Writing Program Administration

Journal of the
Council of Writing Program Administrators

WPA: Writing Program Administration is published twice a year—fall/winter and spring—by the Council of Writing Program Administration.

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 first year 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.

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 and between writing and other academic 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 editors welcome empirical research (quantitative as well as qualitative), historical research, and theoretical, essayistic, or reflective 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. The editors aspire to respond within three months after the receipt of the submission.

WPA publishes reviews of books related to writing programs and their administration. Publishers are invited to send appropriate professional books to Dennis Lynch, who assigns reviews.

Authors whose works are accepted for publication will be asked to submit final versions in both print and electronic form. Articles should be saved on 3.5 inch disks as text files (files using the extension .txt). Tables should be saved in the program in which they were produced; authors should indicate program type on the disk. Illustrations should be submitted as camera-ready-copy. Authors will also be asked to submit a 100-word biography for inclusion in the "Notes on Contributors" section of the journal.

Relevant announcements and calls for papers are also acceptable. Announcement deadlines are: Fall/Winter issue, October 15; Spring issue, March 15.

Advertisers should contact Marguerite Helmers for deadlines and publication rates.

Address articles and editorial correspondence to Dennis Lynch, Co-Editor WPA, Humanities, Michigan Technological University, 1400 Townsend Drive, Houghton, MI 49931. E-mail: dalynch@mtu.edu.

Address advertising issues to Marguerite Helmers, Co-Editor, WPA, Department of English, 800 Algoma Boulevard, University of Wisconsin Oshkosh, Oshkosh, Wisconsin 54901. E-mail: helmers@uwosh.edu.

Call for the 1999 WPA Research Grant Proposals

The Research Grant Committee of the Council of Writing Program Administrators invites proposals to research issues and practices in writing program administration. Maximum awards of $2000 may be given; average awards are $1000. Only WPA members are eligible.

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A complete proposal will

- explain the project and how it will address issues of common concern to WPAs;
- outline how the project will proceed;
- explain how the results will be shared professionally. Note that grantees are expected to submit articles resulting from the research to *WPA: Writing Program Administration* for first consideration;
- provide a budget that is realistic, detailed, and specific.

The descriptive proposal should be no longer than three pages, with a separate budget page.

Because proposals will be blind reviewed, please **do not identify yourself** or your institution in the project description. Include a cover letter that gives the names of all investigators. **Four copies** must be sent to Christine Farris at the address below no later than 1 February 1999. Winners will be announced at the 1999 WPA breakfast in Atlanta.

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Christine Farris
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Letter from the Editors

Needless to say, we are excited about becoming the editors of *Writing Program Administration*. As Doug Hesse observed, it is appropriate that we follow Jeanne Gunner's guest volume on collaborative writing program administration with our own collaboration as editors. We believe we have a special opportunity to contribute to an organization that has contributed so much to our professional lives and we look forward to making the most of it. We thank the WPA Executive Council for selecting us and we thank the Editorial Board—and new Board members—for their advice and extra hard work to help us complete our first issue. No acknowledgments would be complete without extending our gratitude to Doug Hesse for all he has done and continues to do to make the editorial transition smooth for us and for those whose scholarly work has been caught between editors. We have great respect for what Doug accomplished as editor and we only hope to continue in the same way to strengthen the journal's reach and focus.

What possibilities do we see for the journal's future? Here is what we proposed to the Executive Council:

Writing Program Administration provides a forum for research and scholarship that specifically addresses or grows out of the work of WPAs. In the past, this research has included historical work, archival research, empirical studies, and some conceptual formulations of power as they pertain to the position of the WPA. Although we would continue to encourage researchers to submit historical considerations of the position of writing programs in the academy, we believe that there are significant contemporary issues surrounding writing programs that deserve discussion in the journal. Construing the work of the WPA to be essentially intellectual work, we will publish articles that deal theoretically and practically with the very real political curricular and economic issues facing writing programs: hiring and training WPAs; hiring writing instructors; developing the first-year composition requirement; integrating writing into the general education program; tracing relationships of course materials to intellectual property laws; and learning the invisible power structures of the university, including how money moves, how programs publicize themselves, how program directors

work with affirmative action policies, how programs strengthen their connections to writing centers, ESL and modern language programs, and community education and action groups.

We have also reconsidered the look and layout of the journal to mark it with our own personalities and vision, not without some hesitancy, though. At the last WPA conference, Ken Bruffee explained to us that the original design of the journal, its deep red-colored cover and layout, was intended to invoke the feel of our working predecessors from the Federal Writers Project and the Works Project Administration, "the other WPA from the 1930s." We have attempted to return to the original colors red and white, while establishing an open contemporary design that, with luck, will signal a bridge from the past to the twenty-first century. Our thanks go to A to Z Printing in Wauwatosa, Wisconsin for their design help and patience.

Finally, we would like to keep open as a long-term goal to extend the journal internationally, both in its subscription and in its publishings. We say this while recognizing that we have much national work to do: opening the journal to people involved with literacy services and people working to teach writing in hostels and prisons across the country, people whose work, interests, and needs parallel those of writing program administrators and personnel.

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Call for Proposals

The Interests of the WPA

The WPA Summer Conference, July 15-18, 1999

Purdue University, West Lafayette Indiana
Irwin Weiser and Shirley Rose, Local Arrangements Co-Chairs

Proposals are welcome on any aspect of writing program administration, but special focuses will encompass the following questions:

- Whose interests do - or should- writing programs serve? How might WPAs respond to directives about the nature of courses or programs, enrollments or requirements, or budgets?
- How should writing programs be situated within departments, institutions, the academic landscape, the larger culture?
- What administrative and/or personal strategies foster a healthy balance between the administrative work we do and the other facets of our lives?
- What problems or initiatives should WPA pursue? What positions should the Council take, what research should the Council sponsor, and what practices should the Council adopt?

Inquiries to Doug Hesse at (309) 438-3667, ddhesse@ilstu.edu
Full conference description at
www.cas.ilstu.edu/english/Hesse/annwkshp.htm

One page proposals by 20 March 1999 to:

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Professionalizing TA Training: Commitment to Teaching or Rhetorical Response to Market Crisis?

Carrie Shively Leverenz &
Amy Goodburn

Although English Studies as a discipline is often seen as fractured and contentious, there is one subject about which most of us can agree: the job market for new PhDs in English is bad and not likely to improve any time soon. In Bettina Huber's widely cited survey of the results of the 1993-1994 job search, only 45.9% of candidates found tenure-track jobs. The recent report from the MLA Committee on Professional Employment projects similar figures for the foreseeable future. The fact that the number of graduate students with PhDs in English—especially those with concentrations in literary studies or creative writing—far exceeds the number of jobs available has led to such competition among prospective job candidates that "wise" graduate students begin putting together a professional career from the moment they are accepted into graduate school, and those who work with graduate students are admonished to support them in this professionalizing process (Mangum, Pemberton, Wolfsom). Analyses of the job crisis differ, as do proposed solutions, but again, most commentators agree that if new PhDs want to have a chance at tenure-track employment, then everyone—graduate students and their mentors—needs to do more and do it better. The "more" that graduate students need to do usually refers to activities associated with being a research scholar such as publishing articles and giving conference presentations. But there is some recognition that professionalization should go beyond publication of research to include the professional representation of one's teaching, administrative work, and academic service. Eric Curren, who launches a cogent attack on the profession from the perspective of a graduate student displaced by the depressed academic job market, puts it

this way: "Our departments tell us that the most we can do is what they have always been telling us to do: finish our dissertations and prepare to sell ourselves as best we can... But, they add, perhaps with more candor, just to be safe we should create a teaching portfolio, give conference papers, find or construct our own network of contacts, publish articles, and start turning our dissertations into books when we have time" (58).

As writing program administrators responsible for preparing graduate students to teach college-level writing courses (Amy is Co-Coordinator for Composition at the University of Nebraska and Carrie directs the Reading/Writing Center and Computer-Supported Writing Classrooms at Florida State), our first response to these calls for increased professionalization might be a smug, "Well, we've been doing this for years." Even faculty not responsible for TA training concede that graduate students typically have more systematic preparation for being teachers than for being scholars. Teresa Mangum, a literature professor at the University of Iowa, observes in her essay "Identity and Economics; or, The Job Placement Procedural," "[M]ost of the English departments I am familiar with have assembled thorough, finely tuned programs to train graduate students to teach, to monitor and address their problems in the classroom, and to evaluate their progress. The quality of students' initiation into non-teaching activities is far less dependable..."(22). Although Catherine Latterell's survey of TA training programs led her to conclude that many rely on practice-oriented practicums that fail to convey the complex contexts within which college-level writing instruction occurs, the detailed descriptions of graduate-level courses dealing with composition teaching featured in the Fall 1995 issue of *Composition Studies* suggest that many graduate students do, indeed, have the opportunity to engage in substantive reading and reflection about the college teaching they are asked to do. Still, as Nedra Reynolds warns, while many graduate students work in writing programs with extensive professional development apparatus, these programs can "take the form of 'policing' the teaching of TAs rather than developing it" (202). The relationship between TA preparation and a graduate students' professional development, then, does need to be explored. To what extent does TA training represent a site of professional development? And what sort of profession, what sort of development, are we offering these beginning teachers?

Perhaps surprisingly, calls for an increased emphasis on the professional development of graduate students have begun to generate some opposition. In "Preprofessionalism: What Graduate Students Want," John Guillory argues against this trend of expecting graduate students to be successful professionals before they have even obtained jobs. In his words, "This prematurity is phantasmic: it telescopes professional careers into the time period of graduate school and conflates graduate education with self-marketing, as though getting a job were somehow the culmination of a successful career" (92). Other critics respond that pressure to professionalize too early can result, ironically, in job candidates being less qualified for many faculty positions, since writing publishable essays and conference presentations requires a narrowing of interests at the very time when graduate students should be broadening their interests to meet the demands of institutions seeking faculty who can teach a wide range of courses, serve on numerous committees, advise students, and, in whatever time is left, produce scholarship (Fienberg; Hutner). Of course, many critics point out that it is universities, especially those reliant on large pools of temporary instructors (including graduate teaching assistants) rather than tenure-track faculty, that need to change (Dasenbrock, Nelson). But continuing drops in government funding for higher education make changes in university hiring practices unlikely, at least in the near future.

We admit that our title for this essay creates to some extent a false opposition between a commitment to teaching and a rhetorical representation of that commitment, between preparation for teaching and for being a professional. Programs that train and support TAs can, of course, be invaluable sites for introducing graduate students to the profession of college-level teaching. Still, we wish to sound a cautionary note, a warning for us and other WPAs to consider the degree to which discourses of professionalization can misdirect our goals, leading us to focus more on the needs of TAs' academic careers than on the benefits to the undergraduates whom they are hired to teach. Given the limited resources that most TA preparation programs rely on (and as untenured faculty members at large, Research I institutions, we feel keenly our own limited resources of time and energy), those

responsible for this preparation must be conscious both of the pressure to do many different things and of our reasons for choosing to do what we do.

To better understand what we are calling a discourse of professionalization, we wish to explore three forces currently at work: the crisis in the academic job market, public attacks on higher education, especially teaching, and the rise of composition studies as an academic discipline.

Professionalizing to Beat the Odds

We have already suggested that the limited number of tenure-track jobs combined with an overproduction of PhDs is an obvious force leading graduate students and the programs they work in to place greater and greater emphasis on professional development. Graduate students want marketable credentials—and who can blame them—but in our reading on this subject and in our own experience at PhD-granting institutions, we've noted at least two potential dangers. The first is that overconcern with professional development, that is, with preparing graduate students to *become* professional academics, can lead to a reduced focus on pedagogy as the *raison d'etre* for TA preparation programs. These programs, especially ones that provide graduate students with graduate-level pedagogy courses, teaching workshops, mentoring, and advice on constructing teaching portfolios can become targeted as the only place where graduate students receive support for becoming professionals (and where composition faculty are thus the only ones responsible for providing it). Training TAs to be effective teachers in the classes to which we assign them already requires more time and personnel than most departments are willing to commit; being expected to also prepare graduate students for the job market—whether that expectation comes from the department, from graduate students, or from our own desire to be responsible mentors—can put an unrealistic burden on overtaxed resources. Conversely, departments that see the need to provide professional development opportunities related to scholarship may seek a reduction in what graduate students are required to do as part of their teaching appointments in order to make room for panel presentations on producing a marketable dissertation or on writing a successful conference proposal. One of our colleagues recently argued that the pedagogy workshops we offer shouldn't be required because graduate students could gain more in terms of professional development by attending a talk by a visiting Shakespearean scholar. While we certainly want graduate students to attend lectures and workshops by visiting scholars, we do not believe that programs designed to prepare TAs to teach undergraduate writing should be conflated with graduate student professional development in ways that subvert attention to pedagogy and to TAs' actual work in writing classrooms.

Another potential danger we wish to note is a related one: justifying to TAs the value of the TA preparation program by claiming that their participation in the program will result in a more successful job search. Not only is such a claim impossible to make (much as we wish it were true that the best prepared teachers would surely get good jobs), but it can lead to an overemphasis on the *representation* of teaching practices, as lines on a vita or in an elegantly written teaching philosophy, at the expense of critical thinking about one's teaching. Certainly both new and experienced teachers can benefit from systematically reflecting on their teaching, especially when that reflection takes place within a supportive community of other teachers. But we are concerned that too often teaching portfolios are often touted as a means of professionalizing graduate students for the academic job market, an objective, we would argue, that can be quite different from helping new TAs become thoughtful and effective teachers. When the teaching portfolio is constructed with objectives like those we emphasize in our writing classes—to represent change and growth over time—it can provide TAs with the opportunity to reflect on their development as teachers by taking a critical stance toward their work. However, in our experiences as readers of job candidate recruitment and merit review files, the value of the teaching portfolio is measured not in terms of growth or development but in the degree to which teachers represent themselves as successful.

This distinction between self-reflection and self-promotion is a fine one, to be sure, but it is a distinction with real consequences. For example, when a committee that one of us serves on recently met to choose the winner of a TA teaching award, it was forced to decide between a relatively new teacher who had submitted an exemplary teaching portfolio and a teacher with six years of experience, most of it spent in a writing center setting,

whose teaching portfolio was comparatively thin. The letter nominating the writing center teacher praised her ability to work with students of all races, all languages, all disciplines, all abilities—work that couldn't be represented by printing out a sample of class handouts. And yet the persuasive value of the other teacher's portfolio, full of essay prompts and guidelines for peer response, was hard to dismiss, especially when a former teaching award winner serving on the committee commented that when he was nominated, he took time out of other things (his teaching perhaps?) to put together his portfolio because he wanted that line on his vita. What he was implying, of course, was that if the writing center teacher really wanted the award, she should have spent more time on her portfolio. The quality of the writing center teacher's work was never questioned, only the quality of her representation of that work.

