

# Writing Program Administration

*Journal of the Council of Writing Program Administrators*

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# Council of Writing Program Administrators

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

For membership information, please see page 92.

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# Author's Guide

*WPA: Writing Program Administration* publishes articles and essays concerning the organization, administration, practices, and aims of college and university writing programs. Possible topics include the education and support of writing teachers; the intellectual and administrative work of WPAs; the situation of writing programs, within both academic institutions and broader contexts; the programmatic implications of current theories, technologies, and research; relationships between WPAs and other administrators, between writing and other academic programs, and among high school, two-year, and four-year college writing programs; placement; assessment; and the professional status of WPAs.

The previous list is meant to be suggestive, not exhaustive, but contributions must be appropriate to the interests and concerns of those who administer writing programs. The editor welcomes empirical research (quantitative as well as qualitative), historical research, and more theoretically, essayistically, or reflectively developed pieces.

The length of submissions should be approximately 2000 to 5000 words, although the journal occasionally will publish shorter or longer pieces when the subject matter warrants. Articles should be suitably documented using the current *MLA Style Manual*. Please submit three copies of manuscripts, with the author identified only on a separate cover letter. Include a self-addressed stamped envelope if you would like a copy returned. Submissions are anonymously reviewed by the Editorial Board, and the editor aspires to a response time of approximately ten weeks.

*WPA* publishes reviews of books related to writing programs and their administration. Publishers are invited to send appropriate professional books to the Editor, who assigns reviews. *WPA* also publishes an annual review of textbooks; publishers should contact the Managing Editor.

Authors whose works are accepted for publication will be asked to submit final versions in both print and electronic form. *WPA* is produced with Pagemaker 4.2 for the Macintosh. (Articles submitted in Word for the Macintosh will greatly facilitate production, although we have the capability to translate among many Macintosh and PC programs.) Authors will also be asked to submit a 100-word biography for inclusion in the "Notes on Contributors" section of the journal.

Article deadlines: Fall/Winter issue, April 1; Spring issue, September 1.

Relevant announcements and calls for papers are also acceptable. Announcement deadlines: Fall/Winter issue, September 1; Spring issue, January 1.

**Address articles and editorial correspondence** to Douglas Hesse, Editor, *WPA*, 4240 Department of English, Illinois State University, Normal, IL 61790-4240. E-mail: ddhesse@ilstu.edu.

**Address subscription and membership inquiries** to Jeffrey Sommers, Secretary-Treasurer, *WPA*, Department of English, Miami University, Oxford, OH 45056. (See subscription and membership form at the back of the journal.)

**Address advertising inquiries** to the Editor at the address above.

**Address inquiries about the *WPA* consultation/evaluation service** to Ben W. McClelland, Department of English, University of Mississippi, University, MS 38677.

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## Call for 1996 Research Grant Proposals

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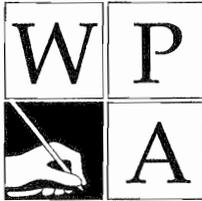
The Research Grant Committee of the Council of Writing Program Administrators issues a call for proposals to investigate the intellectual work of the WPA. Maximum awards of \$2,000 may be given; average awards are \$1,000.

A complete proposal will consist of a description of the project that explains how it addresses the grant theme; outlines how the project will proceed; provides a budget that is realistic, detailed, and specific; and explains how the results will be shared professionally. The descriptive proposal should be no longer than three double-spaced pages. Four copies must be sent to Kristine Hansen at the address below no later than 1 January 1996.

Proposers should contact Hansen for more detailed information.

Kristine Hansen, Chair  
WPA Research Grant Committee  
English Department  
Brigham Young University  
Provo, UT 84602

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*Journal of the Council of Writing Program Administrators*

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## Letter from the Editor

At the end of "The Star Thrower," Loren Eiseley stands on a desolate beach, pitching washed-ashore starfish into the surf. The gesture is largely futile: too many starfish, too many waves. No matter. Eiseley has just conquered a crisis of faith and spirit, and even—perhaps especially—futile action redeems.

As much as I'd like to picture WPAs as heroic star throwers, the image is too romantically overwrought. But there is something in the gesture, if not the figure, that makes the metaphor appealing. As I write, this is the seventh autumn I've served as a WPA, and I've come to understand the vanity of my early imagining that the writing program would be neatly "fixed" by now. Each fall brings a new wave of teaching assistants, each change in higher administration a new need to justify pedagogies and policies. Our theoretically sound curriculum of 1988 is twice revised, and three generations of computer hardware and software in our classrooms promise only many more, in shorter wave-lengths. Marriage, I've learned, doesn't always last forever.

The coastline itself changes. The summer of 1995 brought scattered public attacks on the goals and practices of college writing teachers. Facing powerful cultural forces and numberless issues that we can never finally resolve, WPAs might understandably retreat to status quo-ism. That few of us do so enlivens us all. When Loren Eiseley confronts the ocean at Costabel, significantly, he joins a fellow star thrower.

With this issue Eric Martin, colleague and friend, joins *WPA* as Managing Editor. Anne Greenseth continues her extraordinary work as editorial assistant, Kelly Lowe having taken the tenure track to Ohio. As I enter a second year working with the current editorial board, I continue to value their smartness and generosity. I also continue to value the fine work I'm privileged to read.

In the pages that follow, Nedra Reynolds reads instructors' manuals as artifacts of our assumptions about teaching and teachers. Chris Anson, David Jolliffe, and Nancy Shapiro describe a powerful strategy for staff development. Suzan Harrison discusses an across-the-curriculum portfolio assessment, reminding us in the process that small colleges, too, have WPAs and writing programs, something often lost in the world of state universities that may seem to constitute this organization. Chris Burnham and Cheryl Nims look at assessment from another vantage point, grounded in business management. Nancy Thompson and Rhonda Grego offer a strategy for teaching "basic" writers when institutions decide no longer to give credit for "basic" courses. Finally, you'll find the journal's first attempt at an e-mail directory of members. Happy reading and Happy New Year.

*Doug Hesse*

# Dusting Off Instructor's Manuals: The Teachers and Practices They Assume<sup>1</sup>

Nedra Reynolds

Recently while cleaning my office, I began piling all of the dusty instructor's manuals in a corner when I was suddenly struck by how many I had accumulated in only a couple of years. Intrigued by the question, "who uses these, anyway?", I decided to look at them more seriously. Although neither the most exciting texts written in our field nor particularly useful to most experienced writing teachers, Instructor's Manuals (IMs) represent a rich untapped resource for analyzing layers of ideology at work in composition studies, especially in their constructions of teachers and teaching that drive most writing programs. Writing program administrators, especially those who rely on or recommend the use of IMs for their teaching assistants or adjunct faculty, may be particularly interested in this analysis.

Along with the course catalogs examined by Susan Miller in *Textual Carnivals*, as well as other course descriptions, policies, and syllabi, IMs are assumed to be "natural" to the conditions of teaching writing in colleges and universities. Lester Faigley points out that "if textbooks are not reliable sources of data for how writing is actually taught, they do reflect teachers' and program directors' decisions about how writing should be represented to students" (133). Instructor's manuals, I would add, reflect decisions about how writing should be represented to new or adjunct teachers, who need to be "disciplined" as subjects right along with students. My purpose here is to demonstrate that IMs operate as mechanisms for training new teachers and for keeping experienced ones in line, but that in doing so, they "flatten" teacher subjectivity to a few predictable variables and create a number of contradictions.

Whether named Guides, Resources for Teaching, or Suggestions for Teaching, IMs are produced to support and supplement the apparatus of a vast majority of the published workbooks, handbooks, rhetorics, and readers in the composition industry. Whether published under separate cover from the textbook, bound with the textbook, or listed in the advertisement as available supplemental material, their presence is often taken for granted. The proliferation of these manuals suggests several possibilities: that many teachers use them; that publishers assume teachers find them valuable; or that WPAs or textbook committees won't order a textbook without a good IM being available. As I shall develop later, their perceived value is directly related to the politics and economics of writing instruction, but in any case, they are produced in abundance. What do these manuals imply about the space of the classroom, the relationships within it, and the work that is being done there?

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Given the sheer number and variety of IMs produced annually in our field, this study is preliminary and limited, based on a sample of thirty-two IMs dating back to 1964 and representing a range of workbooks, handbooks, readers, and rhetorics, with 1990s reader IMs slightly dominant in my sample. Concentrating only on IMs that are separate from the textbook, not annotated Instructor's editions, I collected IMs from my own office, the offices of writing program colleagues, and from the Richard S. Beal Collection at the Dimond Library at the University of New Hampshire.<sup>2</sup> While this study certainly leaves out far more manuals than it includes—and while I cannot claim pure objectivity or a scientific method—it should demonstrate that despite a thirty-year range and a variety of textbooks, these manuals share much in common.

My reading strategy has been to look for the features that seem to characterize IMs most clearly, as well as “special features” that make certain IMs stand out. In addition to noting both similarities and differences among these guides, I’ve also concentrated on the prefaces and introductory material, where the intended audience and purpose are most directly addressed. For this essay, I’ve divided the discussion into two parts: first, I examine closely three IMs representative of the publishing industry over three decades and with three types of textbooks: a 1976 rhetoric IM; a 1986 handbook IM; and a 1995 reader IM. In the second section, I turn to a wider pool of texts and a narrower set of issues about the teachers and practices represented in these usually-ignored documents.

## Textbook History and Ideology

Robert Connors’ essay “Textbooks and the Evolution of the Discipline” traces the emergence of question-laden textbooks to an 1829 edition of Hugh Blair’s *Lectures*, to which were added such questions as “Of what kinds of style did our author treat in the last lecture?” (181-82). Connors argues that question and answer textbooks were designed for the increasing population of “classroom ‘monitors,’ [usually older] students who drilled other students on the lessons. . . . [T]hey were untrained in pedagogy . . . and needed textbooks of a new and very directive sort” (181-82). Question-answer textbooks arose from “a shortage of trained, effective college rhetoric teachers” (183). Textbooks also arose from “a shared system of belief” between textbook sellers and textbook buyers, a belief system based on “theory-unconscious writing instruction” (Welch 270).

In “Ideology and Freshman Textbook Production,” Kathleen Welch claims that textbooks are often instructional material “more important for the writing teacher than for the writing student”—a claim that becomes magnified with IMs, where students are addressed through the teacher (271). Textbooks in Welch’s analysis are “persuasive places where new teachers of writing are trained and where experienced ones reinforce the training” (271). Welch’s purpose is to expose how textbooks manage to avoid, downplay, or negate any theoretical attention to writing; for example, process becomes just another mode. Since the appearance of Welch’s 1987 article, critiques of textbooks have in-

creased in number and in sophistication.

In particular, contemporary theories of subjectivity have triggered some keen analyses of the ways students are constructed by writing textbooks. John Clifford and Lester Faigley have both argued that rhetoric textbooks for first-year writing students—with the best-selling *St. Martin's Guide to Writing* a representative example—construct student subjects as unified, coherent, rational individuals who are expected to compose in isolation, free of conflicts of race, class, gender, or sexuality (see Clifford, 44 ff., and Faigley, 132-62). Not only do these constructions conflict with current theoretical and pedagogical directions in our field, but they also excuse students from taking stands or from engaging in ethical issues. Faigley, as well as Alan France in a 1993 issue of *College English*, also critiques Coles and Vopat's *What Makes Writing Good*. This collection of student essays nominated by teachers across the country rests on "the assumption that individuals possess an identifiable 'true' self and that the true self can be expressed in discourse," through such qualities as honesty and authentic voices (Faigley 122).

What these critiques have in common is their attention to the ways in which subjectivity is flattened or watered down by these textbooks—with difference, diversity, or power relationships erased, or as John Clifford puts it, *transcended*: "almost all contemporary rhetorics . . . [create] the illusion that we can transcend ideology with three well-developed paragraphs of evidence" (44). IMs create a similar illusion with suggested sequences, predictable scenarios, and an abundance of "tips."

## Three Representative IMs

In this section, my purpose is to look closely at three representative IMs in order to illustrate their general features and organization and to begin to collect evidence about the ways in which IMs construct the subjectivity of writing teachers and represent the practices and activities of writing classrooms. For this close examination, I have chosen best-sellers in the composition market, re-issued in at least a third edition, and reflective of the three major textbook categories. Each comes from a different large publishing house—Houghton Mifflin; Little, Brown; and Bedford—and each from a different decade: a rhetoric IM from 1976; a handbook IM from 1986; and a reader IM from 1995. The *Instructor's Manuals for Writing With a Purpose* (6th edition), *The Little, Brown Handbook* (3rd edition), and *Rereading America* (3rd edition) illustrate the ways in which IMs are driven by the economic and political mechanisms of writing instruction.

### 1. *Teaching With a Purpose*—a 1976 rhetoric IM

McCrimmon's *Writing With a Purpose* is one of the top-selling rhetoric textbooks in modern composition. Faigley calls it "resilient" and notes that it has

been in print continuously since 1950 (see his full discussion of McCrimmon 146-56). *Teaching with a Purpose*, like so many IMs, is written by someone other than the textbook author—Webb Salmon, a colleague of McCrimmon's at Florida State University—but it is one of the few to have its "own" title, one which echoes but is distinct from the textbook title. Salmon clarifies his sense of audience from the opening sentence of the Preface: "I have tried to write primarily for the young teacher of composition who wants to consider how another instructor would use *Writing With a Purpose*. If experienced teachers find parts of the manual helpful, I will of course be doubly pleased" (v). Salmon goes on to explain his role, that of "teacher's aid" to busy instructors: "When the teacher's preparation for an exercise would require more time than busy people can afford . . . , I have done the preparation and presented the necessary information" (v). He clarifies that this IM is not meant to be "an all-inclusive text on the teaching of freshman composition," but rather a supplement to the textbook designed to "help us in our work" (v). Also in the preface, Salmon acknowledges help of an assistant (unnamed) and explains that he, along with FSU teaching assistants (also unnamed), have tried out the assignments in class and have suggested revisions based on their classroom experiences. Salmon is also careful to assure us that McCrimmon himself read each chapter of this IM.

As most IMs do, the chapters of *Teaching With a Purpose* follow the same organization and emphasis of the textbook chapters, restating and clarifying the author's emphases, goals, and beliefs about student writing. Throughout the IM, beginning with Chapter 1, Salmon offers reasons for "bad student writing." Absence of purpose, as well as "the tendency to write on general subjects rather than real subjects [are some] of the primary reasons for bad student writing" (2). The solution is to get students to restrict their general topics, and Salmon illustrates a number of restricted "real" subjects for writing (2-3). Chapter 1 goes on to offer possible or characteristic statements for each of the Exercises in the textbook; notably, Salmon does not call them "the answers." ("Answers" are offered only for the handbook of grammar and usage, the final chapter of the textbook.) When the Exercises address a particularly frequent or knotty problem in student writing, Salmon explicates the purpose of the Exercise and gives instructors some sense of how much time they should expect to spend on, for example, thesis statements: "the four exercises on thesis writing are in the chapter for a reason. Your students may need to spend considerable time with them" (4). He also addresses the importance of timing, or when to introduce new material; for example, he suggests not providing sample theses for one assignment "until the students are well on their way to developing their own theses" (9).

The remaining chapters in this IM follow a similar pattern: each chapter begins with a one-sentence overview of the preceding chapter and situates the new chapter within the whole writing process. The claims about the reasons for bad student writing continue, as do the sense of what students will find easy or difficult, e.g., "This exercise should cause little difficulty for most freshmen . . ." (12). Salmon also offers the results when certain exercises were done in his classes or the classes of teaching assistants; for example, he provides sample

statements and questions about a photograph included in the textbook for an exercise on interpretation. Throughout the manual, Salmon presents McCrimmon as the “master teacher,” as he routinely refers to McCrimmon’s beliefs about teaching writing in a particular order, with particular emphases. In teaching patterns of organization, “McCrimmon takes the position that the patterns are worth teaching carefully but that they should be taught in a context which suggests that they are useful techniques for helping the writer to achieve a worthy purpose” (23). Or “McCrimmon knows, as does everyone who has given close attention to the problems of teaching written composition, that style is one of those words used loosely in English classrooms” (67). Salmon also includes anecdotes about other teachers’ strategies and methods, sharing with readers how “one professor impressed a class with the necessity of proofreading” (80) or how one instructor helped a student to write in concrete and specific detail (59).

Salmon routinely offers reasons for most of the suggested exercises and assignments: “One reason for having your students write a process theme is that this kind of assignment lends itself to your emphasizing clarity” (31). Or typical, predictable scenarios are outlined, such as those problems arising from the research paper: “Too often [students] find themselves in the predicament of having to carry on with a project that they see they never should have begun” (121).

After chapters that parallel each of the textbook chapters, including The Essay Examination and The Research Paper, this IM ends with a bibliography—“a selective bibliography for teachers of composition”—with such categories as grammar, usage, rhetoric, semantics, and teaching (145-53). By the late 1970s and early 1980s, several IMs became mini-workshops in the teaching of writing, with a thorough coverage model that demonstrated composition’s growing professionalism. These IMs treat composition as a specialty, requiring specialized knowledge to teach it.

## 2. Instructor’s Manual to Accompany *The Little, Brown Handbook*—a 1986 handbook IM

“Prepared by” Robert A. Schwegler and Jane E. Aaron, with special assistance from Tori Haring-Smith, this third-edition IM is designed to demonstrate how *The Little, Brown Handbook* can be used in a variety of courses, with a number of emphases, by a variety of teachers: “Whatever use you plan to make of *The Little, Brown Handbook* [LBH] and whether you are a new teacher or an experienced one, you should find this instructor’s manual a useful guide to the handbook and a source of activities and ideas for teaching composition” (v). Chapter 1 offers ideas for “Organizing the Composition Course” with the use of the handbook, which is a valuable resource “partly because of its flexibility” (1). The LBH can be used to support composition courses with three different emphases: on patterns of expression and thought; on the writing process; or on content and ideas (2-6). The LBH can also be used with a variety of other texts (as

well as serving as the only text in a course)—with a reader, rhetoric, or workbook (6-9). In keeping with the research interests of the mid-1980s, this IM also has a section in the first chapter on "Sentence Combining with the Handbook" (9-11) and another on tutoring. Chapter 2 includes commentary on the handbook's "organization, coverage, and possible uses," and suggests assignments and activities for each section of the handbook, as well as ways to use the handbook's ancillaries (13).

Like Salmon, Schwegler and Aaron include special "tips" to instructors about what they should anticipate in course planning or activities: "Because concluding paragraphs often present a special problem, you may wish to highlight the common inept endings that trap students and to suggest satisfactory alternatives" (25-26). Or they let the IM users know what may result from their decisions or choices: "If you choose to use the code or symbols [in commenting on papers], you should remember also that there is nothing in either system to let students know they have done a good job" (104).

A notable feature of this IM is the inclusion of an entire chapter on "Using Collaborative Learning with the Handbook," by Tori Haring-Smith (67-100). Kenneth Bruffee's well-known article appeared two years earlier, in 1984; thus, this textbook publisher was quick to see its importance and to sense the changing tide of the field. This chapter defines collaborative learning and outlines the benefits, and then offers ways to use the handbook in designing collaborative activities. Haring-Smith identifies the particular exercises in the handbook that are particularly well-suited to collaborative work, and those that are not (those that ask for private writing or those exercises where there is only one correct answer). In addition to advice on preparing students to give peer criticism, Haring-Smith also includes eight sample reader-response forms (86-100).

An entire chapter of this IM is devoted to "Evaluating Student Essays," an issue that few IMs address in such depth. Opening with the claim that "[n]othing we do as composition teachers . . . has as much potential for helping students improve their writing as do our responses as sensitive and thorough readers" (101), this chapter includes twenty-six pages of approaches and techniques, including two paragraphs on conferencing. Like the McCrimmon IM, the *LBH* IM includes a selective bibliography for teaching composition, organized by categories and preceded by a list of fifteen journals publishing articles in rhetoric and composition (129-53).

The final section of the *LBH* IM—forty percent of its total pages—contains "Answers to the Exercises" (155-262). While handbook and workbook IMs are, of course, more likely to be "answer guides," it is notable that sixty percent of this IM is concerned with uses of a handbook for a whole-course approach and with larger issues in the teaching of writing (evaluation and collaborative groups).

