

Journal of the Council of Writing Program Administrators
Volume 17, Numbers 1-2, Fall/Winter, 1993

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The Council of Writing Program Administrators is a national association of college and university faculty who serve or have served as directors of freshman composition 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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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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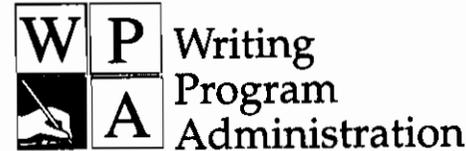
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The Challenges of Rating Portfolios: What WPAs Can Expect

Jeffrey Sommers, Laurel Black, Donald A. Daiker,
and Gail Stygall

Convincing proof of the profession's growing interest in portfolio assessment was offered by the 1992-93 CCCC proposal forms; for the first time, "Portfolio Evaluation" was listed as one of the major subject areas for proposed presentations. Portfolio assessment deserves such endorsement. Proponents have argued that it is a more valid method of assessing student writing (Camp; Elbow, "Virtue"; Hamp-Lyons and Condon; Huot, "Literature"); that it provides opportunities for faculty development (Belanoff and Elbow); that it upholds program standards (Ford and Larkin); and that it provides local control over writing assessment (Black et al.; Condon and Hamp-Lyons; Huot, "Beyond"; Tirrell). Yet despite a growing consensus in support of portfolio assessment over former single-sample assessment programs, much work remains to be done, particularly in scoring portfolios.

This article grows out of work we have done with the Miami University Portfolio Program, which uses portfolios for placing new students. Students who wish to participate—the program is entirely voluntary—submit four specified pieces of writing in June, prior to their first college semester. The required prose pieces, which total no more than twelve typewritten pages, include the following:

- a reflective letter addressed to the raters
- a narrative or descriptive piece
- an explanatory or exploratory or persuasive piece
- a textual analysis

Students may earn advanced placement and credits based upon their portfolios. Excellent portfolios earn students six credits and placement out of Miami's composition sequence; and very good portfolios earn students three credits and placement into a one-semester advanced composition course. Remaining students are placed into the regular two-course composition sequence.

Portfolios are holistically scored by Miami's faculty, and what we have learned is that the problems portfolios present in holistic scoring

situations merit careful thought for writing program administrators who oversee portfolio programs. Some difficulties of holistic assessment (Charney) are exacerbated by the portfolio approach, while some difficulties are unique to portfolio evaluation. While we propose to discuss some of these difficulties in this article, we cannot always offer firm solutions to the problems we raise. The purpose of this article is to stimulate on-going discussion about holistic scoring of portfolios in hopes of resolving some of its attendant difficulties. We will first look at issues of reliability in scoring and then focus on problems in redefining holistic rating in portfolio rating situations.

Problems in Reliability

The most obvious difficulty in rating portfolios is doing so reliably. Over the past two decades, we have learned much about holistic scoring techniques. We can be confident that we know how to score single samples of student writing reliably, that is, with scores from multiple raters that correlate with one another at an acceptable level. Part of the methodology of holistic scoring is devising a scoring guide that is, in some sense, an attempt to describe a range of ideal responses to the prompt. Essays that come closest to that description earn the highest scores; however, portfolios present a crucial difference that complicates the rating situation. Instead of a single, pretested assigned topic, portfolios allow students to make choices of several different pieces. Portfolio scoring guides simply cannot describe ideal portfolios with the same precision as a scoring guide for a single-sitting assigned topic essay. In fact, portfolio scoring is "messy" (Belanoff and Dickson; Yancey). Even though our portfolio requires students to write in specific genres, the contents of the portfolios still differ significantly. Of necessity, the scoring guide has had to be broader. The textual analysis alone offered a myriad of possibilities because students were advised that they might analyze a published text, the text of classmate, or even a text they had written themselves. Thus, one portfolio might include an analysis of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, another might analyze Faulkner's *The Hamlet*, and a third might analyze the student's own poem entitled "Working at the Hamburger Hamlet." Similar variation has also occurred in the other three pieces of writing.

Thus, portfolios clearly give students more power in the assessment situation because they get to choose their topics, which leads to a number of claims that portfolio assessment is a valid assessment, one that gives us a good look at students' writing ability (Elbow, in Belanoff and Dickson,

"Foreword" ix-xvi; see citations on the first page of this article). But giving students more power reduces the degree of control that administrators can exercise in single-sitting timed essays assessment. Thus, it becomes reasonable, and important, to ask whether portfolios can be scored reliably in large-scale scoring sessions. Our experience suggests that the answer is yes.

Rating Portfolios Vs. Rating Single-sitting Essays

Prior to the Miami University Portfolio Program, the Department of English administered a single-sitting proficiency essay for placement of incoming students. In the first transitional year of our portfolio program, we offered students two methods of achieving advanced placement: by submitting a portfolio or by writing an essay in two hours on campus in response to an assigned prompt. Both portfolios and timed essays were scored on a 1-6 scale. Our data suggest that rating portfolios can be as reliable as rating essays.¹

Table 1 demonstrates that our portfolio scoring² was as reliable as our timed essay scoring. The numbers are remarkably close; 85.5% of first and second readers of the essays recorded scores no more than one point different from one another, while 85.8% of first and second readers of portfolios recorded scores no more than one point different from one another. In other words, if an essay or portfolio received a score of 3 from a first reader, 85% of the time the second reader recorded a score of 2, 3, or 4.

Table 1. Differences Between First and Second Readers
(1-6 scale)

	Timed Essays	Portfolios
0	39.4%	45.1
1	46.1	40.7
2	12.4	12.3
3	1.9	2.0
4	.1	0

In situations where the first two readers issued scores differing by 2 or more points, we had a third reader assign a score (See Tables 2 and 3).

Table 2. Differences Between Second and Third Readers
(1-6 scale)

	Timed Essays	Portfolios
0	34.4%	36.4
1	42.0	39.0
2	17.2	22.0
3	5.1	2.5
4	1.3	0

Table 3. Differences Between First and Third Readers
(1-6 scale)

	Timed Essays	Portfolios
0	24.8%	39.8
1	47.1	44.9
2	24.8	7.6
3	2.5	6.8
4	.6	.8

For those essays and portfolios that required a third reading, 76.4% of second and third essay raters differed by no more than one point in their scores, while 75.4% of second and third portfolio raters differed by no more than one point in their scores. Where the percentages shift slightly, the shift favors portfolio rating. Comparing first and third readers, 84.7% of portfolio raters differed by less than one point in their scores, but only 71.9% of essay raters were that close in their scores. While it may be too optimistic to suggest that reliability may increase by using portfolios, it seems fair to assert that reliability in portfolio rating can compare favorably to reliability in single-sitting essay rating.

Rater Survey Data

We also administered a survey to our portfolio raters. These follow-up surveys of raters suggest that the reflective letter has a potentially powerful influence on rating. In fact, we wish to argue that these reflective letters help us achieve reliability in rating. Here are the instructions provided to students for the reflective letter:

This letter, addressed to Miami University writing teachers, introduces you and your portfolio. It may describe the process used in

creating any one portfolio piece, discuss important choices in creating the portfolio, explain the place of writing in your life, chronicle your development as a writer, assess the strengths and weaknesses of your writing, or combine these approaches. Your letter should provide readers with a clearer understanding of who you are as a writer and as a person.

One rater noted, "I found the reflective letter to often be the most interesting part of the packet, not only because of what it revealed of the individual but because of what it showed about the writer's attitude towards their own work. What a fascinating range of boastfulness, self-effacement, wit, and rambling." Another commented, "The reflective letter fascinates me. It appears to be the place where the student establishes his/her authority as writer; positions the reader and writer." A third rater echoed the second: "I liked those reflective letters and narratives which situated the writer and his or her writings best." The tenor of these comments, and many others like them by other raters, suggests that raters feel better prepared to read the remainder of a portfolio after reading the reflective letter. Our research into the reflective letters continues; at this point, however, we are already convinced that they affect the rating situation in a powerful way. Our speculation is that they affect reliability in a positive manner because they bring the personal back into the scoring situation.³

Another factor that might affect reliability is the longer reading time required for portfolio assessment. Proficiency exams usually require 2-3 minutes to read, while the Miami portfolios require 7-10 minutes each. Yet our initial research suggests that fatigue is more likely to affect proficiency exam raters than portfolio raters. In both rating sessions, raters were given 10-minute breaks every hour, similar lunch breaks, and a rating day that began and ended at similar times. Yet it was proficiency exam raters who chose to comment on fatigue: "The simple fatigue that results from hours of reading similar handwritten essays takes a toll on fairness, I'm afraid. I believe I was more fair to the portfolios, with their variety and comparative ease of reading." "Fatigue—by late afternoon—affects judgment. Only *really* good 5's or 6's jump out and get proper scoring by now." "I think that I have done my best, but I wonder if getting tired, etc. as the grading goes on distorts my fairness and accuracy." "An obvious advantage in my eyes at the end of the essay session is the possibility of variety in subject matter. This [rating proficiency exams] is getting pretty tiresome."

On the other hand, portfolio raters did not volunteer comments about fatigue. Instead, they commented on the stimulation of reading portfolios that differed from one another, unlike proficiency exams that all address

the same topic. The "messiness" of portfolios is a product of their variety, which to some raters turns out to be an advantage to rating portfolios. Raters also commented on the ease of reading typewritten work instead of crabbed handwriting. A sampling of comments from surveys follows: "Reading the portfolios is obviously more work, but I think the portfolios are a more accurate assessment of a student's writing ability." "As the day wore on, I was more interested in reading portfolios than the timed essays." "The variety of topics in portfolios makes it much easier to stay fresh and perhaps even fairer."

The surveys also asked raters to agree or disagree with a series of statements about the rating (see Table 4).

Table 4. Response to Survey Statements by Portfolio Raters (n = 34):

Statement A: "I believe that a writing portfolio, such as those I scored today, fairly and accurately reflects a student's writing ability."

Strongly Agree:	17(50%)
Agree:	15(44%)
Not Sure:	1(3%)
Disagree:	1(3%)
Strongly Disagree:	0(0%)

Statement B: "I believe that the scores I assigned to portfolios today were fair and accurate."

Strongly Agree:	9(26%)
Agree:	22(65%)
Not Sure:	3(9%)
Disagree:	0(0%)
Strongly Disagree:	0(0%)

The portfolio raters' responses show a clear pattern; the raters had confidence in the portfolio as a measurement of student writing ability and in themselves as accurate portfolio raters. While the raters' belief in the principle of portfolio rating was stronger than their own self-assessment after completing their rating, nonetheless not a single rater felt her or his rating had been inaccurate.

Proficiency essay raters were asked to respond to similar statements in a second survey (see Table 5).

Table 5. Response to Survey Statements by Proficiency Essay Raters (n = 12):

Statement A: "I believe that a proficiency examination, such as those I scored today, fairly and accurately reflects a student's writing ability."

Strongly Agree:	0(0%)
Agree:	1(8%)
Not Sure:	6(50%)
Disagree:	4(33%)
Strongly Disagree:	1(8%)

Statement B: "I believe that the scores I assigned to proficiency examinations today were fair and accurate."

Strongly Agree:	1(8%)
Agree:	8(67%)
Not Sure:	1(8%)
Disagree:	2(16%)
Strongly Disagree:	0(0%)

The responses from this second group of raters were noticeably different. As a group, they are not nearly as confident in the single-sitting essay as a measure of student writing ability as the portfolio raters were about portfolio assessment. It should also be noted that even though essay raters and portfolio raters responded similarly to the statement about their own rating in the categories "strongly agree," "agree," and "not sure," some essay raters doubted their own fairness and accuracy in a way that no portfolio raters did. The sample, however, is fairly small, and we want to resist making too much of a point here. We can confidently state, though, that the perceptions of the portfolio raters themselves support the notion that portfolio rating can be as reliable as essay rating.

Further support for that contention can be found in a third survey we conducted. Sixteen raters scored both portfolios and essays, and we administered a comparative survey to them (see Table 6).

Table 6. Response to Survey Statements by Raters of Both Portfolios and Proficiency Essays (n = 16):

Statement A: "I believe that portfolio assessment is most appropriate for awarding credit and advanced placement in college composition."

Strongly Agree:	13(81%)
Agree:	3(19%)
Not Sure:	0(0%)
Disagree:	0(0%)
Strongly Disagree:	0(0%)

Statement B: "I believe that the scores I assigned to portfolios last Thursday were more fair and accurate than those I assigned to proficiency examinations today."

Strongly Agree:	7(44%)
Agree:	5(31%)
Not Sure:	3(19%)
Disagree:	0(0%)
Strongly Disagree:	1(6%)

As these results indicate, raters unanimously prefer the portfolio rating as a more fair and accurate evaluation of student writing ability. Once again, the raters' self-assessment is not as high, but 75% of those who rate portfolios and essays were convinced they had been more fair and more accurate in rating portfolios. These surveys offer support for the claim that portfolios can be rated reliably.

Frankly, we expected these surveys to support portfolio scoring over the single-essay exam scoring, and they did; however, the degree to which raters endorsed portfolio scoring was remarkable. An analysis of transcripts of the discussions that took place during the calibration sessions suggests that raters were focusing on content and construct validity rather than mere face validity (Stygall).

Rater Training

Our analyses of scoring patterns and raters' own opinions have convinced us that it is possible to score portfolios as reliably as single essays if the

training is adequate. We posit several reasons for being able to score portfolios reliably: faculty's initial attitudes toward portfolios, a carefully designed training session, the contents of the portfolios themselves, and the relative ease of reading the portfolios.

A number of participating raters have been using portfolios in their own composition classrooms; some even mentioned that in their survey responses. Our department has a long-standing commitment to composition and a track record of support for innovation. Thus, the population from which raters come is one likely to bring positive attitudes to rating portfolios. What this will confirm to writing program administrators is, of course, that institutionalized, large-scale assessment programs do not exist in a vacuum but are a part of an entire writing program. Still, survey results indicate that even raters who support portfolio rating in principle are less confident in practice about their own ability to score portfolios reliably. A WPA who administers a portfolio scoring session needs to prepare carefully for the portfolio assessment to be successful.

Inexperienced portfolio raters participating in their first portfolio scoring may feel disoriented, no matter how experienced they may be with holistic scoring methods or how positive they may feel about using portfolios in their classrooms. The disorientation is a product of their inexperience in rating portfolios in a large-scale assessment. As experienced holistic raters, they may have a sense of what can be expected in a blue book essay produced within a time limit; and as experienced teachers they may have a sense of what can be expected of their own students in a classroom portfolio; but they understandably ask "What is possible in a multi-sample portfolio produced by students whom I have never taught?" The best way to answer this question is through a thorough training session preceding the scoring.

An effective training, or calibration, session depends upon an effective chief reader and a useful packet of sample or anchor portfolios (see Grogan and Daiker). A rating committee including the chief reader needs to work diligently to select anchor portfolios that illustrate the range of accomplishment of the collected portfolios.⁴ In our case, the rating committee consisted of three directors of the Miami Portfolio Program who each read 50-75 portfolios and met for three days of discussion in order to choose anchor portfolios; with experience, the rating committee can now complete the anchor selection in less time. In subsequent years, we have expanded the rating committee to six or seven and have devoted one day to selection. As we will discuss later, there are a number of complications offered by portfolios that the rating committee can anticipate; anchor portfolios can be selected to illustrate any of these complications if the committee wishes to engage the entire group of raters in a focused

discussion of them. Generally, we have tried to assemble a packet of approximately 10-12 portfolios to illustrate our 6-point scoring scale.

Our practice has been to ask raters to read and discuss between 8-10 portfolios, requiring several hours. We begin by focusing on two anchor portfolios at once. Even though this proves time-consuming, as they read through both portfolios, and demanding, as they attempt to remember both portfolios well enough to discuss them afterwards, the paired portfolios begin to create a context for the grading immediately. While assigning a specific score to both portfolios may present raters with difficulty, deciding which of the two portfolios is better does not prove to be that difficult. After the paired portfolios, the training session continues with single portfolios in much the manner of any holistic scoring calibration session. Although the time devoted to the training session is considerable, it seems necessary in order to assure reliable rating. As one rater commented in her survey, "Since this was the first time I have scored portfolios, the long rating session in the morning was extremely helpful, allowing me to understand the differences between scoring whole portfolios and regular timed exams." Another rater commented, "The full morning of training contributed to my accuracy in assigning scores. Discussion of the samples was particularly helpful."

For a number of reasons, then, we are confident at this point that portfolios can be scored as reliably as single-sitting timed essays. The advantages of portfolios (variety, typewritten texts, faculty interest) can work to assure reliable rating, given that a program has carefully laid the groundwork by designing an appropriate portfolio, preparing faculty to accept the program, and training raters. But administrators of portfolio scoring sessions, however confident they can be in the ultimate reliability of their scoring, must be prepared to encounter other problems in rating that are muted or nonexistent in single-essay scoring situations.⁵

Redefining Holistic Rating

Because portfolios are longer than individual essays usually rated in holistic scoring sessions and consist of several pieces of writing, rating "holistically" needs to be redefined. The demands on portfolio readers are great; they must learn to hold their judgment in abeyance not only over the course of a single essay but over the course of an entire portfolio. The challenge increases when portfolios demonstrate unevenness in writing quality or when one piece overshadows all others or when the ideology of the portfolio troubles readers. In the remainder of this essay, we will focus on these difficulties; however, we emphasize that our experience has been that, with practice, raters can learn to rate portfolios holistically.

Just as rating an essay holistically does not mean assigning a score to each paragraph in the piece and averaging those scores to arrive at a final rating, so rating a portfolio holistically ought not mean assigning scores to each piece and then averaging them. The impulse to rate each piece is quite counter-productive. In a portfolio of four pieces rated on a 1-6 scale, for example, a rater who assigns scores of 6 to the first two pieces is not only no longer reading holistically but is also likely to be tempted to score the portfolio as a 6 based only on the first two pieces. This premature assessment subverts the entire point of using portfolios in the first place. Hamp-Lyons and Condon have argued that readers cannot read portfolios holistically if the multiple texts vary from one another in kind. Their point is that readers are bound to consider the multiple texts in light of one another, weighing their strengths and weaknesses, and finally reaching a single judgment based on parts, not on a dominant impression of the whole portfolio. We grant the point that readers inevitably consider the separate parts of the portfolio as they read, but that need not prevent them from assigning a holistically-derived score. In fact, Condon and Hamp-Lyons reach this same and more optimistic conclusion in later research.

We have used the scoring guide to move raters into rating the portfolios holistically. In the general directions, raters should be explicitly reminded not to score individual pieces but rather to withhold judgment until reading all of the written work. As our general directions state, "The portfolios should be read holistically and given a single comprehensive score on a six-point scale ('6' is high and '1' is low). In determining that single score, do not average the four pieces but judge the quality of the portfolio as a whole." We debated whether or not to provide raters with pads for taking notes. The argument in favor was that raters might need help to remember what they have read since each portfolio has many pages and multiple texts. The opposing argument was that the pad might not only slow readers down but also encourage them to score each piece individually. We finally decided not to provide pads, but we did not specifically prohibit taking notes.