We want to make clear that we are not opposed to the use of teaching portfolios as part of an award or job application. We wish only to caution TA educators to be clear about their purposes for requiring new teachers to write teaching philosophies and construct teaching portfolios—sometimes before they have even set foot in a classroom or while they are teaching their very first class—and to realize that this rush to employ teaching portfolios with a view toward professionalization (i.e. representing one's teaching for the job market) might shortchange the type of reflective inquiry and self-criticism that, according to Christine Farris, promotes more effective writing programs and teacher change (173). Perhaps it would be more appropriate to require a course portfolio, as Nedra Reynolds recommends, a compilation of materials intended to show what the TA has learned in a particular composition pedagogy class or course of training. Or, even more importantly, those responsible for TA training need to make clear that teaching is, to borrow from Susan Jarratt, a "rhetorical act," and so is the representation of one's teaching in a teaching portfolio. Teaching portfolios constructed as vehicles of self-reflection are necessarily different from those constructed for purposes of self-promotion.

Naming Teaching as Scholarship

If the idea of requiring new teachers to construct teaching portfolios is related, in part, to the trend toward portfolio evaluation as the preferred means of assessing writing, the TA teaching portfolio can also be seen as part of a larger movement to make all university teaching more visible and, concomitantly, open to scrutiny. Witness the number of universities now requiring teaching portfolios as part of faculty tenure, promotion, or merit evaluation and the consequent proliferation of books and articles advising faculty on how to construct these portfolios (Diamond and Adams; Edgerton et. al.; Selden). And it is interesting to note how new the teaching portfolio is, at least within university settings. In the ERIC database, the first listing for teaching portfolios is in 1991. By 1996, there were over thirty references to teaching portfolios. It seems like more than a coincidence that the increased use of teaching portfolios is occurring at a time when higher education is under attack.

Public criticism of higher education is widespread, due in part to a mismatch between the public's valuing of quality undergraduate instruction and the university's valuing of research, a mismatch that, according to the MLA Committee on Professional Employment, may have its roots in two Cold War-era government aims: the commitment to provide higher education to all or most of its citizens and the commitment to fund research. As the MLA Committee noted, it is very difficult for institutions to succeed at both of these aims; faculty who are rewarded for doing research are unlikely to be interested in providing labor-intensive instruction in the basics. According to a 1994 report issued by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, of the 3500 institutions of higher education in the United States, only 88 are classified as "Research I" universities, with another 37 classified as "Research II," meaning that a significant part of their mission is doctoral-level education and research, and yet, these universities seem to dominate discussions of higher education. Unfortunately, in many research universities undergraduate education has not received the attention it deserves. As the Carnegie Commission (renamed the Boyer Commission on Educating Undergraduates) put it in a recently published report, "Tuition income from undergraduates is one of the major sources of university income...but the students paying the tuition get, in all too many cases, less than their money's worth." The report notes that many students graduate

"without ever seeing the world-famous professors or tasting genuine research. Some of their instructors are likely to be badly trained or even untrained graduate students...some others may be tenured drones who deliver set lectures from yellowed notes" (5). None of the Commission's findings are new to those who, like us, are frustrated by the present system that rewards research productivity more than undergraduate teaching, but the gap between the recommendations of the Commission and the practices of the universities we know well is so glaring that it is easy to see why the public believes the university is not doing its job. And it is not just research universities that are in need of reform. Although research universities produce the PhDs who will become the next generation of faculty, a simple calculation reveals that only a small number of those new faculty will themselves teach at a research university. According to Cheryl Glenn, a member of the MLA Committee on Professional Employment, "In the United States over 90% of English programs and most likely between one-half and two-thirds of the total number of professorial-rank appointments are located outside doctorate-granting research institutions" (3). Colleges and universities compete nationally for the brightest-and best published-new PhDs, who, not surprisingly, carry the values of their research institution training with them, even when those values conflict with the needs of the institution they are hired to serve (Gaff and Lambert 38). Even at small liberal arts colleges that value undergraduate teaching, faculty expect and are expected to do research and may receive release time from teaching to pursue research projects.

Criticism of state-supported institutions is also fueled by the tightening of state budgets and the subsequent need to scrutinize every expenditure. The same obsession with "downsizing" that is leading universities to replace tenure-track lines with temporary, part-time appointments and to depend on an increasing number of TAs and adjuncts to staff undergraduate courses is also leading to pressure on tenure-track faculty to teach more classes with more students and to prove that the work they do constitutes a full-time job. Thanks to public outcry over a number of well publicized exposes of unethical behavior by university professors, such as Charles Sykes' *ProfScam* and Martin Anderson's *Impostors in the Temple,* many legislatures have begun to mandate changes in teaching loads and tenure criteria and to insist on post-tenure review of faculty. As the AAUP's Committee on College and University Teaching, Research, and Publication reported, "almost half the state governments are turning toward direct intervention in the inner workings of the academy" (Clausen 41-2). For example, Christopher Clausen narrates the story of Pennsylvania's State Representative John A. Lawless who, while chairing the Select Committee on Higher Education, held a series of public hearings hoping to verify his belief "that faculty were paid far too much for too little work; that the state should immediately do away with tenure; that sabbaticals and even summers without teaching should likewise be abolished" (41). In Ohio, legislators proposed a bill requiring faculty to teach and meet with students a minimum number of hours weekly, after one legislator noticed that several faculty were meeting classes only two or three days a week and concluded that faculty were working only ten hours but being paid for forty. Perhaps that conclusion is what led a new community college in Texas where one of our graduate students was recently hired to stipulate that faculty must work in their offices at least 35 hours a week—a clear message to the public that faculty aren't wasting precious taxpayer dollars. Teaching portfolios provide another means of documenting the work that faculty actually do.

At the University of Nebraska, the faculty senate recently voted to create mechanisms for further evaluating faculty once they have tenure beyond the current departmental merit reviews. As some critics have pointed out, the plan does nothing to reward good teaching even if it is successfully documented—it is solely punitive in nature. But this punitive tone is emblematic of much of the discourse surrounding the debate. In the fall of 1996, Florida enacted legislation requiring that teaching be given more credit in tenure evaluations and that tenured faculty submit to a post-tenure review every seven years. While the legislation recommends that faculty with outstanding evaluations should be rewarded, there is no guarantee that the legislature will include merit pay in its budget. However, there has been some talk that faculty whose reviews are poor and who fail to improve in those areas should receive a cut in pay, something not difficult to budget for.

Although some faculty and administrators admit that teaching has not

been valued as much as it should, attempts to change the seemingly entrenched value system of the university are often met with opposition or are short-lived. A more palatable strategy has been to address the attacks on university teaching, faculty workloads, and tenure as an opportunity to convince the public of the value of faculty work. Recently, department chairs at one of our institutions were asked to compile a list of faculty research projects and to describe the benefit of that research to the state's constituents. Some of this information was later reprinted in a glossy brochure. Perhaps this awareness of the rhetorical nature of the situation—the desire to find a way to minimize this mismatch of values—helps explain why even calls for an increase in the value of teaching are couched in language that tries to bridge the gap between the public's values and those of the university. For example, Ernest Boyer's widely cited *Scholarship Reconsidered* seeks to revise the concept of scholarship to include a "scholarship of teaching," and Russell Edgerton, Patricia Hutchings, and Kathleen Quinlan have titled their book similarly—*The Teaching Portfolio: Capturing the Scholarship in Teaching*. Both of these books reconceptualize teaching by tying it more closely to its scholarly component, the making of new knowledge. Both also emphasize the reciprocal nature of teaching and research, in the hopes of raising the value of post secondary teaching in the eyes of faculty and their evaluators. Boyer's book, in particular, proposes a radical reassessment of how faculty work could be valued in the academy, suggesting that faculty might follow different models that suit their interests and abilities rather than forcing all faculty into the same research-oriented mode. Yet Boyer's models also perpetuate the notion that teaching needs to be professionally represented within the same language as research in order to gain legitimacy within post-secondary settings. As Boyer points out, "Teaching, as presently viewed, is like a currency that has value in its own country but can't be converted into other currencies....For teaching to be considered equal to research, it must be vigorously assessed, using criteria that we recognized (sic) within the academy, not just in a single institution" (37). Likewise, Edgerton, Hutchings, and Quinlan argue that the teaching portfolio makes visible the "scholarship of teaching" with the assumption that teaching "relies on a base of expertise...that needs to and can be identified, made public, and evaluated" (1). In keeping with the assumption that teaching should be evaluated in the same currency as research, Larry Keig and Michael Waggoner assert that faculty reluctant to participate in collaborative peer review must recognize that "having classes observed and materials assessed by colleagues for the purpose of instructional improvement no more should be considered a threat to academic freedom than would having colleagues critique a proposed manuscript for publication."

What all these authors seem to agree upon is the notion that the production by faculty of written material intended as evidence of teaching ability parallels the production of scholarly writing as evidence of a faculty member's intellectual prowess. While we are attracted to the concept of teaching as a form of scholarship, as an intellectual activity requiring expertise, we worry that the language of professionalization is supplanting the value of teaching for its own sake. As Clausen reminds us, "Contending that higher education is the best route to a better life for a state government's constituents remains one of the most effective ways to argue in its defense, but the argument also has some drawbacks. If teaching is everything, then why aren't faculty members doing more of it?" (43). What the public wants, arguably, is for university faculty to care more about their students than they do about themselves. Attempts to address these concerns through appeals to professionalization and through the promotion of teaching as the equivalent of research, thus, seem off the mark since to do so displaces the beneficiaries of teaching from students to teachers.

One might ask what these examples of faculty teaching have to do with TA training within English Departments. We think that is precisely the problem. For the most part, discussions about TA training and professionalization do not respond to larger university and public discourses about what teaching is, how it should be represented, and how it relates to the research and service that are also a part of being an academic professional. And yet these discourses are inevitably interrelated. While we within the academy tell ourselves that graduate teaching assistants are receiving valuable training for their future careers as college and university teachers (at least the 45% who will go on to get academic jobs), the television show "60 Minutes" presents the use of TAs as a sign that faculty have abdicated their

teaching to those who are inexperienced and unprepared. Those of us responsible for training and supervising TAs know that many of them are inexperienced and underprepared, in addition to being overworked and underpaid, and the burgeoning movement among graduate students to unionize confirms our sense that many TAs, not just those in our institutions, feel exploited (Leatherman). Arguing that teaching assistantships are good for graduate students because of the professional development opportunities they provide begs the question of whether these assistantships are good for the undergraduate students they teach or good for the faculty who teach the same number of classes for substantially higher pay. While most of the TAs we work with are dedicated to and enthusiastic about their teaching, to describe the often exploitative conditions under which many of them work as professional development opportunities seems a stretch, particularly when, as Eileen Schell has pointed out, they are not viewed or compensated as professionals, either by the public or by those within the institutions in which they teach. Public skepticism about university teaching necessarily implicates TAs and the training they receive. Creating a flurry of mechanisms to promote TA professionalization—through teaching portfolios, mentoring groups, peer evaluation, and so on—while perhaps professionally enriching to the individual TA and the writing program in which he or she works, does not really respond to the public's larger concerns about who is doing the majority of teaching in post secondary classrooms and who is receiving the lion's share of the university's rewards.

Professionalizing Composition Studies

Thus far we have been suggesting that public discourses of crisis about the collapse of the academic job market and about the failure of higher education are at least partly responsible for having set into motion university discourses about the value of teaching, discourses characterized by the elevation of teaching to the status of scholarship. But the field of composition has also contributed to the professionalization of TA training for reasons that go beyond a concern with what public or university audiences think of teaching or a concern for whether graduate students will be able to get jobs. Compositionists have a vested interest in seeing—and making others see—TA training as work that requires their professional expertise. Perhaps the concern with professionalization is especially acute among compositionists because so many of us continue to struggle against perceptions that the kind of teaching and research we do is not scholarly and thus not "professional" in the narrow sense of the word. Many narratives of coming into the profession of composition studies detail reactions to our work that vary from subtle scoffing to denial of tenure and promotion (see Enos, Gebhardt and Gebhardt). Ironically, those of us who would define our research interests as related to literacy and our teaching interests as reading, writing, and rhetoric, come closer to fulfilling the public's expectations for what university faculty ought to do—teach "useful" skills to the state's young people—than many whose work earns more accolades for its "scholarly" nature. Still, the discourse surrounding the contended legitimacy of composition as a part of the profession of English Studies can lead those of us responsible for TA training to play out our anxiety about our professional status on our TA preparation programs.

While we believe that preparing TAs to teach undergraduate writing is best done by those trained to do such work, there is a danger in conceptualizing TA training as an introduction to composition studies as an academic discipline. Such a conflation may be the result of institutional coincidence—perhaps a "Theories of Composition" course was created so that TAs would benefit from substantive engagement with pedagogical research and theory and then later, a concentration in composition studies and other graduate-level classes in rhetoric and composition were added. But it is clear from the descriptions of "gateway" courses in composition published in the *Composition Studies* survey that at many of the universities represented the required course for TAs teaching first-year writing is the same course required of students whose academic concentration will be composition, which means that the objectives of the two courses—to prepare new teachers to teach first-year writing and to introduce graduate students to the academic discipline of composition—remain linked. The relationship between preparing teachers of writing and professionalizing graduate students within composition is elided by our professional organizations as well. For instance, the 1992 report, "Tentative Recommendations of the

CCCC Committee on the Preparation of College Teachers of Writing," recommends the following: "Early in the program of preparation, the teacher should learn the importance of joining professional organizations and knowing how to locate professional resources. The teacher should receive guidance in *becoming a professional in our field*" [emphasis added]. This professionalization, as the committee details it, should include attending and presenting at conferences and conducting classroom research.