I want to return briefly to the title page of this IM, where the line "prepared by" highlights the issue of authorship for IMs. "Preparing" an IM is apparently not quite the same as writing one or authoring one. This seemingly minor point says much about the status of IMs in the industry: they are done on

a work-for-hire agreement, with lump sums paid but no royalties. This arrangement makes it possible for others to prepare later IMs without contractual problems, and it illustrates that the textbook as “package” is most important (regarding contractual issues in publishing textbooks, see Winterowd). In other words, IMs are done to serve and promote the textbook. In addition, the larger and more involved the textbook project (mainstream rhetorics or handbooks), the less likely it is that the textbook author will do the IM; thus, Salmon prepares the IM for the McCrimmon book while Schwegler and Aaron (among others for other editions) do the IM for the *LBH*. Reader authors are more likely to write their own manuals.<sup>3</sup>

### 3. Resources for Teaching *Rereading America*—a 1995 reader IM

The IM for *Rereading America: Cultural Contexts for Critical Thinking and Writing* (3rd edition, 1995), titled “Resources for Teaching,” is written by the reader’s authors, Gary Colombo, Robert Cullen, and Bonnie Lisle. The Preface opens with negative definition, what this teacher’s manual is *not*: “we won’t be offering you a list of ‘right’ answers. Instead, regard this manual as your personal support group” (iii). The Preface goes on to invoke the authority of “hundreds of instructors nationwide” the authors have heard from since the publication of the first edition; the manual, then, is “a forum where we can share some of *their* concerns, suggestions, experiments, and hints” (emphasis mine, iii). The authors provide alternative thematic clusters to those that open the student edition—selections that highlight, for example, gay and lesbian experience or issues of class. Immediately following is a section titled “Addressing Sensitive Issues,” a discussion that would not have appeared in IMs of the 1970s and 80s (and appears here, one assumes, because the hundreds of instructors using earlier editions asked for it). Sections on “Establishing Trust,” “Setting Ground Rules,” “Monitoring Class Dynamics,” and “Understanding Differences,” for a total of over five full pages, illustrates the authors’ belief that in order to use this reader on cultural issues, teachers may need some help dealing with “potentially volatile issues” (6). The authors argue against their critics on page six, acknowledging how teachers and students have different perceptions of a “safe” classroom. Following the advice on class discussion or classroom management are sections on journals and collaborative groups (12-17).

The remaining eighty-one pages of this IM follow the order of the reading selections, with introductions to each chapter and responses to or tips for every selection. These passages include a wide range of ideas, from quick summaries of the readings to advice about how to order and structure the course (“Chapter Four probably isn’t the best place to begin your course” [51]). Colombo, Cullen, and Lisle give background information on the selections and their reasons for their placement, offer their own interpretations of or approaches to the readings, and continually anticipate what IM users will be encountering in their classes. Typical comments include warnings to teachers about what students will find difficult, e.g., “The combination of unfamiliar ideas and an academic style makes

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this selection a challenge for many students" (40), or "This is an engaging reading that you shouldn't have any trouble getting students to understand or remember" (79).

Characteristic of this IM are the "rankings" of the readings, not just some indication of which ones students are likely to find difficult, or those that are likely to "raise some hackles" (43), but those that teachers shouldn't miss: "We conclude the chapter with a beautiful poem. Don't skip this even if you're behind schedule" (37), and "Read this one even if you're considering a radical abridgment of the chapter" (54).

The third edition of this IM is well over twice as long as the first-edition IM (1989). Instead of only a one-page preface, whose main recommendation is that teachers give students responsibility for decisions, the third edition contains seventeen pages of pedagogical advice. This much-expanded IM may indicate increasing market demand for more guidance, especially when the content of the course addresses "sensitive issues."

Features of the three IMs examined above can be found in a number of additional texts; perhaps one of the safest generalizations to make about IMs is that they do not vary widely. The goal for most publishers in producing IMs is to have what all other IMs do, plus perhaps one special or distinct feature. This overview of three representative manuals serves as an introduction to the next section, which explores more specific issues, particularly the representations of teachers, students, and practices in these manuals. My discussion below will show that IMs do acknowledge the politically-tenuous position of most writing faculty, but only in their effort to provide pre-packaged courses, with sequences, discussion questions, and tips at hand. Students are treated in one-dimensional ways, as entirely predictable and in need of order and strict management. Despite their role as textbooks to train teachers, IMs offer nearly as much guidance about how the textbook can be used in a variety of courses as they do about classroom practice. In addressing multiple audiences and courses—the key to marketability being flexibility—IMs also frequently invoke the values of teaching experience, possibility, and community.

## Packaged Courses, Packaged Teachers

IMs are clearly written for a distinct population within composition studies: the new, inexperienced, often young teaching assistant, as well as part-timers or adjunct professors who may be teaching in more than one institution and who need time-saving tips and devices. In the manual for his 1975 *Handbook of Current English*, Jim Corder's note to teachers identifies three possible audiences for an IM: new teachers of composition; teachers using the *Handbook* for the first time "whose courses aren't already fixed by temperament, circumstance, or department syllabus"; or teachers who wish to save time (1). In addition to direct references regarding the intended audience for these manuals, the suggested syllabi or course outlines, and in some cases, extensive bibliographies on the

teaching of writing, offer evidence that these manuals are for new or perhaps unsupervised teachers of writing. A Prentice-Hall IM claims to be for inexperienced instructors, especially “those who are teaching a formal course for the first time” (Rigg 1). The *Heath Handbook of Composition* IM begins with a course outline and then suggests that “[d]iscussion with experienced teachers of the course will help new instructors form an appropriate plan” (Kelly 1).

Corder sends teachers to different sections of his IM depending on their level of experience and, in general, provides an explanation for each section of who might find it most useful. For new teachers, the early sections cover how to use a handbook in teaching writing, some general suggestions for teaching freshman composition, and some sample course outlines. Experienced teachers, however, may turn directly to later sections, which contain, for example, ways to generate topics (1).

The function of teacher-training is particularly evident in the appearance of bibliographies in IMs of the late 1970s and early 80s. The manual for the 1981 *Heath Handbook of Composition* consists of several comprehensive bibliographies (“Using Class Time,” “Assigning Papers,” and “Commenting On and Grading Papers”) which demonstrate the opening claim that the teaching of writing has become a specialty (Kelly). Bibliographies were particularly important when the vast majority of writing teachers lacked pedagogical training and were unfamiliar with the research and growing literature. With a few exceptions, bibliographies have dropped out of 1990s IMs, perhaps because of the proliferation of graduate programs in rhetoric and composition (Brown *et al.*).<sup>4</sup>

Perhaps the IM in my set that comes closest to a cram course in teaching composition is the manual for Frank D’Angelo’s 1981 *Process and Thought in Composition*.<sup>5</sup> After surveying various approaches to the teaching of composition, from the more traditional (The Thematic Approach, The Handbook Approach, The Forms of Discourse Approach) to the newer models (The Personal Writing Approach and the Process Approach), D’Angelo offers chapters on Evaluating Student Themes—which include grade distribution sheets and criteria for A, B, C, D, and F themes—and provides sample student essays with discussion of the grade assigned to each. He, too, provides a selected bibliography of teaching composition, with sections on Motivating Student Writing; Journals; Literature and Composition; Audience; Voice; and so on, for a total of thirty-three pages for the *new* teacher before other components are even introduced.

Many features of IMs, including chapter overviews and summaries, rest on an overriding assumption, often stated clearly in the preface, that the guide is designed to save the teacher time. “Our purpose in this manual to accompany *Patterns for College Writing* is to save the instructor time by suggesting the answers we had in mind as we constructed the questions that follow each essay” (*Patterns* Preface). A 1974 handbook IM claims to provide assistance to busy instructors “who often lack the time to work out appropriate exercise solutions” (Rigg). And from a 1980 guide for a rhetoric text: “We hope that the notes will save the instructor the time and trouble of tracking down the material we have

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provided" (Brent and Lutz). For readers or rhetorics with readings, summaries or interpretations are provided in case the busy instructor hasn't time to read the whole thing herself or needs a quick reminder. The emphasis on saving the teacher time fits, of course, with what we already know about the politics of institutionalized writing instruction: textbook publishers respond to the reality that most writing teachers are overworked and underpaid women (Bullock and Trimbur; Miller; Holbrook). While on one hand, saving time can be declared an important service, on the other hand, the time-saving emphasis might be doing inexperienced teachers a disservice. For them, reflective teaching is most important, and saving time on preparation does not necessarily help them to build confidence or a sense of authority in the classroom.

References to the new or the busy instructor appear in a number of contexts throughout these IMs. One of the more unusual appears in the Colombo, Cullen, and Lisle IM for *Rereading America*: In a passage providing tips on a selection by Josh Ozersky on "TV's Antifamilies," the authors note that "Tenured faculty may extend question 9 and make Ozersky the centerpiece of their courses by assigning the essay the first day and watching sitcoms throughout every class meeting thereafter" (33). This sarcastic comment operates as an inside joke among IM users—those outside tenure or the tenure process can have a laugh about the sitcom classroom, presided over by a comfortably tenured teacher (where, ironically, a writing textbook and IM wouldn't be needed, anyway).

In the truest sense of "guide," IM authors typically invoke their own authority and classroom experience, especially their familiarity with the particular textbook for which the IM is designed. The prefaces of IMs for subsequent editions frequently open by acknowledging the experience that the IM author has had in using this particular text, as well as the helpfulness of reviewers and correspondents in noting the problems, challenges, and possible rough spots. On one level, these acknowledgements illustrate the collaborative nature of IMs, especially the group effort of subsequent editions. On another level, though, as with Salmon's references to McCrimmon's authority, IMs often construct a hierarchy of teaching experience, with textbook authors at the top, IM authors one level down, and new, young teaching assistants at the bottom.

Experience in the classroom enables teachers to know what to take from the IM and what to ignore; experience also determines who is writing these manuals and who is reading them. At the same time that they assure experienced teachers that their own experience and judgment is best, IMs also want to offer plenty of guidance for the uninitiated in both how to run a classroom and how to use a manual.

In addressing the inexperienced teacher, several IM authors make deliberate points that these manuals should not be seen as answer guides, that the suggested answers have limited applicability. Here are several examples: "[The questions] are *not* meant to be aids to literary analysis" (Morgan iii); "we hasten to add that there are no absolute answers for most of the questions and

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that our suggested answers may not always be the best or the most interesting ones" (*Patterns*). Another takes pains to point out that "it would be presumptuous to pretend that this manual has all the best answers. The suggested exercise answers and comments are consequently offered in the spirit of helpfulness and suggestion and are never intended in any way to supersede individual instructor judgment" (Rigg). Bartholomae and Petrosky go so far as to apologize in advance if they seem too dogmatic: "We don't mean to imply that we have a corner on effective teaching" (v).

In their hesitancy to be too prescriptive or dogmatic, IM authors are careful to describe their purpose as that of providing suggestions or "possibilities"—an often-used word in prefaces: e.g., "we hope that the manual suggests possibilities or alternatives that will be useful to you" (Eschholz, Rosa, and Clark iii). Dozens of manuals emphasize the idea of possibilities—that the possibilities for using a text in a classroom are limited only by the teacher's imagination (and the students' cooperation). Despite the extensive coverage of some IMs, therefore, they also claim to be hesitant about dictating a curriculum.

In a related effort to assure teachers that their autonomy in the classroom will not be compromised by the suggestion of possibilities, IM authors often allude to a sense of community or collegiality: "we see this manual as a form of conversation with our colleagues" (Schuster and Van Pelt 1). "What follows is a . . . list of tips and afterthoughts—the sorts of things we find ourselves saying to each other over coffee in the staff room" (Bartholomae and Petrosky 1). "We hope you will find the comments interesting . . . in the same way you might enjoy conversation with a colleague" (Callaghan, Kleck, and Martin xxi). The image of IMs as staff room conversations—or as one's own personal support group—provides an interesting contrast to another image of IMs: their function as "policing" mechanisms, used by WPAs to ensure that all instructors are providing similar instruction in the writing process, or that students are given roughly similar experiences in their required writing courses.

It is difficult, however, to give students similar experiences or similar instruction when these textbooks provide a virtual smorgasboard of choices. As Welch and others have noted, rhetoric textbooks have long been associated with the something-for-everyone approach, with process in the first three chapters and Venn diagrams in a later one. While variety and flexibility may be more marketable, it may also confuse new teachers. In a particularly vivid example of flexibility to the point of near absurdity, the manual for *Ourselves Among Others: Cross-Cultural Readings for Writers* claims to be suited for the following instructors and their interests: it can be used in a "standard, reading-and-research oriented course"; or a course focusing on rhetorical analysis; or one which attends to style; or one structured around writing across the disciplines; or one using primarily personal writing; or one integrating creative literature with nonfiction (Cain and Rye 1). Its flexibility is so great that this text might be used in any type of writing course, no matter what the emphasis. The introduction goes on to assert the applicability of this text to a number of teaching techniques: "The book suits the

standard lecture-discussion quite well . . . [and the discussion questions] . . . will also prove useful for instructors who opt for a collaborative classroom" (Cain and Rye 1-2).

Similarly, *The St. Martin's Guide to Writing* IM "offers an integrated freshman writing program adaptable to the needs of students and the special interests of instructors. . . . *The St. Martin's Guide* is a versatile teaching tool. With this textbook, you can organize a writing course in many different ways and with quite diverse emphases" (Axelrod and Cooper 1; 3). This IM suggests using the *Guide* for courses that emphasize personal experience; library research; or critical thinking and reading skills, which might be structured "around lectures, discussions, workshops, or conferencing" (3).

The marketing message—the plea for unit adoptions—is that textbooks that can be used by any teacher, in any writing course that focuses on any approach or any set of practices. One of the major functions of IMs, therefore, is to show how the "same" book can be used by any teacher, in any program, with any emphasis. In their function as something-for-everyone, IMs represent a number of competing demands and identities, awkwardly straddling the mass market and the local institution.

In fact, IMs reflect quite keenly the multiple contradictions in the teaching of writing and the ways that composition—as Faigley argues throughout *Fragments of Rationality*—is still invested in a modernist ideology of writing and teaching. As ideas and theories have shifted the ground beneath them, teachers slip between competing ideologies, and IMs try to provide the safety net with comforting assurances or defused tensions. IM users are led to believe that another semester of teaching experience may be all that stands between them and autonomy, authority, or confidence in the writing classroom. While experience might make some situations easier to handle, it does not mean that surprises don't occur or that every writing class becomes routine, especially as explorations of postmodernism, feminism, and cultural studies have destabilized even the most firmly-situated process paradigm. Similarly, the strategy of emphasizing all of the textbook's "possibilities" serves to reinforce the illusion that writing teachers at all levels do have choices, that they can actually be autonomous without any consequences. Teachers are represented as inherently rational beings who will, if given a number of possibilities, make the right choices for their students, and their choices will be supported by the "community" of other IM users.

Most of the contradictions in the ways teachers are represented in IMs result from the effort of publishers to provide wide, marketable variety. Other contradictions result from the politics of writing instruction that IMs reduce to an experienced/inexperienced dichotomy: IMs try to address the old pro and the young rookie; the rushed freeway flyer and the reflective graduate student; the self-confident and the insecure. In addition, when teachers are represented as busy (read "disorganized"), and when they are provided with a great deal of guidance and pre-packaged preparation, the assumption is that teachers cannot quite be trusted.

Another set of tensions results because composition's institutional position requires teachers to be both gatekeepers and coaches, a very tricky negotiation for even the most experienced. For example, teachers are asked to orchestrate a student-centered classroom but know very well that they cannot give up (their institutionalized) authority. In the same IM that defines contemporary writing practices through collaboration, journals, and portfolios, instructors are also supplied with five different samples of evaluation checklists—evaluation sheets to attach to papers with qualities ranked strong, weak, or somewhere in between, or with qualities given certain points: in other words, diverse writers—in a classroom where multiculturalism is the main topic—can “score” a possible 20 points for organization or for sentence structure (Lordi and Stanford 1-20). The treatment of evaluation belies the gestures toward a student-centered classroom and reinforces the more powerful ideology: that teachers are to be, at all times, the gatekeeper. And even though a number of recent IMs suggest that teachers should give students decision-making power in the class—thereby giving students a sense of ownership and responsibility—no IM acknowledges how this strategy might have different risks or results depending on a number of factors about the teacher. Would empowering students work the same for a middle-aged male teacher as it would for a young, female teacher, especially if that subject position is accompanied by other cultural “differences”? Marian Yee admits that a teacher's “signs of authority usually win” over the signs of difference, but her entrance into first-day class meetings as a Chinese woman is never comfortable or risk-free (26).

Hired by institutions and bound to a writing program's policies, teachers are also supposed to be individuals in their (privatized) classrooms. IMs' frequent assurances about individualism and autonomy contradict the common writing program practice of having a “standard syllabus” or of requiring teachers to attend in-service workshops. Most of all, these appeals to autonomy fly in the face of the mass textbook market, where publishers thrive on program-wide adoptions, with as many as 2500 students and teachers using the same book.

These thousands of students, just by the virtue of buying the same textbook, begin to share a multitude of characteristics. IMs try to represent a variety of teacher subject-positions, but they construct students in extremely predictable, unvarying ways, shrink-wrapped like a packet of ancillaries. Students are, above all, assumed to be trouble for the new teaching assistant—resistant, recalcitrant, negative. Furthermore, the writing classroom and its occupants are reduced to categories, as if “freshmen” or “college students” or “student writers” cover all contingencies. The frequency of such comments as “This article is going to be difficult for some of your students” or “Students are likely to balk here” reinforces the idea that students across the country are predictable and knowable, and that writing classrooms, despite the many options for how to structure them, do not vary. Such generalizations ignore how students differ across institutions and regions, not to mention how they differ from each other. These “tips” may also lead new teachers to feel that they can

always predict student reactions, or at least that they are prepared for any situation. IMs, in this function, are designed to keep the teacher from being asked hard questions; they act as a helmet of protection in case students throw something unexpected. They offer poise in a package.

Connors claims that rhetoric textbooks were born out of "the weakness and ignorance of untrained teachers, and out of the increasing power of a newly technologized publishing industry that was quickly gaining the ability to control the content of textbooks by the exertion of market pressure" (183). Market pressure is still a key factor in the content of IMs, of course, as are the conditions of teaching composition. But perhaps less obvious are the ways that IMs and the textbooks they supplement reproduce the notion that teacher-subjects will be well-prepared and well-organized, if only they have a book to go by. The ways in which teachers are constructed by these IMs reinforces their institutional powerlessness and may lead them to believe that they can overcome inexperience or a lack of confidence with a thin booklet, paper-covered and stapled.

Similarly, many IMs create the illusion that writing teachers can transcend ideological differences in the classroom by being well-prepared. In these manuals, teachers are assumed to be free of race, class, gender, age, sexuality, material lives or political commitments; the only way in which they differ has to do with their level of experience. The main objective of the teacher is to stay ahead of students, to predict their answers and have a better one, or to ward off any conflict or dissensus. The continual chant of "only suggestions, only suggestions" also gives teachers the illusion of authority, choice, autonomy—when, in fact, many of the textbooks, especially when purchased with a number of ancillaries, are intended to be "packaged courses," for which busy or inexperienced teachers do not have to make many independent decisions.

## Conclusion: Complicating the Illusion of Preparedness

One of the reasons that IMs collect dust is that they are typically smaller and thinner than "the real books," often typewritten rather than typeset, with paper covers and staples for bindings (even though recent technological advances have made most IMs look more professional). Their appearance reinforces the idea that in some ways they are not very important, that they are done on the cheap to serve a mass need. After a few years in the field, who needs them to teach a writing class? However, WPAs and others who mentor teaching assistants or supervise adjunct faculty may wish to take a closer look at the IMs for the texts they order.

In the context of the politics of writing instruction—where the laborers are part-timers, adjuncts, teaching assistants, and otherwise tenuous personnel—the proliferation of these manuals suggests that writing program directors don't have time to train everyone, don't get credit for a course based on mentoring, lack knowledge of the discipline, or are overwhelmed with other responsibilities.

However, WPAs might have some power in this marketplace. Because

unit adoptions—mass numbers ordered by programs or departments—drive the textbook market, those WPAs heading up some of the largest writing programs in the country are most responsible for what gets published in successive editions or which IMs undergo revision to address certain needs. WPAs know that a good IM can help to train teaching assistants or new adjuncts; therefore, they should do as much as possible to recommend changes in IMs, changes that don't necessarily reduce teacher preparedness to "tips."