Additionally, our scoring guide makes the ability to compose a variety of pieces a central rating criterion. In other words, writers who compose four pieces in some significant way different from one another should score higher than writers who stick to one genre or one strategy throughout their portfolios. For raters to make such judgments, they must read the entire portfolio. Although readers may weigh the different pieces against one another, they should not be scoring them. The description in our scoring guide of a "6" score reads in part: "A portfolio that is *excellent* in overall quality. These portfolios include four distinctive pieces, one from each assigned genre, that excel in several of the following ways. They

demonstrate an ability to handle varied prose tasks with maturity." On the other hand, the scoring guide describes a "1" score as follows: "A portfolio that is *poor* in overall quality. These portfolios include four pieces, but it may be difficult to identify the four assigned genres. There are few or no signs of an ability to handle varied prose tasks competently." In Condon and Hamp-Lyons' study, the ability to handle varied prose tasks was not an explicit criterion for rating. If the chief reader emphasizes the significance of this criterion during the training session, by shaping discussion to focus on whole portfolios rather than on individual pieces, she can encourage raters to rate portfolios holistically. In short, genuine holistic rating is more likely to take place if the rating committee and chief reader foreground its importance and its challenges forthrightly in the scoring guide and in the training session.

The reflective letter that introduces each portfolio may also assist raters in rating holistically. One essay rater's survey reflected on his first experience in holistically scoring essays: "I continue to react really negatively to judging anonymous, decontextualized writing. I don't know what to suggest, but it's an unpleasant experience." Our program's requirement of a reflective letter is in part a response to the problem of decontextualization. Many of the letters create a context for the portfolio by offering raters insights into the rest of the portfolio pieces, thus encouraging raters to withhold final judgments until reading the entire portfolio. For example, our first-year rating committee assigned one portfolio scores of 6, 6, and 4. In the discussion of their scores, one committee member noted that the reflective letter had mentioned all of the remaining pieces. Her explanatory piece, a research paper that explored the topic of organ donation among African Americans, impressed two of the judges, but the one who had mentioned the reflective letter noted, "The main thing I liked about it, I think, is I got the feeling that I was impressed when she talked about it in the letter. What an interesting topic . . . it sounded like she was going to be alive in talking about it and she was." To make a final judgment about the quality of the letter, the rater had to read the explanatory piece as well to see if the letter's claims for it were convincing; additionally, the letter influenced the reading of the explanatory letter later on.

Another student used her reflective letter to provide a context for the remaining papers by indicating which piece mattered most to her. Her portfolio consisted of the letter, a narrative about a newly widowed woman, an explanation of the word "motivation," and an analysis of Saul Bellow's *Henderson, the Rain King*. In terms of length, the Bellow piece was five pages long, while the narrative was only two, and the "Motivation" piece was three pages; however, her letter was very influential in scoring

the portfolio by the rating committee. The writer offered one paragraph of background about her narrative and a briefer paragraph about the Bellow piece, the most significant comment being that it is "a condensed version of my senior term paper." Then she included a one-and-one-half page narrative of how she wrote "Motivation," a narrative in which she quoted her instructor's assignment, provided interior monologue of her thoughts, quoted one of her own poems, and reported her dialogues with her instructor about her drafts.

The rating committee discussed her letter and its effect upon their scoring:

Rater #1: The one thought I did have about this portfolio is that it says in the general directions to give greater weight to the longer and more substantial pieces. While that "Motivation" piece was not long, I would call it substantial, and she certainly had substantial investment in it.

Rater #2: I think she indicated that she thought one of the more substantial pieces was "Motivation" by talking about it in the letter.

Rater #1: True, but all I was saying is that if you go by length, then you should be counting the Bellow piece as the most important one in there, and I didn't get the feeling that she felt that way herself.

It becomes clear in reading this interchange that relationships between the pieces of writing in the portfolios, which surface in both of these reflective letters, encourage holistic rating. In fact, the portfolio begins to seem less an aggregate of separate pieces than a single whole.⁶

The Roller Coaster and Glow Effects

While familiarizing themselves with the portfolios, the rating committee likely will encounter the "roller coaster" and the "glow" effects. The roller coaster effect occurs when pieces in a portfolio fluctuate dramatically in quality; although our experience has been that this effect was not nearly as widespread as we had feared, it nonetheless does occur.⁷ The fact that some portfolios do have their ups and downs is another argument for holistic rating. Raters who make their decision too soon may miss the other half of the roller coaster ride that would affect their final rating. Sometimes, however, the roller coaster ride provided by a portfolio proves problematic for raters.

One portfolio evaluated by our rating committee received scores of 6, 5, and 3 from the committee and was thus not chosen to be an anchor; subsequently, it was scored as a 3 during the actual rating session by a first reader and a 5 by a second reader, necessitating a third reading, which produced another 3. Examining a transcript of the rating committee's discussion revealed that the roller coaster effect was probably the cause of all the discrepant readings.

The portfolio began with a letter that two committee members described as "very good" and "great," although the third member called it "ordinary." The narrative that followed—a recounting of how the writer had become separated from her class and subsequently lost during a trip to Athens—was an impressive piece of writing. One committee member described the narrative essay as "highly successful from beginning to end . . . one of the best we're going to see." He singled out for specific praise this passage in which the young woman has finally gotten her bearings: "The only impression that remains is the moment when I entered Omonia Square. The sun was blazing behind the two running figures in the fountain, and miniature rainbows shimmered in the fountain's mist. I could almost hear angels on high singing Handel's 'Hallelujah Chorus,' my relief was so great." A second committee member said she "really liked the voice" in the piece, but the third member felt that the narrative was good, not great, that it was safe and that "she takes no chances" in writing it.

All three committee members agreed that the student's explanatory piece about the Girl Scouts was "utterly pedestrian." "It seemed to have a point but not much of one," said the member who had been most impressed with the narrative. For the portfolio's final piece, entitled "Extract from Captain Stormfield's Visit to Heaven: *Mark Twain's Best*," the consensus was that the writer had relied more on summary than analysis, reserving most of that analysis for the paper's final paragraph.

Essentially, the three committee members agreed that the portfolio reached a peak in the second piece, the narrative, and hit its low point in the third piece, the Girl Scout essay, although the three readers disagreed on the height of the peaks and the depths of the valleys. As the reader who gave the low score of 3 commented, "I was swayed because the last two pieces . . . were really weak."

Because the four pieces of this portfolio were inconsistent in achievement, we want to argue, the portfolio became problematic to score. Although readers agreed that the portfolio was uneven, the up and down of the four pieces led to discrepant ratings by three raters. The issue at stake was the degree to which the portfolio demonstrated the ability to handle varied prose tasks. While we cannot offer a concrete explanation for the discrepant ratings at the actual scoring session, it seems more than likely

that three additional readers were also troubled by the unevenness of the portfolio. Certainly some wildly uneven essays will surface in a single essay holistic assessment, but a portfolio program can be expected to supply more examples of inconsistent work, given the greater volume of writing produced and variety of writing required. The rating committee must be aware of the roller coaster effect, perhaps selecting as an anchor a portfolio that demonstrates unevenness in accomplishment to make certain that this problem is discussed, not ignored.

The glow effect, on the other hand, is more common. An exceptionally strong (or exceptionally weak) piece early in the portfolio tends to shed a glow (or shadow) over the remainder of the portfolio that can affect the overall rating. For instance, one portfolio began with an introductory letter that ended with this paragraph:

Over the past few years, I've developed new attitudes toward writing, enjoying it rather than dreading it, and viewing each piece not as one completed but as a work-in-progress. There is always a more appropriate word (most often, the one that awakens me out of a sound sleep at 4 a.m. the day after the deadline), a better phrase, room for improvement. I find this stimulating, not frustrating.

Readers agreed that this letter was an excellent one; in fact, in separate scoring, the letter by itself earned the top score of six from two different readers; however, this student's entire portfolio earned only two fives in the portfolio rating session. That the rest of the portfolio dropped off in quality seems clear, but how much did the strength of the letter help the portfolio's overall score? It's hard to know, but it's not hard to surmise that the very strong impression made by the opening letter must have influenced the raters positively.

In the first portfolio discussed earlier, the committee member who had been so strongly impressed by the narrative essay about being lost in Greece commented, "When I read the Greece thing, and I like it so much, does that glow . . . shed its light on the next things that I read? Well, of course, it does. The question is how much. To what extent does it distort your reading?" His score for the portfolio was the highest of the six readers, so perhaps the glow extended for quite some time. With another portfolio read by the committee, the three scores were 5, 5, and 6. The member who scored it highest commented, "I called the analysis a dreary cut and paste . . . but I seemed to have liked her story better than you . . . did. And I know I liked her letter. I give a lot of credit to people who make me chuckle and she did." Once again, a strong early piece cast a strong glow over the rest of the portfolio.

The glow effect also emphasizes the importance of consistency in handling portfolios as they move from rater to rater during the scoring session. Because each piece in the portfolio can, and probably does, color the raters' views of the following pieces, the sequence of the pieces in the portfolio is significant. If raters are to experience the portfolios in the same manner, each rater must read exactly the same portfolio as subsequent raters, so carelessness in handling the portfolios can lead to problems. It is not hard to imagine that the portfolio with the narrative about Greece might have received even more discrepant scores had one rater read the narrative as the final piece in the portfolio and another read it second. We, therefore, staple the four pieces together and number the pages consecutively as a means of ensuring that the sequence of papers remains unchanged during multiple readings.

It is vital to stress to raters that they need to be self-aware, monitoring how they are being influenced by their reading. If readers make a conscious effort to avoid assigning scores until they have read the entire portfolio, they can perhaps avoid being unduly affected by the glow given off by an exceptional piece. Certainly, the rater who is tremendously impressed by the opening piece and skims the remaining pieces is not doing the portfolio justice or scoring holistically. A judicious choice of anchor portfolios can help the chief reader address the glow effect during the training session and discussion.

Politics and Portfolios

Another potential problem exacerbated by the portfolio is political and is a much larger issue facing holistic scoring of any kind. One rater offered this comment in her survey:

I continue to be concerned . . . by the silence that surrounds critical thought and political awareness in these scoring guides. Consistently, what I hear is 'well-written' even though a piece is critically disastrous. How a responsible teacher of writing (and I think almost everyone in this dept. is) can separate critical thought and political subjectivity from writing is unfathomable to me . . . I do think a student whose politics are not well-argued, full of contradictions, and complications in the very institutional precepts against which they pretend to argue, *should* sit in these composition courses, even if they are in touch with their feelings. Room needs to be given to this different pedagogy in the scoring guides as well as in the holistic training discussions we have after scoring.

The issue raised by this comment focuses on the compatibility of holistic scoring and a social constructionist pedagogy, an issue that has been addressed recently (Bizzell), but this essay is not the place to deal with this debate at any length. Our point is to note that the issue is more likely to surface in portfolio rating than in single-essay rating sessions. Undoubtedly, some programs are developing essay prompts today that ask students to address public issues and challenge political assumptions, prompts that will require rating committees to deal directly with the issue of politics and scoring guides. It seems probable as well that some single-sitting essays on not explicitly political prompts may still produce problematic writing of the sort described by the rater. Portfolios by their very nature, however, increase the probability of such problematic writing occurring since each portfolio includes so much more text than a single-sitting assigned essay. How to handle such portfolios is difficult indeed.

Let us illustrate how such problems may arise in portfolio assessment. The rating committee read one portfolio that included a reflective letter; a narrative about a high school football game; an essay entitled "An Ideal Society" that explained the writer's notion of utopia; and an analysis of Robert Frost's "The Road Not Taken." While all three committee members scored the portfolio as either a 1 or 2 on the scale of 6, a problem arose with the explanatory essay. The passage in question reads:

I think each country's culture is fine the way it is by having their own customs. There will always be social changes and we will have to learn to live with it. We've done good so far.

In each country everyone will be treated equal. Just because of your race or religion, you will not be segregated. If you are homosexual or lesbian, you will be segregated and punished. You will be asked to get mental help and teach you that this is morally wrong. We don't need this in our society.

Here is a partial transcript of the rating committee's exchange about this portfolio:

Rater #1. . . . the homophobia is enough for me to give it a one.

Rater #2. We're going to have trouble reaching anything like rater reliability if people are going to use standards like that.

Rater #1. . . . Regardless of what we say, it seems to me very likely there will be readers who will give it a one when they come across

a passage like that, the argument being I don't want to give institutional approval and credit to a student who thinks that way . . . what concerns me here is that if we distribute credits to students that is institutional approval of what they've submitted.

Rater #2. But not, of course, of their ideas.

Rater #1. Well, *we* know that . . . Let's push this case to the limit. Suppose David Duke, the former Klansman . . . the state legislator down south, his kid's coming to Miami and submits a portfolio. The narrative paper is "The Time We Lynched a Nigger." His explanatory paper is "Why Whites Are Superior to Negroes." His lit crit piece of writing is an analysis of one of his father's speeches, and it's all wonderfully well-written. Do you want to give him a six, and give him credit?

Rater #2. No, I don't think so.

Rater #1. . . . I gave this portfolio a one because of my objection to that one passage.

Rater #3 observed later in the discussion that Rater #1 was no longer rating holistically when he based his score on that one passage, a point well taken. Our purpose in this section of our essay, however, is to note that such problematic situations are going to arise more often in portfolio assessment. It is important not to magnify this problem since it did not present a major obstacle to our rating. Still, highly significant issues are raised by portfolios such as the one discussed above, and the rating committee should think through how to handle such situations if and when they arise. We decided to advise our raters to send back to the chief reader any portfolios that they found they could not rate. This "solution," however, is not entirely satisfactory because it begs the question of what to do with such portfolios in the first place, since the chief reader simply sends the portfolio back out to be rated until someone rates it or else rates it her/himself. It also assumes that raters would be too troubled to rate the portfolio, a naive assumption given that the member of the rating committee most troubled by the portfolio did not hesitate to score the portfolio lower because of the disturbing passage.

The problem raised here is not really with portfolio assessment but with all holistic assessment. Holistic rating, like all other aspects of the composition curriculum, should be subject to intense examination and analysis, and portfolio assessment is very likely to intensify this scrutiny.

The politics of assessment promises to be a site of continued debate—and rightly so with portfolio assessment no doubt affected by that debate—but we ought not mistakenly see portfolios as the cause of the problems.

Conclusion

Our purpose in this essay has been to advance an important claim and continue an important ongoing discussion. Our claim, which we have attempted to substantiate in the first section of the article, is that portfolios can be reliably rated in a large-scale assessment situation, given proper preparation by a writing program administrator. More research, of course, needs to be conducted to determine whether the reliability we reached is reproducible and how best to make sure portfolio rating remains reliable.

In the second half of the essay, we added to the growing discussion of portfolio assessment by sharing our experiences with other writing program administrators. Portfolio assessment is similar enough to other holistic assessment methodology that some of the problems it presents are not new but simply exacerbated by the longer, more complex group of writings presented in portfolios. On the other hand, portfolio assessment is different in important ways from the kinds of holistic writing assessment with which many of us are more experienced, therefore presenting different problems that need to be addressed if reliable rating is to be achieved.

Portfolios are not the panacea to our assessment needs, as Edward White has recently pointed out (*New Directions*), and they are not simple to administer or rate. To a great extent, the future of portfolio assessment rests on the experiences, observations, and insights of writing program administrators in the midst of administering portfolio programs. Complex and complicated as they are, portfolios remain our best tool for assessing student writing ability. Our purpose has been to focus attention on the actual machinery of scoring portfolios. We have outlined some practical methods of gaining reasonable reliability, but we are aware that serious concerns about validity and reliability in scoring portfolios remain. Portfolios have clearly arrived; we hope that this article points the direction for continued conversation about portfolios as an assessment method.

Notes

1. Our research was funded in part by a grant from the National Council of Writing Program Administrators (WPA).

2. Hamp-Lyons and Condon (CCC) present data that show their raters reaching scoring decisions after reading a single page of a portfolio, which would, of course, account for high reliability in a less-than-welcome way. In a later piece (Condon and Hamp-Lyons, *New Directions*), they report having found a way to retrain readers. See p. 17 of our article for further discussion.

3. Of course, bringing the personal into the scoring can be problematic at times. See Laurel Black, Donald A. Daiker, Jeffrey Sommers, and Gail Stygall, "Writing like a Woman and Being Rewarded for It? Gender, Assessment, and Reflective Letters from Miami University's Student Portfolios" for discussion of the effects on scoring the reflective letters.

We also scored reflective letters separately. If we compare the scores received by the individual letters to those received by the entire portfolios, we find that only 53% of the letters were scored within one point of the portfolio score.

We conclude that our reliable scores on portfolios are not caused by premature judgments based solely on the reflective letters. Clearly, portfolio raters are reading the entire portfolios before determining a score.

4. David W. Smit, "A WPA's Nightmare: Reflections on Using Portfolios as a Course Exit Exam," argues that selecting anchor portfolios is virtually impossible given the perplexing variety of portfolios. Careful construction of the guidelines to students, however, can provide concrete descriptions of the required writing, thus preventing variety in portfolios from descending into chaos. For a full description of Miami's guidelines to students, see Black et al., *Handbook on Writing Portfolio Assessment: A Program in College Placement*.

5. The rating committee must decide how to deal with an incomplete portfolio and a portfolio that provides more than one piece in a required genre. While it is certainly possible that an incomplete essay might be produced during a single-sitting essay examination, the situation does not occur often enough to be a major concern. Certainly, there should not be a major problem with incomplete portfolios, but the odds increase when requirements made of students increase. The incomplete portfolio can either be deemed unscorable as a non-responsive essay would be, or it can be scored on the 1-6 scale, with raters taking into account that the portfolio is incomplete. The Miami program chose to set aside incomplete portfolios, weeding them out during the preparation phase; these portfolios were never distributed to raters, and they received scores of 0, meaning "Not Rated." Portfolios that included two narratives, instead of a narrative and a textual analysis, were scored, with the portfolios receiving lower scores because of their inability to meet all of the scoring criteria.

6. The reflective letters not only affect the rating of the portfolio in important ways, but they also present a challenge to rating committees accustomed to the holistic scoring of single essays. Unlike the essay-scoring situation in which raters merely read the essays, portfolio-scoring situations provide raters with a meta-commentary by the student about the written work. Reading the letters is a new task and one for which the rating committee must be prepared. Our ongoing research has been focusing on these letters, which are fascinating pieces of writing; part of our research has been an effort to develop a scoring scale for the letters themselves to see if they can be rated reliably as separate pieces. We have, in fact, rated the letters;

only 14 of 270 letters required a third rating. It is thus reasonable to expect raters to grow accustomed to rating a "new" kind of piece in large-scale assessment situations, given enough practice.

7. Condon and Hamp-Lyons (*New Directions*) describe this phenomenon without naming it in reading protocols written by their raters. One rater writes, "After I read the first essay, I was sure this would be a Practicum placement [the lowest score], but the impromptu and the second revised essay changed my mind."