Of course, some might argue that this conflation isn't necessarily a bad thing. After all, this required composition pedagogy course often invites students into composition as an area of study, an area with which most are unfamiliar prior to taking such a course. Perhaps the self-evident good of these recommendations explains why Carrie didn't think twice about requiring the new TAs enrolled in her pedagogy workshop to attend a colloquium presented by a visiting scholar in rhetoric and composition. This speaker gave a talk arguing that student texts can be as rich and complicated as other texts, if only we take the time to read them from multiple perspectives and he demonstrated his point by reading a single student text through the lens of a psychologist, an anthropologist, and a Marxist critic. Because Carrie, along with her composition colleagues, found the talk stimulating, she was shocked when the TAs in her workshop complained that the information presented had no practical application to their classrooms. With fifty papers to respond to, they complained, they could never devote the kind of time the speaker lavished on his single student text. Carrie explained that the purpose of the talk was not to recommend a teaching practice but to theorize the reading of student writing as literary and cultural critics theorize the reading of other kinds of texts, thereby bridging the gap (to use Comley's metaphor) between composition and literature. Still, the new TAs were unable to see how the presentation might be relevant to their teaching. Although many have argued that rhetoric deserves to be reinstituted as the master discipline, very few English departments have declared it to be so. We shouldn't be disappointed, then, when the TAs who take our (required) pedagogy seminars are less enamored than we with our discourse theory and our sociolinguistics and our research on the politics of remediation (Zebroski). Of course as compositionists we believe that engaging with these issues can inform and improve classroom practice. We agree with Libby Rankin who says that "[w]e must find ways to read our teaching, our relationship with students and peers, as carefully and as subtly as we read the other texts we are used to studying" (126). TA training programs can and should serve as a site where these types of readings can be encouraged and performed. But we believe it is important to distinguish between how we might use published research and theory to prepare teachers new to composition and pedagogy to effectively teach undergraduates and how we use that work to introduce graduate students to the professionalized discourses of composition studies with which scholars are expected to be familiar.

Further evidence that being a professional college teacher is being conflated with being a composition professional appears in the essay, "Beyond Apprenticeship: Graduate Students, Professional Development Programs, and the Future(s) of English Studies." Here, Mark Long, Jennifer Holberg, and Marcy Taylor argue—rightly—against the perception that TAs are mere apprentices when, in fact, they are given complete responsibility for teaching college-level classes. We agree with the authors that TAs ought not to be treated as passive recipients of a writing program administrator's pedagogical wisdom and that TAs ought to be invited to help shape the programs they teach in. Yet, we want to caution against an assumption that everyone who teaches in a university writing program as a graduate student will benefit—professionally—from involvement in the administration of such a program. While we agree that graduate students ought to be treated as colleagues, ought to be given the opportunity to contribute to curriculum decisions and program policy, and ought to be utilized as mentors to incoming TAs, we believe we have an obligation not to sell TAs on the value of such work without also acknowledging that administrative work continues to be undervalued, especially in research institutions. In arguing that we need "to reconceive the professional development program and the graduate student's position in it, as preparation for the future of English studies, and the full range of rights and obligations that comprise membership in the professoriate," Long, Holberg, and Taylor conflate the rights and obligations of compositionists with other scholars in English Studies, suggesting that all members have equal responsibilities in such administrative work (67). While

we would like to believe that changing the model that WPAs use in providing professional development opportunities for graduate students will alter how faculty reward systems define and value academic work, our own experiences suggest that most WPAs continue to have little power to "redefin[e] the value of academic work not confined to its traditionally conceived boundaries" (76). Rarely are scholars outside of composition hired with the expectation that they will do administrative work. And although most jobs for rhetoric and composition specialists involve administration, this work must be undertaken cautiously with a full understanding of an institution's standards for promotion and tenure. Unless a WPA produces scholarship about the success of a collaborative model for program administration, as Long, Holberg, and Taylor do, such work will probably not be valued within the reward systems that most institutions use. Consequently, we must be careful not to burden graduate students with administrative work in the name of "professional development." Moreover, although Long, Holberg, and Taylor suggest that increased public pressure to attend to teaching and service will redefine the nature of academic work, our experience suggests that universities seem to be responding to the public's demand for more attention to teaching and service by simply insisting that faculty do more of everything and do it all better. (See, for example, the report of the MLA Commission on Professional Service or the speech given by William C. Richardson, head of the Kellogg Foundation.) Such demands do not seem to be fulfilling the calls for "balance" in the work of English Studies professionals, so much as they illustrate the push for greater "productivity"—more results for less cost.

A second danger that the professionalization of composition studies must contend with is the identification of compositionists as the only purveyors of pedagogical knowledge, with compositionists being just as likely to fall into this trap as other members of a typical English department. Although all of us have colleagues in literary studies and creative writing who are exemplary teachers, we may hesitate to involve them in TA preparation and mentoring because pedagogy is not their academic specialty. Given that in most departments the undergraduate writing program is large and the composition specialists few, it can be self-defeating to claim that only professional compositionists should be responsible for preparing TAs to teach. Of course, many of us might argue that compositionists are the ones who have fought—and continue to fight—for institutional structures that support and value pedagogical training. Without these efforts, graduate students' "professional development" might still be limited to finding a book and syllabus in their mailbox with the admonition "good luck." But it might also be the case that compositionists who are finally having their professional expertise recognized and valued are unwilling to acknowledge the pedagogical expertise of non-compositionists for fear that to do so will have a negative effect on their professional status.

Ironically, having exclusive "rights" to train TAs can also hurt compositionists who do not have the skills or interest necessary to successfully manage a large undergraduate writing program. While it is generally accepted that not everyone on the English Department faculty would make a good department chair, it is often assumed or expected that all compositionists should be willing to do the specialized work of program administration and TA preparation. When composition faculty decline to do administrative work because of a lack of management skills or a recognition that such work can interfere with their research (which, at most universities, is still the primary criteria for tenure regardless of public relations statements to the contrary), instead of being seen as professionals who are making wise choices, they are seen as not fulfilling their responsibility to the department, even when they teach a full load of writing courses, serve on committees, supervise graduate students' work, and publish their own research on par with other colleagues. Locating the work of the WPA as providing professional development opportunities for graduate students is thus a double-edged sword. On the one hand, WPAs can assert their value to the department in working with graduate students to help professionalize them for the job market. On the other hand, they can be burdened with increased amounts of work abdicated by other faculty and also have the original priorities of their TA training programs misdirected.

In examining the discourses of professionalization that touch on discussions of TA training, we do not mean to diminish the efforts of compositionists who fought hard to secure resources to create TA training programs

where previously there had been nothing. Clearly what attracts many to composition is the feeling that the area offers opportunities to merge theory, practice, pedagogy, and research in vital ways. Recognizing the importance of TA training doesn't mean, however, that we shouldn't reflect upon our own contributions to the current discourses about professionalizing graduate students. Indeed, because our efforts to establish effective TA preparation programs have been so successful, we are now in a position to examine the goals of these programs and to articulate how they intersect with or contradict others' views of what these programs should be like. We need to consider also whether behind our desire to professionalize TA training might be a desire to make TAs see us as professionals and to value what composition professionals do. The assumption that we ought to be replicating ourselves or our experience as graduate students when we train and supervise TAs is often invisible but still powerful. Certainly we want to help new teachers provide well informed and effective writing instruction, but we also need to be aware of the degree to which we are also influenced by our own scholarly interests, our own professional need to turn teaching into something that can be written about and published, something that can help us earn tenure and promotion as we secure a legitimate place for ourselves and for the field of composition. (Even the production of this article illustrates the current emphasis on turning talk about teaching into scholarship that can be measured by research standards.)

Conclusions

The crisis in the academic job market and the public discourse of crisis in university teaching require those of us privileged enough to be working in institutions of higher learning to think hard about the ultimate value of what we do—and what we train graduate students to do. In George Levine's words, "Those in large research departments should be...rethinking their teaching responsibilities. They should be taking far more seriously than they at present do the disparity between their sense of what constitutes useful work in English and what the state and most people who send their children to universities think such work is" (44). Reed Way Dasenbrock describes how his department did just that, by convincing the administration to replace graduate student stipends with tenure-track faculty lines, a move that reduced opportunities for people to do graduate study in English while increasing the number of tenure-track jobs available for those who complete their degrees. Dasenbrock acknowledges the skepticism with which we are likely to respond to his department's successful strategy—and it is indeed an exceptional solution—but notes that "What we had going for us, as would anyone in a public institution, was the deep concern about public perceptions of the typical English department if they found out that none of the required English classes their children take is being taught by a regular faculty member" (41).

Though we have been critical of an unreflective co-optation of TA training by professional development advocates, we acknowledge that any program that helps prepare graduate students to do college level teaching is, of course, preparing them to be professionals. And certainly, preparation to teach writing is important given that most of the faculty positions our graduate students will eventually hold will require the teaching of some composition courses. But we also agree with John Guillory's contention that "[W]e will lose a crucial opportunity if the job crisis does not become also the occasion for inquiry into the modes of professionalization we have internalized in our practice" (97). An overemphasis on professional development, which so often takes the form of advising graduate students how best to promote themselves, does not seem likely to fulfill such an aim. Hugh Sockett, in his book, *The Moral Base for Teacher Professionalism*, makes an important distinction between "professionalism" and "professionalization," which we believe should also inform the way WPAs think about the professional development they provide for TAs:

> *Professionalism describes the quality of practice. It describes the manner of conduct within an occupation, how members integrate their obligations with their knowledge and skill in a context of collegiality and of contractual and ethical relations with clients. . . . this concept of professionalism [is distinguished] from professionalization, which is the process whereby an occupation (rather than an individual) gains the status of a profession. When we professionalize teaching we change its*

status; but a teacher's professionalism is apparent in his or her practice. (9)

Ultimately, we would like to see TA preparation programs continue to emphasize not academic *professionalization,* but teacher *professionalism,* which Sockett describes as having four dimensions: the professional community, the professional expertise of the teacher, professional accountability to those the teacher serves, and a professional ideal of service (16-17). Such a TA program would go far in meeting Long, Taylor, and Holberg's objectives of redefining graduate student teachers as colleagues rather than apprentices and would do so in a way that does not falsely privilege writing program administration or scholarly work in composition as a career goal. Teacher professionalism is also an arena in which faculty of all specializations might be willing to contribute.

We recognize that even the best TA program, one that helps graduate students become teaching professionals, will not be able in and of themselves to resolve the public's complaints about the poor quality of undergraduate instruction, nor will a serious commitment to pedagogy do much to improve the job prospects for new PhDs. Those of us concerned both about the preparation of graduate students and about the quality of education that undergraduates in our institutions receive must continue to seek solutions to these very real problems. The truth is, while we continue to debate how much theory TAs need to read, it's not clear the degree to which undergraduate students benefit when their TAs read this theory. What is clear is that undergraduates would benefit if teachers had more than a few days or even a few weeks of preparation before teaching their first class, and they would also benefit if their teachers had fewer of them to teach. To help our TAs and their students, we need to work for more reasonable teaching loads, better compensation, and a full semester of study, observation, and mentoring before TAs enter the classroom. In addition, faculty need to be willing to teach more, including lower division writing and literature classes, in exchange for asking graduate students to teach less, and standards for promotion and tenure need to change to reward faculty for teaching more. None of these changes is likely to occur if we do not first challenge what it means to be a professional in English studies.

Because we recognize the highly contingent nature of graduate students' experiences with professionalization at the different institutions in which they work and those they seek to enter, we hesitate to make sweeping recommendations about the role TA training should play in preparing graduate students to be professionals. What we would like to offer, rather, are some cautions. First, we believe that WPAs and those who work with graduate students need to recognize that calls for increased professionalization often implicitly—if unintentionally—lay blame on graduate students rather than on the market economy in which there are too few jobs. While it may be true that some graduate students are unprepared for the professional duties required of newly hired tenure-track faculty, our experiences suggest that graduate students generally are professionals, especially in their classrooms, even though they are often not rewarded as such. WPAs also should be wary of how arguments for professional development for graduate students can be used to dismantle TA preparation programs that emphasize pedagogy. There must be a balance between inviting other faculty to participate in the professionalization of graduate students and maintaining spaces for discussions about pedagogy that focus on teacher professionalism. Lastly, those who do genuinely seek to professionalize TA training on the basis of public calls for reform need to acknowledge that utilizing the language of research, while perhaps persuasive to members of a particular institution, might not go far enough in addressing the public's larger concerns. While rhetoric is reality, the rhetoric of educational decline which speaks to a wide audience seems ultimately more powerful than the rhetoric of professionalization, addressed to a much narrower audience of academics with, some might say, overly narrow concerns. Until there is more critical engagement about what the professionalization of teaching is for, what it seeks to do, and how it benefits students in the classroom, the discourses of professionalization will seem more a rhetorical response to a market crisis than a genuine expression of a commitment to teaching. Perhaps the most important contribution WPAs can make to graduate students' professional development is to provide them with opportunities for such critical engagement.

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Learning from Experience: Using Situated Performances in Writing Teacher Development

Shirley K. Rose &
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As a director of a first-year college composition program and a teacher in English education we share with many of our readers a responsibility for educating writing teachers. Because we both work with novice teachers of writing—Shirley with relatively inexperienced teaching assistants and Margaret with pre-service teachers who are students in English education—we are especially aware that much about teaching is learned from experience. The discipline of reflective practice we want these new teachers to develop requires constant assessing and questioning of experience. Such reflection contributes to experiential learning by allowing for detachment and distance from action itself; however, as Donald Schon has pointed out, reflection requires a "looking back" or recollection.

Yet the pre-service and novice teachers we work with don't have enough experience to look back on to guide them. The teacher education strategy we have created and developed, which we describe here, situated performance activities, can involve novice teachers of writing in a "fictional" experience (that is, a hand-crafted experience[1]) that provides a basis for developing both experiential learning practices and disciplinary expertise.

We will begin with an introductory example of a situated performance activity and a brief characterization of situated performances; next, after locating this teacher education strategy in the context of composition studies, we will discuss situated performance as a post-modern rehabilitation of role-play exercises. This theoretical grounding will be followed by a discussion of some additional specific examples of situated performance exercises and guidelines for use.