For example, WPAs might suggest that these manuals do more to represent the actual experiences of teachers, especially those who are "young" and inexperienced—success stories as well as horror stories, and stories about the "routine" parts of teaching. *Stories* might bridge the gap between the local institution and the mass-produced IM that now exists. IMs could also provide critical tools with which new teaching assistants could analyze the power relationships in the classroom and the ways in which their own position in the institution situates them. There are, in other words, political reasons for the feelings of insecurity that have little to do with a teacher's age or level of experience. Especially when new teaching assistants and newly-hired adjuncts are sent into classrooms to discuss sensitive and highly-charged political issues, WPAs might also want to see a more complex treatment of classroom dynamics (along the lines of the third-edition *Rereading America* IM) or questions in the apparatus that ask *teachers*—not just students—to reflect on the issues and on their own strategies or approaches.

IMs are understandably contradictory given the nature of our rapidly-evolving field, but publishers might do more to represent the complexity of teachers, students, and classroom practices, rather than attempting to simplify instruction. I once worked at a university where the president announced that "anyone can teach writing." IMs too often seem to operate on the same assumption. Asking IM authors, WPAs, and teachers across differences to practice reflective teaching might effectively challenge the illusion that the teaching of writing can be packaged and sold.

## Notes

1. The earliest version of this paper was presented at CCCC, 1994. I want to thank Chuck Schuster, who generously agreed to read an early version, and the anonymous referees for *WPA*, whose comments and suggestions were right on target. This draft has also benefited greatly from the information and insights of my colleague Bob Schwegler, a well-established textbook author (including IMs) and a consultant for Harper-Collins.

2. I was able to visit the Beal Collection and complete this project with a small research grant from the Council of Writing Program Administrators. While the collection currently houses no more IMs than the offices of packrat colleagues, I did find several manuals dating back to 1964 representing a range of workbooks, handbooks, and rhetorics.

3. Information in this paragraph was provided by Bob Schwegler.

4. An exception to this is a bibliography in the George and Trimbur IM for *Reading Culture*. A sign of the changing times, however, this bibliography focuses on cultural studies, not on the teaching of writing.
5. According to Schwegler, the IM for D'Angelo's rhetoric set a new standard for instructor's manuals. Its thorough and comprehensive treatment of the teaching of writing influenced industry-wide attention to the IM.

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# Stories to Teach By: Using Narrative Cases in TA and Faculty Development

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## The Need for Reflective Practice

As Lambert and Tice's recent volume on the preparation of teaching assistants illustrates, new teachers of college writing courses receive training in a number of different venues—intensive, lengthy orientations; a required graduate course in composition theory and pedagogy; mentor programs in which new teachers collaborate with more experienced instructors; and informal “brown-bag” discussions that encourage teachers to reflect on their methods and share strategies and experiences. The content of the preparation also varies widely, from reviews of a course syllabus, conventional procedures, and materials for a specific course to credit-bearing graduate seminars that cover the rhetorical, linguistic, and pedagogical theories that support writing instruction and the literature of composition studies. As John Ruskiewicz has pointed out, in just the past decade teacher preparation programs in colleges have grown from simple, “how-to” workshops to courses where rhetorical theory and research in composition sometimes overwhelm matters of classroom practice.

Ruskiewicz' observation reflects the growing importance of weaving together both theory and practice in our teacher preparation programs. Regardless of the form that training and development takes, the typical WPA now faces a planning dilemma: How can we prepare new instructors, *in both theory and practice*, to design courses, to assign, coach, and evaluate students' reading and writing, and to interact professionally with peers and students? Few WPAs who prepare writing teachers would maintain that their new charges need not study, critique, and reflect on the theories and research that support classroom practice in composition. At the same time, the very real, pragmatic needs of the composition curriculum beckon: WPAs must prepare new teachers, usually very quickly, to be effective in the classroom. We believe that “cases”—real or realistic stories about teaching problems used for discussion and problem-solving—are one useful and engaging way to integrate theory and practice in teacher preparation.

## Narrative “Lore” and the Improvement of Teaching

In almost any conceivable educational setting, teachers spend a great deal

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of time telling each other interesting stories about their classes, students, programs, and campuses, stories to which their colleagues can immediately relate. These stories make up the daily fare teachers' work, and the issues come out of the immediate need to solve specific problems: what to do about a sexual harassment case prompted by an "electronic" revision session arranged in a computerized composition class; how to handle a tough instance of "group" plagiarism in a collaborative paper; what to recommend to a TA about a student who is writing pornographic journal entries; what advice to give in a workshop on how to respond to grammatical errors in students' papers; how to react to a freshman composition teacher who teaches everything through a thick lens of Marxist philosophy that makes peripheral the students' focus on their own writing. In many cases, these specific stories move us into more general philosophical and practical concerns of teaching and running composition programs. Just as often, some thorny general issue becomes real and tangible as we share specific cases of these issues at our institutions.

Recently, for example, a relatively inexperienced teaching assistant consulted one of us about a problem she thought she had incited in her composition class. Her students, she explained, were coming to class unprepared, often sitting mutely when she tried to begin a discussion of one of her many assigned readings. When called on by name, many of the twenty students would confess that they had not had time to study the assigned reading in detail. On the day in question, the teacher, pushed to the edge of classroom decorum, asked for a show of hands by those students who had finished the assignment. Eleven students—all women—had come prepared. The teacher promptly dismissed the remaining nine—mostly men—admonishing them not to return until they could participate fully. Three of the men protested, asking if they could stay in the class to hear the discussion and participate when they could. Holding her ground, the teacher refused to continue the class until all the unprepared students had left. Reluctantly, they gathered their things and filed out.

Embedded in this teacher's experience and crying out for interpretation are a number of issues that might be made "legitimate" in the scholarly community if presented theoretically, stripped of the immediacy and situatedness that gives them life in the teacher's classroom. The issue of student involvement and active participation, for example, plays itself out constantly not only in general approaches to college teaching but more specifically in models of writing instruction in the field of composition studies. Issues of teachers' and students' authority in the classroom (and especially as a function of gender) fuel much research and many scholarly debates about the nature of education. In the face of teachers' rights to set policy in their own classrooms, the issue of students' rights to the class time for which they have paid tuition provides snarls for even the best university attorneys. In short, this young teaching assistant's action and consequent internal questioning deserve their place among the most theoretically challenging discussions about teaching.

Such "lore" and storytelling saturates the field of composition, yet even

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our highly practical discipline has not yet learned to accord much scholarly significance to narrative accounts like this teacher's experience. In *The Making of Knowledge in Composition*, North defends the practice of lore as a mode of inquiry even as he acknowledges that "its credibility, its power vis-a-vis other kinds of knowledge, has gradually, steadily diminished" (21). Brannon has gone so far as to suggest a dichotomy between the "softness" of classroom narratives and the "hardness" of scientific truth that tends to inform the profession (especially in its journals). Yet in spite of this overarching disposition toward the nature of scholarly thought about teaching, Brannon predicts a growing awareness of the value of teachers' reflected practice as an arena of authentic research. Challenging us to redefine what should count as knowledge of the writing classroom, she asks, "Why aren't teachers' stories being written and heard?" To tear down the walls of the dichotomy between lived experience and scholarly research requires that each of these perspectives inform the other, so that our reflected practice—even in the form of stories about teaching—takes on a kind of inherent validity.

Together with a heightened accountability for good teaching, recent exploration of what counts as "thoughtfulness" in pedagogy supports a case-based approach to teacher development (Boyer). At their simplest, cases are classroom stories, narratives that engage teachers in dialogue, discussion and problem-solving. Cases directly address the dilemma of balancing theory and practice in teacher preparation. Each case presents a lifelike situation that mirrors what happens routinely in the lives of teachers, and offers a series of issues for discussion that grow out of the situation. The issues come to life in typical problems experienced by writing teachers—problems in designing courses, creating writing assignments, responding to student writing, or interacting with students in classrooms and conferences. By discussing how they might deal practically and concretely with the issues raised, instructors delve into the underlying beliefs, theories, or even research that support their practices.

Because cases are rich retellings of real classroom events, they encourage teachers to move beyond the "idea" of a teaching issue by seeing it played out in a particular context, enmeshed in various related circumstances. Instead of talking "about" leading effective class discussions (even if this topic takes the form of a hypothetical student who constantly dominates the discussion), workshop participants can read about an actual case of classroom dominance, in all its interpersonal complexity, and with all its connections to other aspects of classroom life. That complexity allows for an open-ended unpredictability—the very characteristic of a real-life teaching situation that makes our profession so continually challenging. Furthermore, while cases are particular enough to generate specific questions, they depict classroom events and interactions with which most teachers can identify. Experienced teachers can relate in some way to the kinds of problems a good case will raise, and they often recall other, equally compelling situations of their own. Finally, sharing experiences, reflections, and advice creates a strong sense of community among those who participate in case workshops. At a time when many WPAs and writing teachers express feelings of isolation on their own campuses, the case approach offers a space for dialogue,

collaboration, and social interaction.

Case studies have long been used in various educational contexts, perhaps most thoroughly in the Harvard Business School. More recently, however, cases have become a powerful tool for faculty development. Several organizations, programs, and funding agencies around the country are devoting considerable resources to the development of cases. Pace University even has a Center for Case Studies in Education, directed by Rita Silverman and William Welty, whose mission is to develop and disseminate cases and information on cases, and to offer assistance to others who want to use or develop their own cases. Pat Hutchings, director of the American Association of Higher Education's "Teaching Initiative," has identified the case method as a major component of a recent project aimed at improving college teaching and learning:

Serious attention to the improvement of teaching is on the rise on campuses. But what's the best route to improvement? How can faculty be most helpful to one another? What's the most productive way to talk about important pedagogical issues? One answer that looks increasingly promising is *cases*—narrative, story-like accounts of teaching and learning incidents that raise pedagogical issues in faculty discussion. (Hutchings 6)

Cases themselves come in many forms. In the medical professions, business, and law, for example, they often take the form of "case studies," which present real(istic) situations and then offer commentary, analysis, or solutions by experts, perhaps as a way to model problem-solving methods. A more useful kind of case for discussions of teaching will typically offer no answers to the questions and issues posed. The aim is for instructors—new, experienced, or mixed—to work through the cases in seminars, classes, and meetings, bringing their own experiences to bear and discussing how various bodies of theory and research, as well as the contingencies of local contexts, shape effective responses to the kinds of questions and issues raised by the stories.

Cases for faculty development can be relatively short and undetailed, or they may be several pages long and include information about the context that helps to make the case complicated and more interesting. The former type of case is sometimes called a "vignette." Because it includes little detail, it is designed to help participants connect the brief narrative to their own experiences, encouraging the sharing of stories and events. An example of such a vignette is "Coco Feels Raped," which focuses on issues of the right to privacy in the teaching of writing.

## Coco Feels Raped

Several days after the end of his introductory writing class, Terry Macewicz was in his office, tidying up from a hectic semester, when Coco Stebbings walked into the room. The students in his class, both men and women, thought Coco was absolutely gorgeous, and Terry had trouble on

several occasions keeping the male students focused on the class work when he put them with her into small groups. He knew that some men in the class were constantly talking about Coco and were riveted to her when she spoke out in discussions. The women, for their part, seemed preoccupied with Coco's expensive clothes and chic hairstyle. All the attention to Coco's appearance was, Terry felt, unfortunate because she had a keenly analytical mind and an articulate way of speaking, but the other students seemed to pay much more attention to her good looks than to her ideas. Now she was in his office visibly upset.

"Hi, Coco," Terry said. "Congratulations on the A."

"Look, Mr. Macewicz," Coco replied firmly, "I haven't come to complain about my grade or anything about your teaching, and I did get a lot out of the class. But I feel that you have absolutely no sense of protecting people's privacy in your courses. First you suggested that we exchange phone numbers with members of our conference group so we can get together outside of class. Well, you should know that ever since the first week of class I've been getting nuisance calls in my dorm room and both my roommate and I are terrified. Then I started getting lewd notes under my door, and when I got together with Tom Bonaventure to work on our group project all he did was try making a pass at me and I had to finish it by myself. Then you read my paper about my ski trip with my boyfriend out loud to the class and I got all sorts of remarks from several guys in the class every time they saw me. Then you left our papers in a box in the hall outside your office where everyone can get at them, and someone has stolen my final project. And to top it all off you pinned your grade sheet up on your door where everyone can see my address and social security number and my grade. I feel like everything you've done in this class has just stripped me naked. I feel like I've been raped."

### Issues for Discussion

- How should Terry respond to Coco's accusations?
- Which of Terry's actions do you find unacceptable in the context of Coco's rights to privacy? How would you describe those rights: psychologically? politically? as a matter of personal safety?
- Are any of Terry's actions defensible, and if so, on what grounds?
- What are Terry's legal responsibilities to maintain his students' right to privacy? Do you know of specific institutional policies where you teach that bear on Terry's actions and/or related activities in and out of the classroom?

(Anson, et al. 90-91)



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In addition to their focus on issues of teaching, vignettes such as “Coco” are also very useful in helping new teachers to learn in an unbureaucratic way some of the policies and administrative procedures used at particular institutions. After discussing the underlying ethical or theoretical issues in the vignette, teachers can put policy statements or manuals into a real context.

Longer cases are designed to help teachers understand potential problems and work toward principled solutions. In this way, should a similar problem arise in their own teaching, they will have created strategies for dealing with it. To illustrate how such cases work to improve teaching, consider “Trudy Does Comics,” a case designed for teachers who use writing in courses across the curriculum (Anson 1994).

### Trudy Does Comics

“Great seminar!” Howard Pruett exclaimed to the group leaders as he and his colleagues filed out of the room. For the past two days, Howard had been participating in a faculty development workshop at his school (along with two dozen colleagues from various departments) focusing on integrating active learning strategies into classroom instruction. Inspired by the many ways that the seminar leaders had engaged the group in creative activities, Howard was determined to make some major changes in the way he taught philosophy. “I can’t believe I’ve been so dull in my teaching,” he observed to Amanda Shall, one of the seminar participants he had befriended. “Lecture, test, lecture, test . . . it’s a wonder that my students have tolerated me for this long. And my writing assignments—sheer boredom!”

“Mea culpa,” Amanda said, laughing. “I think this seminar has been a breath of fresh air. But are you ready to put all that work into redesigning your courses?”

“Actually, I’m looking forward to it,” Howard replied as they left the building. “And the first thing I’m changing is the way I use writing in my 101 course.”

For over a decade, Howard had assigned occasional short, formal papers in his introductory philosophy course. As a supporter of writing across the curriculum, he had become known in his department for his opinion that students should write regularly in all courses in order to improve their skills and become better learners. While he teasingly admitted to his English Department colleagues that he was not versed in the “higher arts of teaching the lower verbal skills,” he had—until the faculty seminar—felt quite confident assigning and grading his short academic papers. In these papers, he expected his students to explain

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philosophical concepts and provide examples for generalizations, or to argue a position on a philosophical controversy using a standard essay structure that included a thesis statement and carefully developed supporting paragraphs. His students rarely contested his grades and comments, which tended to be quite rigorous.

But now he was about to throw out what he had been doing for ten years: a course so “automatic” that he usually prepared for his new term the day before it began. Later that day, he dug out a copy of his syllabus from the previous term and began marking it up. Still inspired by the seminar, he found himself putting big slashes through the section describing his writing assignments, then jotting down lists of ideas on the back of the pages. He hadn’t felt this excited about teaching since he collaborated with a close colleague on a team-taught course.

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“How can you say that?” Trudy almost yelled, clutching her second paper and looking defiantly at Howard as the rest of the class filed out of the room. It was a few weeks into Howard’s introductory philosophy course, and not all was well.

“Look, Trudy, I wrote to you about this on your last paper,” Howard replied, gathering his books and notes. “When I asked you to develop ways of understanding the material of the course, I had in mind all sorts of possibilities—traditional papers, invented dialogues with the philosophers we’re reading, double-entry journals in which you critique major concepts. I did not have in mind comic books. I’m afraid I just can’t accept what you’re doing.”

In redesigning his course, Howard had decided to give the students an opportunity not only to write in different ways about the course material, but to define these ways themselves. According to the leaders of his faculty-development seminar, providing such opportunities can help students to respond in ways that better match their learning styles and intellectual dispositions. In his syllabus, Howard had included the following passage reflecting his new expectations for students’ writing:

Writing assignments: These will be worth one-half of your final grade. There will be five assignments due on the dates specified. You will decide what kind of writing you would like to do; you may choose typical school writing such as essays and formal analyses of the readings, or you may be more inventive, perhaps writing an imaginary dialogue with one of the five philosophers we are reading, or a dialogue between two different philosophers, or perhaps a parody of an author’s writings. Be inventive but insightful, and write enough to explore a subject well, please.

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In drafting these new requirements for his course, Howard had worried a little that he would be unable to make clear judgments on the quality of the students' work. After all, they would be turning in different kinds of writing, some of which would not resemble papers he was used to reading in his course. Partly to reassure himself and partly to be more specific to his class about the assignments, he spent ten minutes during the first class meeting discussing what he meant by "free choice" in the assignments. "What will I be looking for in these, then?" he asked rhetorically. "First, that you have become engaged with the subject matter—not just that you have read the material but that you have actually reflected on it, swilled it around in your thinking like a sip of fine wine. These papers are first and foremost a tool for your own learning, and second, a tool for me to assess the extent to which you are actively and critically exploring the subject matter." He realized as he said this that he was echoing some of the terms of the summer seminar leaders, terms like "active learning," "critical thinking," "exploring the subject matter." But he had found it all so compelling that certainly his class would, too. A glance around the room at the thirty young students confirmed it, he thought: many of them seemed excited, eager to get to work.

But now, a few weeks into the term, here was Trudy, visibly upset, holding her paper and demanding an explanation.

"But it says right here," Trudy went on, searching through the syllabus. "Well, it says we decide about what kind of writing. Maybe it was what you said on the first day, but I remember reading or hearing something about just wanting to know if we were reading the stuff and thinking about it. And I'm doing that here. I mean, look at all the different things other people are writing. Why can't I use these little scenes as my way of showing that I've done the reading?"

Howard had to admit that he was intrigued the first time he saw Trudy's comics after the class had read Plato's allegory of the cave in the course text, *The Enduring Questions*. Most of the students had taken a safe path on this first essay, discussing the idea of Forms or critiquing the relationship between ideals and what is tangible in the world. A few students had tried something different, most notably Kurt Nichols, who had imagined himself being on the other side of the cave wall and seeing not shadows but what he called the Real Thing. When he reached Trudy's comics a few papers after Kurt's, Howard was excited to think that at least a few students were using alternative methods of analyzing the material.

In that first paper, Trudy had drawn two imaginary characters (Hap and Zap) shackled on one side of the cave. The drawings themselves were quite good—and he expected it: on the first day, during the introductions, Trudy had pointed out that she was a studio arts major

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specializing in drawing, and wanted to enter the field of advertising as a commercial artist.

But as he read the comics, Howard began feeling unsure about how he should grade Trudy's work. The two characters spoke to each other in short sentences that appeared in the usual cartoon balloons above their heads. Their discussion seemed to Howard rather unsophisticated, rendered in a kind of teenage speech not characteristic of discussions in his course. It was hard to tell from the short exchanges just how much Trudy really understood of the Plato readings. When he had finished the page of comic frames, he was utterly at a loss to decide what to say to Trudy about her work. He had put the comics aside, finished the rest of the papers, and then returned to Trudy's work the next day. Finally, pressured by the upcoming class meeting, he jotted down some notes on the back of the comic page:

Trudy—this is fine work visually speaking, and I like the *idea* (if not entirely the substance) of the comics. I think that in some ways, however, the choice of comics has limited your opportunities to explore the readings very fully. It's not clear, for example, whether Zap really knows what Plato means by Forms, and most of the time Hap is just saying "yup" to Zap's pronouncements (were you trying to be Socratic here? If so, it's not entirely clear to me). So while the idea is innovative, it may not work, finally, as a method of writing in the course. C-

When he had handed back these first papers, he noticed that Trudy seemed upset, but she didn't approach him. Now, after the second paper (and another, longer batch of comics on a reading by Kant), she was confronting him directly about his assessment. On this batch, Howard had given Trudy another C-, mainly to recognize that she had, in fact, read the selection and tried to say something about it in her comics. But again Howard had been at a loss to grade her work. Hap was clearly more vocal this time, and there were more frames in the comics as the two characters carried on their discussion about Kant's positions. But after all, Howard had thought, there was simply *less text* here than in the other students' papers. Trudy just wasn't writing as much, even in two or three pages of comics, and it was again impossible to know how deeply she really understood Kant.