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Teachers *and* Writers: The Faculty Writing Workshop and Writing Across the Curriculum¹

Rebecca Blevins Faery

I'd like to begin by telling a story about a turning point in my own life as a writing teacher.

On a cold January day, more than a dozen years ago now, I sat in a large seminar room at the University of Iowa with nineteen other teachers, all of us Fellows of the NEH-Iowa Institute on Writing and directors of writing programs at colleges and universities around the country. We had gathered in Iowa City for six months of professional development—reading, talking, writing, designing courses and curricula. Some of us were planning ways to initiate programs of writing across the curriculum, still a pretty new idea at the time. We were in the first week of the six-month grant program, and this was the first meeting of what was to be a weekly activity: a writing workshop in which we would share our writing in progress with the group. On that particular afternoon, we were waiting for our first submissions to be returned and discussed.

I still remember the tension in the room as we sat there, anxious about what responses our writing might elicit, worried because we didn't yet know the workshop leader or each other very well, remembering all the other past moments when pride and pleasure had been bestowed, pain or humiliation had been inflicted, with evaluations of our writing. This, we were all silently realizing, is what students must feel each time we circulate among them to return papers we have so laboriously and meticulously "corrected" with our vivid, admittedly sometimes livid, red ink.

To understand our students' experience, of course, was the point exactly, or one point at least; another was to enact the belief that the best writing teachers are teachers who write. The directors of the Institute, Carl Klaus and Jix Lloyd-Jones, agreed with that premise, and along with the rest of the Institute staff, they had wisely decided that experiential learning would be an important part of the Institute; thus, the writing workshop, and they had wisely asked Cleo Martin, a wonderfully gifted teacher in the university's rhetoric program, to lead the workshop. Cleo had welcomed our tentative first pieces of writing, taken them away to read and respond to, and now moved around the room returning them to us. To our astonishment, we found not red but *green* ink sprouting on our pages into

plus marks and marginal comments to indicate pleasure in the reading, praise for work well done, questions, suggestions for further reflection, revision, refinement. The only red in the room was on the faces of the participants, flushed with surprise and pleasure.

Then Cleo distributed the workshop copies and told us how we were to begin the discussion of each piece; the writer was to ask, "What do you like about my paper?" It was another revolutionary moment. You can imagine how enjoyable the workshops were for both writer and readers as a result, how much easier we found it to bring our writing to the workshop when we knew we'd hear first about what we had done well and then about how we might revise a piece to make it better. What's more, we left each workshop session eager to sit down and write more.

We worked very hard during the six months of the Institute. We read and debated theories and pedagogies; we designed new writing courses, seminars on writing pedagogy for colleagues at home, and new writing curricula for our home institutions; we wrote grant proposals for funding faculty development projects and curriculum revision. We learned a great deal from all of that reading, writing, talking, arguing, planning. But I think we all agreed that the writing workshop was where everything came together, where we saw in action, and where we *felt*, a potential for real change in our lives as writers and as teachers. I know for sure that the writing workshop was what we most looked forward to each week. We read each other's work with the utmost care, seriousness, and respect. We offered each other suggestions for improving our work. We celebrated our achievements as writers. The workshop was the place where we got to know each other through writing, where we constructed our identity as a community of professionals with common concerns and aspirations, where our individual identities as writers were called forth and affirmed, and where we continued to learn from the inside out how to create an environment that would best facilitate our students' development as writers. I wrote more in those six months than I had written in the previous few years, when teaching loads and administrative responsibilities had obscured my connection to the activity that had brought me into this profession in the first place.

Being invited to scrutinize my own writing habits and practices and to "put my money where my mouth was," so to speak, by actually *writing* and offering that writing to readers for response—all that changed forever how I teach writing. When the Institute on Writing ended and I went back to my home institution, I didn't want to lose the support of the workshop; I wanted to find colleagues who were willing to spend some time each week reading and discussing our work in progress, willing to encourage and support each other's writing. I also wanted to foster writing across the

curriculum; I knew that a writing workshop would give other teachers, as it had given me, the incentive to reflect critically on their teaching as well as their writing. I announced a faculty writing workshop and invited anyone who was interested to participate. I also made sure that every workshop began with the writer asking the magic question: "What do you like about my paper?"

The workshop was a grand success. The group continued to meet every Friday afternoon during the school year for the next five years. We gathered in a comfortable lounge adjacent to the faculty dining room, not around a seminar table because that, I decided, suggested an atmosphere too reminiscent of a classroom, but cozily ensconced on sofas and easy chairs. I wanted the workshops to feel more like a gathering of friends than a committee meeting, and the informal setting helped. Coffee and tea were always available, and the writing program budget provided cookies or sherry on special occasions like the end of a semester or an academic year. Unlike participants in the summer seminars on teaching writing, the writing workshop participants did not receive a stipend for being in the group, partly because of budgetary constraints, but partly also because I wanted the emphasis in the workshop to be on the personal benefits gained by those who took part. I wanted participants to think of the workshop as something provided *for them*, rather than seeing it as work they did for the writing program or for the college.

Five years after I convened that first workshop, I left the college, but a colleague and workshop regular eagerly volunteered to step in as the workshop facilitator, and the last I heard, the group—and not incidentally, the WAC program—were still going strong.

I subsequently convened similar writing groups at two other institutions where I have directed writing programs. What I have found in all three institutions is that providing a forum for faculty to focus on themselves as writers is richly productive in a number of ways: encouraging and supporting scholarly activity among participants²; helping to create a sense of community among faculty engaged together in the common activities of teaching and scholarship; and increasing participants' willingness to include more writing in their courses. Participants in faculty workshops on their own writing are, I have found, eager to consider ways for their students to experience writing and response as they have. Faculty writing groups are thus a crucial corollary to faculty development programs that address writing pedagogy directly. I believe they are the single most effective way to change faculty attitudes about writing and to build support for writing across the curriculum.

A college or university that decides to develop a writing program across the disciplines faces a number of challenges. First of all, faculty must

accept that they themselves will be implicated in the process of change that launching a comprehensive writing program entails. The first common assumption that needs to be challenged is that students' writing "problems" rest with students alone and thus that students will be the sole focus of the writing program's attention. Those of us in composition studies know, though some of our colleagues in other fields still do not, that the ability to write, for students or for anyone else, is not a fixed or static quality but is instead profoundly context-bound. A writer who writes perfectly well, or even exceedingly well, in one situation may write not particularly well in another as a result of a number of factors: the assignment, the student's familiarity with the discipline, the kind of response she has gotten before both in the particular course and in her whole history with writing, and so on.

Second, the chasms that have traditionally divided divisions, departments, and disciplines must be bridged in order to build a sense of shared enterprise. This means providing opportunities for faculty across disciplines to talk together about discourse conventions, what counts as "good writing" in their disciplines, and what the differences might be between students writing to get acquainted with a discipline, or novice writing, and students writing to enter the discipline, or apprentice writing. Novice writing, appropriate for beginning students and introductory courses, may depart from or ignore the usual conventions of writing in the discipline because its function is to provoke interest and to invite engagement, exploration, and experimentation. Apprentice writing, appropriate for students majoring or concentrating in the field and for upper-level courses, is where students begin to master the discourse conventions of a discipline and to stake out a place for themselves within the field. Discussing these distinctions enables faculty to see themselves as thinkers and writers whose years of work have embedded them in a particular discipline and to see students as people who are initially outsiders to that discipline. Learning to situate their teaching within these distinctions powerfully affects how teachers see their role, not so much as guardians of their discipline but rather as people whose privilege it is to introduce newcomers to the discipline and initiate them into its conventions.

Another challenge is to prevent the program from devolving into "correctness across the curriculum." Every writing director who has tried to recruit faculty to participate in a cross-curricular writing program has heard statements like this: "I don't think I have the skills I need to teach writing effectively; I recognize when something goes wrong in a sentence, but I don't know what to call it. I'd have to relearn grammar if I'm going to teach more writing." The task is to redefine what it means to teach writing, to convince colleagues that writing across the curriculum doesn't

mean everybody should "teach writing" in that outmoded, narrow, correctness-oriented way. Instead, everybody understands that writing is learning, meaning that faculty in all disciplines are better able to use writing to achieve the goals of every course they teach. Teachers need to understand the writing process and learn how to take that process into account when they assign and respond to their students' writing. They are then more likely to give assignments that stress writing to learn—to use frequent, short, informal, exploratory writing along with or at times instead of the usual school "papers" and to offer ample opportunities for revision. They also are more likely to give responses that facilitate students' continued intellectual engagement with the subject, rather than responses that criticize in a way that inhibits or arrests students' interest in further thinking and writing.

Finally, faculty need to find out that there's something in it for them, both as teachers and as writers, when they choose to take part in writing across the curriculum. They need to experience the renewal of energy for both writing and teaching that a WAC program can offer.

A faculty writing workshop is ideally suited to address all of these issues. It supports the comprehensive nature of the writing program and avoids the frequent impulse of fledgling programs to focus only on students and their "inadequacies" because the workshop is focused only on *faculty* and *their* writing. It builds alliances among faculty from many disciplines through the activity of sharing their current scholarship and their struggles and adventures with writing; the result is a multi-disciplinary community of scholar-teachers open to and experienced in conversations about writing. The workshop also helps to avoid the pitfall of teachers who place excessive or inappropriately timed emphasis on grammar and correctness. The group learns quickly that editing matters are sometimes appropriately incidental to discussing the substance of work in progress, that any piece of writing has many more interesting things to talk about than how the sentences parse or how the punctuation looks, and that editing is a last-stage activity in the evolution of a piece of writing. In the process of discussing the substance as well as the style of their own and their colleagues' writing, group members also learn a vocabulary of response that is rhetorically based.

If, then, building a successful cross-curricular writing program depends on faculty from all disciplines becoming familiar with the theoretical and pedagogical implications of the writing process for how they think about the writing that their students do, how they assign writing, and how they assess and respond to that writing, what better way than to invite faculty across disciplines to write for and with each other; to become more aware of what goes into producing a piece of writing and how writing both

is similar and different across disciplines; and to learn from both getting and giving response what kinds of comments are most helpful to writers at different stages of the writing process?

So much for a writing program director's perspective on the value of the faculty writing workshop. What do workshop participants themselves have to say? I asked people in one faculty writing workshop to tell me how participation has influenced them as both writers and teachers; influenced their own writing as well as their ways of assigning and responding to writing; their understanding of the role of writing in their courses and their programs; and their awareness of how both they and their students fit into the discourse communities of their disciplines, their departments or programs, and the institution as a whole.³

Most participants recognize and value the group's focus on them as scholar-writers, as well as on the ways the group helps to forge connections across departmental and disciplinary lines. The workshop meetings are, as one colleague put it, "time out" from teaching, grading, advising, committees, and so on, and offer a pleasant chance to get to know colleagues across the campus with whom we might otherwise have no more than nodding acquaintance. Here is what some of them had to say about the cross-disciplinary collegiality in the workshop:

I most enjoyed the interchange among disciplines. . . . I would add that after a week of struggling through students' essays, it was wonderful to read and discuss scholarly writing of real quality.

The interaction with other group members was important. [My program] is structurally, socially, and intellectually isolated from the rest of the college. The writing group provided me an opportunity to engage with members of the community in a meaningful way.

I . . . really enjoyed and benefited from the chance to talk with colleagues from different departments. I felt much more part of the larger [college] community as a result of the group.

I very much appreciated the workshop when I could attend. It gave me a chance to hear what my colleagues were up to.

For me the most rewarding part of the group was reading and hearing about other people's work and having a chance to see how people in other disciplines write.

Participants were expressly grateful for the opportunity of time to concentrate on their own writing. As a result, their interest in writing was renewed, and they wanted to do more of it, even in some cases to think of doing different kinds of writing, outside the confines of traditional scholarship in their discipline. One respondent spoke directly about how the workshop had initiated a change in how she thought about and experienced her own writing process:

I used to think of the first draft as the major hurdle, or barrier, or accomplishment . . . and the revising process as that "other" much simpler process that came after. Now I no longer see the writing process as a big step (first draft) followed by one or more littler steps (revision). Now I see the reverse! The process of revision has assumed a much more prominent place in the whole of writing.

Other respondents also wrote about how the writing workshop supported them as writers:

[The group] taught me something about my own writing and it was very encouraging. Sometimes when the semester catches up with me . . . I forget I also have this other life. It has always seemed to me that writing was and is a luxury.

I admit to having been rather self-serving in my approach to the writing group, in that I used it more in terms of improving my own writing.

More than anything else, I benefit from the opportunity to talk with people about my work.

I like the idea of showing colleagues a draft—the excitement of the risk, I guess. Since we were all more or less in the same boat, it made it easier to be vulnerable and to value the process of writing and of honing an idea, instead of hiding behind a finished product.

. . . the most valuable aspects of the writing group were getting a chance to think about my own writing and hearing others' reactions to it. It helped me to take more risks in using my own voice and to break away (somewhat) from the tyranny of the academic style. . . . I really liked having two hours each week in which practical concerns were set aside and we got a chance to talk about our work—a rare opportunity! My participation in the group

helped me to think of myself as a writer and to fantasize about doing different kinds of writing—someday.

I have been reading *Wild Mind* by Natalie Goldberg and experimenting with writing short descriptive pieces that avoid abstract formulations. After writing about theory . . . for the last ten years, it has not been easy to accept the metaphors that appear on the page like uninvited guests who turn out to be the life of the party. My interest in writing was sparked by the discussions in the faculty writing group The opportunity to talk about and share written work with colleagues is so rare, that the very fact of its existence made the writing group exceptional I enjoyed being in the group and came away wanting to spend more time writing.

In the workshop, teaching is only rarely a direct topic of conversation, although it is always implicit in our collegiality. Rather, as the passages above demonstrate, the focus is on supporting and encouraging faculty members' identity as scholars and writers. This makes the group meetings a place where a facilitative model of writing pedagogy can be enacted, where the social or communal aspects of writing can be emphasized, and where faculty can become more aware of their own writing process and can experience what it is like to have one's work read and responded to seriously but supportively, with a heightened awareness of writing as embedded in contexts—of discipline, genre, rhetorical purpose, immediate or potential audience—and as an extended, complex, and multifaceted process. One respondent admitted that she hasn't yet changed how she deals with writing in her courses, instead relishing the workshop time to focus on her own writing:

The group has not had a direct impact, so far, on my work with students. I think in a way I wanted to use the time to think about my own development and goals, not to rush into my teacher mode. However, over time, I think that it will have an impact, especially if I can go to some workshops on using the writing process with students.

Yet the workshop experience inevitably raises questions for many participants about the writing in their classes and about their teaching practices. Several other participants were specific about how the experience of the group had already inspired concrete changes in their teaching:

Receiving feedback on my own writing has been very helpful in learning how to give better feedback to students But just as

important is knowing the experience of receiving feedback—what kinds of comments and suggestions are helpful and what is simply discouraging; the importance of hearing what's good about a piece before hearing about what's confusing or what puts the reader off; the effect that the tone of the feedback might have.

As a writer and teacher of writing, the group has helped me to open up. [I've learned that] by viewing the writing assignment as an experience between writers, revisions and resubmissions extend and complement, rather than just show comprehension of, the lectures and the textbook.

Having had my own work productively criticized and experiencing firsthand the importance of hearing a word of praise mixed in with stern words of criticism, I could better formulate my own comments to my students on their papers to reflect their accomplishments and progress, and, at the same time, challenge them to improve their style, tighten up their arguments, and better situate their voices. The discussions and readings strengthened my commitment to making writing central to my teaching. I realized that I could apply some of the same concerns discussed in the writing group to my own seminars. I developed group writing exercises that encourage students to talk to one another across disciplines and to gain more confidence in their own particular approaches, while at the same time recognizing the constraints of any seminar and any subject maintained by conventions, historical context, and the limits of time and space.

I'm more likely now than before to assign more frequent writing projects in my classes, more likely to make revision an integral part of those projects, and more likely to suggest different types of writing projects. Gone are the days of the 15-page paper that was turned in on the last day of class! Now I assign 5 or 6 short papers throughout the semester, each of which is revised at least once and is shared with the larger writing community (either a group of students in the class or the whole class, plus me). As far as what form the writing takes, I'm much more open to permitting the student to choose: I'll choose the topic . . . and the student is free to choose whether she writes a "traditional" essay, a letter to the editor, a letter to her congressional representative, a diary entry, etc. This freedom to choose has met with enormous enthusiasm in the class—and I get more interesting pieces to read!

These changes, significant and welcome as they are, need not be the end point in how the faculty writing workshop can affect the practice of writing and teaching writing on a campus. If I have so far emphasized the near-term results of the faculty writing workshop—support for faculty writers and incentive for critical review of the use of writing in their courses—it is not because I think those things will be the most we can hope for from such a program. The potential of the group is for ongoing reflection and discussion about the work we do together—thinking, writing, teaching. The process of collaboration across disciplines in the workshop can be the foundation or seedbed for curricular evolution. Postmodernism has destabilized and blurred the traditional boundaries between disciplines; just as the college or university curriculum a century ago looked very different from the ones we live with today, so the disciplines of tomorrow will certainly differ from those we know now. Defining education is a process that can never be finished, but it seems safe to predict that interdisciplinarity will be increasingly important in educational arrangements and public life in the coming decades. Two members of the workshop addressed the group's potential for such re-vision:

[One thing] of value is the interdisciplinary nature of the group. I am more interested in questioning traditional disciplinary boundaries than in remaining comfortably within them. Perhaps it is a sign of the times, but I think interdisciplinary discussions are key to future research agendas and policy proposals for our society.

By reading other colleagues' work, I became more interested in how we actually talk across disciplines and how the way we write keeps us separate. By talking about the writing and having the opportunity to ask questions about approaches, statistics, conclusions, and examples, we could almost glimpse what an interdisciplinary curriculum would look like.

That glimpse toward an interdisciplinary curriculum is titillating, but it is only a glimpse; writing across the curriculum is too new for us to know what effects it will have on institutions in the long run. I like to imagine a campus where teachers and students alike think of themselves as *writers*, and both understand and respect the writing process, their own and others'; where no one owns knowledge, but it circulates freely and everyone is willing to share it; where everyone understands that knowledge is not finished and fixed and passed down from one generation to the next but that teachers and students alike are active in the process of remaking and

producing knowledge; and where teachers learn as well as teach, students teach as well as learn.

A faculty writing workshop cannot alone produce such transformations, of course, but I believe it can contribute to them in important ways. I am convinced that encouraging teachers to focus on themselves as writers and on their own writing must lie at the heart of the process to develop college-wide writing programs if those programs are to thrive and bear fruit. Teachers are best qualified to make good use of writing in their courses—and to follow through on the curricular promise of that kind of teaching—when they understand the experience of writing from the inside out. The faculty writing workshop is indispensable in helping teachers acquire that understanding and, thus, in developing a successful program of writing across the curriculum.