Shirley has used the following situated performance activity in a workshop with graduate assistants teaching first-year college composition. The prompt for the activity was this:

> *Situated performance: Leading Class Discussions of Readings*
>
> *Teacher Position: Take up a position as a composition teacher who has given students a copy of a poem by Charles Bukowski in the previous class session. You have told students to be prepared to discuss the poem in class on this particular day.*
>
> *Students' Positions: Consider what you know about the diverse backgrounds and reading experiences of first-year college students. Create for yourself a student position to take up in this discussion. One student should initiate discussion by voicing objections to being required to read and discuss material that he/she finds morally offensive. The rest of the participants may respond to events and participate in the drama in whatever ways seem likely for a group of first-year writing students.*

As this particular drama unfolded, the participant playing "teacher" attempted to keep the discussion focused on the structure and imagery of the poem, but the "students" insisted on discussing whether or not the poem's subject matter and language was appropriate for discussion in an English class. "Student" responses ranged from a suggestion that offended students leave the classroom if they "couldn't handle it" to a *sotto voce* threat to "call the Dean and complain." "Students" argued with one another about whether they had a right to express their opinions in class. One reminded the others that "this is college, not Sunday school"; another retorted that "this is college classroom, not a locker room." When the "teacher" indicated that those who objected to the poem would have a chance to "rebut in writing," it prompted a new round of objections to having to "spend all our time writing about smut."

In the follow-up discussion, the re-vision of the situated performance, the workshop participants' discussion ranged from how the teacher could have (and whether he should have) avoided the problem in the first place by not assigning the poem to responses he could have made to student objections. The TA who played the part of the teacher noted that he had been surprised by the amount of support some of the "students" had shown him, and that he hadn't given any thought before to the complicated classroom politics of such support. The TA who played the part of the first student to voice an objection to the poem reflected on her dismay at the degree to which she had become caught up in her role. She described becoming enraged over the teacher's "arrogance" and refusal to directly address her objections, saying that she never would have expected to find herself that much in sympathy with a student who objected to any literature on "moral grounds." Another TA commented on the "gendered politics" of the male teacher "forcing the female student(s) to 'look at' the poem's images."

The TAs didn't leave the workshop with a list of writers they should avoid assigning or a clear-cut protocol for responding to student complaints about readings, outcomes they might have hoped for or expected. Instead, they had an opportunity to enact a teaching situation they could imagine and to test their predictions about their responsibility.

In *How We Think* John Dewey explained that education can take place only through experience, but that not all experience is educative. Sharing Dewey's values for educative experiences, the two of us have worked together to identify and develop a strategy for educating writing teachers that meets a set of criteria we share. These criteria for evaluating strategies have emerged from our own critical reflection on and revision of our teaching experiences and our own engagement with pedagogical theory and research on literacy. The strategy must:

1) allow novice teachers to develop and draw from both disciplinary expertise (knowledge of writing theory and research findings) and experiential learning;
2) be guided by a confidence in teacher efficacy, that is, a belief that writing can be taught (see McLeod) and that teachers can be taught;
3) acknowledge the importance of affect in teaching and learning;
4) recognize that teacher knowledge is situated;
5) model the critical discourse of teaching;
6) be learner-centered, yet allow critical intervention by the teacher-

educator;

7) offer multiple, flexible options for use that may be enhanced by, but are not dependent upon, multi-media technologies (computer, videotape, etc);
8) develop habits of reflective practice.

Situated performance

Teaching is always a performance constrained by its situation. Classroom contexts, institutional cultures, and larger cultural forces constrain our choices for the ways in which we take action as teachers. We have developed situated performance activities as an experiential learning strategy for building novice teachers' awareness of these situational constraints and the ways in which these constraints shape expectations of how they will perform their roles as teachers. These situated performances are role-taking activities that not only view the classroom as a scene of drama, but also structure reflecting on pedagogical practice as dramatic action. Situated performances are educative role-play activities with the following characteristics: 1) learners actively participate by assuming specified subject positions (as opposed to merely observing others or imagining their own actions); 2) the social, cultural, institutional, and interpersonal contexts for the action are highly elaborated and situational constraints are foregrounded; and 3) the performed actions, motives, and circumstances are subjected to critical reflection and revision.

A situated performance supplies a dynamic text for interpretation and revision by temporarily transforming fluid, fragmented subjects acting in dynamic settings into agents in structured narratives that can be examined. Situated performance is both an imaginative activity and an interpretive one. The participants imaginatively construct a situation, using the resources of their experiences of and assumptions about the ways people can or should behave. These imaginative creations are based on interpretations of situations. In turn, the performance itself is open to interpretation—motives and circumstances are examined, considered against "what might have been" or "what could be." Thus, the action of the situated performance is both an interpretation of "reality" and itself an object of interpretation. Situated performance, used as a tool for imagining, predicting, and interpreting situations, can function as an organized method of group problem solving or as a heuristic for generating spontaneous practice of actions expected in specific roles.

Situated Performance in the Context of Composition Studies

Our notion of situated performance is compatible with several contemporary developments in composition studies, including interest in experiential learning theory (especially as it supports service learning projects), explorations of action research and participatory research, and a widespread awareness of the situatedness of knowledge. We will focus here on placing situated performance in the context of the experiential learning tradition.

Situated performances are flexible and open-ended, allowing novice teachers to become actively involved in choosing the direction their learning takes. Thus they fit Walter and Marks' description of an experiential learning activity: "a sequence of events with one or more identified learning objectives, requiring active involvement by participants at one or more points in the sequence" (1). Walter and Marks specify that experiential learning can be characterized by the active involvement of the participants, the relevance of the lessons to the participants and their sense of responsibility for their learning, and a flexibility in the ways the participants use situations and types of experiences in the process of learning (2-3).

In the preparation and professional development of writing teachers, writing program administrators use a cluster of methods. David Kolb, a leading theorist of experiential learning, describes "traditional" experiential methods as apprenticeships, internships, work/study programs, cooperative education, studio arts, laboratory studies, and field projects; all of these involve direct encounter with what is being studied. In composition staff development, we rely on teachers' learning from experience because there is so much to learn that we must focus on developing habits that foster ongoing lifelong learning about how to teach.

Kolb explains how three traditions of experiential learning have derived from three major theorists, John Dewey, Kurt Levin, and Jean Piaget.

John Dewey believed there is an "intimate and necessary relation between the processes of actual experience and education" (*Experience* 19-20). Kurt Lewin worked with group dynamics and action research as a way of integrating theory and practice, arguing that "learning is best facilitated in an environment where there is dialectic tension and conflict between immediate, concrete experience and analytic detachment" (Kolb 10). Kolb notes that most of the "applied technologies" (11) for experiential learning developed out of Lewin's T-group (training group) theory and action research, including structured exercises, simulations, cases, games, observation tools, skill-practice routines, and role play. The common core of these technologies is a "simulated situation designed to create personal experiences for learners that serve to initiate their own process of inquiry and understanding" (11). Jean Piaget, whom Kolb describes as an "epistemological philosopher" (12), believed that intelligence is shaped by experience and is a product of the interaction between person and environment. As Kolb has observed in his outline of these major traditions of experiential learning, common to all is an emphasis on development toward a life of purpose and self-direction as the organizing principle for education (18).[2]

Those of us responsible for educating in-service teachers of writing share several traditional methods and strategies that foster experiential learning: classroom observations, peer consultations, composition faculty colloquia, one-on-one advising, and review of teaching materials such as syllabi, classroom handouts, and teacher commentary on student papers. However, most of these strategies are not available for working with pre-service teachers. Situated performance activities provide the concrete experience necessary to experiential learning. Furthermore, they prompt novice teachers to initiate their own inquiry into what they can learn from their experience. Situated performance activities can also complement teacher preparation strategies that foster development of reflective practice, such as the scenarios and cases or vignettes advocated by Anson, Jolliffe, and Shapiro, literacy narratives or institutional biographies, and the teaching journals advocated by Geraldine McBroom and by Mary Kay Tirrell. Situated performance activities go further than the discussions of scenarios, cases, and vignettes by allowing participants to actually enact the subject positions being examined. Like literacy autobiographies and institutional biographies, situated performance activities impose a narrative structure on what might otherwise be inchoate experience, but the dramatic action of situated performance allows participants to at least temporarily inhabit those subject positions they might have assigned to the Other. Likewise, teaching journals provide an opportunity to reflect on experience, but do not provide the structured opportunity to revise experience that is built into the situated performance activity.

These situated performance activities meet the criteria we listed in our opening. Situated performance activities can help new teachers to make the connection between pedagogical theory and practice. In a theory-focused teacher preparation course, these activities can ground the theory by providing concrete examples and situations; in a practicum, situated performances provide a way to frame the concrete experience and bracket it for critical analysis. Many of the pre-service and in-service teachers we have worked with have described the experience of making connections between pedagogical theory and teaching practice in the process of participating in situated performance. They explain that "it presents a problem concretely, not abstractly" and "it is an indirect way of establishing a philosophy of teaching, by talking through/working toward consensus."

Situated performance exercises develop confidence in teacher efficacy because they acknowledge teacher actions as a legitimate subject for discussion and analysis. In an academic community where pedagogical lore has been devalued, this can be especially important.

Situated performance activities are sensitive to the affective dimension. Though participants may at first be shy about the "performance" nature of the activities, they soon appreciate that their risks are much lower during the exercises than during the "real thing" that might come up in class. The "performer's" actions, not the participant's "own," is scrutinized and criticized. The critique addresses the actions of the participant in an "on stage" role assumed in an exercise and does not assume these actions directly represent the participant's off-stage positions or actions. Participants can be assured of this safety, however, only if the leader is careful to protect their freedom, self-esteem, and privacy (see Walter and Marks 278).

Situated performance activities recognize that teacher knowledge is situated, that many lessons must be learned anew in new contexts. Experienced teachers can use situated performance activities to re-examine past experiences, to reconstruct events and understand them anew or to imagine how past events might have unfolded differently. Many of us do this on our own—we replay classroom interactions and imagine (too late) what we should have said or what we should have done. The organized group situated performance exercise has the added advantage of providing sympathetic and knowledgeable colleagues who can help to analyze events and suggest new strategies.

Situated performance activities model the critical discourse of teaching. By framing teaching practices as dramatic texts, they provide enough distance to allow for critical reflection. Yet they bring classroom practice closer by simulating "reality", and providing immediate feedback. Situated performance develops a critical discourse of teaching by providing structured opportunities to examine and reflect on the actions taken in the performance exercise.

Situated performance activities are learner-centered, yet allow for teacher intervention, allowing for experiential learning through guided practice for future action. Inexperienced teachers can use situated performance activities in a protected setting to build their repertoire of strategies for responding to classroom situations. They can develop their confidence in classroom teaching approaches and their confidence in their ability to employ these approaches. The participants control the situations and the outcomes, yet the teacher-educator has opportunities for critical intervention to provide guidance and challenge glib or pat responses.

Situated performances also foster reflection by providing an opportunity for revision and re-vision. Participants have the option of changing their choice of actions and replaying the exercise and they have a chance to see actions in an educational setting in a new way.

Situated performance activities have "low tech" requirements. The technology of the activities does not depend upon specific equipment or a particular physical environment and is flexible enough to be adapted to the specifics of a particular context. The activities are revisable and renewable.

Situated Performance as Re-vision of Role-play

The situated performance activity we are explaining and advocating here is a re-conceptualization of traditional role-play activity. Essentially, we are attempting to recover an effective educational technology by reframing it in the more contemporary terms of postmodern theory. In role play we have found a teaching practice with many aspects that still work even though the explanations of why they work are unsatisfactory.

Biddle explains that the role perspective arose coincidentally in several disciplines in the late 1920s and early 1930s—social psychology, sociology, and anthropology. The central concern was to understand patterns of human conduct (or roles); the constitution of expectations, identities, and social positions; and the significance of the individual response within the context of social structure (ix). Biddle briefly summarizes the theoretical contributions of early role theorists: Ralph Linton viewed roles as units of culture and assumed a consistency of roles throughout a society; Talcott Parsons saw roles as part of a social system—role expectations are held by participants and supported by sanctions; George Herbert Mead believed that the role-taking process is essential to the socialization and development of self[3]; J. L. Moreno argued that the role-playing process is important for education and psychotherapy (ix).[4]

In his review of role theory, Biddle identifies five underlying propositions about which there was general, if informal, agreement among role theorists:

> *Role theorists assert that 'some' behaviors are patterned and are characteristic of persons within contexts; roles are often associated with sets of persons who share a common identity (i.e., who constitute social positions); persons are often aware of roles, and to some extent roles are governed by the fact of their awareness (i.e., by expectations); roles persist, in part, because of their consequences (functions) and because they are often imbedded within larger social systems. Persons must be taught roles (i.e., must be socialized) and may find either joy or sorrow in the performance thereof." (8)*

Erving Goffman has used the metaphor of the theatrical role to

explore and explain specialized capacity or function in social interactions. Certain behaviors, which, according to Goffman, arise from attitudes and specialized skills, are expected of people with special capacities or functions. In developing his concept of "frame" as a way of identifying and understanding our behavioral expectations of one another, Goffman called these expected behaviors "roles". Events are significant to us in human and social terms because they are framed in a certain way. As Paul Hare has explained, this dramaturgical perspective "views all social interaction as a form of drama, with creativity at the heart of the matter" (7).

There is a substantial, though not extensive, literature on the uses of role playing in education. Most discussions centered on descriptions of successful use of the approach in a particular instructional context.[5] Role-play has a number of advocates among specialists in teacher preparation,[6] including Karen Strickland, who has described using role playing to model experiential teaching strategies for writing TAs.

In our work, we have conceived of situated performance as postmodern revision of role-play—a reframing of a modernist learning strategy in terms of more contemporary theory. From a theoretical standpoint, teacher educators may dismiss role-play because they reject the role theory by which its efficacy has been articulated and advocated. These teacher educators do not presuppose a single unified role for "teacher" but see "teachers" simultaneously occupying multiple roles which are fluid, fragmented, and transient, positions that are complex, conflicted, and constrained by context.

Lester Faigley has suggested that the notion of *subjectivity* replace that of *roles*, arguing that subjectivity is

> *a conglomeration of temporary positions rather than a coherent identity; it allows for the interaction of a person's participation in other discourses and experiences in the world with the position in particular discourses; and it resists deterministic explanations because a subject always exceeds a momentary subject position. (110)*

Faigley goes on to explain that postmodern theorists have argued that "because subjectivities are located within discourses, they are deeply involved in relations of power and institutional authority" (112).

As Lu and Horner have argued, the relation between experience and discourse is dialectical (259). Recognizing that teachers and teacher knowledges are discursively constructed, the concept of situated performance emphasizes: 1) the explicit foregrounding of contexts for the dramatic action; 2) participants' explicit articulation of specific positions through dramatic enactments; and 3) explicit discussion and potential revision of the positions articulated. Thus, while we reject the underlying modernist assumptions that roles are fixed and stable, the role-play activities themselves retain their potential for making experience available for discursive representation.