"Trudy, I know how much you enjoy art," Howard had said softly, trying not to be confrontational. "But this is a course that turns around the written language, around words that stand on their own. Your comics are fun and interesting, but they go only halfway toward what I see as the proper way to explore the field of philosophy. Why don't you put the comics aside for the third paper and try something a

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little different? Besides, you might find some other new ways of exploring the material and becoming engaged with it."

"Fine," Trudy said abruptly, thrusting the syllabus and her paper into her bag. "But I don't consider that freedom." And she swiftly left the room.

### Issues for Discussion

1. Is Howard wise in asking Trudy to stop using the comics in her responses to the required writing assignments? How do you assess his course of action?
2. Should Howard have been more explicit in his expectations to students for their experimental writing? If so, could that squelch the "freedom" he wants to give them? What could he have said about his expectations?
3. Is there a way for Howard to recognize Trudy's strongly visual learning style (and creative talents) in his expectations for students' papers?
4. Could Trudy have done anything in her responses to meet Howard's expectations, as these are expressed in his syllabus and in what he said to the class?
5. What issues does this case raise about diverse forms of writing, teachers' expectations, criteria for assessing learning, power vs. freedom in discourse, and the relationship between learning to write and writing to learn?



"Trudy Does Comics" illustrates an important principle about cases: it is an engaging story based on a real classroom situation. Unlike much theoretical work in composition studies, the case is immediately present, peopled by a real teacher whose earnest idealism is challenged in a temporarily uncomfortable but ultimately productive way.

Conducting faculty development workshops with cases, as "Trudy Does Comics" might suggest, promotes immediate and lively discussion. Because new teachers may have had little experience in the classroom, the situation provided in the case begins to enact what would otherwise remain a fairly generalized problem. Asking a new teacher about how to use journals in the classroom may open up important considerations about the type of writing expected in the journal, how often it will be used or collected, how important it will be in students' grades, or what assignments might feed into it. But the problems raised in "Trudy"—how much to "constrain" students' writing, how to respond to it, how to define or understand its goals, how to recognize students' different

learning styles, or how to measure the quality of students' learning through varieties of discourse some of which may be academically unfamiliar—are brought to life by the specific context of Howard's class. The case provides a scene in which teachers can contextualize practical or theoretical questions.

Cases can also be used in programs involving mentorships or collaborations between experienced and novice teachers. Newer teachers can be paired with colleagues who have a lot of instructional experience, or groups of new teachers can meet with a WPA or other faculty leader, to discuss how they would address the issues, both theoretically and practically, in the actual context of their own institution. We have found that discussions of cases with experienced instructors and tenured faculty inevitably call up the participants' own experiences (sometimes from very distant memory). In turn, these experiences become the "living" scenarios that encourage pedagogical thoughtfulness and turn routine practice into the "scholarship of teaching." Exposed to such narratives of experienced teachers, newer teachers learn of methods and problem-solving strategies they can use in their own instruction.

A successful use of cases involves some attention to the type of participants and the goals of the workshop. In one model, participants are asked to read and perhaps write about a specific case (ideally between meetings). They then divide into small groups and discuss their responses. Once reconvened, the large group compares the issues that emerged from the focused discussions. If the small groups respond to different cases, then a spokesperson in each group can summarize the facts of that case for the larger group discussion. Even that exercise—deciding on the relevant facts of the case—may challenge the group, since the cases are filled with many details that may or may not be considered significant. If all the groups are responding to the same case, then the leader needs to allow enough time for sharing and comparing the group summaries, and for synthesizing the resulting large group discussion.

How the discussion is organized is perhaps less critical than having the chance to explore the situation described in the case. The discussion questions typically included at the end of a case are intentionally provocative and complex. It is unlikely that someone would feel comfortable, on a first try, with a single solution to the problems posed. In fact, participants from different institutions, or with different levels of classroom experience, might want to spend some time putting their responses into a specific context.

When one of us used this case with a group of teachers from a dozen different colleges and universities in one state, we found that the diversity of teachers and institutions made the discussion even livelier than usual. The small groups offered comments which, in turn, were excellent springboards discussions about the uses of informal writing, the nature of teachers' response, the role of students' and teachers' ideologies, and the boundaries of "academic discourse." Some participants focused on Trudy as the "problem," arguing that she had not yet become a member of the academic community and come to terms with the conventions of its writing. Others looked to the development of

Howard's own teaching philosophy, claiming that he was caught midway between his previous, rigid approach to students' learning and a newer, more insightful approach whose particulars he had not yet entirely worked out. Still others focused on the way Howard's training in philosophy had not prepared him to assess different kinds of intellectual work outside his own field. As suggested in these responses, answers to the individual cases will vary. It is in this variation that both the workshop leaders and the participants will find ways to enrich their teaching by finding support for their assertions, thinking about alternative approaches, and trying to reach partial consensus on the problems underlying the case.

## Cases: Some Prospects

We see the use of cases as a starting point for programs that want sustained participation in faculty development. Cases offer a kind of model for reflective practice that formalizes experience without taking it out of the world of human action. In an integrated program of teacher development, it may be useful to move from existing cases (which must, at some level, always remain less than fully contextual—see Grossman) to the creation of cases from the actual daily experiences of teachers.

Cases *are* teachers' stories, but stories without immediate solutions. For teachers to turn their own experiences into cases, they must stand back from their experiences and ask what principles or theoretical issues make these experiences important to other teachers. Workshops in which participants begin writing their own cases from vicarious experience often focus on issues of design:

- Begin with a story. What has happened to you as a teacher that presented a problem to solve?
- Does your story present a problem that might lead to reflection, and can that reflection be generalized to other classroom situations?
- How can you deepen the issues in your story? How might you embellish the case?
- From whose point of view do you want to tell the story? Do you want a fictitious persona or do you want to place your readers into the situation ("You are teaching a freshman writing course at X College . . .")?
- How much contextual information should you include? How much detail is useful, and why?
- Do you want to present a distinctive problem, or is "finding out the problem" part of the case?

Such questions help cases writers to select experiences that can be meaningful to other teachers. One of us, for example, has heard a story about a teacher at a prestigious liberal arts college who has an unusual way of evaluating his students' writing. On the day he returns an assignment, he first hands back the papers of the students who have done well, neatly placing each graded paper

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in front of its author. Less successful students, however, are humiliatingly presented with zip-lock plastic baggies containing the shredded contents of their essays. Although it makes a shocking tale for professional conferences and coffee-room chit-chat, this story simply won't work as an effective case. It serves as a dramatic illustration of unprincipled instruction—of what *not* to do. After the initial gasps of horror, discussions of such stories last only a few minutes.

As they begin selecting and crafting their stories, participants welcome the opportunity to write creatively, seeing how their own lives can be transformed into meaningful, interesting tools for faculty development. The process of transforming specific experiences into generalizable cases also encourages teachers to stand back from the minutiae of their instruction and analyze the sources of its complexity. Over time, that experience may create more thoughtful and effective teaching. Such reflection (either as an original case or a response to someone else's case) can become excellent entries for a teacher portfolio (Anson "Portfolios").

Inspired by Brannon's vision of teacher inquiry, we also foresee some exciting potential for teacher-research and other studies arising from the case approach. For example, cases have much potential for longitudinal studies of teacher development (see Anson, described in Anderson). Small groups of 5-6 new teachers could consider and discuss one of two selected cases. Half the groups could discuss Case #1, and the other half could discuss Case #2. These focus-group discussions could be recorded and transcribed. Two or three years later, the same groups could consider and discuss the case to which they did not respond in the first year. Careful descriptive analyses of the transcriptions could then reveal whether there are qualitative differences in 1) the solutions the teachers present for the problem posed in the case; 2) the reasoning strategies used to arrive at a solution; 3) the ways in which prior teaching experiences are employed in the discussion; and 4) the nature of the teachers' talk about teaching in general. Refining the observations may help us to understand more fully not only what constitutes pedagogically rich reflection but also what seems to help young teachers to acquire the perspectives and knowledge that lend themselves to such reflection. We may then be able to revise our teacher-development programs in keeping with our new insights.

Variations on such longitudinal studies might also include comparisons of expert and novice teachers of writing. For example, a group of "expert" teachers (winners of teaching awards and grants, leaders of acclaimed teacher-development programs, etc.) could respond either individually or in focus groups to one or more cases. Comparisons of their responses might then be made with those of relatively inexperienced teachers. This research could discern patterns of thinking typical of expert or "model" teachers. Again, such patterns could be used as a rubric for examining less experienced teachers' pedagogical reasoning processes and problem-solving strategies. Differences might then lead to more principled faculty development programs.

In these and other studies, and in program-specific evaluations of teaching effectiveness, we may find that the use of cases provides a vital new

method for writing program administrators. As the case method becomes more widely used, we might also see its inclusion in professional journals as a way to encourage richer dialogues about teaching throughout the field, or into the work of writing-across-the-curriculum programs. Cases could also be used to raise issues of writing program administration and the implementation of professional standards for the teaching of writing. These and other uses of cases open up new opportunities for teachers, administrators, and students to tell their own stories and thereby reflect more thoughtfully on the scenes and actions that define their professional and personal lives.

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# Portfolios Across the Curriculum

Suzan Harrison

In 1985, as a graduate student and therefore composition instructor at a large, state university, I participated in a panel of composition professors and instructors trying to persuade the Arts and Sciences faculty to adopt a Writing Across the Curriculum program. It was, to say the least, an eye-opening experience for a naive graduate student who believed that what we were doing in our writing classrooms benefitted and was understood by faculty in other areas. But as I listened to what faculty in areas such as history, philosophy, political science, biology, psychology, classics, and physics had to say about student writing and writing instruction, I realized that assumptions I took for granted about pedagogical strategies and results were not necessarily shared by faculty from other disciplines. While some faculty supported the concept of writing across the curriculum, others were decidedly hostile to the idea. Some objected that it was not their responsibility to teach students how to write; we were to do that in two semesters of required composition. An historian exclaimed, "All I ask is that you teach students how to construct a decent sentence and where to put commas. Is that too much to ask? I mean, what else are you doing for two semesters of required freshman comp?"

Looking back on this experience ten years later and from the perspective of a professor and administrator in a composition program, I realize that the comments that surprised me so were actually not unusual in faculty discussions of writing across the curriculum programs. Both the resistance and the support are clearly demonstrated in the profiles of successful programs and the concluding survey of "the enemies of writing across the curriculum" in Toby Fulwiler's and Art Young's *Programs That Work: Models and Methods for Writing Across the Curriculum*.<sup>1</sup>

In "Reconsidering Faculty Resistance to Writing Reform," Jody Swilky observes that Fulwiler and Young, as well as others like David R. Russell and Susan H. McLeod, assume that resistance to writing across the curriculum is necessarily negative and obstructionist. Swilky points out, however, that "resistance can signify something other or more than 'negative' behavior. Although faculty resistance to cross-curricular writing instruction can be a conscious or unconscious attempt to preserve the status quo, such response can also represent a critical interrogation of the purposes of reform or uncertainty about the objectives of educational change" (50-51). Any faculty attempting to establish and then foster community standards for student writing will encounter resistance and disagreement; discussions of writing's place in a college curriculum often raise more questions than answers. How does an academic community achieve consensus about what constitutes quality writing? Compe-

tent writing? Who should be responsible for the development and quality of student writing? What ought to be the relationship between the roles and perceptions of writing in other disciplines and what we do in our composition classrooms? What effect should writing assessment have on students' writing?

Such questions about writing in the academy became the subject of much debate among faculty, administrators, and students when, in 1988, Eckerd College (a private, liberal arts college in St. Petersburg, Florida with 96 full-time faculty and approximately 1400 students) made the transition from timed, proficiency writing exams to a campus-wide portfolio-based mode of writing assessment. Our seven years of portfolio assessment demonstrate the success of portfolios at a small college<sup>2</sup> and illustrate the potential cross-curricular benefits of portfolio assessment.

The institutional answer to the question of who is responsible for writing instruction at Eckerd College is that all faculty share this responsibility and that writing shall be an integral part of the program of all majors. This institutional commitment to cross-curricular writing was reaffirmed in 1988 when the faculty, after much discussion and debate, unanimously passed legislation to replace a system of timed proficiency writing exams and required composition courses with a portfolio-based writing competency graduation requirement. Designed by George Meese, Director of the writing program, in response to the Southern Association of Colleges and School's requirement that we develop reliable methods of assessing our students' writing, our program was a college-wide adaptation of the Elbow/Belanoff program within the English department at SUNY/Stony Brook. Rather than administering this requirement within the context of a particular course, however, our portfolio is a graduation requirement. We ask students in the junior year to submit a portfolio of four papers *from any of their college classes*.<sup>3</sup> We encourage students to revise these papers in light of feedback from the original professors or through consultations in the Writing Center, and we ask that the portfolio copies *not* include the classroom professor's comments. Students cannot register for required senior comprehensive exams, thesis credits, or project credits until they have passed this competency requirement. Students whose portfolios do not pass are required to enroll in a writing course before submitting another portfolio. We have one spring and one fall deadline for portfolio submissions, and each semester the portfolios are evaluated by a committee of interdisciplinary faculty who have volunteered to participate in the review. The faculty reviewers follow procedures based on holistic scoring methods. To date, more than forty percent of the whole faculty have participated on an evaluation team.

Our portfolio instructions ask students to include compositions from four categories: 1. "a descriptive, narrative, or expressive piece that is primarily the result of the author's own 'making sense' of experience"; 2. "an argumentative or persuasive piece in which the author takes a stand on a topic or issue"; 3. "a piece of interpretation, evaluation, criticism, or analysis in which the focus is on the ideas of others" (usually a research paper); 4. "an in-class essay or essay

examination written under timed conditions." Students may also include a fifth, optional piece of their own choosing. We require that one of the submissions (usually the argumentative or the interpretive/analytical) be a fully documented, academic research paper that demonstrates the student's ability to incorporate source material into her or his writing. Students are also asked to annotate each paper in their portfolios with a description of the circumstances of the writing, including the course assignment, the amount of time and number of drafts, and any assistance they received in writing; we also ask them to annotate the portfolio as a whole with a reflective piece calling readers' attention to the strengths of the portfolio.

In "Portfolios and Literacy: Why?" (1994), Pat Belanoff comments, "One of the outcomes of introducing portfolios into a classroom as an assessment system—as almost everyone who uses them discovers happily or unhappily—is that they restructure everything" (17). The restructuring that results from the introduction of portfolios into a college-wide assessment program has implications for the entire curriculum. While the shift from timed, proficiency writing exams to portfolio assessment does not resolve all of the issues surrounding the place of writing in the college curriculum, the implementation of a college-wide portfolio assessment system raises these issues to the level of cross-disciplinary community discussion and negotiation, a shift that has, I believe, great significance for how students learn about and perceive writing and how an academic community thinks about the role of writing in the process of learning.

## How does an academic community achieve some sort of consensus about what constitutes good writing? Competent writing?

Too often discussions of assessment, testing, scoring validity, and measurement in composition and rhetoric<sup>4</sup> seek to reduce "good writing" to a set of qualities that can be easily measured, in a worst case scenario, by multiple choice, standardized tests that don't include a writing sample. The CCCC Committee on Assessment outlines the dangers of "externally imposed writing assessments" in their May 1992 "Selected Bibliography on Postsecondary Writing Assessment, 1979-91": "They may," the authors caution,

undermine the instructor's autonomy in the classroom, they may have a narrowing effect on the curriculum, and they may continue to invite the student to see writing when it matters—on the test—as filling in the blanks. Equally important, such measures of writing competency can depress the development of new paradigms for writing assessment. (244)

To this list of dangers, I would add one more. Such assessment methods suggest that an absolute notion of "good writing" exists outside of a rhetorical context, outside of a discourse community of readers and writers. I would argue instead that definitions of good writing change often, from decade to decade, from discipline to discipline, from one rhetorical situation to another, and are constructed and continuously reconstructed within the context of a community.

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In fact, as Peter Elbow and Pat Belanoff note, even composition professionals can't agree on any absolute notion of good writing: "Our profession lacks any firm, theoretical, discipline-wide, basis for deciding the right interpretation or evaluation of a text" (Portfolios 338). They continue, speaking of their own "in-house" portfolio system at SUNY-Stony Brook, "The only way to bring a bit of trust-worthiness to grading is to get teachers negotiating together in a community to make some collaborative judgements. That the portfolio promotes collaboration and works against isolation may be, in the end, its main advantage" (338). In "The Myths of Assessment" Belanoff goes further to celebrate this lack of agreement, arguing that "our inability to agree on standards and their applications . . . is a sign of strength, of the life and vitality of words and the exchange of words" (62). Karen L. Greenberg also stresses portfolio assessment's contextual, collaborative qualities in "Validity and Reliability Issues in the Direct Assessment of Writing." Greenberg notes that the finding of a College Board "attempt to provide evidence for construct validity of multiple-choice tests of writing" actually "calls into question the practice of assessing writing ability with a single writing sample and also echoes recent evidence that writing ability is not a single construct but rather is a composite of several situation-specific constructs" (14-15). She goes on to praise the development of portfolio writing assessments that engage faculty in a collaborative development of an assessment tool "that is grounded in their theories, curricula, and classroom practices" (15).<sup>5</sup>

It is this sort of community negotiation of writing standards that a portfolio system has created for Eckerd College on a college-wide level. The process of designing the portfolio system, considering the proposal, discussing it in faculty and departmental meetings, and then voting on it, started an on-going discussion of the role of writing in our overall educational program. We began to ask questions about writing's importance in our general education curriculum as well as our majors, and we began a debate about the skills students should possess and the standards they ought to achieve.

These discussions did not end, however, once the faculty voted to implement the portfolio assessment system. Our portfolio submissions are evaluated by an interdisciplinary group of faculty, and the composition of this group changes for each evaluation. Every semester a new committee (with representatives from all departments and as many diverse disciplines as possible) engages in a fresh discussion of what constitutes good writing. Reading and discussing sample portfolios from the previous year, the committee struggles with difficult questions about our expectations of student writing and the standards we will apply as we evaluate that semester's submissions. What features do we consider crucial to competent writing? How important is appropriate use and documentation of source material? How do we evaluate "voice," "communicative quality," or "rhetorical sophistication"? One colleague from a social science discipline comments, "The lack of clear, 'absolute' standards—clearly impossible to devise—made it difficult in a few cases. How do we evaluate students for whom English is a *second* language?"

Our answers to such questions often vary. For instance, two faculty from the same evaluation committee can come away with different impressions of the portfolios. One remarks, "It was reassuring to see that our students *can* write," while another expresses disappointment, "The experience was very worthwhile. I especially enjoyed seeing the variety of writing assignments. I also discovered that Eckerd students do not yet write as well as I wish they did." Such conversations remind us of the complexity of writing, of the connections between writing and thinking, of the social nature of writing, and of the complexity of our roles as readers. It is through talking about these variations, about our different goals and desires for our students' learning, that an academic community negotiates its way toward shared standards of writing competency.

## Who should be responsible for the development and quality of student writing?

It must be obvious at this point that the answer to this question in the context of Eckerd's portfolio assessment program is that the responsibility for student writing is shared by faculty across the curriculum. Participating in the preliminary training session gives faculty a conscious sense of ownership and investment in the quality of student writing, which is, according to Edward White, the point of such training: "The training of readers, or 'calibration,' as it is sometimes called, is not indoctrination into standards determined by those who know best (as it is too often imagined to be) but, rather, the formation of an assenting community that feels a sense of ownership of the standards and the process" (215). Every semester a group of faculty leaves the evaluation committee having reached greater agreement about writing standards than I would previously have supposed possible and with a commitment to applying those standards in their classrooms. The agreement is never complete, however. In "Portfolio Scoring: A Contradiction in Terms," Robert L. Broad stresses the importance of "[reconsidering] the meanings and merits of evaluative disagreement" and "[transforming] our notions of consensus and difference in the context of communal writing assessment" (264). We have found our differences to be as valuable as our consensus, often revealing the contradictory and conflicting assumptions about writing that form faultlines in the geography of academic discourse. Such differences instruct us in the complexity of the rhetorical constructions in which we require students to participate.

