

Review

Resituating Writing: Constructing and Administering Writing Programs

Joseph Janangelo and Kristine Hansen, editors. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook-Heinemann, 1995. 163 pp. \$24.50

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Resituating Writing is the most recent work in the Boynton/Cook-Heinemann series *CrossCurrents: New Perspectives in Rhetoric and Composition*. Collectively, the book's editors and fourteen chapter authors—mostly writing program administrators—have logged more than a century of administrative experience, expertise that is apparent throughout the book. It is evident in the Foreword, where series editor Charles Schuster not only comments on the chapters that follow but also draws on his years of WPA experience to offer useful strategies for dealing with the crises that writing program administrators inevitably face. It is evident in the Preface, where Janangelo and Hansen explain that the collection is designed to help WPAs with the intellectual work that distinguishes WPAs from other campus administrators, ones who don't deal with the knowledge of a field on daily basis. The collection also will prepare current graduate students to enter the field with their eyes opened. Perhaps the best feature of the book, though, is that it should persuade department chairs, deans, vice-presidents, and provosts that writing program administration is as intellectually demanding as any work in the academy.

The first section, "Philosophical Issues and Institutional Identities," is eclectic but intellectually rich. It opens with a fascinating essay by Joseph Janangelo, who uses Derrida's layered term *differánce* and Lyotard's theory of "the differend" to explain how writing programs can and should subvert institutional expectations that we simply teach students to write better. That is, we have opportunities and responsibilities to equip students with tools for challenging institutional hierarchies and hegemonies. Kristine Hansen, displaying an admirable *ethos* as she describes some of her experiences working with part-timers, argues convincingly that we need to do a much better job than we have to professionalize adjuncts and to treat them ethically. Reminding us of the promise of the unfulfilled Wyoming Resolution, she shows us through her own ethical actions how we can walk the walk, not just talk the talk, for treating part-timers with dignity and respect. Lester Faigley and Susan Romano explain how computer technology has the potential for disrupting traditional literate practices. We old-timers, though, may be too entrenched in the academy's "essayist literacy," privileging logic, documentation, and a neutral stance. Our graduate students—the young Turks—will need to lead us into the literacy of the twenty-first century. The most distinguishing feature of this essay, by the way, is that

Faigley and Romano go to great lengths to name and pay tribute to the graduate students who have led the charge at the University of Texas. In the final chapter of the first section, Elizabeth Nist and Helon Raines, both community college faculty, offer an interesting history of community colleges and their writing programs. They make readers painfully aware that organizations such as the Council of Writing Program Administrators have long neglected the needs of writing faculty in two-year institutions. They conclude by providing concrete suggestions for actions that the Council, as well as university faculty, should take to foster the work of community college writing programs.

The second section, "The WPA Within and Across Departments," suggests strategies for constructing positive working relationships with academic units. Lynn Bloom offers a practical guide for what WPAs can and should do to strengthen writing on their campuses. To transcend the tedium of shuffling papers, she argues, WPAs need to "take charge of training those who teach in the writing program" (74), resisting the temptation to assign that responsibility to others. Bloom also provides useful strategies for influencing both undergraduate and graduate education, for establishing and enhancing the institution's reputation in the field, and for conducting useful research. Ellen Strenski tackles the sticky issue of recruiting and training composition teachers other than those hired on tenure-track lines. She recommends that the key to a happy hiring season is finding teachers whose pedagogical practices match those of the program. She also suggests ways to encourage teachers to engage in professional development by offering appropriate incentives. Her advice is important given that, "any writing program is really nothing but the people we hire, retrain, and retrain" (97). Molly Wingate, after confessing her own failures in collaborating in institutional change, uses the work of sociologist C. Wright Mills and German historian Werner Rings to analyze the dynamics of a writing center's collaboration with its host institution. She convincingly demonstrates that writing center directors must become politically savvy to help plan for curricular change or they will be victimized by it. In the section's final essay, experienced administrator Susan McLeod explicates a range of metaphors that can describe the roles of WAC directors. Dismissing the roles of conqueror, diplomat, Peace Corps volunteer, and missionary, McLeod suggests that change agent is the ideal metaphor for describing the effective WAC director. She goes on to note strategies for changing curricula and pedagogical theories.

In the book's final section, "Professional and Scholarly Identities," four well-respected scholar-administrators offer effective survival strategies for WPAs. The essays in this section should be required reading for WPAs, as well as those administrators and committees who evaluate their work. First, Christine Hult uses Ernest Boyer's four categories of scholarship—discovery, integration, application, and teaching—to construct a convincing case that much of what WPAs do is scholarly. Her chapter should serve many in the field, especially untenured WPAs who have to persuade their sometimes less-than-scrupulous institutions that their administrative duties—often forced upon them—warrant tenure. Next, Edward White, the guru of evaluation, details what to do and what

not to do when evaluating writing programs. Such work, he argues is highly rhetorical and demands substantial investments of time, effort, and money. In the final chapter, Barbara Cambridge and Ben McClelland describe the dozens of roles that WPAs serve on their campuses. They argue that WPAs must have institutional power because "if power is left as close to the action as possible, the writing program administrator will be part of a multitude of partnerships" (156). Partnerships, they note, must exist among all people on campus who want students to learn how to write more effectively. An effective WPA is one who creates the glue, not one who is the glue, for partnerships that lead to synergies.

What is most impressive about *Resituating Writing* is that its authors individually and collectively possess strong *ethos*. The chapters are filled with explicit references to the authors' administrative experience and experiences. Beyond that, though, the chapter authors make clear that they care about students, teachers, writing program administrators, learning, writing, writing programs, and institutions. Having finished reading *Resituating Writing*, I feel fortunate to have spent some time considering advice that I know will serve me well as I perform administrative duties at my institution. I am reminded of the massiveness of the work that I have before me, but I also feel that I'm now a little better equipped to do that work.

WPA Research Grants

The WPA Research Grant Committee, composed of Kristine Hansen (chair), Theresa Enos, David Jolliffe, and Ben McClelland, chose the following persons to receive grants for 1996:

Mara Holt and Leon Anderson, Ohio University, for focus group interviews, one phase of a planned multi-method study of how WPAs manage and negotiate conflict. Amount: \$1800.

Susanmarie Harrington, Indiana University-Purdue University, Indianapolis, for research on placement rating systems that use group reading sessions and rely on teacher experience in the classroom rather than on norming sessions with scoring rubrics. Amount: \$978.60.

Amy Devitt and Mary Jo Reiff, The University of Kansas, for an investigation of the role of teaching teams in ensuring continuity among classes in the Freshman-Sophomore English sequence, maintaining standards, and making the work of administration more collaborative and collegial. Amount \$2000.