Letter From the Editor

Last Saturday I chaperoned twelve seventh graders, one of them my son, for a day at Six Flags Great America, an amusement park near Chicago. It was an end of year, school-sponsored trip. Being a good chaperone (or at least one worried about losing a group among the thronged thousands), I rode the roller coasters: Batman, Shock Wave, Demon, Iron Wolf, Whizzer, Viper, and my favorite, American Eagle, a vast wooden coaster that trades loops for speed and a rickety wobble.

There was only one ride I wouldn't do, one of the park's newest attractions. It is called, plainly and truly, The Giant Drop. It consists of a steel column over 200 feet tall. Riders strap into a ring of thirty seats at its base, their feet dangling over thin air, and are hoisted to the column's top, where after a few seconds the ring releases, plummeting in free fall about 180 feet before a brake jerks everything to a stop. Down takes less than four seconds. I remembered something about 16 feet per second per second.

I'd like to say the reason I didn't ride The Giant Drop is that I'd just taken two of my own. The semester had ended in a frenzy of grades and reports following the 15-week build of tension. And I had just agreed, suddenly, to become Graduate Director, which means for the first time in eight years I will not be a WPA, come August. But I didn't not take The Giant Drop for metaphorical reasons. The thing scared me.

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This issue of *WPA: Writing Program Administration*, carries a cluster of essays on professional issues. Rick Gebhardt provides some broad perspectives on the relationships among teaching, scholarship, and service. Diane Boehm, Suellyn Duffey, and Theresa Enos offer complicating responses to the draft of the "WPA Statement on Intellectual Work." Jeanne Gunner challenges us to think critically about the Portland Resolution and Pauline Uchmanowicz about the status of nontenure-line faculty. Another group of essays share research and professional practices. Eric Miraglia and Susan McLeod update an earlier study of WAC programs, analyzing reasons some fail and others succeed. Michael Allen, Jane Frick, Jeff Sommers, and Kathleen Yancey share a method for validating program portfolio assessments, and Ray Zimmerman and Ellen Strenski offer several strategies for using the world wide web in program administration. Finally, Eric Martin has once again heroically assembled a bibliography of writing textbooks published this year.

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Please note the call for articles on page 130 for a special issue of *WPA*. Jeanne Gunner will edit this issue, dealing with facets of collaborative administration. I hope you'll send Jeanne a flurry of essays.

<p style="text-align:right">*Doug Hesse*</p>