Enhancing this sense of ownership and responsibility is the fact that the portfolio papers can come from course work in any field, assigned by any professor. Thus the pressure to hold students to agreed-upon standards of writing is not confined to the writing classroom. Indeed, the portfolio system assesses faculty in an indirect manner. As faculty read student writing from other disciplines and classes, we are motivated to re-evaluate our own students' writing and our grading. We have, of course, encountered some problems. What happens when a failing portfolio includes papers that received A's in the context of courses? What happens when a portfolio reviewer finds evidence of plagia-

rism that the original classroom professor missed? What happens when patterns of portfolio success and failure over time begin to suggest “writing problems” in specific majors? We don’t have any pat answers to such questions and challenges, but we do not ignore them; these issues are all part of the larger negotiation of community writing standards (and, of course, institutional politics), and we thrash them out as they occur.

For the most part this cross-disciplinary responsibility for student writing has resulted in a valuable critical interrogation of our own pedagogical assumptions and practices rather than in embarrassment and anger. Because the students’ annotations of their papers often include a description of the assignment that originally prompted an essay, interdisciplinary discussions and exchanges of writing assignments have begun; we now share with one another prompts that resulted in papers that pleased us and seek suggestions for revising assignments that didn’t work well.

Faculty standards for writing assignments are not the only standards that have risen since we implemented the portfolio system. As Jan Ross, one of my colleagues in composition, observed, “We have, in fact, seen an evolution of standards over the past two years. Readers this fall demanded greater variety in the writing, more development of ideas, greater success in using sources correctly and effectively, and more careful proofreading or editing than a semester or year ago.” Again, faculty carry these greater demands into their own classrooms. One colleague commented after reading portfolios the first time, “It prepared me for a higher level of expectation when it comes to my own students’ writing abilities.” Thus our method of assessing student writing has become a tool for improving student writing in all fields.

## What ought to be the relationship between the roles and perceptions of writing in other disciplines and what we teach in our composition classrooms?

In *Teaching and Assessing Writing*, Edward M. White claims that “At its best, assessment can improve our teaching, make our jobs easier and more rewarding, and demonstrate the value of what we do” (8). His observation is an apt description of our composition faculty’s experience with a portfolio system. The opportunity to read writing assignments and student papers from other courses has been a valuable part of the composition faculty’s involvement in the portfolio process. We have developed a sense of the remarkable range and variety of cognitive and rhetorical tasks that students encounter in their courses throughout the curriculum. We now have the option of designing our composition courses in light of this knowledge, rethinking our pedagogy, creating new writing prompts and designing new rhetorical contexts to which students can respond with writing.

At the same time, faculty from other disciplines have developed an increased interest in how we teach writing. Writes one, “I would like to have

more information about what is taught in the [one hundred-level] writing courses. For example, copies of the syllabi and texts used. I believe that material might also be helpful to Western Heritage faculty.”<sup>6</sup> Writing faculty have become resources for faculty in other fields as they look for new ideas for incorporating more and better writing into their classes. Suddenly we have the chance to explain process pedagogy, revision strategies, peer writing groups, and discourse communities to colleagues in disparate disciplines.

The current challenge for the writing faculty is to assist our colleagues in various disciplines to develop students’ abilities to write in the discourse of their fields and to translate the concepts of their field for a lay audience. For example, a workshop for faculty in Human Development focused on composing process-oriented writing assignments, providing students with accurate models of writing in the field, and incorporating writing instruction into their courses. Composition faculty are currently collaborating with faculty in Management to coordinate writing presentations in their upper-level courses. In several other majors we arrange for Writing Center peer consultants to work with specific classes, arranging writing groups, or tutoring students on prewriting and revision strategies, etc. We have developed a writing-within-the-sciences course to be team taught by composition and natural science faculty. In place of the programmatic approach of traditional writing-across-the-curriculum programs, the portfolio system has led us to develop different strategies for assisting colleagues in differing disciplines with varied writing needs and paradigms. Resistance to the goals of writing across the curriculum is reduced significantly when faculty in various disciplines first assess their own writing needs and then collaborate with faculty in composition and rhetoric to develop strategies to meet those needs. In the language of Edward White, writing assessment is then perceived in terms of promise rather than threat.

## What effect does our portfolio assessment method have on our students’ perceptions of writing?

Has the portfolio system changed our students’ thinking about writing? I believe it has. Our portfolio assessment method invites students to engage in learning on a variety of levels. Students are invited to extend their view of writing beyond the closure of “term papers” and the artificial boundaries of semesters, to see writing as involving recursive processes of critical thinking, expression, rethinking, and revision. The portfolio encourages students to consider the responses of various readers—the professor in the original course, a Writing Center peer consultant, the portfolio evaluation committee—in their revision processes; writing becomes collaborative and interactive, a dialogue with the ideas and voices of others. Students are encouraged to demonstrate the range and variety of “voices,” of social and ideological languages that they have learned to manipulate. As James A. Berlin observes, “The portfolio in a postmodern context enables the exploration of subject formation. As students begin to understand through writing the cultural codes that shaped their

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development, they are prepared to occupy different subject positions, different perspectives on the person and society" (65). The annotations students write invite them to engage in a complex process of metacognition and metadiscourse, to situate their discourse for a specific audience, engendering the "self-reflexiveness about writing" that Kathleen Blake Yancy identifies (104). Most important, the portfolio requirement invites students to claim ownership and authority over their writing, to review the papers they have written in college, to decide which ones they think are best, and to articulate their writing strengths. In Karen Greenberg's words, portfolio assessment "sends the message that the construct of 'writing' means developing and revising extended pieces of discourse, not filling in blanks in multiple-choice exercises or on computer screens. It communicates to everyone involved—students, teachers, parents, and legislators—our profession's beliefs about the nature of writing and about how writing is taught and learned" (16).

In our composition classrooms the change is obvious. We face a more willing and engaged audience because, instead of being required courses, writing courses at Eckerd are now electives; they are perceived as valuable opportunities for developing the writing skills that the college as a whole demands and will evaluate in the portfolio. Our courses have been growing in popularity since we made them elective. Before portfolios, about forty-eight percent of all students took at least one composition course; now about fifty-seven percent take at least one, and three new, advanced courses have been added to our curriculum. Writing is understood as a college-wide concern rather than one relegated to something called "freshman comp." Elbow and Belanoff identify a benefit of their portfolio program that we have observed as well: "It makes teachers allies of their students—allies who work with them to help them pass. Teachers become more like the coach of the team than the umpire who enforces and punishes infractions" (State 104).

What more could an assessment method offer? Let me, in closing, describe the most unexpected benefit I've observed: pleasure, in our students' writing and in our own. We enjoy the pleasure of collegiality, of discussing with colleagues issues important to us. One evaluator explains, "I liked the opportunity to read two different portfolios with the group and then discuss our reactions and questions." We also enjoy the pleasure of reading our students' best writing, of seeing what they have achieved. "It never seems we have enough time," complains one professor, "to read and re-read the good work." We also read writing more often, as faculty from disparate fields come in contact with writing. Seven years of college-wide portfolio writing assessment has changed the campus community's attitude toward writing. This is an institutional transformation that no other assessment method I know of can foster.

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## Notes

1. I agree with David Russell's contention that "the fundamental problem of WAC is not so much pedagogical as political, not how to create a sound program (that has been possible for decades), but rather how to administer it, how to place it firmly in the complex organizational structure of the university" (191).
2. The development and implementation of campus-wide portfolio assessment at a large, public institution involves difficulties that are (thankfully) beyond the scope of this article. Chris M. Anson and Robert L. Brown, Jr. describe some of the problems faced by large institutions in "Large-Scale Portfolio Assessment." In "Introducing a Portfolio-Based Writing Assessment: Progress through Problems," William Condon and Liz Hamp-Lyons trace their difficulties in designing a system for the University of Michigan. More recently, Richard Haswell, Lisa Johnson-Shull and Susan Wyche-Smith describe their "daredevil" (45) implementation of a general-education portfolio assessment program at Washington State University in "Shooting Niagara: Making Portfolio Assessment Serve Instruction at a State University." Despite the authors' harrowing (and humorous) representation of putting together a workable large-scale portfolio program as a ride over Niagara Falls in a barrel, WSU's portfolio assessment process is thus far a success, and their article offers valuable advice for other large institutions.
3. Transfer students may include two papers from a previous institution, but we ask that they accompany each paper with a letter from the course professor to certify their work's authenticity.
4. See Alan Purves, "Reflections on Research and Assessment in Written Composition," Thomas McKendry, "Locally Developed Writing Tests and the Validity of Holistic Scoring," LaRené Despain and Thomas L. Hilgers, "Readers' Responses to the Rating of Non-Uniform Portfolios: Are There Limits on Portfolios' Utility?" and David W. Smit, "Evaluating a Portfolio System."
5. With support from the Council of Writing Program Administrators, we are currently assessing the reliability of our portfolio evaluation procedures through a review by writing program administrators at other institutions. This review is part of the ongoing Portnet Project under the direction of Michael Allen at Ohio State University.
6. Western Heritage is a one-year, freshman, humanities-based general education course that is taught in rotation by all faculty at the college. It is supposed to include a strong writing component, but the forms of written work required are not specified and are left up to the individual professor's discretion.

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# Closing the Circle: Outcomes Assessment, TQM and the WPA

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## Introduction

Outcomes assessment initiated a controversy at our institution that has generated more heat than light. In the best academic tradition, we have appointed a series of ad hoc faculty committees to coordinate our response to the North Central States Accreditation Association's requirement that we have a plan in place prior to their next visit. As WPA, I serve on three of these committees. The committees write concept papers and design implementation plans, then revise them, hoping all the time that the visit will come and go while we are still debating. And according to the literature, our response is representative.

Why do we resist the accountability movement? The attention given outcomes assessment by legislators, lobbyists, and the tax-payers suggests a watch dog motivation and threatens a new wave of meddling, so we do need to be cautious. Moreover, encouraged by the standardized testing industry that views outcomes assessment as a cash cow, some administrators want results reported as bottom-line numbers. We must resist such reductionism.

But the charge of outcomes assessment is sensible, actually healthy. It simply asks us to articulate our objectives in concrete terms, develop instruments to measure student performance in terms of those objectives, and use that information to initiate reforms and revise curriculum in response to student, institutional, and public needs. Compared to other accountability schemes, outcomes assessment has a distinct advantage. It is recursive. Ideally, the process institutionalizes a feedback loop. Defining goals, measuring outcomes, and revising curriculum all circle back on one another, encouraging constant reflection and improvement.

Here we meet a paradox. Unlike most faculty, WPAs do not find outcomes assessment unreasonable. Program evaluation has long been one of our primary concerns. If anything, outcomes assessment promises more productive evaluation than currently exists. Outcomes assessment situates a writing program in a larger context, in the department, college, institution and society. As program advocates we understand that credible program evaluation legitimizes claims for resources. As a consequence, we have developed respectful relationships with psychometricians and statisticians. Their methodology and language can help us gain access to higher administration and the public; we need them as allies.

Here's the nut. We are stuck between faculty resistance and the public sector's (and thus the administration's) affirmation of outcomes assessment. Administrators charges us with completing outcomes assessment, but without faculty cooperation we cannot do our job.

## The Spectre of Business

How do we deal with this dilemma? Obviously, we need to know more about outcomes assessment, so we can understand its motivation and objectives. When we look, however, we may not like what we find; the rationale and methodology of outcomes assessment originate in professional management. Ironically, while higher education's interpretation of outcomes assessment has a decidedly empirical emphasis, professional management has acknowledged through long experience the failure of purely empirical assessment. Management's latest strategies, foremost among them Total Quality Management (TQM), invoke complex social theories and have a decidedly humanistic orientation. As WPAs, our most productive response to outcomes assessment and its related controversies is to inform ourselves about management theory, especially TQM, and, when appropriate, apply their methods to our advantage.

In the past, faculty have resisted borrowing concepts and schemes from business. Our distrust of the values that dominate the business culture creates an almost knee-jerk reaction against business-based innovations. Given the relations between the accountability movement, outcomes assessment, and the quality movement in business, however, viewing our own world through a TQM lens might be productive. TQM and its cornerstone, the Quality Circle, offer constructive ways of rethinking our assessment practice while maintaining local control.

Once understood, TQM's values reflect several ideals of higher education. Total involvement, a focus on process, inter- and cross disciplinarity, teamwork, collaborative decision making, and other practices encourage individual and team initiative, innovation, integrity, involvement, and empowerment. The principles and practices of TQM foster an ongoing self-conscious process of reflection and research. Constant analysis and measurement of needs and expectations allow for feedback, efficiency, and improvement in what is done and how.

More than altruism motivates a close look at TQM. Understanding its origins and development may help us deal with the new political reality signaled by the 1994 Congressional elections. According to a "States of Mind" profile in the *New Yorker*, Newt Gingrich extols the values of the quality movement to the point of including "Quality as described by Deming" as one of "The Five Principles of American Civilization" in his video lecture series, "Renewing American Civilization" (December 5, 1994, p. 84). If Gingrich is the future, then the future will include TQM.

Self interest is another motivator. As we explore outcomes assessment and TQM, we hold a mirror to ourselves, seeing clearly in the reflection blem-

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ishes we can examine and eliminate. Such is the case in the project we will report. After discussing controversies over outcomes assessment and the accountability movement in general, we will consider recent developments in professional management, especially TQM, and their relevance to our work as WPAs. We will offer a primer in TQM practices so WPAs can discover ways to appropriate its methods to our best advantage. Finally we will describe an application based on TQM values that encourages novice teachers to become responsible for the quality of their own teaching.

## Evaluation Paradigm Controversies

Christine Hult's edited anthology, *Evaluating Teachers of Writing* (1994), offers a detailed treatment of recent evaluation controversies and exemplifies our discipline's ambivalence towards outcomes assessment. As a prolegomenon to evaluation praxis, it raises questions concerning values and methodologies, summarizes conflicting views, and suggests responses. The controversies are more pointedly developed in the "Viewpoints" cluster in the October, 1993, *Research in the Teaching of English*, where traditional psychometric theories of evaluation shudder against attacks from newer naturalistic approaches, especially those offered by Guba and Lincoln in *Fourth Generation Evaluation* (1989) and subsequently by Guba and others in *The Paradigm Dialog* (1990). In *Toward a New Science of Educational Testing and Assessment* (1992), Berlak and others frame the struggle as a life and death battle between the positivistic psychometric model they portray as socially oppressive and a naturalistic model they argue is sensitive to diversity, human rights, and freedom. The controversies originate in recognizing the limits of positivism. Empiricism has its role, but its methodology does not lend itself to examining complex social processes. More and more, evaluation scholars are paying as much attention to people, their interactions, and to processes as to empirical measurement.

Of the writers represented in Hult's anthology, David Bleich is the most openly ideological in posture and subversive in purpose. His goal is replacing the current status- and competition-dominated evaluation paradigm with one based on the feminine values of cooperation and other-centeredness, turning evaluation into a tool through which teachers can demonstrate and enhance the quality of their work. His attention to teachers and teaching reminds us that WPAs manage several "outcomes." Outcomes assessment directs us to the quality of student writing. But to do so we must also consider teachers, especially those of us who train GAs and other novice teachers. These two, student writing and teacher development, are closely linked.

Bleich begins by discussing conventional administrative attitudes toward teaching, attitudes characterized as oppressive and negative. Teaching must be evaluated and specific plans developed to remedy the deficiencies evaluation will naturally reveal. That evaluation could substantiate successful, high quality teaching, Bleich notes, is never admitted. Undoing this prejudice becomes his challenge.

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Bleich examines traditional administrative attitudes by deconstructing Ernest Boyer's *Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate* (1990). Offered as an argument to increase the value placed on teaching per se, Bleich contends that the report does not challenge the existing meritocratic organization of higher education with doctorate-granting universities at the top and two-year colleges at the bottom. According to Bleich, the devaluation of teaching originates in these hierarchies. In our context, as long as teaching is undervalued, then the outcome associated with teaching, student writing, will be underdeveloped. Thus, assessment is self-defeating. The quality of student writing will reflect the low value placed on the teaching of writing.

Bleich argues for a new non-status-based consideration of teaching. His strategy is radical: change the language to change the reality. Rather than "excellence," with its hierarchal connotation, he suggests "vitality." Such a change encourages teachers to pay attention to the quality of their teaching while avoiding competition and odious comparisons. "If teachers who are actually striving for something like 'vitality' in teaching situations are distracted by the competitive feeling that they must become excellent according to some system of judgment, there will no longer be any reasons to take risks in the service of vitality: there will only be reasons to accommodate the system" (18).

As much as we admire Bleich's critique of the current paradigm, we live in a complex world without the option of dismissing either of the competing views, needing to attend to both. Bleich fails to demonstrate a concrete link between vitality and excellence. Common sense warns us that vitality is not automatically synonymous with excellence; many lunatics live with great vitality. But vitality, properly directed, can lead to excellence. Vitality is an aspect of process. Excellence links process *and* product; we cannot forget that. Eschewing competition and comparisons risks dichotomizing process and product. This is a false dichotomy; quality, excellence, whatever the term, integrates process and product.

Bleich offers another linguistic substitution to shift the emphasis from the competitive "excellence" and "measurement" model to one concerned with quality reflected in process:

But suppose the term 'involvement' were substituted for 'assessment': self-involvement, teacher and mutual involvement. Wouldn't the resulting terms then necessarily refer to the substance and daily activity of teaching, rather than imply that teaching is done first and then 'techniques' are used to evaluate it. Similarly, if the *idea* of involvement more generally took the place of measurement and assessment, wouldn't the process of evaluation and self-evaluation become an ongoing, internalized aspect of all teaching? (18).

Echoing a central tenet in professional management's quality movement, Bleich argues that "substance" derives from a dialectic between actor, act, and outcome, between the teacher and who she is, what she does and why, and what students do as a result.

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Bleich's suppositions are, of course, rhetorical. As a concrete application, he describes a teaching evaluation scheme using portfolios at Syracuse University. Teaching portfolios offer a non-competitive means of allowing teachers to describe the coherence and quality of their teaching practice. The portfolio collects a wide variety of documents, including philosophical rationales, assignments, and student work, through which faculty demonstrate that their teaching is coherent and purposeful, evaluation is ongoing, performance is strong, and quality is constantly improving. In short, that the teacher is vital and involved. To avoid solipsism, the portfolio is addressed to an audience of peers, a community similarly invested in articulating teaching quality.

From a political perspective, however, we question Bleich's confidence in a community's ability to balance the interest of all its members, especially when many of them are served quite well by the status quo. Bleich's rhetoric does not address the hierarchies that exist in departments. Writing programs housed in English departments are particularly vulnerable. Even in Bleich's dream vision of properly valued teaching, the teaching that will be valued most will be that which enjoys highest status in the department, teaching literature at the advanced levels. Other missions, especially our "service" mission, teaching writing at the lower levels, will continue to be undervalued.

Nevertheless, we endorse Bleich's vision. He is working to empower teachers, challenging them to establish the terms of evaluation, and to begin a negotiation by offering the portfolio to the community. In his system, teachers must write the quality of their own teaching and read the quality of others. All must be involved. The emphasis is on quality and process. This same rhetoric dominates TQM.

By showing how an evaluation scheme can reflect the values of the rhetoric and composition community, Bleich moves us beyond merely reacting to the accountability movement. He helps us appropriate it to our ends. As a discipline we need no longer resist accountability; we need to make it central to our practice and culture.

## The Search for Method: Learning to Talk with Each Other

Bleich has written us back into the accountability movement by encouraging conversations about quality in teaching, but he does not show us how to talk with each other. We still need a method through which we can document and elaborate the quality of our practice.

We recommend looking beyond our discipline for some help learning to talk with each other about quality. Though we anticipate objections, we recommend looking at professional management, specifically TQM, for techniques we can adapt to start our conversations about quality. Professional management as a discipline is centrally concerned with questions of quality and how to use human and material resources most effectively.

We will argue that TQM can make a substantial contribution to writing

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program administration by providing WPAs a theory of management and a method for focusing on quality. Let us be clear. We reject many of the values and metaphors of professional management, especially trivializing education as a phenomenon of material economy as signaled by applying the metaphors "client," "customer," or "product" to students. Our challenge is to use our resistance to professional management positively, critiquing its methods and values so we can adapt some while rejecting others. When we look closely at recent developments in professional management, especially those related to TQM, we will see that they are trying to solve the same structural problems, especially that of hierarchically imposed, remediation-motivated evaluation.

## TQM: A Primer

In the last few years management has come to discover that manufacturing and commerce, like education, are rich and complex social acts. The consequence of this discovery, evident in the TQM movement, is a paradigm shift through which outdated, mechanistic management approaches have been supplanted by more complex ones. These innovations evidence a concern not only for production numbers and zero defects, but also an intense concern for the human side of work.