Notes

1. I am grateful to my colleagues Karen Hollis, Deborah Schifter, Lucas Wilson, Patricia Ramsey, Karen Remmler, Jena Gaines, and Jean Grossholtz for their assistance with this essay and also to the Center for Advanced Studies at the University of Iowa, where I spent a developmental leave in spring 1992 and where the research and writing were done.

2. It's reasonable to assume that participants publish more as a result of their workshop experience; it would be difficult to assess that with any accuracy, however, because of the many variables that would be impossible to control for, such as, who came to the group year by year; how active they were as publishing writers before or after, as opposed to during, their participation in the workshop; whether, indeed, they brought to the workshop writing that they intended for publication. One participant, a chemist nearing retirement, began to write poems again when she joined the workshop, something she had not done since her undergraduate days; while writing poetry gave her enormous pleasure and she produced a number of occasional poems for people or events within the college community, she had no desire to publish them. Other members of the group brought grant proposals, clearly not meant for publication, or papers that they intended to deliver at conferences but did not expect to publish. I do have anecdotal evidence that publishing increased somewhat among participants, including my own conviction that having an audience of careful and supportive readers to respond to work in progress and to give suggestions for revision made me more willing to submit my writing for publication and more successful in placing my work. Another member of the first workshop group, untenured during the five years I was part of the group, later said to me, only half jokingly, that she was sure that she never would have gotten tenure without the workshop group's support and encouragement, enabling her to publish more than she felt she could otherwise have done. Other participants have offered similar comments over the years.

3. All quotations are from participants' written responses to my questions about the effects of their taking part in the writing group. I have excerpted freely but edited with restraint, only to fit a passage gracefully into my own text. Some respondents asked that their names not be used; for the sake of consistency, I have used no one's name. Respondents were from departments of psychology and education, economics, politics, history, mathematics education, and German.



The Role of AP and the Composition Program

Daniel Mahala and Michael Vivion

A few years ago, our department was prompted by a note from the university's admission office to review our policy of granting six hours of credit for a grade of 3 or better on the Advanced Placement (AP) English exam. Our review of the AP program and of the history of the department's acceptance of AP credit led us to a few surprises. The note asked that the department consider the review in light of the change in the AP's English exam from one test to two: the Language and Composition test and the Literature and Composition test. The admissions officer recommended that the department consider awarding up to twelve hours to students who had taken both exams and had received a 3 or better. His expressed concern was not that the department would fail to review this recommendation favorably but rather exactly how the department would choose to award the twelve hours.

The major surprise was how little members of the English Department knew about the AP test and the credit we granted for it. No one, for example, had known about the separation of the AP English exam into two distinct parts. It follows that no one knew either the content recommended by the College Board (CB) or tested by the Educational Testing Service (ETS) for the two AP courses.¹ In fact, for some time even the admissions office had been granting six credits in composition, no matter which test was reported. We also discovered that there was no university policy for a regular review of any of the tests that the university accepts for credit. In other words, the departments that accept credit-by-examination had virtually conceded the responsibility to grant certain university credit to various national testing agencies.

This realization led to some major questions that arose in our discussion and that are pertinent to writing program administrators and department chairs across the country. Do the exams that lead to the granting of credit reflect mastery of the same knowledge, the same critical thinking abilities, and the same academic competencies as the courses for which they substitute? In accepting credit for these tests, what conceptions of the discipline of English—that is, of composition, language, and literature—are we implicitly endorsing? What constitutes acceptable evaluation of the

knowledge and competencies for which we would wish to grant six or even twelve hours of college credit?

The authors believe that acceptance of AP credit should be based on principled answers to such questions. Clearly, WPAs have an important role to inform colleagues about AP programs in arriving at such answers, since the tests frequently provide the basis for exemption or credit for writing courses. If our experience is any guide, however, most departments have not based their acceptance of AP credit on reasoned endorsement of the views of language, literature, and rhetoric that, as we will show, AP exams represent. By sharply criticizing the views implicit in the AP program and by showing how they conflict with the goals of our own program, we do not primarily wish to argue on behalf of our own curricula or theory of "English" but to enable departments to base their AP policies on the same sorts of deliberations about language, literature, and rhetoric that attend other decisions about programs, teaching, and research. Unfortunately, the economic and political forces we describe in this paper are likely to continue to shape the development of AP programs and policy more than departmental debate unless WPAs and other well-positioned educators do more to inform colleagues about AP.

We have found, for instance, that many WPAs are startled to learn that *more than 67%* of the 134,000 students taking the 1991 Language and Composition or Literature and Composition exams received the CB/ETS's rating of "qualified" or better. These students, who have received a grade of 3, 4, or 5 on either exam, are led to expect college credit for their scores. Of the remaining third of test-takers, 29% were "possibly qualified" (with a score of 2), and less than 4% received "No recommendation" (1991 *AP English: Free Response Scoring Guide* 40-1). Moreover, as James Vopat has reported, these grade distributions are determined *in advance* of the actual essay grading. Thus, as Vopat comments, the success rate of 96% remains consistent from year to year and marks "a decided shift of emphasis from the original intent of the AP program and test. What began in the late 1950s as a 'concern for the academic progress of the gifted student' (Jameson 1) has become a reward system that validates mediocrity" (Vopat 58-9). Vopat, following David Owen, goes on to note that colleges are content to validate this arrangement because "it enables them to give the equivalent of scholarships without spending any money" (Owen qtd in Vopat 62). The economics are clear. As long as AP can make good on its claim that "[n]early all the 2,200 colleges that most AP students attend give credit or advanced placement or both" (Student Guide 2), exams should be easy to sell. For \$65, students shoot for 3-6 college credits with two to one odds in their favor; and for \$130, the prize is 6-12 credits.

If these figures are surprising, educators should consider pressures favoring expansion of the AP and other standardized exams. For instance, this year the Coordinating Board for Higher Education in our own state (CBHE) began lobbying for AP courses in all Missouri high schools. Already, the CB claims that 1,200 institutions award a full year's credit to students with "satisfactory grades" on the AP exams, and if competition for student enrollments heats up, we can expect the number to grow. Finally, a host of pressures have been building nationwide that favor long-term expansion of AP testing: mandates for standardized assessment, escalating college costs, and growing student anxiety about incurring debt in an economy where college degrees don't necessarily translate into jobs.

The most obvious objection to accepting these tests as substitutes for coursework is that they emphasize multiple-choice questions far more than most college teachers do in their own classrooms. For many teachers, the nature of these multiple-choice questions, whether challenging or not, is not the issue; they are simply an inappropriate way to assign college credit. Moreover, the multiple-choice section in both exams is weighted more heavily than the essay section. Thus, even though students ordinarily spend two of three hours on the essay section (67% of total exam time), the essays count for only 55% of the score. Forty-five percent of the score is ordinarily based on the one-hour, multiple-choice section (*Advanced Placement Course Description* (May 1993) 9; also *Student Guide* 16, 52). For those who believe that the measure of education should be the ability to deal with complex ideas in speech and writing, this extra weighting of the multiple-choice section delivers a harmful message to students; in the overall scheme of things, writing is not worth the time it takes.

Nevertheless, 55% of each test is essay. Typically (as on the 1991 exams), students write three essays, with an average time of forty minutes for each. On such short essays, however, it is questionable whether the test measures the writing competencies most emphasized in modern composition classes. In our English I and English II composition courses, for example, students write multiple essays in which they learn through practice the importance of rethinking, revising, and editing. These courses stress an epistemic rhetoric in which students learn not only the ways in which writing communicates the known, but also how writing can discover new connections and new knowledge. Students taking these courses receive credit for each class based on our evaluation of an entire semester's work.

The AP students who receive three hours college credit for either the Language and Composition exam or the Literature and Composition exam are typically evaluated on three in-class essays; yet in the past, students receiving at least a 3 on either of these tests received credit for six hours,

three credits each for our required English I and English II classes. In the exam setting, they might be expected to do surface editing but not substantive revision. As many composition scholars have noted, in fact, the kind of writing such an exam calls for is inimical to the emphasis of modern literature and composition pedagogy on the epistemic functions of language and the development of complex ideas. As Bartholomae and Petrosky put it, "highly complicated ideas, which frequently call for highly complex and therefore easily mistaken syntax, are perhaps too risky for this [exam] situation. A writer's thoughtfulness might be valued as much, but probably not more than his ability to control error" (Bartholomae and Petrosky 100-01). Plainly, in our case, the AP essays did not validly represent the kinds of writing emphasized in our curriculum.

So what view of English as a discipline does the AP English program represent? The most salient fact about the AP English programs is that more exams are given in English than any other subject. Although 29 AP exams are now offered in 16 disciplines, more than 37% of the 360,000 students who took the 1991 AP exams took one of the English exams. Clearly, students are understanding undergraduate "English" as one of the easiest subjects to "test out of" in the university. The *Student Guide* acknowledges that "compared with your regular high school English courses, the AP courses will *probably* be more demanding" [emphasis ours], but it also dangles the bait of tuition savings and the 67% success rate before the students' eyes (*Student Guide* 2,5,7).

This understanding, of course, dovetails nicely with the popular understanding that English inculcates "basic skills" preliminary to the intellectual work of the university. This argument was also given by our registrar for accepting AP credit. "Superior" students (his designation) should not be required to take something as basic as freshman composition if they have already mastered the skill. Moreover, this trivialized view of writing is encouraged by the structure of the AP English program and its promotional literature. The *Student Guide*, for instance, tells students that they "might expect" six credits for the Literature and Composition exam, but only three credits for the Language and Composition exam (83). Clearly, this is one reason students are taking the Literature and Composition exam by a margin of more than 3 to 1. This exam structure reproduces the split between rhetoric and literature so often lamented in English departments. Significantly, both exam titles feature the word "composition" in the secondary position, implying that one studies "literature," or (with less profit) "language," but "composition" only as a means to those higher ends. Indeed, the *Student Guide* represents writing as an activity that requires no practice or scrutiny but merely as a passive by-product of literary consumption: "It is probably true that if you sat down and read the complete three-

volume edition of Edward Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* and then wrote a paper about it, you would find that your writing style would reflect Gibbon's great classical style with long periodic and balanced sentences, great series of elegant phrases and clauses, and an elevated, lofty tone. Therefore, read omnivorously and you won't even have to be taught how to write" (10). Such arguments may have seemed credible when universities served an elite who sought a veneer of gentlemanly culture. As most literary and composition scholars agree, though, such romantic aestheticism hardly serves the interests of students struggling to gain a critical foothold amid the myriad textual manipulations with which mass media surround them (Scholes 15).

Moreover, educators who might take comfort in the thought that students receiving AP credit will have assuredly studied and written about some challenging texts may be surprised to learn that *students need not take any AP course at all to receive credit through the exams*. Grades received in AP courses are generally not considered in the granting of credit; indeed, students can expect that little or nothing of the material studied in their AP courses will actually appear on the exam. To be sure, the wide range of sample syllabi that the CB distributes as examples of the AP Literature and Composition curriculum represent much of the challenge and diversity of "English."² These syllabi show the possibility of studying texts as divergent as the *Iliad*, *The Assistant*, or *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, as well as the possibilities of organizing AP courses according to the instructor's choice of formal, thematic, or historical approaches; however, these syllabi can be very deceiving to educators who suppose that these syllabi represent a reliable picture of what "qualified" students have studied. To say the least, the optional nature of the AP course casts some doubt on AP's claim that "the examination may be the heart of the AP Program, but it is not the lifeblood or the spirit" (McQuade 3).

On the Language and Composition exam, multiple-choice questions focus on rhetorical analysis of passages presented within the exam. Students are not responsible for bringing any of the material from their AP classes to the exam; they are expected, however, to be able to apply certain things they may have learned in the class. They choose stylistic preferences, grammatically correct answers, name styles, or answers that demonstrate reading comprehension, interpret figurative language, perform rhetorical analysis. The texts presented for analysis are challenging and interesting.

The presumptions about language and rhetoric implicit in the exam are in many ways fundamentally at odds with those of our English I and II courses. Mainly, the exam tests students' ability to recast sentences or carry out analysis of passages in these terms. For instance, one type of question

expects students to choose, with no discursive context whatsoever, the best "revised" sentence "in terms of conciseness, idiom, logic, and other qualities found in well-written sentences" (1987 *AP English Language and Composition Examination* 5). While such questions may test a student's facility with sentence transformations, they also further what many rhetoricians would consider an arhetorical view of language; sentences are presumed atoms of meaning about which stylistic decisions can be made in isolation from a writer's communicative intentions.³ Similarly, another typical question demands analysis of short passages in terms of "rhetorical devices," "elements" and "modes" that are presumed to be universal ingredients of arrangement or style: "The first and second paragraphs of the passage both present A) elaborate metaphors B) series of parallel constructions C) extended definitions D) concessions to opposing viewpoints E) cause and effect relationships" (1987 *AP English Language and Composition Examination* 8). By sharply focusing on the form of passages in isolation from content, questions like these reduce rhetoric to a repository of preconceived formal patterns that are mechanically analysed by readers and, presumably, applied by writers. In fact, assumptions of questions like these can be placed within contemporary rhetorical traditions. They derive from positivist rhetorics, described by Berlin and others, that see language mainly as a passive medium secondary to the generation of ideas, a mechanical tool for transmission of messages (see, for instance, Berlin, *Rhetoric and Reality* 7-11; *Writing Instruction* 62-76; Fish 474-78; Knoblauch and Brannon 58-61).

On the essay questions, the exam gives credence to the assumption frequently made in such rhetorics: that "the writing process" is a universal set of cognitive operations that does not change significantly even in radically different rhetorical contexts. Learning "the process" of writing simply creates improvement in all circumstances. Of course, the *AP Teacher's Guide* does acknowledge that writing processes vary among writers and even for any single writer. It also notes objections of teachers who "have pointed out that the AP examination is oriented to product" (McQuade 19). In the end, however, differences between timed writing on surprise topics and writing to probe, develop, and revise formulations of a self-generated idea don't amount to much: "Should AP students learn the process of writing? Absolutely . . . Conditions during the examination may not favor the production of a student's best writing, but that is no reason to withhold instruction that might help the student to produce better writing when conditions *are* favorable . . . If the class has established a routine of peer coaching and editing in small groups, students can use all they know about the process of writing to help one another improve the first drafts they write in the classroom" (McQuade 20; see also Gadda et al. 6).

How can the student "use" peer feedback, discussion, brainstorming, revision, and other composing strategies when the timed writing situation doesn't permit it? The CB doesn't say, but it does keep grades high by ensuring that readers "take all these [exam] circumstances into account when judging the merits of each essay" (*The 1991 AP Examination in English Literature and Composition* 24; see also Jensen 18). Because AP exams are scored holistically, revision and editing are not a part of the evaluation. Indeed, the CB advises students (with good reason) to avoid "the need to revise your thinking in mid-paper" (*Student Guide* 13).⁴

A popular format for the essay sections is to provide a reading, then ask the students to write an essay analysing rhetorical devices (ETS, 1991 *English Language and Composition Exam*, question 1) or authorial tone and attitude (question 2). In these types of questions, students are expected to have a ready catalogue of "elements," "components," and "devices" of expression that they can apply to analysis. Other questions might ask students to support an opinion with personal experience or references to some unspecified reading; to choose a piece of writing, film, or television and write an essay about a given topic; or simply to agree or disagree with ideas presented in a selection (usually excerpted). Typically, these questions provide more latitude for students. Still, in this context it is understandable that the "average essays" that the CB lists as samples for the 1991 exam are rough, undeveloped, and only 200-400 words long (1991 *AP English: Free Response* 6-7, 12, 16-17). One of the three "average" samples for the 1991 exam (keep in mind average in this context means "qualified") is only a paragraph long.

The assumptions about writing underlying such questions are at odds with our writing program's curriculum. In our English I and II courses, emphasis is not on formal analysis of completed passages, mechanical manipulation of isolated sentences, or timed writing but on the student's struggle to discover and articulate meaning. We assume that writing processes that make the search for meaning possible are not necessarily available on demand and are not always even available to conscious control. To resist premature closure of thought and to cultivate a tolerance for generative ambiguity and uncertainty, we often deliberately subvert student attempts to circumvent thought through imposition of formulas, the "elements," "modes," and "devices" tested by the exam.⁵ Of course, we expect students to work toward formal coherence in their writing, and we expect them to master a variety of conventions of discourse; however, the fullest sense of form that we wish students to master—that is, form as an organic outgrowth of a real communicative intention in a real rhetorical situation—derives more from epistemic rhetorics described by Berlin ("*Rhetoric and Ideology*" 488-493) than from positivist rhetorics assumed by the exam.

Questions used on the Literature and Composition exam, too, can readily be placed in contemporary debates about literary theory. The types of questions are, in fact, very similar to the ones described above (excluding the "revisions" of atomic sentences). More emphasis is placed on "close reading" of selected passages. Generally, a mechanical, arhetorical view of language prevails, typically associated in literary contexts with long-outmoded "scientific" versions of New Criticism. As on the Language and Composition Exam, meaning is presumed to exist in the "text itself," not in terms of the text's relationship with its contexts of production or reception. For instance, the *Teacher's Guide* acknowledges that "[t]he territory occupied by facts seems to be shrinking in current critical theory as theorists recognize the power, even the right, of each reader to determine the meaning of a text [However], the AP Examination assumes the distinction between objective and subjective. . . . the unstable boundary between objective and subjective is conceded in the direction to choose the 'best' answer to the multiple choice questions, not the 'right' answer" (McQuade 11), even though only the right answer receives credit. Clearly, the very format of the exam demands that meaning must be located in snippets of texts and that experts are authorized to determine without argument the "best" meanings. The format demands that meaning have a reality *in the text as pure object*. Hence, the *Teacher's Guide* emphasizes teaching "close reading" and annotating texts to identify formal devices: "Something has to *be* there in order to circle it [in annotation]; some pattern has to be *seen* before one can draw a series of boxes around words or phrases and connect them with arrows" (McQuade 12).

No doubt, many teachers of writing and literature would ascribe to the theories we have been criticizing. In programs where such a theory holds programmatic sway, using this exam to grant credit might be appropriate; however, we suspect that in most programs, decisions to accept AP credit are not consciously intended to endorse such an approach to literary texts. Yet universities have widely ceded the right to construct such a vision of English to the CB/ETS.

Putting aside for a moment these objections what would the appropriate credit be for this exam in our program, again, assuming that the decision had been made to grant credit at all. Our English I class is an introduction to critical inquiry, to the symbolic processes through which men and women probe the nature and relationship of humanity and its world. We have no freshman or sophomore class in stylistics, reading comprehension, or grammar. Granted that the description of the recommended readings in the AP brochure is impressive—Addison, Eiseley, Morrison, Carlyle, Mencken, et al. On the other hand, knowledge of and familiarity with these writers don't find their way into the test; therefore,

humanities credit for a class on the expository essay would be inappropriate. Our English II class focuses on cultural studies. This course requires extended documented essays from students, thus making it outside the range of the AP exam. Consequently, the exam does not measure knowledge and experience equivalent to that offered in our courses.