Uses of Situated Performance

One objective of situated performance, anticipation and rehearsal of possible future action, emphasizes the activity's potential as practice for a slipping, sliding, never fixed postmodern reality. In a simulated situation, participants temporarily step into the positions they anticipate taking in the future and discover that these positions are not fixed but fluid. For example, teaching assistants might rehearse a teacher's part in a student writing conference.

A second purpose for situated performance is to imaginatively take the part of someone else. The participants try out positions that they do not identify as their own in order to better understand the perspective of others and in the process discover that these positions are not static, but unstable. For example, an experienced TA and an inexperienced TA might be paired to play the parts of student and teacher discussing a grade on a paper. The inexperienced TA develops responsibility (which we think of as "response-ability") for a possible future situation by rehearsing it; the experienced TA develops a new understanding of a student viewpoint by temporarily assuming it.

In structured situated performances, participants' guidelines for action are described in detail with participants following a script suggesting an appropriate sequence of actions. This design is especially useful for exer-

cises oriented toward learning a protocol—how to talk with a student suspected of plagiarism, for example.

In unstructured situated performance, only the general outline of a situation is suggested, and participants act from their assigned positions spontaneously. In this design, the action flows from the participants' familiarity with the situation and is oriented toward exploring problems. This design would be appropriate, for example, in exploring possible responses to a student's claim that he received a low grade for a paper because the teacher disagreed with his opinion. The unstructured situated performance allows the teacher educator to gain insight into novice teachers' expectations and assumptions.

These situated performance activities can help new teachers to prepare for student-teacher classroom interaction. Many new teachers are extremely anxious about how they will relate to their students—whether their students will understand them and respect them. By imagining and stepping into a teacher position in a situated performance, these novice teachers can try out different teaching stances and think through a sequence of events. By taking the position of a student in a situated performance exercise, the teacher can anticipate response to planned activities. For example, exercises requiring participants to step into student positions can help them to better understand the student writer's perspective in activities such as writing group workshops. Situated performance activities can also be used to assist new teachers in course-design and lesson planning. A rehearsal of a classroom exercise can help teachers to understand the demands they are making on students—for example, the cognitive tasks involved in formulating a response to a discussion question or the social constraints that may be operating during a peer editing exercise.

Situated performance activities can also aid the teacher educator to understand her own responsibilities to the novice teachers who are her students. Observing scenarios as they unfold and listening to participants' follow-up analysis can provide insights into the concerns of the novice teachers, their attitudes toward students, their strengths and weaknesses, all in a context where these teachers can receive support and guidance from one another and from the teacher educator herself.

We have used situated performance exercises in a number of settings. For example, Margaret has used situated performance activities to help preservice teachers anticipate and prepare for discussing adolescent literature that students and parents may view as controversial or even offensive.

When Shirley taught Introduction to Teaching Composition to preservice teachers at San Diego State University, students took on the positions of a committee of professional teachers making textbook choices. In presemester orientation sessions at Purdue, new teaching assistants have taken the positions of writing teachers and students in a performance of a student writing conference. In another session, new TAs have identified the anticipated classroom situations that are giving them "nightmares" then rehearsed ways to handle these situations. We have used scenarios suggested by new teachers and performed by more experienced teachers to give participants a chance to explore alternatives for ways of handling anxiety-producing situations.

In a more extended exercise, Shirley has asked TAs who are preparing to teach for the first time to write first-day scripts.[7] The preparation of the script allows the new teachers to rehearse the first day of class and go in with confidence bolstered by having something to fall back on. Preparation of the script also reinforces the importance of beginnings and, because it is a creative act, writing the script demonstrates both the extent and the limits of their power to create and direct the course they teach. In the process of preparing the scripts, participants realize that classroom communication is two-way. They notice if their scripts are monologues rather than dialogues and they realize that they will not be able to rely completely on the script but must be able to respond to the dynamics of the class as they unfold.

Despite these benefits, some students will be uncomfortable, at least initially, with situated performance exercises. It may be very unfamiliar, though in one of the earliest studies, Mann and Mann report research from which they concluded that experience in role-playing improved participants' ability in role-playing (practice does make perfect).[8] Others may resist role-play because of its association with therapy (as with Moreno's psychodrama), because it seems non-intellectual since it isn't entirely cerebral, or because they are uncomfortable with its open-endedness. Still others may

object because they confuse "role" with stereotypical behavior or formulaic behavior. Many of these objections can be overcome by explaining the pedagogical purpose and the theoretical grounding for the exercises. In any case, situated performance exercises are not appropriate for a group of strangers and should not be used until group members develop a degree of trust in one another.

There are of course some risks in using situated performance exercises. If participants can overcome their reluctance to engage in an unfamiliar activity and can work within the time and space constraints role-playing imposes, they still must accept the teacher's loss of control over what is being learned. Indeed, they must learn to value this disruption of conventional power relations. No matter how well designed, planned, and conducted the role-play exercise is, there is no way to accurately predict how the situated performance action will unfold. Both teacher educators and novice teachers must keep faith that the issues that arise from situated performance are relevant as reflections of novice teachers' knowledge, experience, and concerns—even though they may not be on the syllabus.

Notes

1. This gloss is derived from following *fiction* back to its Latin origin in *fingere*, to form.
2. Kolb mentions several other traditions of experiential learning, including therapeutic psychologies such as Jung's psychological types based on different modes of adapting to the world; radical educators such as Friere and Ivan Illich, in whose critical consciousness pedagogy Kolb sees an extension of Dewey's liberal humanistic emphasis on the dialectic between abstract concepts and subjective personal experience; and the field of brain research on hemisphericity which identifies two modes of knowing as complementary processes (Kolb 16).
3. Walter and Marks suggest that George Herbert Mead's theory of symbolic interactionism supports role-playing as learning.
4. Walter and Marks say that though the rationale for role-playing developed from Jacob Moreno's works on psychodrama, role-play is appropriate for educational settings as well as therapeutic settings. The action and acting, spontaneity and creativity, and focus on the here and now in role-play generate a catharsis for both actors and audience; the resulting emotional release is central to learning in these situations (193).
5. Role-play exercises have been used successfully in high school and college-level communication courses, including ESL (see Turnbull, Dickinson, Robinson, and Donahue), composition (see Ewald and Roundy), and basic business communication (see Shue), as well as in undergraduate courses in business education (see Greathouse and Karmos), political science (see Duncombe and Heikkinen), and biology (see Cherif). Role-play has also been used in educating professionals in human services (see Wolf and Picker), law (see Hagland), and journalism (see Brown).
6. Ivy describes using role play to train learning disability teachers, Birch uses it with health educators and special education teachers, Golebiowska with pre-service teachers of language, Deethardt with preservice high school speech communication teachers, Pennington with TAs for college-level introductory psychology courses, and Emrick with senior or mentor teachers.
7. Thank-you to Susan Wyche and William Zeiger, who first suggested and tried out this strategy with Shirley in a collaboratively-led TA orientation at San Diego State University.
8. Research on the use of role-play in education reports primarily survey-based studies, concluding that it is among the least preferred by teachers sampled, perhaps because of its relative unfamiliarity. McKinnon (1992) sampled teachers at a technical college and Everett and Drapneau (1994) surveyed corporate trainers and business educators. Notably, only Anderson, Frager, and Boling (1982) report empirical research on the effectiveness of role-play. Their study compared students' memory of information presented and performance of skills demonstrated via videotape and through role-play, and concluded that viewing videotape is a more effective learning approach. Significantly, in this study

apparently the students only observed live role-play exercises rather than participating in them.

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New Visions of Authority in Placement Test Rating

Susanmarie Harrington

Holistic scoring, as Edward White notes in a historical overview of changes in assessment practices since the 1970s, was introduced in the 1970s as "a flexible, accurate, and responsive measurement method, one that could come under the control of teachers" who were dissatisfied with indirect measures of writing ability (*Teaching* 270). For many years, holistic scoring has been perhaps the primary scoring method associated with large-scale direct writing assessments such as placement tests. But as White notes in his retrospective, holistic scoring has properly become the subject of scholarly analysis, and developments in assessment theory now challenge traditional methods of holistic scoring. These developments offer writing program administrators new options for the design of scoring sessions, and suggest that a tight-knit community of teachers can maintain sufficient agreement about the requirements for success in an institution's writing program. In the past few years, administrators designing scoring for a direct writing assessment would have considered holistic scoring the only logical option; now, administrators have a variety of models to examine.

The newer models rely on teacher expertise to sort students into the appropriate courses.[1] One model, developed at the University of Pittsburgh by William Smith, posits that placements are best decided by teachers of particular courses; another model, developed at Washington State University (WSU) by Richard Haswell and Susan Wyche-Smith, posits that qualified raters can easily identify prototypical placements into first-year composition courses, and that placements into other courses, as well as marginal first-year composition placements, require the time and attention

of a group of expert raters. Both these models challenge the holistic scoring assumptions that have guided a generation of direct writing assessments, and it is the purpose of this study to test the assumptions in such teacher-driven placement tests. What factors drive good placement decisions? What contributes to decision-making expertise in such a system? In order to answer such questions, I designed an empirical study that tested the impact of placement test rater meetings on rates of agreement and placement outcomes. Such a study, based on a summer's worth of placement tests at a large urban university, provides a rich array of data for the testing of theoretical assumptions about placement models. Given that placement testing is practiced at most American universities and that a timed impromptu is the most common form of placement tests (Murphy et al.; Huot, "Survey"), such inquiry has wide applicability.[2]

Before describing the forces on my campus which made such study a matter of practical as well as theoretical utility, I will briefly review the foundations of holistic scoring and the challenges raised by the WSU and Pittsburgh systems.

Challenges to Holistic Placement Scoring

Holistic and primary trait scoring sessions require raters to use a central scoring guide in their decisions. A traditional holistic scoring rubric provides descriptive paragraphs corresponding to each point on the rating scale; most scales use 4 or 6 points. A primary trait rubric provides descriptive paragraphs for each trait or dimension of text scored (such as style or organization; see Lloyd-Jones for more information). Central scoring guides provide clear parameters for raters, and they impose order on the messy business of evaluating student writing (see White, *Teaching* ch. 10; or Cooper). The scoring guide is the key to the reliable assessment of texts, for it enables all raters to work from the same foundation. Without such a foundation, raters would apply individual criteria, leading to idiosyncratic and unreliable scoring patterns. A well-run holistic scoring program provides, as White explains, "quick, economical, and reasonably reliable rankings of large numbers of test papers" ("Apologia" 31). Experienced holistic scorers achieve impressive degrees of inter-rater reliability, which promotes confidence in test results.

The reliability of a good holistic scoring system is maintained by thorough training and rating sessions that open each rating session (and may be repeated throughout the day, depending on the assessment leader's design). Anchor texts, chosen because they exemplify the rubric's description of various levels of achievement, are used to ensure that all raters participating in the day's work agree on rating standards. The assessment leader's job is to monitor rating and ensure that all participants are understanding and implementing the centralized rubric. Discussions of the anchor papers translate the scoring guide into reality. As White notes, the discussion allows "readers [to] internalize and come to 'own' the scoring guide" under the watchful eye of the assessment leader (*Teaching* 203). A well-run holistic scoring session achieves reliable scoring by trained raters, allowing the evaluation of students' texts to proceed, no matter what differences in teaching styles, philosophies, or standards might be manifest among the raters in a less controlled situation.

However, one problem arises in the use of scoring guide-driven sessions when the test raters are writing teachers involved in making placement decisions. Traditional holistic scoring practices tend to suppress the connection between courses (and teachers) and scoring. Even though scoring rubrics are derived from the themes emphasized in the local curriculum, and are revised in light of actual student performance over time, they are not written in the language used to describe students in the classroom, and usually do not make explicit references to placements. Raters may be aware that if two raters give an essay a 4 on a 6 point scale, the result will be a first-year composition placement, but the scoring guide itself makes no mention of that. Rather, the focus of the scoring guide is the *text*, and the guide describes textual features at various levels of performance.

But teachers like to talk about students, not simply texts. Inevitably, during a placement rating discussion, raters begin to talk as teachers, rather than as users of a scoring guide, and begin to make decisions based on their classroom experience. One of the key jobs of a scoring session leader is to make sure that the raters adhere to the scoring guide, and the leader is constantly monitoring the conversation to ensure that the central scoring guide

remains the anchor for all decisions made. Nonetheless, conversations about holistic scores invariably veer into some remarks about students in class. "This student reminds me of the kind of student who sits in the back of the room and doesn't talk," raters will say, or "This student is the kind who just needs a conference on paragraphing and then the essay would be revised with no problems." At that point the session leader steps in with a comment like "Don't talk about the writer! Talk about the text and how it relates to our rubric." While this direction is successful in keeping the conversation related to the rubric, it is not successful in keeping teacherly thoughts out of raters' minds. Teaching experience is probably always a factor in the use of holistic scoring, although it is difficult, if not impossible, to study the relationship between overt attention to rubrics and perhaps unconscious reliance on prior experience in raters' use of the rubrics (see Barritt, Stock, and Clark for discussion or related issues; Broad discusses the relationship between teacher experience and scoring guidelines in a portfolio program). Yet in holistic scoring, there is no way to take account of teaching and classroom-based expertise.

For placement, then, traditional holistic scoring sessions involve a tension between teaching and scoring, or what Huot has called tension "between a reader as reader and a reader as rater" ("Literature" 255). This tension is converted into a strength in the Pittsburgh and Washington State University placement systems. These practices differ from the traditional holistically scored direct assessment in that they invite test raters to make direct decisions about placement, rather than indirect ones. Instead of considering whether a given essay is a 4 or a 3, raters can consider whether an essay most resembles texts produced in the early weeks of basic writing or first-year composition. These direct placement readings rely not on a rubric, but the local curriculum to define the different placement points. Teachers' and administrators' understandings of course goals and expectations of students at the start of the semester are used to analyze the possible responses to the placement test, although these understandings are not codified in a central document to which all raters must refer. These new procedures profoundly challenge the assumptions which have guided holistic scoring and thus may act as useful prototypes of assessment practices that implement new theories of assessment attentive to, in Huot's formulation, "the context of the texts being read, the position of the readers, and the local, practical standards teachers and other stakeholder establish for written communication" ("Toward" 561).