TQM and other recent developments in management react against the old "Taylorism" approach, the theory that dominated business from the 1800s until recently. Taylor distrusted an organization's or a line-worker's ability to evaluate situations and solve problems. TQM, in contrast, advocates that workers are experts, and they can improve the system by working "in" it. Taylorism, also known as Scientific Management, ignored worker groups, their social nature, and their needs. Taylor believed that only outside experts could bring reason, order, improved productivity. TQM philosophy believes that workers can and should accomplish those things. Taylorism, according to Weisbord, became synonymous with "speedups, employer insensitivity, people turned into robots" (61). Scientific management searches for simple solutions. Complex problems, however, don't have simple solutions.

Ironically, the management system of most educational institutions is based on Taylorism, with few academic administrators having substantive background in management theory. Thus our practice either continues the status quo or reflects highly idiosyncratic, perhaps autocratic, practice. Without a theory base, we can only repeat what has been done to us or devise systems based on insights that have not received close scrutiny. The further irony is that while management systems are now searching for theories that consider a more complex, multi-dimensional approach to improve quality and for sophisticated tools to measure those improvements, education has become more and more focused on single-factor quantitative measures. Maybe it is time for us to look more closely at management systems adapted by business.

TQM has been developed gradually over the past sixty years by propo-

nents such as W. Edwards Deming, Joseph Juran, and Philip Crosby. Deming and Juran led the Japanese to understand that specialists were not necessary—that everyone can improve quality. This idea gave birth to the Quality Circle. Thus Americans championed an approach to quality that became largely responsible for Japan's economic resurgence after World War II. With the addition of Philip Crosby's concept of "Zero defects," the quality movement as we know it took shape.

In the U.S., the major move towards TQM began in the 80's. Firms like Motorola and Ford took up the call for quality becoming "everyone's job" and "Job 1." Xerox, Federal Express, IBM, Westinghouse, Disney, Corning, Hewlett-Packard and others followed suit. As Seymour notes in *On Q: Causing Quality in Higher Education*:

The fact is that TQM has made a difference in organizations around the world. It cannot be dismissed as another management fad. It is not academic whimsy. It is too well-grounded in a scientific approach to problem solving, and it has been tested, scrutinized, and revised in thousands of organizations over a period of more than three decades.

Bottom line: It works (ix).

TQM allows us to pay attention to the complexity of any situation where people and process are intricately interwoven. Rather than a linear process which cannot make allowances for multiple variables, TQM provides an evaluation matrix that analyzes all aspects of the system.

From an outcomes assessment perspective, adapting TQM values allows us to argue vehemently against using external standards to measure outcomes, whether standardized test scores or schemes that would have us ship documents to outside groups for evaluation. Through TQM we learn how to demonstrate the quality of existing practice and exercise control over plans for change. With clearly articulated TQM-based assessment programs, we can convince higher administration and the public that we accept, even celebrate, our obligation for accountability. Clearly, concerns for accountability motivate much of outcomes assessment.

Most features generally associated with TQM—such as quality training, process improvement, and benchmarking—do not generally produce advantage. What does produce advantage are certain tacit, behavioral, imperfectly imitable features—such as open culture, employee empowerment, and executive commitment. These tacit resources, not TQM tools and techniques, drive TQM success. Organizations that acquire these features, according to Powell, build on a theory, not a system, that works. Reducing TQM to a "system" will surely lead to the same failure that has been produced by older unproductive systems of management.

TQM is often inadequately defined, with individuals from different backgrounds having different perceptions of the subject (Ronen and Paas). A majority of organizations fail to understand or realize its true potential. One of the most serious deficiencies of many TQM efforts, according to Batten, is a

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tendency to view and practice quality management as a rigid process that takes place in a *segment* of the total organization. When it fails, it is often because it was not applied within a *total* quality culture. Companies that have failed in attempts to implement TQM have failed to understand its multi-faceted dimensions, and have tried, instead, to use it “as a panacea to solve all their organization’s problems or to engineer unpalatable strategies” (McManus).

Despite the claims of some of its detractors, TQM is not dead. It has been misunderstood, misused and misapplied, but it is not dead. The concepts at the heart of TQM have resurfaced every few years with variations, each time under a new name, and each time meeting with incrementally greater success than the previous time. This is due, in part, to a shift in management attitudes from strict authoritarianism—a far greater influence than many readily recognize—toward a practiced belief in true participative management. The closer the management paradigm shifts toward the open participation advocated by TQM, the greater the chance for successful implementation (McConnell).

Success in the late 1990s and the 21st century will require business and educational organizations to become flexible, knowledgeable, balanced, sensitive, and responsive (Hertz). We endorse these values. As WPAs we must be open to theories and philosophies that facilitate practicing these values.

## From Outcomes Assessment to Continuous Improvement

According to Chaffee and Sherr, “assessment should serve two purposes: assessment should show that colleges and universities are achieving their intended outputs (the accountability function), and it should provide information that permits faculty and administrators to improve what they do (the improvement function)” (84). Early approaches emphasized accountability with multiple end-point measurements to demonstrate important outcomes. In so doing they overlooked the second aspect of the assessment mandate, discovering and solving problems during the course of a student’s education.

Recognizing this difficulty, assessment proponents began to call for campuses to *use* the feedback provided by assessment to plan for change. However, they underestimated the importance of taking into account from the outset the need to identify where, how, and what kind of improvement might be required. They focused instead on trying to “inspect quality into education at the end of the line. That is, assessments occurred only at the end of the year or at the end of general education or major course sequences. TQM offers an alternative, more effective approach: Ensure quality at every step in the process” (Chaffee and Sherr, 84).

Assessment, as traditionally conceived, is iterative, while TQM is continuous. In the end, proponents of assessment who believe in continuous improvement could find themselves changing not only their practice but also their language. Perhaps the “assessment movement” would be more aptly thought of as the “quality movement” or, even better, the “improvement initiative” to

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complete the evolution away from an outcomes oriented, testing-driven concept. From an academic point of view, we might focus on Continuous Learning Improvement" (Chaffee and Sherr, 87).

## A Comprehensive—and Controlling?—Training Program

Over the years the writing program at New Mexico State University has developed a strong sense of purpose and identity. We focus on the GAs who teach the vast majority of first-year writing courses, striving to develop in them a sense of competence despite their lack of experience. We offer extensive staff development, including as many as 100 hours of direct training and supervision during a GA's first semester of teaching. We provide a theoretical and methodological orientation and a substantive academic course to help novice teachers become confident that they can teach effectively and thus enjoy a level of comfort in their classrooms.

We begin each semester with a week-long preterm orientation required of all who have not previously taught college-level composition. Training continues in ENGL 571, Problems in Teaching Composition, a semester-long three-credit graduate course in theory and pedagogy normally taught by the WPA. In addition, each new GA meets in conference with the WPA every other week to discuss his/her teaching. Through the semester, the assistant WPA leads a weekly session for all GAs, but especially for new GAs, providing nuts and bolts information about working through the syllabus. New GAs are mentored by experienced GAs, and they receive additional Writing Center tutor training.

We view our program as a model, exemplary in assuming administrative responsibility for providing writing students and teachers alike support and direction. And yet we knew it was not working as well as it could.

As we looked closely we discovered that the structure and emphasis of the program maximized administrative control, a major weakness from a TQM perspective. A program designed for maximum administrative control requires rigid top-down organization. Staff creativity is, at best, stifled. At worst, the structure can oppress and alienate the staff, causing some to resist and subvert the program.

## A Lens on Limitations: Evaluation

One example of the inadvertent effects of our thorough training process is the program's scheme for evaluating student writing. New GAs and novice teachers have a difficult time articulating and applying standards so students can understand them and recognize that the standards are not arbitrary or unfairly subjective. Our evaluation scheme tries to address both instructors' and students' concerns.

We use portfolios for evaluation. Each portfolio, which represents all the

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major emphases of the course, includes four elements: a common essay, written by all students on a common topic under controlled conditions; a researched essay; a substantial revision of an essay written earlier in the semester; and a reflective essay evaluating the student's performance and learning in the course, using the student's own writing to prove her argument. The researched essay is the longest piece students complete during the semester, spending three weeks to a month researching, drafting, and revising the piece, conferring with instructors about topics, research strategies, and the written text several times. While all other essays can be revised even after they have been submitted to the instructor for evaluation, the researched essay cannot. For final evaluation purposes, we need to see how far the student can bring the essay while working on her own and in her peer groups. In the portfolio, the writing must stand on its own. It represents the student's actual performance and is evaluated as objectively as possible to assure accuracy and consistency. In addition to these four elements, students are also encouraged to compile all their work through the semester into a course book and include it as a supplement to the portfolio.

From the perspective of outcomes assessment, we already have in place all the elements needed to examine student performance. Collecting and analyzing the materials is the challenge. We are currently developing a "course" portfolio, using sampling procedures to collect a manageable amount of materials for primary trait analysis to investigate student outcomes. Actually, we have been using the portfolio scheme for program evaluation since its inception more than ten years ago. We track grades, consider correlations between common essay performance and course grade, and we sample portfolios. But these activities do not encourage the curriculum development we feel is needed to meet our objectives. These empirical measures are valuable, but they provide us no direction for improving practice.

Support for GAs during evaluation comes in two forms: training in portfolio evaluation and grading common essays. During the pedagogy class, GAs complete a portfolio evaluation exercise in collaborative groups. This exercise occurs before students compile portfolios and helps instructors articulate and clarify expectations. They review previously submitted portfolios and must come to agreement on the grades these portfolios should receive. In the process, they define the levels of competency expected for students to earn particular grades. They also examine anomalous portfolios in an attempt to anticipate any problems that might arise when they evaluate their own class's portfolios. Instructors know their students' capabilities best, so they maintain autonomy over evaluating their students' portfolios and assigning grades for the course.

The common essay score also becomes part of the portfolio. Controlling conditions allows us to avoid plagiarism and assure that the essays can be scored holistically. Common essay scores range from 2 through 8, the sum of two independent readings on 1 to 4 scale. Scores of 6 and higher signal success on the essay. Before scoring the essays, we complete a norming session using benchmark essays to ensure all readers are working with same general standards.

Students understand that the common essay represents an “objective” evaluation of their writing. Instructors cannot score their own students’ common essays, nor can they challenge the score awarded the essay by the two anonymous evaluators. However, students do not need to earn any particular score in order to pass the course. We believe no single piece of writing adequately represents a student’s writing ability. It follows, then, that no single score should determine whether a student passes or fails the course.

In most instances the common essay experience confirms GAs’ sense of program standards. We encourage GAs to read and score their own students’ essays after the holistic scoring session in order to detect and understand anomalies. They find that the two other scorers evaluate their students at roughly the same level they have, raising everyone’s confidence level.

We work to show both students and GAs that evaluation is not arbitrary or unhealthfully subjective. The common essay, along with the portfolio evaluation collaborative exercise allows all of us, administrators and instructors, to articulate and enforce the program’s standards.

## Opening Pandora’s Box

As we mentioned earlier, though we take great pride in our training program, we knew it was not working as well as it could. We wondered why and determined that we had violated TQM’s first principle. Rather than inviting GAs to help establish goals and thereby come to own them, we provided all the values, goals, and practice. We did not invite GAs to shape or endorse the program. This is particularly true of the evaluation scheme. The portfolio controls the program. The system works well as long as everyone understands and endorses the values.

There’s the rub. Our program and our training reflect our best sense of *how students learn to write*. We hold this value to such a degree that we disregard how individual teachers might best teach writing. We devote most of our energies to explaining to new staff how the various elements of the program work. Everything turns back onto itself. The training is self-reflective, in a negative sense. We stress the program, capital P, to such a degree that it assumes a mythical identity. Our bulky 200-page-plus program training manual has come to be known as the “bible.” We have never been comfortable with this reference. The manual originated as an effort to document effective teaching practice. Over time, however, it became an oppressive contract prescribing and proscribing instructor practice. The program had become dogmatic.

The bible metaphor underscores the problem of authority and control through the whole program. Concerning the common essay’s role in the overall evaluation scheme, we would regularly confront certain questions and objections. New GAs, perhaps reflecting the attitudes of their students, would question the value of such an elaborate procedure that didn’t have an *absolute*

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*value* in determining the grade. Without absolute value, the common essay seemed to have an ambiguous purpose. Such ambiguity could affect performance, both by students preparing their essays and by GAs scoring them. The whole process could be skewed if only a few of the participants do not take the exercise seriously.

Because the program philosophy had so turned in on itself, we were unable to “hear” these questions. We could only reiterate, for the thousandth time, how the common essay fits into the program and what a good program we had. When GAs did value the common essay, they did so because they had assumed the ethos of the program. Some may have merely succumbed to indoctrination.

What happens when a GA decides that she does not “buy” the common essay? What happens when she informs her students that they will write the essay as a program requirement but that she will not count the scores? Many of her students will dismiss the essay, skewing the results of the entire process. One such GA, asked to defend her action since it influenced the results of the entire process and thus had an impact on every student, offered a refreshingly direct response. She said that she had done right by her students, evaluating them fairly on what she valued, and that she didn’t care about the impact on others and the program. She implied as well that for administration to think that she was the only subversive in the group was naive, that the “program” was not held sacrosanct through the entire GA corps, that resistance was significant, a Pandora’s Box waiting to be opened. Should we keep the box closed by invoking even more administrative control or should we invite those spectres to join a conversation?

Regardless of our response, the incident exposed the problem of alienation and lack of empowerment, something that from a TQM perspective could have been easily predicted. No participation, no stake, no individual responsibility for organizational quality. In some respects we had forced some GAs to this extreme response by preventing them from exercising any agency.

## The Trainers Retrained: The Teaching Forum

TQM encourages us to continuously examine all elements of the training program, so we began to look more deeply in the box. A major goal of our training is introducing new GAs to the discipline of rhetoric, offering them membership in this scholarly community. We use a sequence of assignments in the pedagogy course to accomplish this end. The sequence of assignments encourages but does not require an ongoing focus on one particular pedagogical problem or issue. The best projects, however, do result from focusing on a specific problem through the course. We encourage such a focus through conferences, project proposals, and project updates embedded in the sequence. The assignment is tightly sequenced and structured, reflecting the clear value we place on top-down control. Here control serves professionalism, getting new

GAs on track from a programmatic perspective and helping them find a niche in the discipline.

Students become familiar with research tools, such as scholarly journals, and complete a professional book review involving a literature search. They also complete a research project culminating in a professional quality essay, targeted at a specific journal for publication, and presented orally as a scholarly paper in "Symposia" at the end of the term. The point is to share information that will allow everyone to teach the course, to do their "job," more effectively the next time. The problem is that the "job" itself, as detailed on the syllabus and through the course assignments and requirements, cannot be negotiated.

Examining the symposia through TQM lenses indicates they are aptly, if ironically, named. The term invokes a Socratic air. Just as the dialogues dramatically portray Plato driving his opponent further and further into confusion so Plato can achieve crystal clarity at the end, so were the 571 Symposia designed to take the new GAs from confusion to understanding within the program's boundaries. Through symposia new GAs earned our imprimatur.

The research project directs students to investigate a particular pedagogical issue, achieve a level of expertise, and offer instruction about the issue to all subsequent GAs. The latter purpose was served through the "571 Binders," in which all the research projects were collected and made available in the department's library.

Ideally, the research project originates in a specific problem a GA is having while teaching the course. Given the normative influence of the syllabus and program training, the assignment is essentially remedial. The program cannot be broken, so the GA must be broken. To begin the assignment, a student must reason: "what am I not doing very well? The program includes it, so it must have value. Obviously, the scholarship will support the program and offer a solution to the problem. I will review the scholarship, find the solution, and offer it to all the future incompetents who, like me, may have problems in the same area." The message is not a healthy one.

## Revision: Symposia Become Conversations

Our need for control was alienating some GAs and limiting the creativity of others. Our good intentions resulted in wasting too much of the potential of our staff. TQM principles helped us understand the problem, and they suggest a solution. We need to encourage shared responsibility for quality by empowering all involved to act as stakeholders whose active participation can shape the curriculum. To accomplish these goals we will make two changes in the research project/symposia assignment.

The first change will invite all new GAs to share responsibility for quality. We will describe the research project from the outset as a *program critique*. Rather than devoting all energy to convergence within the program structure, our goal will be to encourage new GAs to place themselves in relation to current

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program structure but to develop an innovation, something not included within the program or an approach different from current recommended practice, that reflects their individual values, goals, and emphases. For example, a new GA with a creative writing concentration might design ways to incorporate imaginative writing exercises in her course.

Our purpose is to provide a sense of ownership for every instructor. Starting from scratch to build consensus over the entire set of program values and goals, while desirable, is not feasible. The revised approach represents a compromise where the new GA is required to actively engage the program, show initiative, and to exercise some control. Each new GA must describe what she is doing differently, build a scholarly rationale for the innovation, test and evaluate the results, and recommend whether and how the innovation should be integrated into the program.

Given a degree of freedom and control over some aspect of her work, the new GA is more likely to support other aspects of the program. Working to accomplish both individual and program goals requires GAs to pay close attention and develop reflective discipline, thereby assuming more personal responsibility for total quality in their classrooms.

The second change will empower GAs, making them stakeholders actively involved in program design. Rather than the implicitly remedial symposia, ENGL 571 will now include a "Teaching Forum." The new GA has defined herself both in relation to and against some aspect of the program, then developed an innovation embodying her individual goal in practice and tested and illustrated her success in terms of accomplishing that goal. Now the stage is set for introducing the specific goal into the general conversation of the program.

She will do this through the Teaching Forum, the academic adaptation of the quality circle, a common TQM practice. In contrast to Symposia, the Teaching Forum is open-ended, a place for introducing, discussing, and debating potential curricular changes. In a series of presentations during the semester following the work in ENGL 571, each new GA will bring her experience to the whole group of writing teachers, including GAs, instructors, and regular faculty. She will explain her innovation and discuss its success. She will lead a conversation to determine whether her innovation should be incorporated into the program, offered as an alternative activity for use by individuals so inclined, reconceived and retested, or abandoned. Based on this conversation, the innovation may become the subject of further development and implementation. Details for this process still need to be worked out, and, given our shifting attitude toward control, we will invite the GAs themselves to help manage the process. We must be careful not to re-dogmatize the program through the Teaching Forum and recreate the same alienating power currently exercised through the training program and manual.

## Conclusion: Closing the Outcomes Assessment Circle

A new GA's participation in the Teaching Forum as a proponent for change closes the outcomes assessment circle by articulating programmatic and individual values and goals, and testing and refining them in the most dynamic way possible. Most important, we will have completed the feedback loop and recognized and begun to remedy a weakness in our program. Just as quality is neither a subject nor an object but an inter-relationship, so is responsibility more vital and productive when shared between program and teachers.

We want to avoid one of the accusations we raised against Bleich. We want to establish a direct link between process and product. Thus, we look for the Teaching Forum to have a concrete impact on student writing. Given that the project requires GAs to complete a sophisticated research project and to theorize the role research plays in learning and teaching, we expect them to do a better job teaching research to their own students. They will pay more attention to negotiating meaningful topics involving concrete projects directly relevant to the student. Experiencing some of the same problems as their students, though at a different level, they will be more prepared to help students manage the project toward success. Even if all they do is communicate an enthusiasm for research, their students should take the research project more seriously and thus perform better.

After allowing the Teaching Forum experiment to mature for a few semesters, we will look closely both at attitudes of students and teachers and performance as represented in the researched essays collected in the portfolio. We will develop primary trait scales to examine the several outcomes and values mentioned above, concrete relevant projects, effective research management skills, and enthusiasm. Just as the Teaching Forum completes the feedback loop for staff development, so will examining the researched essays determine whether and how the project is affecting student outcomes.

In the end, outcomes assessment must consider more than specific student behaviors. While measuring whether students have met particular objectives by the end of the course has value, the measurements do not necessarily reveal the origin of problems or suggest solutions. We must also consider teacher attitudes and behaviors and how they affect the quality of the final product. Effective outcomes assessment will help us not only evaluate the product but also suggest how to improve the process along the way. The TQM lens requires us to look at all the elements of a transaction, and the new GA is key.

## Note

1. Collaborative projects require a weaving of voices within an essay. In this case, "I" refers to Burnham, the director of the program, and "we," when not a reference to the whole community of WPAs, signals the shared experience of Burnham and Nims, the assistant director.