The primary issue is one which, from the size of the list of universities that accept AP credit, most universities are ignoring. Simply stated, should America's colleges and universities grant college credit through tests given by agencies outside education? Should we instead waive lower level requirements while maintaining the same number of hours for graduation?

We welcome the opportunity to make advanced courses that support our curriculum available to high school students for credit. Our university has accepted the premise stated in the *AP Teacher's Guide*: "that college-level material can be taught successfully to able and well-prepared secondary school students" (McQuade 1). Indeed, our college runs an extensive high school/college credit collaborative program. In this program, however, the university takes its own class to the high school campus. We collaborate with able high school teachers and invite them to discussions that affect the evolution of our curriculum. As part of the AP program, the CB sends "practical descriptions of college-level courses" to the schools. Who should be offering such practical descriptions?

As we have argued, the AP exam's assumptions about rhetoric, language, and literature are contrary to our program's assumptions; however, programs founded on different assumptions may discover a compromise in the name under the initials. AP stands for "Advanced Placement," not Credit by Examination. In this sense the name is clever because it implies that the exam is a placement exam, not an exam that measures work completed or knowledge acquired. Obviously it is to the CB/ETS's financial benefit to encourage universities to offer credit; many fewer students would pay to take the exam if it were only a placement exam.

Finally, our department resisted the registrar's request that the department grant twelve credits for the two AP exams. Most of the composition faculty resisted granting composition credit for either test, but not everyone in the department agreed. In the end, we compromised; we raised the score necessary to receive credit from 3 to 4. Students who scored 4 or better on the Language and Composition exam would receive 3 credits for our English I composition course, and students who scored 4 or better on the Literature and Composition exam would receive 3 general humanities credits plus credit for a one-credit course called "Writing About Literature." The registrar responded to these changes with dire warnings about the potential damage that raising the acceptable AP score from 3 would have on potential scholarship students from high schools with active

AP programs. He didn't want the university to lose potential scholarship students because they might not receive credit for their AP work. Such is the power of the College Board and Educational Testing Service.

It is not necessary to accept our curriculum or our vision of English to be disturbed by the growing power of the CB/ETS. Whatever philosophical commitments we as WPAs and teachers hold, we neither control the content of AP courses nor supervise the teachers. If we grant credit for these tests, it is our responsibility to *choose* to do so and to inform our colleagues about the tests accordingly. We must reconcile our beliefs about what our programs are *for* with what is tested by the CB/ETS. We must know what's on the tests. Judging by our own experience, it is a responsibility we have been too often failing.

Notes

1. We often refer to the College Board and ETS together by the acronym CB/ETS because it is often difficult to distinguish where power and responsibility resides between the two organizations. Relationships between the two organizations are thoroughly interdependent, although somewhat obscure. The College Board was one of the founders of ETS in 1947. Today, ETS is quick to emphasize its continued servitude and accountability to the College Board, which it describes as a "non-profit membership organization" of "more than 2,700 colleges, schools, school systems, and education associations" (*Information for Coordinators* 3). A number of critical studies in the last fifteen years, however, have documented how ETS has, since 1947, "dwarfed its parent" both in revenues and power (Owen 6). Nairn quotes an anonymous interview with a College Board professional that the CB/ETS relationship is "like the Greek myth of the parent consumed by the child" (310). According to Owen, the "confidential contract" between ETS and the Board gives ETS "'authority and primary responsibility' not only for 'design, prototype development, and operation of programs and services' but also for 'the monitoring of ETS performance in the field'" (Owen 6). In other words, ETS writes, administers, and retains legal ownership of the tests, as well as supervises its own fulfillment of contractual obligations with the Board. Owen reports that the Board could, if it gave ETS a contractually specified three and a half years notice, "take its business elsewhere," but he quotes a former Board president that this possibility is "so hypothetical and improbable that it's not worth discussing" (6). These contractual arrangements became public only after ETS failed to win a protective order covering the court record of a lawsuit (*Denburg vs. ETS*, Superior Court of New Jersey), which forms, according to Owen, "a treasure trove of information about ETS that is available nowhere else" (296).

In addition, the two organizations are economically interdependent to an extraordinary degree; for instance, almost half of ETS's \$133 million in revenues in fiscal 1983 were from College Board programs (Owen 7). In 1980, Nairn reported the Board received 90% of its income from ETS programs and less than 1% from dues from member institutions (310). For further accounts of the historical interdependence of the CB and ETS, see Crouse and Trusheim 25-39, Nairn 306-31,

Owen 6-17, Vopat 52-54, 62-64. For the CB's account of its role in founding ETS and the early inter-organizational relationship, see Fuess 176-207.

2. Obviously, the issue of "diversity" of works represented in the AP exam and curriculum would receive lively debate in many English departments. While writers like Tillie Olsen, Zora Neal Hurston, and Toni Morrison have found their way into the AP canon, some secondary teachers report strong reservations about teaching novels not well known or established in the canon, since the Literature and Composition exam's open question requires students to cite only works "of acknowledged literary merit." For examples, see McGee, and Spender.

3. For a full critique of this presumption, see Dillon, *Constructing Texts* 6-20. Dillon refutes what he calls, following James Moffett, the "particle view of language." In Dillon's terms, this view mistakenly supposes that reading proceeds from "bottom to top," that is, from words to sentences to paragraphs to discourses: "Normally, the discourse context gives top-down guidance in the perception of sentences: it enables readers to project expectations about where the sentence is going and to look for words and phrases that refer to things under discussion and are likely to be coming next. This point is widely recognized today, though its consequences have not been fully digested." Using multiple examples, Dillon shows that stylistic improvements of decontextualized snippets of discourse often turn out not to be improvements at all when a "motivating context" for the original construction is provided (8). Such motivating contexts can easily be constructed for the AP test sentences that complicate the test-makers' choice of a "best" (i.e., stylistically superior) sentence.

4. David Foster sums up an abundance of research (Flower, Sommers, Faigley, and Witte) demonstrating that "the major difference between skilled and unskilled writers is the latter's tendency to limit revision to changing words and sentences and editing mechanical errors" (6-7). Foster shows in detail how the AP essay questions "subvert the importance of [the revision] process" and how the multiple-choice sentence-revising questions on the Language and Composition exam "encourage exactly that kind of revising behavior identified with inexperienced freshman writers" (10-11).

5. In addition to the formulaic view of writing, several researchers have observed a disturbing degree of self-closure towards writing and learning among former AP students. In a small-sample developmental study of former AP students, for instance, Karen Spear and Gretchen Flesher report that AP students they studied who did not take freshman writing "manifest a sense of closure toward writing—that what is to be known about writing is limited to mastery of skills, and they have mastered them." Spear and Flesher's interviews with these students lead them to conclude that the attitudes and writing practices they learned in AP were harmful to their development. "[These students] make . . . intellectual gains only by overcoming much of what they have learned, at least about writing, in AP. All needed to overcome the message of the AP course that they were finished developing as writers—a message that the decisiveness of the AP exam and subsequent waivers for college writing requirements unfortunately reinforce" (Spear and Flesher 40, 47; for a similar account of self-closure among AP students in first-year composition, see Henderson).

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Curriculum-Based Peer Tutoring Programs: A Survey

Margot Soven

"... in colleges or universities today, peer tutors as a group, acting collaboratively, are potentially among the most powerful agents for educational change, because peer tutors learn the most important tool for effecting change, the art of translation—the art of conversation at the boundaries between communities."

Kenneth Bruffee

To celebrate the tenth anniversary of its Writing Fellows Program, the first curriculum-based peer tutoring program to achieve national recognition, Brown University held a national peer tutoring conference in April 1993. In his keynote address, "Lost in Translation: Peer Tutors, Faculty Members, and the Art of Boundary Conversation," Kenneth Bruffee focused on the relationship between peer tutors and faculty. Although Bruffee did not intend to compare curriculum-based peer tutoring programs to writing center-based peer tutoring programs, in fact, by emphasizing the role that peer tutors play in their conversations with faculty, not just with students, Bruffee was doing just that. The potential of curriculum-based peer tutoring programs to create contexts for conversation between faculty and peer tutors, in addition to providing tutoring services to students, may help to explain increasing interest in them.

The interactive quality characteristic of curriculum-based peer tutoring programs (often called Writing Fellows or Writing Associates programs, hereafter abbreviated as WF programs) makes them one of the most promising activities in Writing Across the Curriculum. Proponents of these programs believe that because peer tutors are assigned to individual classes, they enter into conversations with students and faculty in which multiple voices negotiate the crossings between the rhetoric of the discipline, the students' "dialect," and the language of the peer tutoring community. If one of the basic tenets of Writing Across the Curriculum is to put rhetoric back in its rightful place at the center of the curriculum, then WF programs may have a major role to play. Communication becomes inseparable from content when peer tutors are in the mainstream of the curriculum, rather than on its periphery, as they are often perceived to be when housed in a writing center.

The purpose of this essay is twofold: to describe the varieties of WF programs and to provide some help for those who want to start one. To provide up-to-date information on these programs, I administered a survey, the results of which form the basis of this report. In addition, I offer several observations based on my experience as a director of a six-year-old Writing Fellows Program.

Philosophically, many WF programs, such as the one at La Salle University, are the first descendants of the Brown University Writing Fellows Program. Because Tori Haring Smith, the founder of the Brown Program, so effectively articulated the principles on which it is based and developed a structure to carry them out, Brown became the model for other similar programs, although this was not the first program to assign undergraduate writing tutors to courses (e.g., The Illinois State and San Diego State University programs preceded Brown's). Most programs based on the Brown model agree that all students can benefit from draft review by peer tutors and that peer tutors should avoid comments on the accuracy of content in an essay. Admittedly, the line between content and expression is often hard to draw, but WFs try to comment on students' work as a reader would, noting areas of confusion and weakness in organization, coherence or style, and then suggesting ways to improve expression. Students who receive assistance may accept or reject the WF's suggestions, usually without penalty from the instructor.

Structurally, the programs surveyed exhibit a certain amount of variation, although there is surprising uniformity in administrative practices. Brown, with 80 tutors, is probably the most diverse in terms of the services it provides. Most of the programs responding are considerably smaller than Brown's (except for Swarthmore with 88 tutors), regardless of the size of the institution that sponsors the program. Several realities, such as budgetary constraints, seem to explain the relatively small size of most programs.

The Survey

The survey was mailed to ninety-five schools that had either requested information from Brown University or had participated in workshops on WF programs held at the Conference on College Composition and Communication meetings in 1988 and 1990. If there are other such programs, not on these lists, then they did not receive the survey. The reports received reveal similarities in all WF programs and some significant differences as well.

Of the twenty-six surveys returned, eighteen indicate that their institutions have some version of curriculum-based tutoring, although in

some cases (e.g., Lawrence University) peer tutors are assigned to both the Writing Center and to individual courses. Two-thirds of the institutions that responded are four-year liberal arts colleges; the others are large state universities (see Appendix for a complete list of the programs).

The survey asked questions in four areas: development and administration of the program, selection and training of peer tutors, faculty participation, and operation of the program (see Appendix for a sample survey). To verify the accuracy of the information, this article was sent to all of the institutions described. Ambiguities were resolved during phone conversations.

Who These Programs Serve

The largest number of WF programs included in the survey make tutors available to courses in all departments (e.g., Brigham Young University, Brown University, Swarthmore College, La Salle University, Western Washington University, University of Michigan, Wesleyan University), although often with priorities. The Swarthmore program is linked in part to their Primary Distribution courses offered in all disciplines. Western Washington University favors courses designated as writing proficiency courses. La Salle gives priority to Freshman Year Experience courses in the core curriculum designed for at-risk students. Brown and Swarthmore encourage requests for tutors from foreign language departments, and at Brown, Rhetoric Fellows, who receive special training, assist courses involving oral presentations. Rhoda Flaxman, director of the Brown program, believes that Brown is still the only program that includes this kind of training.

Freshmen writing programs and developmental reading and writing programs comprise the next largest constituencies using WFs. At Lawrence University (Wisconsin), peer tutors are assigned to each section of Freshman Studies, a two-term "great works" course required of all freshmen and taught by faculty from all disciplines. Geoff Gajewski, director of the Writing Lab, says that because a writing course is not required at Lawrence, the feeling is that the freshmen studies course must prepare freshmen for writing demands that they will face in other studies. Pomona College (Claremont, California) is developing a similar program. At Illinois State University, students who may be at risk in introductory composition are placed in tutorial sections of the course; at California State University, Northridge, one group of WFs is dedicated to the developmental reading and writing program. Assistance may be requested by instructors who teach other courses.

Seattle University assigns all WFs to an activity situated within a course. The fellows work with students who are completing a senior project developed by the School of Engineering. Each project team, consisting of four or five students, meets with the tutor to produce a proposal, progress reports, and a final report. The Seattle program illustrates a trend toward assigning peer tutors to specific projects and populations, which sometimes grows out of a more broadly based program, like the one at Brown. For example, at La Salle several WFs are assigned to the senior writing project in Biology. At some institutions, like Seattle, targeted curriculum-based peer tutoring develops from the Writing Center.

The Budget

Most programs are funded by the central administration or from a writing center budget. Rhoda Flaxman (Brown) comments that the independence and autonomy of these programs is enhanced when they are not funded by the English Department. At California State University, Northridge, the program is funded by state funds earmarked for developmental English and Mathematics programs. At Brigham Young, the General Education/Honors Department controls the budget. Some programs began with limited funding of a pilot project, a strategy that worked at La Salle. The budget gradually increased as the program grew from ten to twenty-five peer tutors over a three-year period. A more permanent commitment by the institution was sought after the pilot project was evaluated.

Tutors receive monetary compensation (in some cases in addition to course credit) in all of the programs that responded to the survey, except at Beaver College. Salaries vary. In programs where students receive an hourly wage, salaries range from \$4.65 to \$7.00. The number of hours per week they work varies from 6-10 hours, depending on the school. At schools where students are paid by the semester, the range is from \$250 to \$500. At La Salle, students receive \$300 for approximately sixty hours of service per semester. At Arkansas College, students are paid from work-study funds.

All but one of the directors who responded to the survey as full-time faculty receive a one-course reduction to administer the program. Part-time instructors receive the equivalent compensation for one course. The director is typically responsible for all aspects of the program: recruiting students and faculty, selecting, training, and supervising tutors, and evaluating the program. At several schools, the program is coordinated by the writing or learning center director or staff (e.g., Seattle, Lawrence, Illinois State). The program at the University of Michigan is administered

by a three-person rotating faculty committee that receives no additional compensation.

Most institutions seem confident about renewed funding, except for several state-related schools that are experiencing general budget cuts. Increasing recognition of the value of peer tutoring may at least partially explain the approval of curriculum-based peer tutoring budgets.

Starting a WF Program : Faculty Support

[Our program grew] out of discussion concerning a writing component for a new variety of courses to meet distribution requirements, and in response to a general college concern for the quality of student writing, I was asked to look into the Brown Writing Fellows Program The major impetus for the program came from the Provost's office and the all-college committees charged with designing and proposing new or revised curricular ventures. (Tom Blackburn, Swarthmore College)

At the initiative of an English Composition Board Member, the Dean's office appointed a committee on peer tutoring (Susan Marie Harrington, University of Michigan)

The director of writing in the sixties initiated an Undergraduate Teaching Assistant Program for Writing Classes. (Janice Neulieb, Illinois State University)

These responses to the question, "How did your program get started?" reflect various points of origin. Regardless of how and why the program got started, however, directors of WF programs agree that they cannot exist without a reasonably strong faculty mandate. Barbara Sylvester (Western Washington University) says, "Our program works because the interdisciplinary committee overseeing the program works." Faculty from the disciplines feel a sense of ownership for the program at Washington State because they help to run it.

WF programs seem to function best when faculty work collaboratively with the peer tutors assigned to their classes, and most directors suggest that considerable time be set aside for this purpose. Faculty understanding and cooperation are essential. "An extraordinary amount of collaboration among faculty and student tutors makes this program work so well; a great deal of good will is involved," says Patricia Murray (California State, Northridge).

It is recommended that a group of faculty be involved at the program's inception. Ideally, they should be among those faculty who observe a need on campus for additional attention to writing. At La Salle, the program proposal was jointly authored by a committee of faculty in the School of Arts and Science and the Business School who believed that a WF program would strengthen our Writing-Across-the-Curriculum program. Recruiting our first group of sponsors was made easier by their support. An interdisciplinary committee appointed by the dean still serves in an advisory capacity to the director.

Selecting Peer Tutors

Kim Toomey did a really excellent job with my students. I am grateful to her. Thanks. (Preston Feden, Education, La Salle)

I spoke to you about keeping Karen for a whole year with my Honors Course. Please say this is O.K. (Joseph Volpe, Philosophy, La Salle)

Rob has told me he will probably work with someone in Communications next semester. I understand his reasons completely and encourage him to do so, but I am very jealous of this person! He is so conscientious to interact with, helpful to me, and gives thoughtful suggestions to the students. They respect his comments. He did a superb job! (Nancy Jones, Chemistry, La Salle)

Comments like these are not unique to La Salle's WF program. Program directors who responded to the survey report almost unanimous faculty satisfaction with the peer tutors' performance. The weak tutor seems more the exception than the rule. Admittedly, such agreement is surprising. One possible explanation is that peer tutoring programs are somewhat self-selective. As peer tutors at La Salle have assured me, the stipend is insufficient motivation to participate in a program that is time-consuming, somewhat risky ("Will my fellow students hate me after this?"), and usually requires enrolling in a rigorous training course (see below), often outside the peer tutor's major field of study. An interest in writing, a concern for one's fellow students, and the intellectual challenge bring students to our doors.

Mere interest is not sufficient, however, to gain acceptance into most WF programs. Most institutions that responded to the survey require applicants to submit writing samples and perform well in an interview with

supervising faculty. In addition, Swarthmore asks students to evaluate a sample paper, and Brown requires applicants "to teach us something" and describe their own writing process. Recommendation by a faculty member is necessary at other schools (Pomona, California State at Northridge). Seattle involves extensive role playing as part of the selection process. Illinois State requires a B+ average and a strong performance in writing courses, although students need not be English majors. Students at Wesleyan must submit a transcript. At some small colleges (e.g., Beaver), the process is more informal because faculty are familiar with students' work from courses they teach.

WF programs seem divided on the subject of class status as a criterion, although at most schools students must be sophomores to begin tutoring. At La Salle, students can apply as sophomores but cannot enter the program until they are juniors. In our experience, juniors and seniors seem to have less difficulty with interpersonal issues, and our applicant pool is sufficiently large to enable us to limit the program to juniors and seniors.

Although most schools report that the majority of tutors are English majors (University of Michigan and others), students from all departments are urged to apply. Science majors apply in surprisingly large numbers (e. g., Lawrence University, University of Southwestern Louisiana). La Salle makes a special effort to recruit business majors, who have been among our best tutors but who often have less confidence in their writing ability than other students.