The Pittsburgh and WSU Systems

At the University of Pittsburgh, William Smith developed a model he called "placement rating" (148).[3] Placement rating differs from other scoring systems in that its purpose "is to use the student's text as a window into that student so as to place the student into the course which best matches his/her needs and abilities" (148). The rating scale is not keyed to some externally derived rubric, as in traditional holistic scoring, but to the available course options for an incoming student; furthermore, scores are not numeric, subject to adding and averaging. Test raters make direct decisions about what course a student needs to take, and reading procedures allow for continued reading until reader agreement is reached. Finally, the assessment keeps in mind that there will be "a very direct impact" on the students taking the test; "any error in placement will mean that the students are not being well served" (150). In holistic scoring, one scores the test; in placement rating, one places the writer. Advocates of holistic scoring, I must note, caution against the misuse of test scores, which can damage students, and note that test raters must feel a real sense of community, as well as ties to both scoring guide and examination, in order for holistic scoring to be effective (see White, "Holistic" 93). But the sense of community that forms a holistic scoring session revolves around the scoring guide, rather than a shared sense of teaching expertise, and this difference has great theoretical implications.

The heart of the shift from scoring the test to placing the writer comes in the location of *authority* in the assessment. Smith found that the "raters' expertise—the expertise which comes from working with their students—might be more powerful than any training session in which they are told about the various courses and read essays prototypic of those courses" (175); equally important, he noted that raters' experience can never be trained out of them. That is, leaders of holistic scoring sessions who ask

raters to disregard experience-based reasons for scores and adhere to scoring guide-based reasons for scores probably succeed in stopping the articulation of such reasons, rather than the use of them. Smith found that raters did the best job placing students when they accepted them into their own courses. However, "all raters, regardless of course-taught expertise, [were] able to reliably discern student who are prototypic of a course" (181). Smith also found that "the raters were highly reliable. They knew whether an essay fit into their course, and...they knew when it didn't" (185). Because of the effect of "course-taught" expertise, the only decisions that raters make in Smith's model are acceptances. Raters accept or reject students for the courses that they teach; if a reader rejects a student, the test is read by a reader who teaches an adjacent course, until the student is accepted into a writing course.

The implications of Smith's model—that teacher expertise is the source of authority for placement decisions—are embraced in a placement model designed at Washington State University (WSU) by Susan Wyche-Smith and Richard Haswell. While their model is very different in form from the Pittsburgh model, the fundamental assumption is the same: teachers know best which students belong in their classes. The Washington State system relies on the notion of *prototypes*, or texts that are so clearly in the bounds of a given course that raters with the proper expertise (course teachers) can easily recognize them. At WSU, a first tier of raters makes only one decision: does this student belong in first-year composition? If the answer is yes, no further reading is necessary. If the answer is no, a second tier of more expert raters comes in and makes a placement decision; these raters have more experience with the courses other than first-year composition. These expert raters may place some students into first-year composition (students whose writing falls on or near the boundaries between first-year composition and basic writing, or first-year composition and honors, for instance); their job is to make decisions about students whose texts are not prototypic of first-year composition.

Because both these models rely on the same assumption of teacher expertise, they avoid the previously-described problem which has plagued anyone who has run a holistic scoring session for placement tests: when test raters are teachers, they want to use their teacherly expertise. These placement models capitalize on teacher expertise and make it central to the decision-making. The models have one key difference, however: the fundamental move of the scoring system. At Pittsburgh, raters of each test ask the question "Does this student belong in *my* course?" and the tests flow from rater to rater according to the way the first reader answers the question. At Washington State, raters of each text ask "Does this student belong in *first-year composition?*" and second raters are invoked only if the answer is no. Smith and Haswell and Wyche-Smith are careful to note that both their models were designed to meet local needs and should not be regarded as models to be copied. Placement testing involves a *local* decision; it determines which particular course a particular student needs to take. Decisions about placement testing need to take into account the nature of the student body, the nature of the courses, and the personnel available to make the placement decisions, in addition to concerns about the nature of the test itself. Although placement is always local, the similarities between the Pittsburgh and WSU systems can function as useful guides to others designing placement tests; thus it is important to see whether the assumptions that underlie these systems can function in other settings in ways that provide reliable and fair assessments for students.

In particular, it is useful to determine whether or not teacher expertise seems to have any bearing on the adequacy of placement decisions. Related to the issue of teacher authority or expertise in placement decisions is the issue of how authority and expertise are maintained over time. In traditional scoring models, training (via meetings) is the key to maintaining authority and consistency. And authority and consistency are closely related to two foundational testing concepts: *reliability* and *validity*. Any good assessment must have both these properties. A reliable assessment is a fair assessment, one which will consistently produce, for the most part, the same results. A valid assessment is one which assesses what it sets out to assess (in this case, students' ability to write in relation to the local curriculum divisions). Holistically scored placement tests are reliable assessments when experienced raters are well trained; the extent to which these new placement systems produce reliable results is critical. If teacher expertise leads to

reliability, then administrators and students can trust the resulting placements; if it does not, the placements fail to serve students' interests.

Daily rater meetings are the hallmark of holistic scoring sessions, and the foundation for scoring reliability. As Smith notes, teachers enjoy the chance to meet and discuss student writing. However, if teacher experience, rather than training in test rating, is the driving force in the assessment system, regular meetings should not be necessary. In a well-run writing program, faculty development opportunities should keep teachers aware of the goals and outcomes of each introductory level course. Some differences between teachers and between sections may exist, but a good deal of overlap should be created and shared. This sense of course boundaries is imparted by the regular formal and informal activities of a writing program, not by special scoring training. The implied argument in the Pittsburgh and WSU systems is that a vibrant writing program provides teachers with the training they need to make good placement decisions. And if teaching experience guides good placement decisions, raters must be teaching courses, but they need not be attending regular meetings. Can a well-run faculty development program create the shared standards that lead to reliable judgements? Another area of inquiry should involve whether raters can reliably identify prototypic essays. The main difference between the Pittsburgh and Washington State systems involves different valuing of course-taught expertise versus the ability to identify prototypical first-year composition placements.

A Program-Based Inquiry into Theoretical Questions

Context and Personnel

Recent changes in my department's placement testing situation provided a practical laboratory for the investigation of such questions. The logistics of our placement testing are dictated by campus priorities. The campus—an urban commuter campus with wide admissions standards—is currently reforming its application/registration/orientation process in an effort to reduce the number of visits prospective students must make to campus before classes start. The move to daily placement tests is part of the efficiency reforms, an easy enough change to make with the cooperation of the Testing Center. Previously, the department had offered tests only on certain days each semester, and large batches of tests were then scored by test raters using holistic methods. But once we changed to daily testing, it became difficult to use holistic scoring methods, dependent on rater meetings. Because our test raters are all members of our part-time writing faculty, their teaching schedules are varied, and often quite tight. Trying to gather raters for meetings one day a week was practical at some points in the semester, but gathering test raters for daily meetings would be prohibitive. So the new placement methods that relied more on teaching experience and less on standardizing meetings seemed attractive for practical reasons, not just theoretical ones.

Currently, placement testing occurs six days a week, fifty weeks a year. Placement tests are rated each week day by eight members of the English department's associate (part-time) faculty; all have taught either first-year composition or basic writing for at least four years. Most have taught both courses, and four also work in the University Writing Center. At the time of this study, no rater had any experience teaching honors courses, an artifact of the way the department distributes small benefits to faculty of different rank. Placement rating is considered a "perk" for experienced part-time faculty, while honors teaching assignments are considered a perk for lecturers, whose heavy administrative loads do not allow time for placement test reading. This disjunction between the range of possible placements generated by the raters and their teaching experience leads to some problems, discussed below.

As I designed a new scoring procedure, I wondered whether it would work. How could we tell that raters were making good placement decisions? Would a system that largely abandoned standardizing meetings really work? With these questions in mind, we implemented the daily rating system. The results of the work described here led to changes in our scoring practices; the changes that were identified after data analysis are described below.

How Tests Were Scored

During the period of this study, tests were rated using a model inspired by the Pittsburgh and WSU systems, modified to meet local needs: two raters scored each test, and made a direct placement decision (e.g. "take first-year composition"). At the time these data were collected, the

raters could decide that a student needed to take honors composition, first-year composition, basic writing, or a pre-basic writing course (the pre-basic writing placements have been excluded from the discussion because they are rare). If raters felt that a test fell between two courses, they indicated that with an "in-between" rating that nonetheless showed which course the reader would lean towards for placement. Third raters were used only if the first two raters disagreed about what course a student should take.

Data Collection

Data were collected over a period of twenty-two weeks, during which 2,877 exams were given. Raters' meetings were varied in order to explore the effect of those meetings on placement decisions (the research design is graphically depicted in Figure 1). For the first six weeks of the study, raters met before each placement rating session, read 3 placement essays, and discussed placements. This sort of meeting, derived from the holistic scoring tradition, was designed to help raters articulate their notions of course boundaries and to feel "in sync" with each other; each reading session began with a common discussion of raters' reasons for making placement decisions into particular courses (such as basic writing or first-year composition). During this six-week period, the raters made their placement decisions independently, and had the option of negotiating differences in placement or sending disagreements on for a third read by another reader.

In the second six-week session (weeks 7-13 of the study), raters did not meet at all to discuss placement tests; they came in daily to read tests but did not discuss any tests with other raters. This (non)meeting period was designed to explore the assumption that if teaching experience alone drives the system's reliability, the absence of meetings should have no impact on placement decisions. Alternatively, if meetings did matter, rates of agreement would fall off over time. During this period, any disagreements about placement were passed on to third raters for a decision.

In the final weeks of the study (weeks 14-22), weekly placement meetings were held. All raters gathered on Fridays to read tests and discuss placements, after which the raters assigned to finish that day's test batch would do their work; on other weekdays, raters came in, rated exams, but did not meet with other raters before commencing their rating. This session, which lasted for eight weeks (in order to make the number of tests read in this period roughly equivalent to that read in the other two sessions), was a return to the usual practice on our campus.

	Frequency of Rater Meetings	Rating Process	Result of Disagreement between Rater 1 and Rater 2
Phase 1	Daily	Two raters met each morning to discuss a group of placement tests and compare rating decisions; discussion focused on the rationale for ratings and identification (but not always resolution) of differences in opinions. Each rater then read the day's tests individually, making rating decisions independently of the other rater.	Test sent to 3rd Rater, or disagreement negotiated between R1 and R2
Phase 2	None	Two raters came to campus daily to rate the day's placement tests, but did not discuss rating with each other. Rating decisions were made independently. No rater meetings of any kind were held during this period.	Test sent to 3rd Rater
Phase 3	Weekly	All raters came to campus weekly to discuss placement tests and compare ratings; discussion functioned as in Phase 1, but in a whole group. Two raters came to campus each day during the week to independently rate each day's batch of placement tests.	Test sent to 3rd Rater

Figure 1: Research Design

In all three periods, at least two raters read each test, and each reading was independent. Neither reader was aware of the other raters' placement decision until the scores were recorded at the end. Raters signed up for reading days based on their own schedules; over the course of the study, reader pairs shifted, so that most raters read with each other over time. Test scores were entered into a database, along with information about reader teaching experience and years of test rating experience.

Results

Overall Rater Agreement and Soundness of Placement Decisions

Of the 2877 tests included in this analysis, 717 (25%) were placed

into basic writing; 1994 (70%) into first year composition, and 139 (5%) into honors. (A small number of tests were excluded from analysis, including placements into pre-basic writing or ESL classes as well as unscorable tests and exams with missing data.) The distribution of placements during the twenty-two week study period mirrored the distribution of placements more generally. During the period of this study, raters agreed with each other much more often than not about course placement. The overall rate of agreement about course placement was 82%; 18% of the tests required a third reader to make a placement decision.

Of course, agreement about placement does not, in itself, mean that the decisions are good decisions; raters could be agreeing about poor placements. In order to determine whether these placements were good ones, I surveyed writing faculty in the early weeks of the semester, and asked them to report any students in their sections who could have been placed into a higher or lower class; I analyzed overall course grades; and I analyzed internal rosters which listed each student's grade and an explanation for each non-passing grade. We have used these methods of establishing what Smith calls the adequacy of placement decisions since 1994; since the tests analyzed here were taken during the spring and summer of 1996, the placement adequacy studies done during Fall 1996 would have involved almost all of the students who tested during this study.

Following Smith's method, I asked teachers to identify which students they considered placed too high, too low, or just right in the third and fourth weeks of the semester (before that point, teachers may not be able to form an accurate judgment; past that point, the effects of instruction and teacher effort are such that familiarity leads teachers to see almost all students as appropriately placed). Between Fall 1994 and Fall 1996, the results of this faculty survey indicated that most students were, from their teachers' perspectives, in the right course. In more than 60 sections of first-year composition (nearly 1800 students per semester), an average of only 6 students were reported placed too high, and an average of only 12 students were reported placed too low (and those students were usually those who had taken basic writing more than once). The basic writing teachers' responses, however, indicated slightly more dissatisfaction with the placement results.

We offered about 22 sections of basic writing each semester (nearly 650 students per semester) and in Fall 1994 and 1996 there were roughly 20 students reported placed too low, nearly one in every section. In the spring 1995 and 1996 surveys, roughly one-third of sections reported one misplaced student. Smith's discussion of course boundaries suggests that some students will always be "between" courses; since students writing abilities do not neatly match curricular boundaries, the relationship between preparedness and curriculum is fluid. Nonetheless, the basic writing course coordinator felt it would be advantageous to try to make changes in the placement model that would direct a slightly larger number of students into first year composition; the changes that we identified are discussed later in this essay.

In order to analyze the reasons for student failure, in the first full semester after the data were collected, I also analyzed internal rosters on which instructors recorded reasons for students' failures. The overwhelming reason for failure to pass both the basic writing and first-year composition course was attendance. Very few students failed because their written work was not up to standard; rather, they failed because they stopped coming to class part-way through the term and never handed in any work.

Relationships Between Courses and Placement Decisions

While the overall rate of agreement about course placement during the course of the study was a respectable 82%, this rate shifted quite considerably when controlled for factors such as writing course, meeting frequency, and teaching experience, moving from a high of 93% agreement to a low of 58%.