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# The Writing Studio Program: Reconfiguring Basic Writing/Freshman Composition

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## 1. Basic Writing

In many recent discussions of basic writing,<sup>1</sup> concerned teachers and administrators pursue questions about academic and student culture, writing environments and contexts—questions which betray attitudes quite different from the gate-keeping mission of assessment which gave birth to many freshman writing courses and which has primarily sustained the basic writing “class culture.” Research over the past decade has increasingly helped us see academic writing and writing instruction from the perspective of students and to understand their needs and institutional culture as reflections of each other. Those who administer programs that fill *institutional needs* are thus led to question *student needs* which increasingly lead back to questions about academic institutional culture as it influences (sometimes even dictates) teaching and student writing. The result is that we are increasingly able to understand and treat student, teacher, and institutional needs as historically and politically situated *perceptions* of need. Writing programs must strike a critical (and flexible, ever-shifting) balance among these perceptions. How?

For the past four years we have worked with an alternative first-year writing program that provides an access point for students, teachers, and the institution to learn more about each other—a program we call the Writing Studio. All students enroll in regular freshman composition (English 101) classes, but some receive additional peer and expert help in weekly small-group writing workshops. These meetings are held in a place separate from the English 101 classroom, with students from other 101 classes, and are led by an experienced writing group leader. For students, the Writing Studio program thus works on writing development “outside” the classroom but “inside” writing groups. For the institution, this program works to “reposition”<sup>2</sup> early college writing instruction to a place outside the realm of the traditional labels and stereotypes—which have become, as David Bartholomae suggests, too comfortable—while still providing the additional help that some student writers need and others desire.

While student populations have changed and researchers have used various methods to articulate and understand student writing and pedagogy, the assessments, courses, and conceptual place held in the academy’s mind by the traditional concept of “basic writing” may have unwittingly allowed academic

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institutions to stop growing and learning about student writing. Our repositioning of student writing, assessment, and teaching in the Studio program has helped us see freshman composition programs as a potential site, for both teachers and students, for “research as learning”<sup>3</sup> about academic cultures of writing, and as a way of beginning to change the institutional culture of writing. Here we present the story of how our program reconfigured basic writing/freshman composition, giving particular attention to implications for writing program administration and its intellectual position in the university.

## 2. Bringing the Studio Into Being

Until 1992, the first-year writing program at the University of South Carolina had for many years consisted of three courses: a traditional pair, English 101: Composition and English 102: Composition and Literature, and a course that received elective credit, English 100: Basic Writing. However, during the late 1980s, South Carolina’s Commission on Higher Education (CHE), without communicating with those of us who taught basic writing, revoked the three hours of elective credit for English 100. It is likely that we would still be teaching in a separate English 100 system had it not been for the CHE’s action. Anger—which at first paralyzed us—eventually pushed us to solve the problem of a now uncredited course, a change that undermined its integrity, “welcoming” students by placing them behind before they had even begun their college careers. Both students and instructors had to invest much energy in overcoming these students’ resistance.

How could we get around the debilitating institutional problem of no credit for the course and still meet the needs of students who needed extra help entering the academic mainstream? Despite understanding the different and difficult circumstances in which various basic writing courses are taught, we took seriously then—and still do—the NCTE resolution against tracking approved in the open Board of Directors Meeting at the 1991 Fall Convention: “RESOLVED, that the National Council of Teachers of English support curricula, programs, and practices that avoid tracking, a system which limits students’ intellectual, linguistic, and/or social development.” We took the stance that it is important to integrate students of different skill and/or knowledge levels, so that those who are less prepared might begin immediately learning how to function in the academic environment, with appropriate assistance in small groups. In the early phases of developing the Studio idea, this stance allowed us to entertain seriously the possibility that traditional teaching strategies were perhaps not adequately addressing the student problems that our experience told us persisted in both regular sections of freshman composition and in basic writing.

In this initial phase the two of us formed a “Basic Writing Practicum” with other basic writing teachers in Fall 1991 and began to work as an inquiry group, following Reason and Rowan’s research approaches in *Human Inquiry in Action*. Each of us worked outside the practicum group to teach our courses and then, every two weeks brought our observations back inside the group for

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collaborative exploration in intensive 90-minute discussions. Reason and Rowan provided a model for small-group action research that encouraged us to enact a spiralling pattern of trial and observation, leading to research questions circling around the extent to which our 100 and 101 students had similar or different needs and perceptions of themselves as developing writers. All of us were already using small-group pedagogy in our classes, but our practicum experience within our own small group plus Marie Wilson Nelson's *At the Point of Need* pushed us to consider ways of using small-group learning outside the regular classroom structure. The sense of progress and support created in our practicum made us think about how to create that same fluid and dynamic work environment for our students. We began to suspect that if students themselves could be brought together in small groups similar to our own, they too might be able to see correlations and thereby be better motivated to take action on behalf of their own writing.

This practicum laid the groundwork for a proposal to our department. We would discontinue the former English 100: Basic Writing course and our Writing Placement Test (WPT, a one-time, timed writing sample). Now, all students would be placed in English 101. Some students could volunteer, and others whom teachers identified could be placed (based on two first-week writing assignments and a portfolio of previous writing) in the Writing Studio. Small groups of 4-5 students (from different sections of English 101) would meet one hour once a week with an experienced small-group leader for intensive help on the writing they would currently be doing for their 101 classes. The groups would hold a regular weekly meeting in the Writing Studio. Studio Staff small-group leaders would communicate each week to the students' 101 instructors via a written Dialogue Sheet to encourage the instructors to return it with their comments. Instructors would use these weekly communications, a final summary report on each student, and student grades on other course requirements to arrive at the student's final grade in English 101. No grade would be given directly by the Studio, though attendance and active participation would be basic requirements.

This proposal was accepted. We piloted the Studio program in fall 1992, wrote a report in spring 1993, and ran the program for the second, third, and fourth times in fall 1993, 1994, and 1995. Throughout this time we have been continually working out details, changes in plans, and strategies. As we see how some aspect of our logistics or approach doesn't work, we probe for new ideas; and, just as important, we explore and build upon what does work. For example, we found that standard, monologic institutional methods for communicating with students about writing assessment and placement (or about their chance to volunteer for a program like the Studio) tended to reinforce both students' estrangement from the academic institution *and* the institution's assumption that it knows all it needs to know about student writers' needs. Our job, then, was and is to create a site within the institution which generates both the possibility and the willingness for reciprocal learning on the part of institution, teachers, and students—starting with our assessment process, described below.

### 3. Portfolios, “Writing History” Diagnostics, and Referral

One of the most important ways to re-member our students’ writing histories, we decided, would be to ask all incoming freshman students to bring with them a portfolio of previous writing.<sup>4</sup> In contrast to the usual holistic scoring methods used for portfolio assessment, we saw our students’ portfolios as a more open-ended diagnostic tool that could yield richer information than traditional assessments and give us a more comprehensive view of students’ writing backgrounds. Traditional-aged freshmen can include written projects, papers, and essays from high school classes in a variety of subjects—or from non-academic recent writing experiences, as we encourage nontraditional-aged students to do. In this way, we aim, from the start, to open up that heavy silence which students bring with them to first-year writing classes: What writing experiences and instruction have they had previously?

In Fall 1992 about 60% of the incoming freshman students brought portfolios to their English 101 classes. In Fall 1993 and Fall 1994, the participation rate went to about 70%. Participation in the portfolio system was obviously uneven; thus we also designed a “Writing History” diagnostic system for the first week of classes to provide additional information about the needs of our first-year student writers. In the Writing History diagnostics, students are asked to discuss their writing history in two different formats: an in-class timed writing and a take-home assignment due the next class period. The in-class writing is framed as an informal piece wherein students are to introduce themselves as writers to their classmates and 101 instructor. The take-home essay is a more formal assignment which asks students to discuss/make sense of the writing experiences that they bring to 101 (including references to the pieces of writing in their portfolios) for the Freshman Composition Committee, an audience genuinely interested in their previous writing experiences and who will use that information in ongoing curriculum design.

Rather than looking at student writing through institutional eyes, we try to use student writing to look at the academic institution and the composition instruction provided therein. We believe strongly that an important indicator of writing development is what writers can say about their own writing products and processes,<sup>5</sup> though we do not simply accept their words at face value. As we ask students to tell us about their previous writing instruction, we note the language students have developed for discussing and making sense of their writing pasts, the ideologies of writing and learning that their words perhaps unconsciously serve within academia.

In the Writing History diagnostics, students often use the vocabulary of emotions: they might talk about how frustrated or paralyzed or nervous they get when trying to come up with something to say or when they can’t write down clearly all the ideas in their heads, about how angry (or proud) they feel at teacher comments on their written work, or about how much they enjoy writing their own poetry or stories or songs. Our observations lead us to hypothesize

that, in settings where students don't have some technical language for identifying or discussing issues in their writing products or processes (or when they have not been asked in the past to reflect in this way upon their writing), students instead will report felt emotions. These emotions are not so indicative of simple "frustration-induced-by-ignorance" or lack of ability as assessments derived from holistic-scoring scales might leave us to believe.

Embedded in students' emotions is much the institution needs to learn about how student writing processes, products, and attitudes are predicated on institutionalized ideologies in English departments. In an upcoming article (Grego and Thompson), we use feminist approaches to shed light on the inequitable relationship between the institution's need to deal efficiently with student writing versus the deference it accords to Literature. Our Studio assessment system does not focus on efficiently dealing with student writing as much as it generates the kinds of questions about student writing that are usually only asked about literary texts. In Studio assessment and pedagogy, we struggle to allow students' emotions about their writing to be considered as an important part of the academic learning about writing experience, *not* to be sloughed off as unintellectual.

How do the English 101 instructors use this assessment system to refer students to the Studio? (Recall that many other students volunteer.) They do so with the help of 1) an orientation session wherein the two of us talk about telling features of the portfolios and diagnostics, about how to combine this information with other observations of students and what they know about themselves as teachers; 2) a 4-5 page section explaining the Studio in our *Teacher's Guide*; 3) a Studio Referral Sheet; and 4) Studio Staff who are available during the first two weeks of classes in the Writing Studio to work as hands-on consultants with 101 instructors. The kinds of writing features that we asked teachers to look at the first year were very faithful to institutional standards: following the assignment, elaboration of content, organization, and mechanics/sentence structure problems. To this traditional set of assessment categories, we added questions the second and third years which direct teachers to indicate and take note of what *students* say about their own writing characteristics or experiences related to the original assessment categories, for reasons noted above. In Fall 1995, we changed our procedures rather than our referral sheet: during the initial diagnostic period, instructors come to the Studio with their students' portfolios and writing histories to sit around the table with 3 or 4 other instructors and a Studio leader to discuss which students should be referred, and why. This procedure brings fuller and more thoughtful participation in the diagnostic process. It also teaches instructors more about the experience their students will have in the Studio.

Our guiding principle in making decisions about Studio candidates has, in general, been that if instructors *perceive* students as needing Studio help, or if instructors *perceive* that they don't have the expertise or the time to work with a particular student, then these perceptions should count as much as what we see

in the student writing itself. The instructor's perception that a student might fail the course is a powerful one and must be acknowledged. If we can help students work with that instructor's perception—learning how to work with their teachers (as audience often representative of institutionalized assumptions about student writers and their work) *and* with their writing, both as parts of a rhetorical context—then the Studio serves a valuable purpose in the student's education. If the Studio can raise teachers' consciousness of their assumptions about student writers, then it serves a valuable purpose in the teacher's education as well.

#### 4. Interactional-Inquiry Inside Studio Groups

How did students in the first three years react when they entered the Studio for their first session? While the Studio provides, from the institution's point of view, positive integration with additional support for students, the Studio can still represent, from a student's point of view, being negatively singled out from other 101 students. One of the first things that we do with Studio groups is some exercise (freewriting, metaphorizing, etc.) designed to get students talking about "what they thought when they first heard that they'd be coming to the Studio." We want to get any initial reactions out "on the table" for discussion so that we can talk about how the Freshman English curriculum worked in the past, how we've changed it for the better (according to student testimonials from previous years), and what the Studio won't do, as well as what we hope it will. Getting these initial reactions out "on the table" is just one of the ways in which we begin engaging students in building a community culture that opens up interactions for inquiry.

We see the voicing of student reactions as essential to what Bizzell and Lu have termed "recuperating" the individual student-learner, as a first step in students' taking a more active role in their own education. What initial feelings do students reveal? There are students—often those who need the most support—whose first response is anger; we regard the voicing of this anger as a good effect of repositioning the student outside the 101 classroom/inside the writing group. Students can voice this anger more freely in the Studio, perhaps because they know that the Studio leader has no grade power and because the student is sitting at a table with other students who also might be similarly angry. Giving voice to anger in a supportive community setting can lead to productive action and change, as we knew from our own experience. Resignation is another common response. Some students anticipate being placed in the Studio because of their high school tracking experiences or because they've been told over and over that they have problems with their writing. Years of such experiences have squashed these students into submission/resignation. While these students are more docile and perhaps ready to work, we don't necessarily see this as productive either. Both anger and resignation can trap students—with one approach and one set of expectations for themselves as writers and for the writing instruction they will receive. (For a variety of reasons, their 101 instructors may also come to class with one approach and one set of expectations for

those student writers.) With resignation as with anger, setting students to talk about their past and present difficulties—with a Studio group leader working to do justice to the complexity of their problems and bringing the 101 instructor into these deliberations—seems vital to helping them reposition themselves as productive learners and developing writers. The key is “deep listening” and responding to student perceptions/talk/writing/emotions as the product of the student’s educational process, as the product of the relationships which the student has had with their own texts and with their teachers.

Thus we become co-researchers with students in exploring how academic culture influences writing. We call our co-researcher method “interactional-inquiry,” our version of Reason and Rowan’s human inquiry. Interactional-inquiry is grounded in relationships: using small-group collaboration for rounds of listening; talking and writing to generate ideas; acting upon them; and reflecting about them—a continual to-and-fro between action and reflection. For the student groups, the inquiry cycle operates in the following way. The student members of any one Studio group attend their various 101 class meetings. Inside those classes they are one of 20-25 students who receive writing assignments and work on those assignments: they bring to their weekly Studio group their work-in-progress: writing assignment sheets or notes of their own, brainstorming lists (or the need to brainstorm), freewriting (or the need to do some freewriting), rough drafts of papers, final drafts, drafts with teacher comments for further revision/portfolio work, and lots of questions about what to “do” with these documents, about how to “read” the teacher comments, and about the actions that the documents or comments (often implicitly) suggest. In other words, the “action” about which this reflective inquiry revolves consists of whatever assignments students are pursuing for their 101 classes (though our discussions sometimes roam broader afield).

“Reflection” means getting on the table all the assumptions about academic writing at this university, in this freshman program, in these 101 classes, for your 101 teacher, in your paper. This list emphasizes all the various scenes (to use a term from Burke’s pentad) in which the students see writing and themselves as writers. The Staff leader is there to be open and generous with information to contextualize writing assignments: why tasks are the way they are, curriculum or institutional history, various theories/competing ideas about writing instruction or writing process, etc. The leader’s job is not only to talk directly about academic writing, but also to listen to the more informal conversations and interactions between group members in order to understand students’ depictions of academic work.

Reflection includes a wide range of activities, and the Studio staff member is to facilitate and engage in them: chatting about how the semester is going, about the latest “big news” in the *Gamecock* (student newspaper) or about the upcoming break, rehearsing what the latest writing assignment is asking a writer to do and how to do it, brainstorming, getting responses from other group members on their draft or on ideas for a draft, exploring the organization choices

for a piece of writing, going to a dictionary or handbook to find answers to questions about style and/or mechanics, and, above and through all else, “talking open” and asking questions about ways for negotiating the world and work of academic writing in English 101. Though similar activities can be orchestrated in the regular classroom, they may be less meaningful than if they are allowed to arise organically within an institutional site, as in a Studio conversation where the help can then be offered “at the point of need” (Nelson).

Reflection seems to be a mental “site” at which emotion and reason are clearly operating together. In *Descartes’ Error: Emotion, Reason, and the Human Brain*, Antonio Damasio locates the biological processing of emotion in the same place in the brain as the process of what we consider to be reason. He notes that emotion plays an integral role in assessing information. For instance, when we have to reason through several alternative potential actions, we mentally try out a solution and reject or embrace it based on a quick check of feeling about it (174-5). Damasio’s concept that we hold an image in mind in order to reflect upon an idea and thus interrogate it more fully describes an intra-individual act analogous to the Studio inter-personal actions of getting ideas on the table. Studio small-group members can help a student writer hold an idea in mind and interrogate it more fully, perhaps slowing down the quick check of feelings that might cause a student writer to dismiss or accept an idea too quickly. As our writing history diagnostics have shown, the feelings which students are quickly checking are often emotions shaped by the student writer’s previous patterns of behavior in matters of academic writing.

Studio Staff leaders, in parallel fashion, engage in another cycle of interactional inquiry in weekly Staff meetings. The work we do leading small groups provides the experiences we bring to the table for reflection. Instead of a 101 assignment, we bring to meetings a one-page written discussion or enumeration of concerns, problems, successes, or questions relevant to the particular weekly work of the Studio student groups. These guide our own cycle of reflective inquiry.

## 5. From “Basic Writing” to “Basic Teaching”

“Basic teaching” is a phrase that Studio Staff member Hayes Hampton has insisted upon. The Studio experience helps us understand teaching in a way not available through composition theories or pedagogies, thus subverting the original institutional label “basic writing” with which our story began. The Studio’s repositioning of remediation holds a mirror up to our teaching, helping us see that it is not just student texts that need remediation, and moving us to question the power structure held in place by words like “remediation.”

Early on we realized—and embraced—the fact that being outside the normal academic credit structure requires forging inquiry-based, collaborative relationships with instructors and others to make the Studio work. But how? How can we involve each instructor in interactional-inquiry about their student

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writers? We considered oral communications—either in person or by telephone—but we know that is logistically impossible to do on a regular basis. We have come to see, as the most viable means of communication, writing a report to each 101 instructor each week on each student. The Dialogue Sheet we use has a space marked for instructors to respond to our comments, which we often lace with questions to stimulate dialogue.

We see these Dialogue Sheets as mediators: between Studio and English 101, between Studio leader and 101 instructor, between the student and the academy. In each Studio small group, we try to pull commentary out of the students as much as possible, information that teachers working with much larger groups of students in the classroom often find difficult to obtain on a regular basis. To the instructors, we can pass information about the students' life circumstances, writing/learning processes, and written products that come to light in the context of a small-group meeting—information that can help an instructor understand the difficulties a student might be having, as well as strengths in the student's writing and group interaction perhaps also less likely to emerge as clearly in the larger class. Concomitantly, we ask questions that we hope will elicit information from the instructor to help *us* work with the student more effectively and which will help teachers problematize and push their ideas about student writing.

We hope 101 instructors within this Studio process will break the cycle of the general stereotype that students who don't/can't make it in higher education are those without the right backgrounds. This stereotype is prevalent and widespread, but it does not give teachers any good basis for teaching: no one teacher would be able to supply such a background even if we knew that the lack of this background adequately described student problems. So we hope our 101 teachers will use information from the Studio Dialogue Sheets to see their students as intelligent individuals and to resist tempting stereotypes that might well become self-fulfilling prophecies. The Dialogue Sheets can help teachers begin to recognize the complexities of student writing in ways that may be very unfamiliar. They may make teachers' jobs seem much less efficient and much more chaotic when the limitations of institutional standards for describing student writing are, in a sense, called to our attention on a weekly basis. Though our procedure is not perfect—we have been successful in generating Dialogues with some instructors though certainly not all—we continue our commitment to the idea and continually discuss ways to make what are sometimes monologues become more dialogic, and thus a means of basic teacher education in our program.

## 6. Too Student Centered? "Mere Therapy"?

In an educational system where curriculums are geared almost completely—as most are—toward subject matter, any program that openly addresses students' needs is going to *seem* too student centered and, thus, have to answer to

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the charge “mere therapy.” The Writing Studio *is* student-centered, particularly in the way it addresses the politics of the position of the student and of student writing. Therapy? Perhaps. But if so then it is, as much as anything, a kind of therapy designed to get both therapists and patients aware of the past and present influence of the institution within which both work. Thus the Studio moves beyond the usual text-focused needs of student writing to explore ways in which writing programs can address the psychic needs of students and teachers, needs constructed by institutional preference for narrow assessment and treatment of the disembodied deficiencies of student texts. (See Grego and Thompson for further discussion of the institutional politics of emotion and writing.)