Program directors agree that a selection procedure must be practical to be effective. The logistics of collecting writing samples, reviewing them, and arranging interviews are formidable. A process that becomes too complex may discourage potential applicants and frazzle the director. At La Salle, some supportive and willing colleagues help select the tutors by reading application submissions. Their assistance reduces questions about objectivity and gives the director needed support during a process that often takes several weeks.

Training and Supervising Tutors

Establishment of a mechanism for training tutors is integral to the process of developing a curriculum-based peer tutoring program. Most schools require tutors to enroll in a three-credit course that combines theory and practice. The course requirement emphasizes the seriousness of the program and also rewards students in training with course credit. Although peer tutors sometimes question the necessity of a course, as opposed to a brief workshop, to prepare them for peer tutoring, most directors seem convinced that a course is a good idea.

There is surprising agreement among program directors on what tutors need to know: how to write effective comments on student papers and conduct successful conferences, the specific demands of academic writing, and the reasons many students have difficulty meeting those requirements. On the theoretical side, courses emphasize the literature on process approaches to writing, collaborative learning, the development of writing ability on the college level, and the nature of academic writing in different disciplines. Some also include material on gender issues as they relate to writing, black dialect, theories of communication and textuality, and English as a second language. Most directors agree that a problem surfaces in these courses when teachers who are overly enthusiastic about theory allot insufficient time for practicing tutoring strategies, such as commenting on sample papers and role-playing conferences. (Note: Syllabi for sample courses can be requested from the schools marked by an asterisk in the Appendix.)

Once WFs complete the course and receive tutoring assignments, the method of supervising them varies by school. The University of Michigan has the most extensive training program, requiring WFs to enroll in a second course that meets one hour a week. At some schools (e.g., Illinois State University, California State at Northridge, Wesleyan), students attend weekly meetings during subsequent semesters. WFs at La Salle meet briefly with the coordinator when they receive a set of drafts. At Brown, head fellows help with monitoring new tutors. Fellows in most programs also meet periodically during the semester with their sponsoring instructors.

Program directors seem convinced that peer tutoring cannot be "taught" quickly. It takes time to synthesize theory and method, practice the recommended strategies, and receive feedback from classmates and the instructor. At some schools, (e.g., Brown and La Salle, where the course is taken simultaneously with a WF's first placement), the course also becomes a forum for discussing the first tutoring experiences. At those institutions where training is currently limited to a brief orientation or workshop, directors feel that more extensive training is necessary.

Evaluating the Program

Writing program evaluation is never easy, and WF program evaluation is no exception. The survey reveals that WF programs include extensive evaluation procedures, perhaps because accountability is crucial when peer tutors are involved. All programs that responded to the survey include an evaluation component, usually consisting of surveys completed

by tutees, faculty sponsors, and the fellows themselves. At La Salle, several fellows with lighter tutoring assignments help tabulate survey results each semester. (Sample survey forms can be requested from the schools listed in the Appendix.)

Evaluation serves several purposes. Most important, it provides immediate feedback to tutors and the coordinator, useful for improving the program and also for boosting the tutor's sometimes wavering confidence. ("Most of the kids in my class really felt I helped them! Wow.") Evidence from the schools surveyed indicates that all three constituencies—tutees, fellows, and faculty—seem incredibly pleased with existing programs. Some directors report a surge of strengthened administrative support once the first reports on the program are in. When budget time rolls around again, no argument may be more compelling than data gathered during the evaluation process. These comments represent the general positive reaction to WF programs:

Tremendous improvement in final products. (John Bean, Seattle University)

Increased attention to student needs and problems. (Patricia Murray, California State at Northridge)

Better writing. It definitely improved their papers. However, more importantly I think it had a long lasting positive effect. I believe these students are now more conscientious about what they write. Also, I think it is important for students to get used to constructive criticism. (Robert Vogel, Education Dept., La Salle University)

Improved performance of at risk writers. GPAs in these classes [tutorial sections of the freshman composition course] equal those in regular classes, though students placed in them have lower essay and ACT scores. (Janice Neulieb, Illinois State University)

Directors conclude that most students served by these programs believe their papers improve and, more importantly, report an increased understanding of the writing process. The fellows experience the satisfaction that comes from helping their peers and collaborating with instructors. They say that participation in the WF program enhances their own writing and interpersonal skills. By becoming translators of the conventions of academic writing, they become more aware of the traditions of thinking and expression in different disciplines that form their foundation. John Bean (Seattle University) reports that tutors who work with the engineering project experience increased job opportunities in technical writing.

Many faculty who work with WFs note changes in their assignments as a result of discussions with the peer tutor. Focus groups with WFs involved in specific projects at La Salle have provided faculty with information about student attitudes toward assignments and their methods of accomplishing the assignment. As a result, we have modified several major department writing projects.

Problems and "Solutions"

The surveys indicate that the administrator of a curriculum-based peer tutoring program must be tolerant of the "less-than-perfect." Despite her best efforts to guide both faculty and tutors, she discovers that many components in these programs are difficult to control. For example, "getting students to commit the necessary time to work with tutors" (Geoff Gajewski, Lawrence University) is a persistent frustration. Both fellows and directors complain that some students submit carelessly written drafts. Late papers and missed conferences cause irritation. The "difficulty of inspiring writers to make the effort required by real revision rather than real but minor improvements" is noted by Tom Blackburn (Swarthmore).

"Logistics" was identified as a key problem by several directors. ("My draft is late; how can I find my Fellow? I lost my appointment time.") A more serious problem, tutor credibility, is sometimes cited as an obstacle to the program's effectiveness, especially in technical courses (Seattle) or in upper-division courses (La Salle).

According to the surveys, although never completely eradicable, students being students, these problems occur less frequently in classes where faculty voice strong support for the program and adhere conscientiously to the program guidelines. They must clearly indicate that the WF program is integral to the course, not a penalty for having unknowingly enrolled in a Writing Fellows' assisted course. Directors agree that when faculty underscore the importance of the writing process as a mode of learning and communicating about the course material and the value of having a non-expert read assignments, students seem more apt to adopt behaviors that help them benefit from the program. When procedures for submitting papers and signing up for conferences are clearly spelled out, students are less likely to be confused.

Other problems, such as poor assignments, faculty who want the fellow to become an editor, and faculty (often in the English Department) who are too critical of the fellow's performance, can also undermine the program. At La Salle, we have found that an informal conversation with the offending faculty member, to which the fellow may be invited, can set matters straight.

Occasionally, but very rarely, a WF may turn in a disappointing performance or simply decide midway through the semester that he wishes to leave the program. At La Salle, since all fellows are not given assignments each semester, we are usually able to substitute another peer tutor in his place. This possibility should be made clear to faculty when they agree to sponsor a fellow.

Recruiting faculty and peer tutors was cited as time consuming and at times frustrating (e.g., University of Michigan, Beaver College). Directors agree that there is no substitute for continuous publicity and personal meetings with both interested students and faculty. Also, appropriate placement of the peer tutors is a prerequisite for creating a positive campus-wide attitude towards the program.

The WF Program Director

Directing a curriculum-based peer tutoring program is like nothing else I have ever done, although as co-director of La Salle's composition program and coordinator of the Writing-Across-the-Curriculum program I have twelve years of experience as a WPA. Perhaps the intense involvement with the peer tutors makes the difference. My own diplomatic skills have been considerably honed by serving as the meeting point between the fellows, their faculty sponsors, the committee that oversees the program, and school administrators.

I endorse Tom Blackburn's (Swarthmore) and Patricia Murray's (California State, Northridge) recommended qualities for WF program directors, although at times it is difficult to live up to them:

I would urge that the leadership of the program be vested in someone who believes in and can articulate the goals of the program, who understands the particular institution and its internal politics, and who has or is given a position not easily marginalized. (Tom Blackburn)

Hire knowledgeable, hard-working, self-sacrificing enthusiastic people to run it [the program]. (Patricia Murray)

Final Observations

"All you need are a few willing students, someone to train them and administer the program, and most important, the cooperation of an administrator who will provide the funding." This statement by Tori

Haring-Smith echoes the optimism and confidence in students and the concept of curriculum-based peer tutoring that inspired many of us to attempt our own versions of the Brown program. The results of this survey suggest that the process of developing such programs may be more demanding than Tori Haring-Smith's statement implies; however, this survey also indicates that institutions which have developed WF programs have not been disappointed. Additional research is needed for a more accurate assessment of the effects of WF programs, but for now, faculty and student reports suggest that these programs seem to strengthen writing instruction and enhance performance. By creating contexts for "conversation at the boundaries between communities," they also foster a sense of collegiality between students and faculty, often cited as a primary but elusive goal on many campuses. They bring people together to pursue common objectives: good writing, enhanced understanding of the writing process, and commitment to the power of peer collaboration.

Appendix 1

This essay is based on survey information and materials gathered with grant support from La Salle University. Contact these schools for additional information about their programs.

Schools responding to the survey that have Writing Center Peer Tutoring Programs are not listed. I thank their WPAs for their responses. See Muriel Harris' chapter, "The Writing Center and Tutoring in WAC Programs" in *Writing Across the Curriculum: A Guide to Developing Programs*, eds. Susan McLeod and Margot Soven (Sage Publications, 1992) for a comprehensive discussion of these programs.

*John C. Bean, English, Seattle University, Broadway and Madison, Seattle, WA 98122, (206)296-5421.

*Thomas H. Blackburn, English, Swarthmore College, 500 College Ave., Swarthmore, PA 19081-1397, (215) 328-8151.

*Jo Ann Bomze, English, Beaver College, Glenside, PA 19038, (215) 592-2105.

*Rhoda Flaxman, Rose Writing Fellows Program, Brown University, Box 1962, Providence, RI 02912, (401) 863-1404.

Geoff Gajewski, Director of Writing Lab, Lawrence University,
Appleton, WI 54912, (414) 832-6797.

*Ann Green, Wesleyan University, Middletown, CT 06459, (203) 347-
9411/ext. 2448.

*Susan Marie Harrington, English Composition Board, University of
Michigan, 1025 Aneglee Hall, Ann Arbor, MI 48109-1003, (313) 763-4912.

Ann Johns, Academic Skills Center, San Diego State University, San
Diego, CA 92187, (619) 594-6331.

James McDonald, English, University of Southwestern Louisiana,
Lafayette, LA 70504-4691, (318) 231-5487.

*Patricia Murray, English, California State University, Northridge,
1811 Nordhoff, Northridge, CA 91330, (818) 885-3410.

*Janice Neuleib, English, Illinois State University, Normal, IL 61761,
(309) 438-7858.

Deidre Paulsen, Writing Fellows Program, Brigham Young Univer-
sity, Provo, UT 84602, (801)378-7844.

Beverly Wilson Palmer, Writing Program, Pomona College, Claremont,
CA 91711, (714) 621-8000, ext. 3443.

*Margot Soven, English, La Salle University, Philadelphia, PA 19141,
(215) 951-1148/1145.

*Barbara Sylvester, English, Western Washington State University,
Bellingham, WA 98225, (206) 676-0610.

*Karen Vaught-Alexander, English, University of Portland, 5000 N.
Willamette Blvd., Portland, OR 97203-5798.

Virginia Wray, Arkansas College, Batesville, AR 72501, (501) 698-
4347.

Appendix 2

A SURVEY: CURRICULUM-BASED PEER TUTORING PROGRAMS

Please return to: Margot Soven
La Salle University
Phila. Pa. 19141
(215) 951-1148/664-0491

This survey is designed to gather information about curriculum-
based peer tutoring programs, often called Writing Fellows or Writing
Associates Programs, in which peer tutors are assigned to individual
classes to help students with their writing.

Name _____
School Address _____

Phone _____

I. Development and Administration of the Program

1. How long has your program been in existence?
2. How did your program get started?
3. Who does your program serve? Is your program related to a writing across the curriculum program? Please explain.
4. Do tutors receive a stipend? If so, how much do they receive per semester?
5. How is your program funded? (external funding, English Dept., Central Administration, etc.)
6. How is your program administered? Who controls the budget? Who does the training? Does the coordinator receive compensation?

7. How do you evaluate your program?

II. Selection and Training of Peer Tutors

8. How many tutors are in the program? _____
9. Are most peer tutors English majors? If not, please explain.
10. Which of the following are required for application to the program?
- ___ a) attaining (frosh, soph, junior) status to apply?
 - ___ b) submission of writing samples
 - ___ c) an interview with faculty
 - ___ d) an interview with students
 - ___ e) nomination by a faculty member
 - ___ f) other
11. What kind of training do you provide for tutors? (a course, workshop, etc.)
12. Which topics are emphasized during training?
13. How are tutors supervised after the training program? (e.g., How often are they required to meet with the supervisor?)

III. Faculty Participation

14. _____ What percentage of the faculty participate in the program?
15. What are the requirements for participation?
- ___ specific kinds of assignments
 - ___ meet periodically with the tutor
 - ___ other?

IV. How Does the Program Work ?

16. _____ How many hours does the peer tutor work during the semester?
17. _____ How many students does the peer tutor assist during a semester?

18. Does the program emphasize the value of written comments on the students' papers or conferencing (or both)?

19. What are the major benefits of the program?

20. What are the major problems associated with the program?

21. Is there a unique feature of your program that these questions have not brought out? If so, please describe.

22. What kinds of advice would you give faculty and administrators who are interested in developing curriculum-based peer tutoring programs?

23. In order for this survey to be complete, it would be useful to have the following information about your institution.

- a) _____ Number of students
- b) _____ Number of faculty

24. Please circle the description that best fits your institution:

- a) Community College
- b) Two-year College
- c) MA granting University
- d) PhD granting University
- e) Other (please describe)

25. Please circle whether your institution is:

- a) Public
- b) Private

26. Please indicate the writing requirement at your institution:

- ___ a) one semester of freshman composition
- ___ b) two semesters of freshman composition
- ___ c) an upper-division writing course
- ___ d) a writing emphasis course requirement
- ___ e) other. Please explain.

Thank you for your time.
Margot Soven

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ComPost: A Writing Program Newsletter and Its Rationale

Dennis R. Hall

Writing program administration is inexorably shifting from pursuit of coherence to pursuit of consensus. The maturing of writing as a research-based academic discipline, the diffusion throughout academe of graduates of programs in composition and rhetoric, and the expanding disciplinary consciousness among teachers of writing have yielded this change. The diversity of people, theory, and pedagogy resulting from the solid study, research, and experience of practitioners must be recognized and acted on by the community of individuals who constitute the program.

In the 1990s, this common effort is one of developing writing program consensus—a continually evolving agreement, sufficiently flexible to meet the needs of students, teachers, and the discipline, yet sufficiently cohesive, stable, and orderly to meet the demands of complex and often large organizations. Policies and practices and the means to implement them now derive from the people most intimately involved in the work, propelled by program consensus rather than administrative directive.

Participation and communication, it perhaps should go without saying, are processes central to developing and sustaining writing program consensus. However understandably, we have to date attended more fully to strategies that promote participation rather than to those that improve communication. Composition programs generally are increasingly open to the participation of instructors, support staff, and students, often despite rigid and hierarchical institutional contexts in which they may operate. At the University of Louisville, for but one among many examples, we have made a concerted effort to capitalize on the intimate link between graduate study in composition and rhetoric and the writing program. We are seriously engaging as many people as possible, in a wide variety of ways, in a host of essential functions: defining course goals and objectives, developing curricula and selecting texts, conducting basic and program research, revising course guidelines and model syllabi, determining the agendas, as well as designing and delivering staff development workshops, visiting one another's classes, developing assessment norms and practices, and formulating and executing administrative policy.

Although strategies for expanding participation in program development are a much discussed concern among writing program

administrators, the matter of communication remains relatively neglected, and unhappily so; it is crucial that knowledge of this work be shared systematically with program colleagues and with colleagues throughout the institutional community. Sure symptoms of the need to attend to communications are the expressions of surprise by a program colleague, a chairperson, a dean, a vice-president, or a president—anyone who should know—on learning about a particular program development or a special undertaking by a group of teachers and students or a distinction earned by a member of the program. Even more serious signs are misconceptions of the program's ends and means expressed by teachers in one's own or other departments or by people working in an advising center or a tutoring program or a student services office.

People commonly do not know that important work is being done in the writing program, who is doing it, and how they are going about it. This situation results, as many of us are painfully aware, in squandered morale and in isolation of instructors, both of which have unfortunate effects on teaching and learning. This particular failure to preserve psychological capital is especially common in larger programs where substantial efforts may be known to relatively few or may even be lost to anyone's attention, an ignorance singularly debilitating to the process of consensus building.

Among the many uncharted duties of a writing program administrator are those of chief information and morale officer. They are, however, among the most important and worthy of the time and effort they require. Because they are so close—or, perhaps not close enough—to the people they work with, writing program administrators too often tend to think that the ordinary news, the common knowledge of the program "goes without saying." What goes without saying, however, is precisely what needs to be said, perhaps noisily so, when the aim is consensus building. Many are the ways of promoting morale and dispensing information, but I have found one device that makes a particularly effective contribution to the effort. While not a terribly novel undertaking, our writing program newsletter has proven worth the effort. I'd sooner give up my job than *ComPost*.

The first number of *ComPost* appeared in August 1991 when I began serving as director of composition. Now, every Thursday, August through May, its four to six pages find their way to every member of the Composition Program, the English department faculty and staff, and the Writing Center (a related but independently administered developmental writing program) and to all graduate students in English who request it. *ComPost's* circulation also includes a large secondary audience: the dean and associate deans of the College of Arts and Sciences and the Graduate School, the Academic Advising Center, the Preparatory Division, the

Multicultural Center, the Women's Studies Center, the university's president, provost, vice presidents, and assistant vice presidents, the director of academic computing, any university faculty who request it, the writing programs at colleges and community colleges in the immediate area and, finally, graduate student alumni who have taken jobs or are doing doctoral work elsewhere. At present, we distribute some 170 copies a week. While I will foist it on anyone, the primary audience remains the sixty or so people who teach composition, most of them graduate teaching assistants (GTAs) and doctoral students in Composition and Rhetoric, with the remainder part-time lecturers (PTLs) and tenure-track English faculty.

Ostensibly *ComPost* began as an effort to save a tree and a dollar or two by consolidating and cataloging the host of separate announcements, warnings, and pleadings that it had become our habit to send to all hands. I sought especially to end the execrable practice of bumping a memorandum by scribbling "copy all instructors" across the top and giving it to a hapless student worker for distribution. Communication had gotten lost in the mailbox clutter that democratizes the crucial, the interesting, and the trivial along with the immediate and the remote. *ComPost* announces required staff meetings; availability of desk copies; due dates for teaching preference, book order, and payroll forms; changes in schedule, offices hours, and phone numbers; inevitable reminders of all kinds; and routine messages necessary in an increasingly complex academic environment.