Placement Decisions by Course

As Table 1 illustrates, the rate at which the initial two raters agreed with each other about a placement decision shifted significantly across course. It was much easier for raters to agree about placements into first-year composition than it is to make decisions about placements into any other course. Rater agreement was highest concerning placements into first-year composition: 86% of the time no third rater was needed. Raters agreed only 73% of the time with respect to placements into basic writing classes, and only 63% of the time about honors placements.

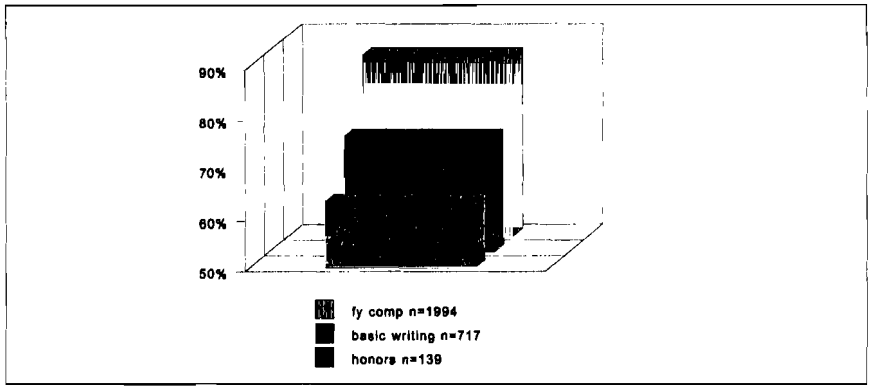

TABLE 1 – Rates of agreement by course

Meeting Frequency

Table 2 shows the placement agreement rates for the three courses, when the frequency of rater meetings is taken into account. Agreement about placements into first-year composition remained remarkably stable (hovering around 87%), no matter how (in)frequently raters discussed tests together. Meeting frequency, however, did affect rater agreement about placement into basic writing and honors courses. Rater agreement with respect to basic writing placements was highest (80%) during the period with daily meetings; dropped down to 72% when meetings were not held; and dropped even further (to 58%) when weekly meetings were reinstituted ($p \leq .001$ for all group comparisons). Rates of agreement regarding placement into honors also varied across time period, although not so dramatically as with the basic composition placements. (Variations here were not statistically significant, largely because of the smaller number of students placed into honors classes.)

Course Most Recently Taught

Smith's placement rating model is predicated on the notion that the best decisions are made by teachers of the course, and he found that he could account for almost all reader disagreement in this fashion. To see whether Smith's model accounted for disagreements on my campus, I measured the percentage of time the first rater's placement decision was subsequently confirmed—either by the second rater, or by the third. Table 3 shows the percentage of time Rater 1's decisions were confirmed, factoring in courses most recently taught. The effect of courses taught on placement

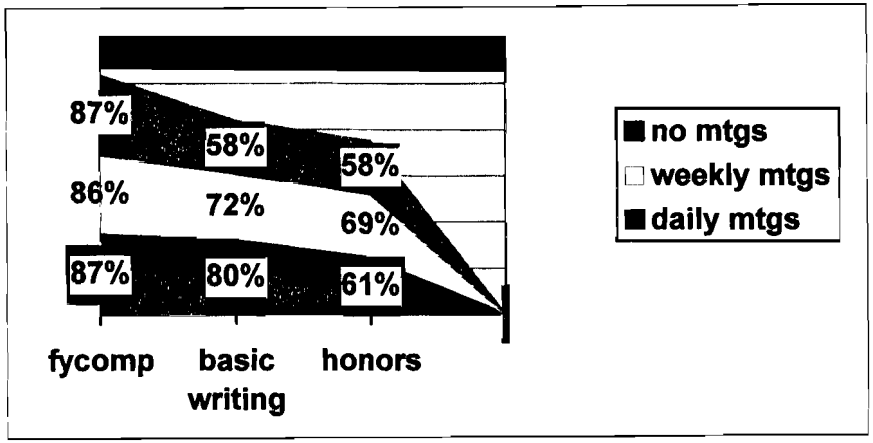

TABLE 2 – Rates of agreement, by course and by rater meeting frequency

into honors classes is not examined here, for the simple reason that the raters do not teach the honors sections.

As a general rule, the first rater's placement decision was confirmed 93% of the time when the placement was into first-year composition, and 87% of the time when the placement was into basic writing. When agreement with Rater 1 is measured against teacher experience, first year composition remains unaffected. Even when Rater 1 was not currently teaching first year composition, or had not been teaching first year composition in the previous semester, placements were confirmed by subsequent raters 92% of the time. Placements into basic writing courses, conversely, were affected by course most recently taught ($p \leq .01$). Counter-intuitively, those raters who had not just taught basic writing were more likely to have their place-

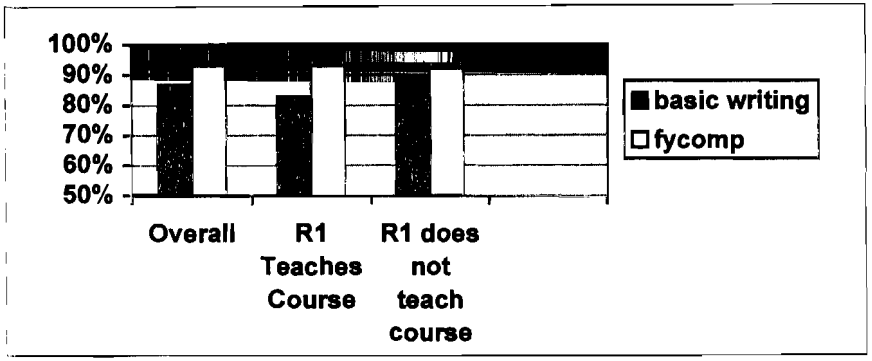

TABLE 3 – First rater teaching experience and rates of agreement, by course

ments confirmed by later raters (90%) than those who currently taught basic writing (83%).

Multivariate Analysis of Rater (Dis)Agreement

An obvious question at this point concerns the relative importance of the nature of the placement decision, meeting frequency, course most recently taught, and years of rating experience on placement decisions. The seeming impact of course taught on basic writing placement decisions, for example, may disappear when other relevant factors are taken into consideration. It's possible, for instance, that the real determinant of rater agreement about placements was simply years of rating experience. Perhaps raters who had worked the longest made the best decisions. Or perhaps raters were most likely to agree about placements they viewed as prototypical placements and less likely to agree about placements on the borders of the courses in question. In order to tease out the effects of all these factors, I regressed rater disagreement against four sets of variables: course most recently taught; rater experience; placement decision; and protypicality of the placement decision.

The prototypicality of the placement decision was determined by whether or not the raters marked a placement decision as falling squarely within the bounds of a given course, or whether their decision indicated the placement in the boundary area that is arguably shared by two courses. Rater experience was coded as low, medium, or high, with low experience being one year, and high experience being more than three years of experience.

As Table 4 shows, the factors that exerted significant influence on rater disagreements about placement decisions are the course in question, the prototypicality of the student exam, and years of rater experience. When other variables were controlled for, neither meeting frequency nor course most recently taught exerted any significant influence on the rate of rater disagreements.

TABLE 4: Factors Influencing Rater Disagreement in Placement Decisions[4]

Course Placement		
Basic Writing (0-1)	.14***	(.02)
Honors (0-1)	.22***	(.03)
Prototypic (0-1)	-.10***	(.02)
Meeting Frequency		
Daily (0-1)	-.02	(.02)
Weekly (0-1)	.03	(.02)
Course Most Recently Taught		
First Year Composition (0-1)	.002	(.02)
Basic Writing (0-1)	-.05	(.03)
Rating Experience		
Rater 1 (0-2)	-.04***	(.01)
Rater 2 (0-2)	-.02*	(.01)
Constant	.29***	(.03)
F	16.42	
Number of tests	2,842	

Entries are unstandardized regression coefficients, with standard errors in parentheses. * $p \leq .05$ *** $p \leq .001$

The course in question had the greatest impact on raters' tendency to disagree about placement. For instance, when other factors were held constant, Raters 1 and 2 were 14% more likely to disagree about placements into basic writing than placements into first-year composition, and 22% more likely to disagree about placements into honors. At the same time, when the placements were judged prototypic, raters were 10% *less* likely to disagree.

Years of rater experience was also a significant factor, although much less so than course placement or protypicality. Because the pool of test raters was so small, it is likely that the findings here are an artifact of particular rater pairs and less truly linked to experience, but generally speaking, the rater pairs least likely to disagree with each other were those with the greatest experience. A rater pair where each rater had been scoring tests for more than three years (high experience) was 8% less likely to disagree with each other. The fact that Rater 1's years of experience exerted a stronger statistical influence than Rater 2's suggests that these findings must be treated with extreme caution, since in practice, with independent rating, there is no reason for the order of rating to affect outcomes.

Factors Affecting Placement Decisions

This study offers some intriguing evidence about the factors that influence placement rating. Overall, the results suggest that the Washington State assumption that prototypical essays are easily identified by appropriately

trained raters is borne out. Overall, for all courses, raters were less likely to disagree over placements judged prototypic, which supports Wyche-Smith and Haswell's assumptions.

Influence of the Course in Question

In particular, the consistently high rates of agreement, regardless of meeting frequency, about placements into first year composition suggest that that course has special status in the placement system. The fact that more than half—in many semesters more than 60%—of entering students place into first year composition means that first-year composition has a much broader range of students than any other course. Consequently, it is not surprising that raters, regardless of whether or not they are currently teaching first-year composition, can recognize prototypical first year composition students. To use Smith's spatial metaphor, the distance between the upper and lower course boundaries are much greater for first-year composition than any other course, and it makes sense that the large middle ground would be relatively easy to spot. And the fact that raters could spot this middle ground even if they had most recently taught basic writing or a second-semester composition course also makes some sense. Teachers who work with students in courses that are designed to lead into or immediately follow from the first-year composition course consistently work with the expectations for the two courses; in a well-articulated program with good faculty development opportunities, all teachers should have some sense of the very center.

Influence of Teaching Experience

Does teaching experience matter? While the multivariate analysis presented in Table 4 suggests that course most recently taught did not affect placement decisions, other evidence suggests that teaching experience does matter a great deal. Smith's study, in fact, found that courses taught explained all teacher disagreement, a finding not borne out here. But our experience with honors course placement vividly illustrates the ways in which teaching experience matters. Local context, in fact, makes it virtually impossible for our raters to agree on honors placements except under very tightly controlled-and even then short-lived-conditions. In 1993 and 1994, for example, raters placed only about 60 students (out of approximately 5000) into honors composition. In any scoring system, raters are reluctant to use ends of the scale, preferring to reserve the highest and lowest scores for tests that could not possibly be any better or any worse. No doubt this compression effect had a dampening effect on honors placements.

However, our raters' reluctance to make honors placements may also be traced to feedback from the teachers of the honors sections, who were rumored to feel that too many "artsy" students were getting placed into honors comp, students who lacked the technical skill to succeed. This feedback took on the status of something like an urban legend in the department: the honors teachers were not entirely sure how the test raters were getting this impression, yet the impression itself was clearly influencing reader decisions. Worried that they were placing the wrong students into honors, the raters became reluctant to identify *any* honors placements. In a system which privileges teaching experience, it is not surprising that raters who never taught a course would have trouble identifying students who fit into it; furthermore, teachers of first-year composition may be reluctant to make honors placements, fearing that all the good writers would be pulled out of the course they do teach. In any event, since the period of study, honors placements are no longer determined by this group of test raters. Any test identified as having a chance at honors (which we now define as a test that a rater would definitely place into honors, or a test that a rater identifies as near the upper boundary of first-year composition) is sent on to honors teachers, who make the final determination. This new system seems to have eliminated reader anxiety about honors placements.

Although traditional methods of holistic scoring have been used in many circumstances to train readers with disparate experiences to rate reliably using a given scale, all efforts to train our placement raters to use the upper end of the scale were fruitless. In this particular instance in our program, local context appears to have been such a powerful force that it overrode holistic training. Even during the four years in which a holistic scoring guide was used for placement and intensive training was held regarding the upper scale points (which raters knew would likely lead to honors placements), raters could not be trained to use the high end of the scale with any frequency. I attribute this to the interaction of teaching experience with the

scoring guide (see Elbow, "Writing Assessment" 122 for a discussion of training difficulties in a portfolio context). Because the raters believed that the honors teachers did not like the placements that resulted from their use of the high end of the scale, they were reluctant to use it, and no amount of training (by me, my predecessor, and the honors teachers) affected this for any length of time. The test raters did not feel part of a teaching community that included honors, and that feeling of exclusion affected their ability to rate.

Given that the test raters do not share anything like common course boundaries for the honors course (and that some raters have difficulty imagining any test as worthy of placement into honors), it would be a monumental undertaking to train the raters to recognize and agree on honors placements. Since the course assignment system does not permit part-time faculty to teach the honors course, for the most part, it is unlikely that the group of test raters will ever have enough familiarity with the course to be able to make consistent, confident placement decisions. We responded to this situation, in the end, by creating the tier of "expert readers" for the honors course placements. The first group of raters no longer makes final placement decisions about the honors courses; rather, they create the possibility of an honors placement by referring the test to the second group of raters. In the first year of this new procedure, honors placements rose 150%, and the teachers of the honors sections report that the students in those courses are placed properly. (The first group of test raters reports relief that honors placements are no longer their sole prerogative.) This placement pattern has held steady since then.

Influence of rater training

Particularly because the regression analysis found that years of rater experience (but not meeting frequency) had a significant effect on rater agreement, the role of group cohesion and the factors that influence the creation of shared course boundaries must be the object of further study. While the daily meetings that typify holistic scoring sessions may not be necessary to maintain acceptable rates of reliability and validity, the activities that contribute to rater experience (which is also linked to teaching experience) must be analyzed. Brian Huot found that holistic rating experience conferred significant advantages on test raters, who were able to personally engage with student essays much more effectively than raters who lacked this training. Furthermore, the raters with holistic rating experience "organized [their] past experience into a coherent set of rating strategies" ("Influence" 226), which led Huot to conclude that "it may be that holistic scoring procedures actually promote that the kind of rating process that insures a valid reading and rating of student writing...the use of a scoring rubric made it easier not only to agree with each other, but to actually score the papers" ("Influence" 228). Of course, Huot's study examined the impact of training on reading in relationship to a scoring rubric, and his findings may not necessarily generalize to reading in relationship to direct placement decisions. What sorts of experiences confer training in a placement rating setting remain to be determined.