Thus, teaching in the Studio requires constantly developing abilities and ideas. Studio staff leaders must be able to act on their feet by postulating connections between needs and the complex local factors of each student writer. Studio group-work thus requires and builds a knowledge of the social dynamics of small-group work, background knowledge of the academic institution, and a repertoire of ways of responding to student writing—all ready to be pulled, on the spur of the moment, from a critical consciousness developed through the experience of working with student writers. With four to five students and one hour per week, there’s not a moment to waste. As the students enter the room, the leader must be alert and ready to listen deeply to see what lurks under the discussion table, what needs to be—respectfully and intelligently—put on the table so that students can better understand assumptions that influence their writing. Specifically, the leader must connect what is said with who is doing the saying, using background information, personal and social, and then bringing the possible connections or underlying influences into the light of discussion. Rather than dominating the responding themselves, Studio leaders see their responsibility as modeling how to initiate and exchange ideas for other students and ultimately for themselves.

Yes, Writing Studio teaching *is* concerned with relationships and the positive use of emotional energy. As one Studio Staff member, Mary Alm, has expressed it:

We recognize that conflict springs from many sources; we continually work at channeling it into a streambed that has direction rather than either dam(n)ing it or letting it run itself out, aimlessly and wastefully. Literacy-teaching is a nested concept in Studio instruction. The Studio is about reading and writing one’s self in/on to one’s world—this new academic world in which students find themselves; and it is about reading and writing the texts presented by that world. The Writing Studio aims for growth in understanding, particularly understanding of the paradox of social construction: i.e., that we must exercise our opportunities to discursively construct our world at the same time we are recognizing how we are being constructed by it.

## 7. What Institutions Need

To readers who might be interested in adapting or creating a program like the Writing Studio, we emphasize the need to look carefully at your own academic context—at other institutional programs and their history, students, and teachers. As we have come to know other basic writing programs in our region, we have seen that every situation is unique. A first-year composition teaching force of largely graduate assistants (like ours) requires different considerations than, say, college faculty or adjuncts. In addition, the community college with virtually open admissions has different needs and resources than the large university with admissions restrictions and other programs that siphon off students with non-traditional backgrounds, such as life-long learning programs for adults, or provisional programs for less academically-prepared students.

At the University of South Carolina approximately 1700-1900 students enroll in English 101 each fall. Our previous WPT identified varying numbers of students for placement into our English 100: Basic Writing course, in part depending on departmental resources available for teaching the course in any given year. Since 1988 the highest total number of students placing into basic writing was 237 (in 1988-89), the lowest 84 (in 1991-92). The Writing Studio enrolled 80 students in Fall 1992, 70 in Fall 1993, and 83 in Fall 1994.

During its first year, 94% of the students participating in the Writing Studio program passed English 101, most with grades ranging from C to B+. Out of the 80 students who placed into the program, only 9 failed English 101. Out of that 9, 4 students received Fs in all their courses, indicating that their first semester in college posed problems that went beyond needing extra help with writing. The remaining 5 Studio students (6%) thus indicated the program's true failure rate that first year. Due to the anonymity of the students required to allow us to legally and ethically check their records, we are not able to identify the specific reasons for their failure, though we know that these students did pass other courses in the fall semester. In the second year, all students who participated in the Studio passed; and for the third year, which ended in December 1994, Studio students had a 95% pass rate.

At the end of each fall term, we have collected surveys from the students involved and their 101 Instructors, asking all to comment on their experiences with/in the Studio. Of the first year's (1992) student surveys, 51 of 56 were very positive after students overcame their initial fears that the Studio might be the "same old kind of remedial work" many had been required to do in the past. When asked what they had expected, some were relieved that they were not stuck in large classes. They were pleasantly surprised at how helpful the Studio was for their 101 courses and for learning to write for different professors. Several suggested that their classmates would have benefitted from the Studio. (The five who were generally negative about the Studio the first year demonstrated a self-fulfilling prophecy: they didn't expect the Studio to help; thus it

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didn't.) At the end of the second and third years (1993 and 1994), the student surveys were virtually all positive, with only one or two exceptions from students who were not able to commit themselves fully to Studio work. This we took as evidence of our concerted efforts to present more initial information about the Studio and to encourage volunteers. The series of quotes that we used in *Writing At Carolina: The Student's Guide to Freshman English 1993-94* illustrates the kinds of benefits students perceived:

- I was rather impressed by the actual work on our papers instead of the grammar and writing drills. The drills haven't worked in the past 12 years, but I think the Studio has helped me in ways that drills can't.
- We all spoke of ways to revise our papers. It helped to improve my writing. We heard one another's papers and gave our view on them.
- I learned a lot of things that I thought I had learned in high school but never quite understood.
- A pretty cool place.

The Instructor Surveys have given us good ideas and insights into Studio procedures and philosophy from the institutionally-influenced point of view. We continue to see how training for "basic teaching" needs to break through stereotypical and institutionally blind views of students and their writing problems. For example, from the first-year Instructor Surveys, we learned that about half thought we would be working basically with grammar and mechanics. They sometimes questioned why the Studio didn't focus more intensively at this micro-text level of writing (though we did spend lots of time at that level with different student groups at different times), but at the same time they commented that their students' participation in the Studio helped them see the need for making assignments that could be clearly explained to their Studio group. In response, we have explained the Studio in greater detail during teacher-orientations and used the Dialogue Sheets more intensively to enlist teacher support and cooperation.

Whenever a course becomes an institutional fixture, as basic writing courses have, we run the risk of allowing institutional labels to render invisible the richness and complexity of the backgrounds that all students bring into the academy. Our foray outside the classroom, moving inside Writing Studio small-group instruction, has repositioned us to ask—and begin to suggest answers for—the what-if questions of Bartholomae, Elbow, and others. *What if* we had no separate basic writing course? Whether or not readers see the Writing Studio we have described here as a viable possibility for their students, teachers, and institutions, we assert that the process of slipping outside the traditional slough of familiarity can enlighten and enliven the theories and practices which inform our writing programs, and can move us to integrate research on and learning about writing within those programs. Providing such sites, and finding ways to organize and disseminate the results, describes today's challenge to writing program administration.

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## Notes

1. See articles and conference presentations by Joseph Harris, Patricia Bizzell (in the *Journal of Education* "Symposium," Harris et al.), Min-Zhan Lu (also in the *Journal of Education* "Symposium," Harris et al.), Thomas Fox, David Bartholomae, Peter Elbow.
2. Joseph Harris and Min-Zhan Lu have used this word to deny "monolithic" definitions of academic discourse or writing, to describe instead a world of various perspectives and voices with which student-writers become familiar as they make their way into the academy. We have taken this word and applied it to our own position in the academy as teachers of writing who do not want to be tied in our curriculum, our pedagogy, or our assessment methods to upholding a falsely monolithic vision of academic writing.
3. We attribute this phrase to Gordon Wells (of the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education), in his plenary presentation on "Research, Inquiry, Hegemony" at the NCTE International Conference, New York University, July 7-9, 1995.
4. Since Fall 1992 at least one other large state University (Michigan) has also experimented with portfolio assessment for incoming students writers.
5. This assumption is at the heart of most writing process pedagogies and research methods which rely on students' "rhetoric of composition" for either research or instruction/learning purposes. Our open use of what students say about their writing/writing history has led us to look, actually, *less* at "writing development" and *more* at the institutional culture which fosters the student rhetorics of composition which we see every fall semester. See "Repositioning Remediation: Renegotiating Composition's Work in the Academy," Grego and Thompson.

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## Notes on Contributors

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**Rhonda Grego** and **Nancy Thompson** have collaborated as co-directors of the Writing Studio Program at the university of South Carolina since its inception in 1992. They have written two other articles together: "Repositioning Remediation: Renegotiating Composition's Work in the Academy" (for CCC) and "Two Women's Ways of Knowing Teaching Writing," on the origins of their research, for an NCTE collection on college teaching. Nancy is involved with another colleague (Judith Giblin James) in a biographical /textual recovery of Sylvia Ashton-Warner's "ways of knowing," and Rhonda is currently working on a book project interpreting classical Greek and modern feminist writings about memory through a historical and applied understanding of the politics of composition. They continue, in the fluid "site" provided by the Writing Studio Project, to think, talk, and write together on explorations of the academy.

**Suzan Harrison** is an Assistant Professor of Rhetoric at Eckerd College where she directs a campus-wide portfolio assessment of student writing. She teaches courses in composition, rhetoric, and women/gender studies. She has written articles on portfolio assessment, feminist pedagogy, and Southern fiction.

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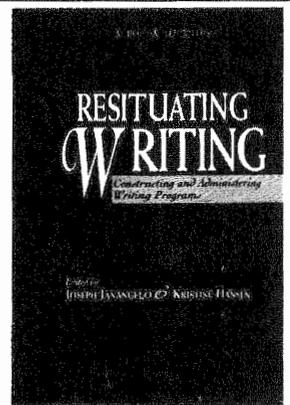
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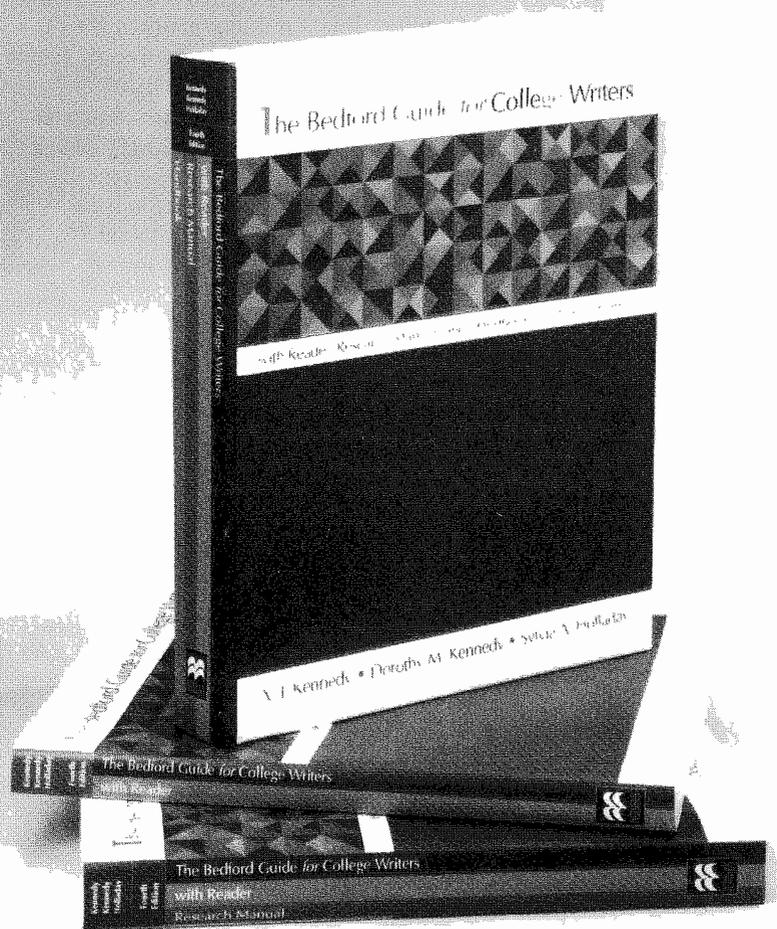
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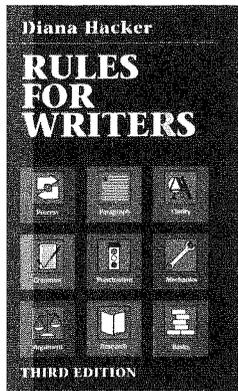
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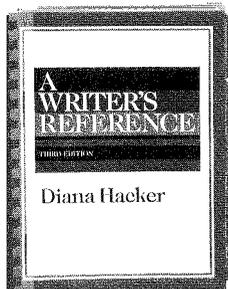
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# WPA E-Mail Directory

Following is a list of e-mail addresses for WPA members who responded to the "call for addresses" in the spring 1995 issue of the journal. I apologize in advance for any errors I introduced in typing and in shuffling materials among various files. Please send corrections and updates to <ddhesse@ilstu.edu>.

WPA hopes to expand this directory; please send additions to the same address.

—DH

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F R O M N C T E

# INTERSECTIONS

## Theory-Practice in the Writing Center

Joan A. Mullin and Ray Wallace, editors

This introduction to writing center theory-in-use analyzes the cornerstones of theory and proposes a reexamination of some taken-for-granted composition practices. The fifteen essays in *Intersections: Theory-Practice in the Writing Center* reveal the complexity of teaching writing, with some contributors calling into question the gap between classroom theory and classroom practice as seen through students' and tutors' perspectives. Though each chapter explores one theory, this volume represents the numerous theories that underlie the flexible, reflective practice necessary to every writing center, to every classroom. Expected topics appear here—collaborative learning, social construction, whole language—but these writing center practitioners also draw on medical ethics, textual linguistics, feminism, and philosophical hermeneutics. As co-editor Joan A. Mullin suggests, this book is not meant to prescribe theory or practice but to “invite you also to participate as reader/practitioner/theorist—to continue the conversation begun here, to rearrange, overláp, reflect on, and expand our beginning dialogue.” 196 pp. 1994. Coll. ISBN 0-8141-2331-7.

No. 23317-4017 \$19.95 (\$14.95)

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# LISTENING TO THE WORLD

## Cultural Issues in Academic Writing

Helen Fox

In *Listening to the World*, Helen Fox explores why students from other cultures often find it difficult to learn academic writing and understand its purpose in the U.S. university. Drawing upon systematic conversations with students, Fox discusses how their writing is influenced by cultures where people communicate indirectly and holistically, value the wisdom of the past, and downplay the individual in favor of the group. Based on the author's observations as a teacher-researcher and on interviews with students from Asia, Africa, and Latin America, this study looks at what happens to undergraduate and graduate students—some of them mid-career professionals who are published writers in their own countries—when they try to modify their writing and thinking styles to produce analytical papers in the Western context. No comparable book on the market addresses the difficulties of both international and U.S. students—and does so with sustained and empathetic focus on underlying cultural differences. *Listening to the World* is a valuable resource for all university teachers and academic advisers who work with students from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds. 161 pp. 1994. Coll. ISBN 0-8141-2953-6.

No. 29536-4017 \$16.95 (\$12.95)



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## PEDAGOGY IN THE AGE OF POLITICS Writing and Reading (in) the Academy

Patricia A. Sullivan and Donna J. Qualley, editors

Writing at a time of "intense institutional examination and social critique," the authors in this important volume address how our teaching practices might productively respond to these challenges. Maxine Greene, David Bleich, Robert Scholes, and eighteen others discuss how our evolving awareness of the social forces of gender, race, class, and culture may be taken from the level of abstract discussion into our day-to-day interactions with students and colleagues. Contributors offer new perspectives on such issues as feminism in the classroom, the shifts in power brought about by computers in the writing class, approaches to literatures from various regions and cultures, and new ways of looking at genres such as the journal and the academic autobiography. Especially stimulating is the historical focus of several essays. They reveal how some of our assumptions (about pedagogy, or about literacy, for example) and our classroom genres (e.g., the thesis-driven essay) gained a hold on our current thinking, and they suggest alternative ways of viewing instruction. 256 pp. 1994. Coll. ISBN 0-8141-5890-0.

No. 58900-4017 \$21.95 (\$15.95)

## VOICES ON VOICE Perspectives, Definitions, Inquiry

Kathleen Blake Yancey, editor

What is *voice*? Is it compatible with postmodern views of the self and of writing and reading? And if so, how can it be translated in ways that both respect students and challenge them? Those are the questions and issues that *Voices on Voice: Perspectives, Definitions, Inquiry* seeks to explore from a diversity of perspectives—from that of writers such as Toby Fulwiler; from readers such as Carl Klaus and Laura Julier; from scholars such as Peter Elbow; from teachers such as Paula Gillespie; from cross-cultural rhetoricians such as Gwen Gong and John Powers; and from the "unvoiced" world of the deaf. Other perspectives—the feminist, the Native American, and the postmodern electronic—situate voice differently still. That is, in part, the point of this work: We all hear voices, those we admit, acknowledge, and construct. How we listen to those voices—as individuals, as communities, as writers, and as readers—is the point of departure of *Voices on Voice*. 363 pp. 1994. Coll. ISBN 0-8141-5634-7.

No. 56347-4017 \$29.95 (\$22.95)



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## SCENARIOS FOR TEACHING WRITING

### Contexts for Discussion and Reflective Practice

Chris M. Anson, Joan Graham, David A. Jolliffe,  
Nancy S. Shapiro, and Carolyn H. Smith

*Scenarios for Teaching Writing* offers teaching assistants, new faculty members, and adjunct instructors "real-world" scenarios about the many facets of teaching introductory college composition. Experienced writing program administrators from throughout the country provide situations, sample syllabi, assignments, and journal entries from their own classrooms, highlighting those that present engaging theoretical and practical topics for discussion. The book's six chapters move from general considerations of assignment design and the selection of materials to more particular concerns of teacher-student interaction. In addition, they feature "Issues for Discussion," which challenge readers to find the solutions that work in their own classrooms. Included is a bibliography featuring author-selected readings on the questions raised throughout the book. 160 pp. 1993. NCTE in cooperation with the Alliance for Undergraduate Education. Coll. ISBN 0-8141-4255-9.

No. 42559-4017 \$16.95 (\$12.95)

## EVALUATING TEACHERS OF WRITING

Christine A. Hult, editor

This timely book explores issues many university writing faculty and their departments are now debating: What is an appropriate way to evaluate writing teachers? Who should conduct the evaluations? What is evaluation, anyway? Contributors such as David Bleich, Joyce Kinkead, and Peter Elbow describe the various forms evaluation can take, and then discuss the inability of a single form to accurately describe the work done in diverse, distinct types of writing classrooms. Evaluation is discussed through real-life examples: evaluation of writing faculty by literature faculty, student evaluation of teachers, peer evaluation, videotaped evaluation of class sessions, and standard departmental numerical evaluation. The book includes evaluation questionnaires that have proved successful at the authors' institutions. *Evaluating Teachers of Writing* delineates problems in evaluating writing faculty and sets the stage for reconsidering the entire evaluation process to produce a fair, equitable, and appropriate system. 189 pp. 1994. Coll. ISBN 0-8141-1621-3.

No. 16213-4017 \$19.95 (\$14.95)



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# SEEING YOURSELF AS A TEACHER

Conversations with Five New Teachers  
in a University Writing Program

Elizabeth Rankin

What is it like to teach writing? How do new teachers of composition conceive their roles? With these and other questions in mind, Elizabeth Rankin began a series of weekly conversations with five second-year teachers in a university writing program. In *Seeing Yourself as a Teacher*, Rankin invites us to listen as the new teachers talk about everything from their relationships with students to their pedagogical theories to their ideas about their roles as writing teachers. She also invites us to reflect, as she does, on some of the questions that emerge from these conversations: How do we integrate the personal and professional in our lives? Why do some teachers resist the whole concept of theory? How do the teachers we've known influence the teachers we will be? Why do some people struggle more than others to see themselves as teachers? Rankin's reflections on these and other questions suggest that these issues have meaning not just for new teachers, but for veteran writing teachers, scholars, and administrators as well. 137 pp. 1994. Coll. ISBN 0-8141-4298-2.

No. 42982-4017 \$12.95 (\$9.95)



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F R O M N C T E

# TWO-YEAR COLLEGE ENGLISH

## Essays for a New Century

Mark Reynolds, editor

*Two-Year College English: Essays for a New Century* fills a void in the scholarly work on community college teaching, curricula, faculty, programs, and history. Each of the nineteen essays explores a significant aspect of the two-year college and argues for recognition of the critical roles that such colleges now play and will continue to play well into the twenty-first century. Among the crucial topics considered are meeting the needs of diverse student populations; the demands of preparing students for access to four-year institutions; the innovative measures required to bring ethnic/cultural awareness to the classroom; the challenges presented by "older, nontraditional students"; the status of part-time instructors in a system still too-often modeled on full-time professorial faculty; and many others. Containing essays by nationally recognized scholars, educators, and authors such as Bertie E. Fearing, Judith Rae Davis, Barbara Stout, Smokey Wilson, George B. Vaughan, Jean Bolen Bridges, and Keith Kroll, *Two-Year College English* offers energetic and optimistic insights into the current and future roles that community colleges will play in the development of today's students. 241 pp. 1994. Coll. ISBN 0-8141-5541-3.

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