The environment at the University of Louisville, for example, is complicated by the fact that the writing program offers eight different courses in 120 sections per term, conducted by sixty different people who teach and confer with students and take their own classes between 8:00 a.m. and 9:00 p.m., Monday through Friday and often on weekends, on two campuses, and have their offices, such as they are, in five different sites in three buildings—a not uncommon pattern. In a considerable exercise of self-discipline, *ComPost* has become the only vehicle for distribution of this kind of information. To make reading *ComPost* an unavoidable routine, however, is less an exercise of administrative efficiency than an effort to expose people to the newsletter's other contents because the primary motive for this effort is to promote program consensus.

From the outset, *ComPost* sought to do and be more than a bulletin board and so to include information of every description about the program's instructors and of possible interest to them. The program has only one standing committee, the Composition Committee, but many ad hoc committees and interest groups. *ComPost* is used to recruit participation in these efforts, which, often as not, are initiated, designed, and carried out by members of the program rather than by program administrators. *ComPost* reports on the work of people reviewing and recommending texts;

using portfolio grading; developing multicultural approaches to English 102; sharing techniques in computer assisted instruction (CAI); organizing a symposium on the relationship between creative and expository writing instruction; designing a staff development workshop on responding to student writing; preparing a series of workshops on using computers; consulting in the schools of law, engineering, or business; participating in a university writing-across-the-curriculum project; and the like. *ComPost* makes these activities available to more people and, as people are moved to undertake activities that interest them or meet their immediate needs, it seems to generate more enterprises of this kind. As in any small town weekly, *ComPost* is careful to put people's names in the paper, printing them in boldface and trying to spell them correctly. We try even harder never to let appreciation for a job done go without saying and saying so as publicly as possible.

ComPost also chronicles the successes of individual members of the program. When I began as director of composition, I was alarmed at how little I and others knew about accomplishments of the program's people. The "Congratulations" section is a direct assault on what I took to be a serious impediment to good morale and consensus building. *ComPost* routinely honors completion of every graduate program requirement. When people have passed language and doctoral exams, it notes the achievement. When a thesis or dissertation prospectus has been approved, *ComPost* publishes the name of the writer and the title of the project, soliciting any help colleagues might be in a position to provide. Notes of congratulation mark the defense of every thesis and dissertation and the awarding of the degree, with an account of where the person will next study or work, and the new address and phone number. *ComPost* details as fully as it can all successes: awards, attendance at professional meetings, special teaching activities within or outside the university, reviewing for publishers, papers read at conferences, poetry readings, papers accepted and published, and the like. In the beginning, *ComPost* had to overcome an understandable reluctance among many, who perhaps feared being seen as tooting their own horns, by resorting to what I suppose might pass for low-level investigative reporting. In time, however, the convention has become established, and people with good news, or their close friends, readily provide it. Success, obviously, begets success, but only if it is known. And knowing it begets a sense of community and program consensus.

However well disposed we might be, we are in a position to help one another only when we know what one another is doing or what a person specifically needs; and many people—perhaps it is a function of American culture—are reluctant to ask for help. Some are even crestfallen when desperately needed help is not provided, despite their not having asked for

it. From the beginning, *ComPost* has served as a forum for expressions of help and thanks.

To establish the precedent, I appealed for help on two papers I was writing that term and received very useful information in return from people I would never have thought of asking. I coaxed a couple of other people to do the same, and the practice caught on. The help sought ranges widely: people needing to borrow a copy of a book or wanting to briefly use a book checked out of the library, looking for a bibliography on a given subject or author, considering a writing assignment on local politics for 102, needing someone to take their classes so they can attend a conference or have surgery, hunting someone to exchange classes with in order to accommodate a change in child care arrangements, wanting to talk to somebody about statistics, looking for a roommate or someone to share a ride to CCCCs, needing to find a new apartment or a good VW mechanic, wanting to unload free kittens, looking to get a group together to go to Shakespeare in the Park. *ComPost* helps to articulate a commonality of problems, interests, resources, and solutions and to reduce the reinvention of wheels.

ComPost's function as a help-line has evolved in other ways. For example, it publishes each term the schedule for doctoral exams, with an appeal for support of the people named who are taking them, in the form of well wishes, or of an offer to take a person's classes during exam week. Indeed, it has assisted in the formation of a variety of interest groups: exam takers, CAI writing teachers, computer and software users, people using portfolio grading, people developing panels for conferences, poets and fiction writers, business and technical writing teachers, and people sharing interests in social and political issues.

Exchanges of this kind, of course, have been among the most fruitful and enjoyable parts of academic life since time out of mind, and no newsletter will replace the discourse of the corridor and coffee room. But *ComPost* is a useful supplement, particularly to the benefit of those new to the program, those who are shy, or those isolated by their teaching and academic schedules or the geography of their offices or classrooms. *ComPost* provides some order to what is inevitably a fragmented discourse; to a degree it fixes, externalizes, and makes more accessible the program's ongoing conversation.

Moreover, *ComPost* is at the disposal of a very active English Graduate Organization (EGO), which uses its pages for work on a speakers program, professional development workshops, computer workshops, work with the Twentieth Century Literature Conference, administration of graduate school travel money, social activities, improving benefits and working conditions, and defining and solving problems. I think it is safe to say that

EGO's efforts have both expanded and improved since, and in at least a small part because of, the advent of *ComPost*.

ComPost also includes, for want of a better expression, a lot of miscellaneous stuff that adds to its usefulness and character. Announcements of events on campus likely to be of interest to writing teachers and their students: the meetings of the critical theory forum, the several events of African-American History Month and Women's History Month, the schedule of the multicultural video series, and poetry readings, lectures, films, plays, concerts, and the like—anything that the editors think of interest or any reader brings to our attention. *ComPost* also runs notices of recent acquisitions to the program's Bonnie Collection of books, periodicals, and materials on composition and rhetoric; information on job openings; announcements of new journals or special issues that might offer a publishing opportunity; calls for papers and conference announcements with notes on application procedures and deadlines; and creative writing contests.

ComPost is prepared by the director and associate director of composition, both of whom are full-time faculty members, and two assistant directors of composition, who are GTAs. EGO copy is provided by the organizations's officers. Since the editing chores are rotated weekly, no one voice dominates *ComPost*. Each of us is free to impose his or her own style on the issue. We try to get as many people involved in the creation of copy as possible and try to keep the tone light. We run engagement, wedding, and birth announcements and handle the general social calendar. The newsletter's title is the result of a name-the-newsletter contest, the first of many such competitions after the precedent of those in *New York Magazine*. When necessity requires a general remonstrance of some kind—that people need to return overdue books, stop using the Modern Languages photocopier or, get marks in on time, or the like—the word comes from Ensign Pulver, the program's chief laundry and morale officer, a persona whose directives are easy to grouse about and make fun of, and, on that account perhaps, a little easier to follow. Each issue ends with a summary of dates, times, and places, with each item coded so that a reader can refer to the issue that describes the event in greater detail.

ComPost also runs stuff in each issue simply for the sake of amusement: short notes or observations or reprints of poems or short prose pieces from anyone who cares to submit them, especially for special holiday issues that strain to be as funny as our collective wit can make them. We always find space for a cartoon or two, scavenged from the likes of the *New Yorker* or *The Chronicle of Higher Education* or the funnies, that more often than not have something to do with writing or academic life, *ComPost* serving as the

communal office door on which we seem compelled to post such reminders not to take ourselves too seriously.

While teachers of composition are *ComPost*'s primary focus, the substantial secondary audience is also important to the process of consensus building. I have no illusions that the university's president or any of the others on the vast distribution list eagerly await their copy of *ComPost* every week or even that they see it or read it, but I want them to be able to. While on the university meeting circuit that is the lot (curse?) of all writing program administrators, I tout *ComPost* shamelessly. When questions arise that reading it would answer, I do not hesitate to note the value of being a regular *ComPost* reader.

Indeed, *ComPost* is read. I get feedback from people throughout the university who are no longer surprised at the work our people are doing and who have a better idea of what we are about and how we are going about it. While most of the response is positive, I also get some anxious inquiries and complaints, which suggest that in some quarters more than passing attention is paid; and that is a step in the right direction. These responses also allow me to explain further or defend our practice long before something might develop into formal controversy. Everyone, it seems, has at least a curiosity about the composition program, although too seldom is it founded on real knowledge or active interest. One "subscriber," a professor of Music History, has started attending some of our staff development workshops. For *ComPost* to prompt exchanges of this kind is a useful start.

Some few of our secondary readers even get involved by contributing an article on good writing, a cartoon or a squib, or by asking that we run an announcement of an event they are interested in promoting. *ComPost* has become in effect the principal source of information about the Department of English as well as the composition program. Tenure-track faculty members are just as pleased to have public notice taken of their conference presentations or the printing of their articles as are GTAs and PTLs.

The principal motive for maintaining this secondary audience, however, is to serve the primary audience of composition instructors because it is vital to their sense of community to know that the larger academic community is aware of their work. Given the current hierarchical organization and economic reward structures of universities, the place of writing teachers in them, and the slow pace of the evolution of those structures, members of a composition program, who know the value of their work in teaching, research, and service, need to know that others in the university community are aware of it. *ComPost* can contribute to a sense of collegiality by presenting their contributions as colleagues to colleagues.

A full sense of collegiality and genuine program consensus in writing programs are long-term goals, and the barriers to realizing these conditions are substantial. A composition program newsletter alone cannot achieve these goals, nor should it serve as a salve to hide underlying sores. But a vehicle like *ComPost* can promote the communications that contribute to accomplishing these ends, as well as the cohesiveness and stability any complex program needs. That is no mean thing and something well worth doing.



WPA on Campus

What About the TAs? Making the Wyoming Resolution a Reality for Graduate Students

Susan H. McLeod and Fred S. Schwarzbach

While much attention has been given to what the Wyoming Resolution and the subsequent CCCC statement on professional standards say about the use of part-time and temporary instructors to teach composition, there has not been much focus on the use of graduate students, a situation also ripe for potential abuses that may contribute to poor teaching. The two of us, one the chair of the English Department, the other director of Composition, would like to share our efforts to comply with the CCCC Statement of Principles and Standards with regard to working conditions of teaching assistants. We hope that our efforts might help others struggling with similar agendas, particularly those who are being told that establishing a comprehensive training program for TAs (and thereby reducing their teaching load) can't be done. We know it can because we did it.

First, we will review what the Statement of Principles and Standards says about the use of graduate students to teach composition. The document states that the teaching experience of graduate students should be taken as an essential part of their training for future professional responsibilities. Institutions should provide adequate training and supervision; the special status of composition TAs (being fully in charge of the class) should be recognized and class size and course load adjusted accordingly; teaching loads should not interfere with graduate students' progress toward their degrees. Teaching assistantships should be awarded only to students who are superior writers themselves and who also have had experience or training in teaching composition (see "Statement" 332).

In a research institution like ours, the model for delivery of most lower-division instruction is the apprenticeship model; TAs across the institution teach 100- and 200-level courses as part of their training to become professionals in their field. Part of the challenge in maintaining the quality of instruction in freshman composition, then, is to make the TA program the best apprenticeship program possible, one that will help our graduate students realize their full potential as students and as teachers. How can this be accomplished?

We began by examining our TA training program. Although the program was in many respects an enlightened one (we did at least have a program), it needed improvement if we were serious about maintaining a high quality of instruction in composition. We already were doing some things that the Standards document suggested. Superior writing ability was one of the criteria for acceptance into our graduate programs, for example, and we had already used the argument of the special status of composition TAs to get them a three-course-per-year teaching load, but clearly we could do more. First, although we looked for teaching experience among our applicants for graduate study, there were always some (mostly in our MA programs) who came to us with no teaching experience. Second, although TAs attended a required practicum (Teaching Apprenticeship) and those new to teaching were encouraged to enroll in an additional graduate seminar (Theories of Composing and their Pedagogies), they took these courses *simultaneously* with their teaching during the first semester they were with us. Thus, as many as half of our new TAs in any given fall were inexperienced teachers trying to teach and to learn how to teach (and also learn how to be graduate students) all at once, something like trying to repair a train while it is going down the track at full speed. While the program was better than the sink-or-swim method that the two of us experienced as TAs, this was very far from ideal.

At the time we were examining our TAs' situation with an eye toward improvements, our campus, like many campuses, was discussing the quality of student writing and what could be done to improve it. The Faculty Senate, the university provost, and the Board of Regents had recently endorsed a comprehensive seven-part plan to improve the quality of undergraduates' writing across the campus. One component specifically called for continuing improvements to the quality of instruction in English 101, the required freshman writing course. Clearly, then, this was an opportune environment in which to ask for support for a new TA training program and for the addition of several new TA positions that would enable us to implement the program. The new positions would allow us to reduce new TAs' teaching load the first year from three to two courses, the extra course to be made up in an apprenticeship program that would result in the improvement of composition instruction.

First, the faculty of the English Department had to support the request, which it did unanimously when it became clear that the new TA positions would benefit all of us, not just the composition program, by supporting more graduate students. Then, we had to secure the endorsement of our dean. We started the process, inevitably, with a memorandum elaborating our argument, followed by an interview that served as a valuable dry-run for our major challenge, the provost himself. The chair,

the dean, and the head of the Senate's All-University Writing Committee (as it happened, a senior English professor) met with the provost to make our case. The provost asked for clarification about three key issues:

1. Would funding such a training program set a precedent for TAs across campus? In other words, why did English Department TAs require special training opportunities? (We argued that their role as instructors of record, rather than assistants to faculty, in a required general education foundations course distinguished them from other TAs. The provost, familiar with Ernest Boyer's declaration that writing proficiency is the foundation for success in the undergraduate experience [73 ff.], agreed.)

2. What good would our proposal do if it were implemented? (It would make our TAs better teachers of writing, thus improving student writing in general; moreover, it would enable us to recruit additional, high-quality graduate students from our existing pool of applicants, students we were now turning away for lack of such awards.)

3. How much would it cost? (We calculated that sum—\$50,000—by determining that we would need five new TA positions to make up the classes not taught by TA trainees the first semester.) The provost acted as any senior administrator worth his salt would; he took the matter under advisement. Two weeks later he approved it.

Here is the program we worked out.

1. Those graduate students with no teaching experience are paid a full TA stipend for the first year of appointment, but they do not teach in the classroom during the first semester. Instead, they tutor in our Writing Lab, enroll in a graduate seminar on rhetorical theory and practice, and are paired with an experienced mentor TA. They attend their mentor's composition class, observe and take notes in a teaching journal (to be used the next semester as a reference), and occasionally help the mentor teacher with conferences or with small-group work in the classroom. (Mentors are chosen carefully, and we specify exactly how the apprentice teachers can take part in instruction; mentors are not allowed, for example, to ask the apprentice teacher to take over the class for them or to put new TAs to work as graders.¹) Inexperienced teachers thus have an entire semester to study composition theory, watch an experienced teacher teach a complete class, read the selections their students will be reading, learn to conduct conferences, learn how to use our computer lab, reflect on how they will teach their class, and prepare their own syllabi based on that reflection. The second semester, they teach two sections of our introductory composition course; during this semester, they attend a weekly teaching practicum with the director of Composition to discuss the day-to-day issues that arise in their teaching.

2. Graduate students with previous teaching experience may choose to follow the same path as those with no experience—that is, no classes first semester and two the second. We give experienced teachers another option, however—teaching one class each semester in their first year—and most choose it. These TAs also tutor in our Writing Lab, and they are also paired with a mentor. Once they have observed a few of their mentors' classes, however, they are free to discontinue their observations if they (in consultation with the director of Composition) feel that they are ready to launch out on their own. Most continue to keep close contact with their mentors, even though they might not observe classes; some move around and observe several different classes, finding that watching different teaching styles helps them understand their own. Finally, these TAs attend the first-semester teaching practicum led by the director of Composition.

Although the program is only in its second year, we have enough evidence to suggest that it is preparing our apprentice TAs as we had hoped. Evaluations by new and mentor TAs are uniformly positive—indeed, enthusiastic—about its effects, and an examination of various other measures (student evaluations, the percentage of "W" grades in the classes of new TAs compared to those of experienced TAs, a comparison of the grades given by new and experienced TAs) suggests that students are better served under this new program. While it was devised with instructional improvement in mind, our apprenticeship program is based on a larger premise: that graduate students should be treated like junior colleagues who are given all the support and help the institution can muster in order to succeed at their chosen profession.² To that end, English departments should also (as we do) support graduate student travel to professional meetings, ensure that graduate students are represented on key committees (including faculty search committees), and pay TAs a reasonable amount for their work. Departments should also do whatever they can to prepare students for the job market: encourage them to present papers at conferences, advise them on submission of papers for publication, provide funding for research, give workshops on the job application process, conduct mock job interviews, and in general provide appropriate professional development opportunities as they would for faculty. A comprehensive apprenticeship program should start with TA training and continue until the graduate student has left us for a job outside our walls. Such a program not only prepares students to teach composition well; it prepares the professoriate of tomorrow. That is, after all, a central mission of the research university.

Notes

1. One of the surprises for us was learning that mentors found their work with new TAs rewarding rather than burdensome (as we had feared it might be). Most enjoyed having regular feedback on their own teaching and asked to participate again. Informal visiting of one another's classes and subsequent sharing of assignments have become part of the TA culture.

2. One reviewer of this piece asked if our university provides such rigorous and mandated support for junior colleagues. We can't speak for the entire institution, but our department certainly does. Each new faculty member is assigned a mentor who helps the junior colleague become acculturated to the department and involved in the profession. Specifically, the mentor advises about teaching (perhaps serving as one of the two peer reviewers each faculty member needs in the tenure and promotion file); about research, publishing and grant writing; and about putting together materials for annual review, tenure, and promotion. We also reduce the junior faculty members' teaching and committee loads the first few years to give them time for new preparations and for their research. Thus, the TA mentor system we set up in some sense mirrored a faculty system already in place.

Works Cited

Boyer, Ernest L. *College: The Undergraduate Experience in America*. The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. New York: Harper, 1987.

"Statement of Principles and Standards for the Postsecondary Teaching of Writing." *College Composition and Communication* 40 (1989): 329-36.



Draft Document

At their March 1993 workshop, a committee of WPA Consultant-Evaluators reviewed the "Guidelines" which have directed campus self-studies for over a decade. What began as editing turned into massive revision, as the committee began incorporating recent conceptual and organizational changes in writing programs into the document. Since this document represents a WPA vision of what is important about a writing program, the following draft appears here for all interested members to make comments and propose changes. The document will be revised in light of comments received and presented to the WPA Executive Committee at their CCCC meeting in March. Send all suggestions by January 1, 1994, to Professor Edward White, English Department, California State University, San Bernardino, San Bernardino, CA, 92407.

Guidelines for Self-Study to Precede WPA Visit

One month before the WPA consultant-evaluators are scheduled to visit your campus, you should send them a self-study. The purposes of this self-study are, through the process of writing it, to help you understand more clearly the reasons for the visit and to acquaint the consultants with your institution.

Ideally, this self-study will be prepared by a team, including the writing program administrator at your institution and others who are directly involved in your writing program, not by one individual.

The self-study should be largely a narrative report that focuses on the main concerns you have about your writing program. The questions below are intended to help you think of all the possible facets of your program you might want to describe in your self-study. You need not answer all these questions, and they are not intended as an outline for your report.

The final self-study should be about 10 pages in length, not including any supporting documents.

I. General Background

A. Focus of the Visit

1. What are the program's current concerns?
2. What changes in the program are being contemplated?
3. What issues would you like the consultant-evaluators to address?

B. Current Institutional Conditions

1. What specific institutional changes are affecting your writing program?
2. What specific characteristics of your student body affect your program?

C. Missions

1. What is the mission of your institution?
2. What is the mission of your writing program?
3. How does the mission of your program support the mission of your institution?

D. Philosophy and Goals

1. What are the principles or philosophy of the writing program(s) at your institution?
2. What are the goals of your program?
3. How do these goals reflect the program's philosophy?
4. How do your program's practices enact the philosophy and goals?

II. Curriculum

A. Philosophy and Goals

1. What are the philosophy and goals of the writing program(s) at your institution?
2. Do the goals of the writing program(s) accord with the goals of the institution as a whole?
3. How are the philosophy and goals communicated to the teachers, the students, and the appropriate administrators?

B. Courses and Syllabi

1. What writing courses are currently taught in your institution? By what departments are they taught?
2. How are these courses sequenced or otherwise related? Which courses are required, and of whom are they required?
3. If your institution identifies some students as "basic writers," how are their needs addressed?
4. Are the syllabi for the courses uniform or different for each teacher? (Or do some teachers follow a uniform syllabus, while other teachers follow their individual syllabi?) If the syllabus is uniform within each course or for several sections within each course, who is responsible for developing it?
5. If the syllabus is uniform within each course, what opportunities do individual teachers have for experimentation with the syllabus? If the syllabi are individual, what ties or links make the course cohere across the sections?
6. What is the logical basis for the sequence of assignments within each course? How does that sequence relate to the goals and philosophy of the program?

7. How much writing, and what kinds of writing, must students do for each course?
8. What kinds of reading are assigned in the writing courses? What instruction is given to students in the reading of these texts? In the reading of their own drafts?

C. Instructional Methods and Materials

1. What events or activities typically take place in the classrooms of the program's writing courses?
2. What textbooks are used in each writing course? Why is the program using these textbooks? What instructional materials other than textbooks does the program use? How do these textbooks and other materials fit the goals and structure of the course(s)? Who chooses the textbooks and other instructional materials used in the courses?
3. How much time do teachers devote to individual conferences?

D. Responses to and Evaluation of Student Writing

1. At what point(s) in their composing do students receive responses to their writing? What kinds of responses do they receive? At what points during the course(s) do students receive evaluation of their progress?
2. What procedures do faculty use in evaluating students' writing (e.g., letter grades on each paper, letter grades on some papers only, no grades until the end of the course)? On what bases (standards) do faculty evaluate papers?
3. What processes are used to assure consistency across sections in evaluation of students' writing? How does the program assure that the bases for evaluation cohere with the goals of the program?
4. How does the evaluation of students' work reflect their achievement of the stated goals of the course?

E. Assessment

1. What tests and testing procedures are used in the writing program for such purposes as placement, exemption, determination of readiness to exit from a course or from the program, determination of eligibility to enter a more advanced program? What procedures are used to correct errors in placement? How do these procedures relate to the goals of the program?
2. Under what conditions are the assessment procedures conducted? Who conducts them? Who interprets and uses the results? What training do those who conduct the assessment have? If tests are scored by humans (i. e., not machines), what training do the scorers have?

3. What methods are used for continued monitoring of the assessment instruments to assure their current reliability and validity for the students and the purposes they are to serve? How frequently is the monitoring conducted?

III. Faculty

A. Status and Working Conditions

1. What percentage of full-time faculty at each rank, adjunct faculty, and graduate students teach writing? How many writing courses do faculty at each rank or status teach? What percentage of the writing courses are taught by faculty at each rank or status?
2. What are the qualifications for writing faculty, and how are they established? What training and experience in teaching writing do the writing faculty have? What professional organizations do they belong to? What is their record of research, publication, conference participation, and professional activity in composition and rhetoric?
3. What are the salary ranges by rank and category? How do these salary ranges compare to comparable departments? To neighboring, comparable institutions?
4. How are teaching, administration, and research in composition rewarded in terms of salary, promotion, and tenure?
5. How are adjunct faculty appointed? By whom? When in relation to the opening of a term? How are they evaluated? What is the length of their appointment? How are they reappointed? What percentage have multiple-year contracts? How are the adjunct faculty compensated in terms of salary and benefits? Are there step raises or cost of living increases for adjunct faculty? Are adjunct faculty compensated for preparation if a course does not fill or is covered by a full-time faculty member? Is there a departmental policy on percentage of part-time faculty? Do adjunct faculty attend department meetings and writing program meetings? Serve on departmental or writing program committees? What opportunities exist for adjunct faculty to develop curriculum, choose textbooks, formulate policy and procedures? What arrangements are made for office space, telephones, mailboxes, and clerical support for adjunct faculty?

B. Faculty Development

1. How is faculty development defined as a goal of the institution, the department or administrative unit, and the writing program? What are ongoing plans for faculty development in teaching writing?

2. What courses, speaker programs, workshops, teaching awards, etc. does the writing program offer or support to encourage excellence in teaching writing?
3. What opportunities for faculty development in teaching writing already exist? Who uses them? How do faculty find out about them? In what ways are faculty encouraged to avail themselves of these opportunities?
4. Are these opportunities available to adjunct faculty and teaching assistants?
5. Are issues of race and gender addressed in faculty development?
6. What financial resources are available for travel to workshops, conferences, and institutes related to teaching writing?
7. What avenues exist for writing faculty at each rank and status to design, implement, and evaluate faculty development programs best suited to their needs and interests? How are faculty encouraged to develop their skills in composition research and teaching writing? What opportunities exist for learning about faculty development programs in writing at other institutions?
8. Does the department or institution support faculty development by offering paid leaves or sabbaticals for further education in composition studies and rhetoric, by publishing journals, by developing software or other media for use in teaching writing?
9. What support does the department or institution give for development of institutional and individual grants to improve writing instruction and curricula and for released time, overhead, and other support to carry out the grant?

IV. Program Administration

A. Institutional and Program Structure

1. What writing programs are there on campus (e.g., first-year composition, writing across the curriculum, technical writing)?
2. What is the size and make-up of each of the departments or administrative units in which these programs are housed? What is the governing structure of each? How are these related administratively?
3. What are the internal governing structures of the writing programs? Are there writing program administrators (e.g., director of first-year composition, composition committee chair, director of the writing center)? If so, what are the WPAs' administrative relations to other levels of administration? To whom are the WPAs responsible?
4. If there are night school, continuing education, or non-degree programs, who determines how writing is taught in those programs? How is

control exercised? Who is responsible for the teaching of writing in other departments or colleges within the institution?

5. How are the teaching and tutoring of writing funded? Who controls these funds? On what are these funds spent? How does the funding of the writing programs compare to the funding of other programs on campus?
6. Are institutional grant funds available for program development (e.g., curriculum development and assessment)? If so, have WPAs applied for and been awarded any of these grants?
7. Who hires, promotes, and tenures the writing faculty throughout the institution? Who determines their salaries and assigns courses to them?
8. How are new teaching positions determined and by whom?
9. Who determines such things as class size, curriculum, and teaching load in the various programs?
10. How are internal problems solved? Who decides on syllabi, testing procedures, textbooks, etc.? What procedures are in place for full-time faculty, adjunct faculty, teaching assistants, and students to shape policies?
11. What permanent or ad hoc committees related to writing programs exist? How are these committees appointed? Who serves on them (e.g., full-time faculty, adjuncts, students)? What do these committees do?
12. What are the procedures for negotiating student and faculty complaints about grading, teaching, harassment, learning atmosphere, and administrative processes and policies?
13. What administrative, clerical, and technical support is there?
14. How are the writing programs' histories documented (e.g., annual reports, status reports on progress toward multi-year development plans)? Who writes these histories and who reads them? How are they used?

B. Writing Program Administrators

1. How are the WPAs chosen and what are the lengths of their appointments?
2. What are the terms and conditions of appointments of the WPAs? Are these terms in writing?
3. What are the academic and professional qualifications of the WPAs? What are the WPAs' ranks and tenure statuses? Who decides the WPAs' tenures, promotions, and salaries?
4. What are the WPAs' teaching loads and how do they compare with other faculties' loads?
5. How much and what type of research are WPAs expected to do? To

what extent are the WPAs' efforts in program development and institutional research considered scholarship?

6. How and by whom are WPAs evaluated? How are WPAs rewarded?

V. Related Writing Programs and Instructional Units

In many institutions the English Department's composition program is not the only place where writing instruction takes place. Other sites charged with teaching writing may include many of the following: writing centers, reading centers, learning centers, testing centers, disabled student centers, Writing-Across-the-Curriculum Programs, ESL and bilingual programs, tutoring services, correspondence and extension courses, telecommunications and long-distance learning courses and programs, high school bridge programs, writing proficiency programs and exams, and discipline-based writing programs in colleges of education, business, nursing, law, and engineering.

Please address the relationships with the programs that are most pertinent to this visit. (Also include relationships that may become significant in the immediate or long term.) Briefly tell how you perceive the relationships between your program and the other academic units charged with writing instruction.

A. Administration

1. To what extent do services offered by the writing program and other units overlap?
 - a. Do their common goals and procedures reinforce each other or conflict?
 - b. In what formal and informal ways (through scheduling, a coordinating committee, etc.) is each unit related to the writing program?
2. How is each unit funded?
3. How does each unit follow up on students who have used its services?
4. How is credit determined for work in these units?
5. What arrangements exist for the evaluation of each unit?

B. Curriculum

1. How many students and faculty are associated with each unit?
2. What is the profile of the students?
3. How are students placed in or referred to each unit?
4. What kinds of materials (books, computers, television) and techniques (tutoring, workshops) does the unit use?
5. How do students learn about the unit?

C. Personnel

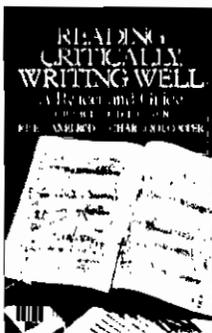
1. What are the job descriptions for the director and teaching staff of each unit? How are the director and staff selected?
2. What is the institutional status (faculty, full-time, part-time, graduate student, etc.) of unit personnel?
 - a. How are they compensated for their work?
 - b. How is their work evaluated?
3. What provisions exist for training and professional development of unit staff?

You may not want to overwhelm consultants with background materials, but you may want to include the following in an appendix to the narrative report:

- Statistical information for the previous and current academic year: enrollments, class sizes, composition of the teaching staff, final grade distribution.
- A description of each course within the program(s) to be evaluated (objectives, syllabuses, texts, placement and exemption procedures, grading criteria).
- Copies of evaluative instruments.
- Materials pertaining to teacher training (both faculty and graduate students or adjuncts), including orientation meeting agendas, workshop descriptions, and syllabuses for training courses.
- School catalogues, department handbooks, and departmental student materials.



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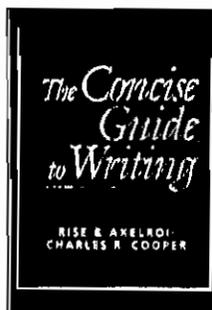
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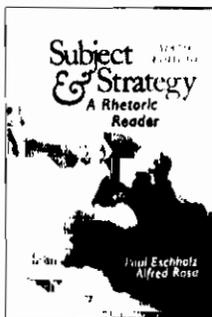


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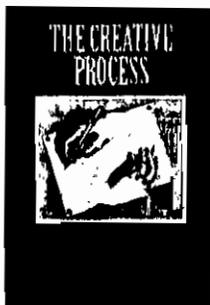


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NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

Rebecca Blevins Faery is a writer and writing teacher currently living in Iowa City. During the past sixteen years, she has directed institution-wide writing programs at Hollins College, The University of Iowa College of Law, and Mount Holyoke College.

Dennis Hall is Director of Composition at the University of Louisville where he teaches Composition, History of Rhetoric, Teaching College Composition, Bibliography and Research, English Literature, and the odd course in Popular Culture. He has published articles in *The Technical Writing Teacher*, *The Wordsworth Circle*, *Social Epistemology*, *English Language Notes*, and *The Journal of American Culture*, among others. He is currently the editor of *Studies in Popular Culture*.

Daniel Mahala is Director of Composition at the University of Missouri at Kansas City. His work on the history of writing across the curriculum reform has appeared in *College English*, and he is currently writing about the historical impact of the discourses of colonialism and postcolonialism on reform in literacy education.

Susan H. McLeod, formerly Director of Composition at Washington State University, is now Associate Dean of Humanities and Social Sciences at that institution. Her most recent publication is *Writing Across the Curriculum: A Guide to Developing Programs* (Sage, 1992), co-edited with Margot Soven. **F.S. Schwarzbach** was Chair of the English Department at Washington State University for five years; he is now Professor and Chair of English at Kent State University.

Jeffrey Sommers, Miami University-Middletown, teaches courses in composition and pedagogy and has published articles on portfolio and teacher response. **Donald A. Daiker**, Professor of English at Miami University, is co-editor with Max Morenberg of *The Writing Teacher as Researcher* (Heinemann/Boynton-Cook). **Gail Stygall**, Assistant Professor at the University of Washington, teaches courses in composition, rhetoric, and linguistics. **Laurel Black** is an Assistant Professor at St. John Fisher College, teaching courses in composition, sociolinguistics, and assessment. Sommers, Daiker, Stygall, and Black are co-editors of *New Directions in Portfolio Assessment* (forthcoming from Heinemann/Boynton-Cook), and they co-directed "A Project in Portfolio Assessment," funded by the Fund for the Improvement of Post-Secondary Education.

Margot Soven is Director of the Writing Across the Curriculum Project, the Writing Fellows Program, and Co-Director of Composition at La Salle University. Her most recent publication is *Writing Across the Curriculum: A Guide for Developing Programs* (Sage, 1992) co-edited with Susan McLeod. Her text *Write to Learn* will be published by Wadsworth in the fall, 1993.

Michael Vivion is a former Director of Composition, a Professor of English at UMKC, and a founder of the Greater Kansas City Writing Project. His work includes *The Writer's Circle*, co-authored with Sarah Morgan, and most recently, *Cultural Studies in the English Classroom*, co-edited with James Berlin.

Announcements

Award Winners Announced

The Council of Writing Program Administrators is proud to announce the winners of the 1993 WPA Research Grants:

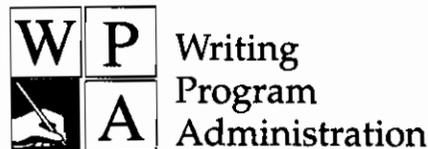
Barbara Walvoord, University of Cincinnati, for a two-year study on the effects of departmental pressures on faculty who may want to change their practices after attending WAC workshops.

Wendy Bishop and Gay Lynn Crossley, Florida State University, for an ethnographic study of the intellectual formation and development of writing program administrators within English departments.

Linda K. Shamoan, University of Rhode Island, for a one-day regional conference on what should be the nature and design of a "rhetoric" course that could occupy a central position in writing programs.

Sheryl I. Fontaine, California State University—Fullerton, for a study of how different models of administration affect the training of graduate teaching assistants and their initiation as apprentice WPAs.

Nedra Reynolds, University of Rhode Island, to examine how teachers are portrayed through the discourses of instructor's manuals and instructor's versions of college writing textbooks.



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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.

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To you winners, congratulations! Thanks for submitting excellent proposals. WPA also wishes to emphasize that we received many excellent proposals that we were unable to fund. The WPA Research Grant Committee urges you to resubmit your proposals for consideration again (see Call for Proposals below).

Call for Research Proposals

The Council of Writing Program Administrators is currently accepting proposals for its 1994 research grants. The Council will award several grants (up to \$1000 each) for research relating specifically to the concerns of WPAs. Proposals should not exceed four single-spaced, typed pages and should describe (1) the research problem and objectives, (2) the procedures for conducting the research (including sample, design, instrumentation, and personnel), (3) a time-line, and (4) a budget. Researchers planning to conduct surveys may include in their proposal free use of the WPA mailing list. All WPA grant recipients will be asked to submit their research report to the Council's journal, *WPA: Writing Program Administration*, for possible publication before submitting it to other journals. Please include your name, affiliation, address, and telephone number on your proposal. The deadline for submission is November 15, 1993. Award winners will be announced at the CCCC in Nashville. Please send the proposal and two copies to Professor Patricia Bizzell, Chair, WPA Research Grant Committee, Writing Programs, P.O. Box 188A, College of the Holy Cross, Worcester, MA 01610.



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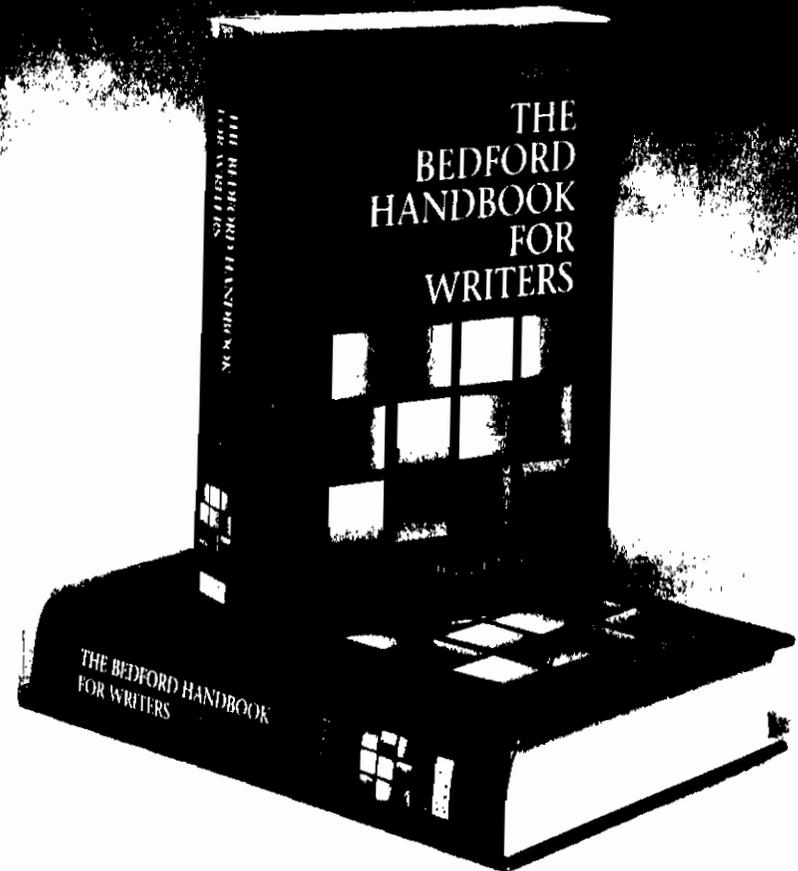
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