Nonetheless, it seems clear that a sense of community does have a significant influence on rater behavior. Research by Pula and Huot explore the varying layers of community that affect raters. The raters quoted in Huot ("Influence"), Pula and Huot, and Smith echo the raters on my own campus in valuing the training and meetings associated with placement testing. To outsiders, the reading of placement tests can seem the most tedious of processes, but to test raters, it is an exciting process that involves generative and wide-ranging conversations about expectations, curriculum, and student performance. However, the fact that meeting frequency had no impact on placement decisions for first-year composition, and affected basic writing and honors placement decisions in opposite ways, suggests that this variable requires further research. Training can occur in a variety of ways, and it is possible that new models of training can emerge from these expert scoring systems.

We need to determine what factors contribute to raters' ability to rate in an expert scoring system. Smith's study found that test raters from other universities were able, when provided with information about Pittsburgh's courses, to achieve respectable levels (72%) of agreement with Pitt's own raters (171). He attributes this finding to the effect of a writing instructor discourse community (studied in greater depth by Pula and Huot). A similar effect may explain the success of Portnet, an electronic discussion forum that brings together teachers from varied programs to discuss student portfolios. Michael Allen's report of Portnet's first year noted that the participants

found that they "had more agreement than disagreement" on scores for the portfolios discussed on line (80); he offers a range of explanations for this, ranging from the self-selection of participants with shared values, to the expertise of the group (all experienced teacher/administrators), to the nature of e-mail, to the fact of well-articulated program standards. In a co-authored essay published later in the project, various Portnet participants argue for various explanations of the agreement (Allen et al.)

In other contexts, too, wide-ranging agreements about the nature of first-year composition appears. For the past two years, a working group drawn from the Council of Writing Program Administrators has been working on an outcomes statement for first-year composition. This statement, which has been presented and developed on in forums, workshops, and panels at recent CCCC and WPA meetings, has evolved over time; teachers and administrators from a variety of schools in all parts of the US have found it an exciting experience to define a common core of outcomes for this course which is so central to our discipline. While local standards and the particulars of curriculum may differ from place to place, there is a surprising amount of agreement about this course, and this is manifest both in our local findings and in experiences such as Portnet.

On the whole, there is much potential for the exploration of how communities are maintained. Faculty development opportunities or articulate, thoughtful grading rubrics may be of as much use in generating valid placements as rating training sessions. The impact of rater meetings on placement test rating is likewise an area that will bear further study. The small number of raters who participated in this study mean that the curious impact of meeting frequency on rater agreement must be analyzed with caution. Furthermore, it must be noted that the same raters participated throughout the study, so it is possible that there was a cumulative impact of all meeting strategies. That the meeting frequency did not affect agreement for all courses in the same way only deepens the mystery about the differences between rater attitudes toward basic writing and honors. Further inquiry is needed to determine the relationships among agreement, faculty development opportunities, rater training, and meetings.

Practical Implications

Both practical and theoretical considerations have emerged from this study. As the discussion of honors placements illustrates, one practical upshot of this study was a reconceptualization of the procedures for test readings. Our experience with the honors placements and the prototypical rating suggests that one general guideline that has emerged from this research is that all tests need not be treated the same.

Before the Washington State system was introduced into national discussion, many placement test leaders assumed that all tests needed at least two readings to ensure reliability (it should be noted, however, that in recent years the Advanced Placement exam has been using only one rater for some exams). But if raters are consistently able to recognize first-year composition placements, is a second reader necessary on all those tests? The data suggest that multiple readings are not necessary for all tests. When the first rater of an exam placed the student into first year writing composition, that judgment was supported about 93% of the time (either by the second reader or by the third). Moreover, this percentage remained remarkably stable, whether the placement was regarded as prototypical or resulted from an "in-between" judgment call. In consultation with the basic writing course coordinator, who wanted to move some students out of basic writing and into first-year composition, I changed our scoring system so that tests placed into first-year composition by Rater 1 do not require further reading. This had the practical effect of increasing first-year composition placements somewhat, which fit with our program goal of giving students who seemed at the very high end of basic writing the chance to succeed in first-year composition instead.

In another innovation related to those in use at Washington State, the enlarged pool of placement raters achieved by inviting honors teachers to read some tests also offers us ways to tailor placement practices to the test in question. If prototypic placements are easier to identify (for appropriately trained raters), non-prototypic placements are harder. A system which gives some tests fewer reads than others allows the raters to devote more of their time and energy to making the difficult decisions. One important way in which not all tests need be treated the same is that not all tests demand the same of raters. Some tests are hard to rate, and our system now acknowledges that.

Is anything global about local assessment?

Clearly, this study had practical benefits for the placement system on my campus, but it also raises theoretical questions about the very nature of placement decisions. All assessments should be fit to their context, but none more so than placement testing, which determines which courses students will take. Any placement program should fit the needs of particular campuses; my campus needs to test daily, while another campus' summer testing program allows for other arrangements. But local placement experiences must be pooled in order to further test the theoretical assumptions that are the basis for entry assessments. The overlap in findings between this study, Smith's, and Haswell and Wyche-Smith's work suggests that while placement is local, some theories are global. That an open-admissions urban university, and a more selective urban and more selective rural university discover that qualified test raters can reliably identify prototypic first-year composition placements invites further study. Why is it that these placements are more easily decided? Why do courses most recently taught by raters seem to affect decisions about some placements on my campus, but not all? How do faculty form their notions of course boundaries and prototypic texts? Further research into these questions will enable placement testing to move into a more central position in the literature on writing assessment.

These questions also invite scholars to take the growing literature on validity and examine it in light of placement testing. Portfolio scholars have called on writing teachers to engage in assessment practices which examine and enact the values of the classroom (Elbow, "Foreword" and "Writing Assessment"); entry placement assessments as well must be considered in light of the values of the writing program. Portfolio assessment's popularity can be traced in part to the close connection between teaching and assessing; we must seek to create a similar link between teaching and placement testing. In particular, recent developments in assessment scholarship invite us to assess our own assessments. Peter Elbow, long an advocate for finding ways to increase the authenticity of writing assessments by opposing what he sees as reductive scoring practices, suggests that concerns for teaching should lead to the abolition of placement tests ("Do It Better" 130-131) and that at the very least, scoring procedures should be changed so that programs spend more time assessing problematic texts and less time assessing easy-to-label texts. But placement tests are defended by others who see them as a system for protecting the needs of at-risk students and offering opportunities that would otherwise be lost (see White, "Importance"). It is clear that while teacherly impulses may lead to broad agreement in some cases, there is significant disagreement among writing teachers about the best approaches to providing students with appropriate amounts of writing instruction. Placement testing practices can serve as fertile ground for research into these conflicts, for no other type of writing assessment so directly addresses the question of how we know what type of writing instruction we should provide for our students.

Controversies among writing teachers about the value of particular assessments (such as placement tests) are rooted in differing assumptions about the purposes and results of assessment. White outlines conflicting agendas of writing teachers, researchers and theorists, and testing firms and governing bodies, and students, arguing that the best future for writing assessment lies in "negotiating and compromising among the interest groups involved" ("Power" 24; see also "Writing Assessment"). In particular, we need to develop more complex ways to approach notions of validity and reliability in placement testing, to better understand the ways test results are formed in a community of raters and to better ensure that our assessment efforts will be meaningful to the varied audiences (such as campus administrators or state legislators) who will take an interest in them.

Of particular importance in this effort is the emerging literature on validity and performance assessment. Lee Cronbach suggests that validity is best understood not as an inherent property of a test, but as an argument to be made about the use of a test: "the [validity] argument must link concepts, evidence, social and personal consequences, and values" (4). Cronbach's call for the examination of evidence about the concepts tested, the evidence available, and classroom and program values echoes the scholarship on portfolios in the classroom. The rise of a constructivist assessment paradigm challenges us to examine the relationship between theory and practice and to see it as something in constant dialectic (Guba 26); Pamela Moss argues that the examination of varying assessment paradigms in light of each other

will produce critical reflection necessary to better theory and practice. The implications for placement tests are numerous. Since Smith's work offers one of a very few published examples of an attempt to validate placement scores, there is ample room for further work. Further study is required to describe the dialectic relationship between teaching experience and placement decisions, to understand the ways in which the validity of placement tests can be understood and argued, and to determine the principles that can be shared across diverse campuses. The data presented here, in conjunction with the WSU and Pittsburgh data, do not permit easy generalizations about the relationship of teaching experience to test rating.

Maurice Scharton's recent essay "The Politics of Validity" lays out relationships between varying professional belief systems and approaches to validity. In particular, he identifies an "instructional perspective" on validity which seeks "to change the political situation in assessment so that the classroom teacher rather than the institution wields the real power" (56). While Scharton identifies the instructional perspective with the portfolio movement, his formulation can be extended to include the developments in placement testing that seek to directly include teacherly expertise in the assignation of placements. In order to reconcile the instructional perspective with "programmatic perspective" (aligned with researchers and psychometricians), Scharton suggests that discussions of validity be rooted in questions such as "what cooperative measures have assessment and curricular designers undertaken to ensure integration between assessment and curricular content?" (75). A question that might be usefully added to Scharton's list might be "what measures have assessment and curricular designers undertaken to ensure that those producing the scores feel that all their expertise comes to bear on the scores?"

But the introduction of teacherly expertise into placement testing raises important issues of reliability. As Edward White noted in a review of this essay, "reliability matters." An unreliable assessment cannot be said to serve students needs (although Peter Elbow argues that it is legitimate to sacrifice reliability for validity; see "Foreword"). If, by designing placement systems that privilege teachers' classroom experience, administrators are setting up systems in which raters evaluations of essays are all over the map, unrelated to clearly defined placement goals, students' needs are not served no matter how well the raters feel the system acknowledges their expertise. But the data reported here, and in Smith's study of the Pittsburgh program, suggest that such fears are not well-founded. But reliability does matter, and it bears some further discussion. Most importantly, we must acknowledge that the very notion of reliability has not been defined or operationalized consistently in the field. An important task for future research will be to develop approaches to reliability that allow for better comparisons between systems.

The variability in reports of reliability has been well-documented by Roger Cherry and Paul Meyer and more recently by Doug Shale. In brief, these researchers identify vague definitions of reliability (often confused with validity), over-emphasis on inter-rater reliability, and lack of agreement on statistical methods for computing reliability as some problems in the field. Shale extends his critique to include an unfailing reliance on classical test theory and proposes instead a new theoretical formulation based on generalizability theory. Shale argues that that generalizability theory better permits us to acknowledge the fact that essay raters will always vary in their responses to some texts (93) and to seek "acceptable levels of consistency for assessments of writing" (94).

The particular question facing any assessment leader is "how much disagreement is too much disagreement"? White notes that , in a good system, holistic scoring methods lead to the scoring of many tests "on a six-point scale with about 95% agreement on scores within one point" ("Apologia" 40). In comparison, the data reported here, with overall agreement rates of 82% on placements (with agreement rates for particular course placements ranging from 56% to 93%) seem low. Yet Smith reports that in his study, agreement rates of 72% met "the minimum acceptable level of agreement" when he compared judgements of different rater sets (171). What accounts for these discrepancies? Differences in scale points between a 6 point holistic scale, a four-course system at Pitt, and a 3 course system at IUPUI? And how are individual administrators to establish that minimum level of agreement? Smith argues that rater disagreement does not lead to lack of reliability (173) and that rater disagreement rather points to the fact that placement testing of necessity seeks to put students into particular cat-

egories (courses) that may not exactly match students' writing abilities; students writing abilities do not necessarily develop in ways demarcated by curriculum in a given school, and thus some students may not neatly fit into any available composition course. Shales' call for reconsidering reliability invites ways to value natural and normal tendencies for rater judgements to vary in clearly defined discourse communities (such as the communities of teachers studied here and at Pittsburgh). The administrative and scholarly challenge is to learn more about how such communities are defined and maintained, explicitly and implicitly.

Conclusion

This study represents the sort of local inquiry that builds knowledge in two ways. First, it builds local knowledge by allowing test administrators to get a better picture of the factors which affect placement decisions in their program and demonstrates the use of empirical research in program reform. Second, it offers a small piece of a puzzle that needs to be assembled by pooling local data from various sources. Placement testing ultimately needs to be looked at as simultaneously local and national; tensions between the local findings and theoretical positions need to be negotiated and evaluated. Further study, both within my program and across campuses, will help determine the extent to which the local findings I report here are anomalous.

Placement testing has lingered for too long in the shadows of classroom assessments. At a time when new forms of placement tests are being devised to meet administrative challenges, and when writing assessment theory is developing provocative ways of viewing test validity, the time is ripe for new studies of the effectiveness of placement testing and the forces that lead to sound placement decisions.

Notes

1. Dan Royer and Roger Gillies of Grand Valley State University have developed yet another model, directed self-placement, described in "Directed Self-Placement: An Attitude of Orientation." Since directed self-placement obviates the need for scoring of placement tests, I do not consider it here.

2. This research was funded by a grant from the Council of Writing Program Administrators. Thanks are due to Ellen Ann Andersen and Kathleen Blake Yancey for their generous readings of earlier drafts of this work.

3. William Smith is no longer at the University of Pittsburgh, but the testing model he introduced is still in use (with some modifications). The Washington State system is in use as described here, although Richard Haswell and Susan Wyche-Smith have left that university.

4. Because the dependent variable in this analysis is dichotomous (0 = rater agreement, 1 = rater disagreement), logistic regression is preferable to ordinary least squares (OLS) regression. What OLS lacks in statistical precision, however, it makes up for in ease of presentation. Therefore, I discuss the results of an OLS regression in the text, but include the logistic regression in Appendix A.

Appendix A

Logistic Regression of Rater Disagreement

	Parameter Estimate	*Standard Error*	*p-value*
Course Placement			
Basic Writing	.939	(.133)	.000
Honors	1.29	(.201)	.000
Prototypic	-.65	(.127)	.000
Meeting Frequency			
Daily	-.175	(.115)	.130
Weekly	.153	(.144)	.287
Course Most Recently Taught			
First Year Composition	.042	(.141)	.768
Basic Writing	-.242	(.218)	.267
Rating Experience			
Rater 1	-.267	(.066)	.000
Rater 2	-.128	(.065)	.048
Constant	-.935	(.203)	.000
-2 Log Likelihood	2544.7		
Model Chi-Square	133.0		
% Correctly predicted	81.9		
Number of cases	2842		

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Evaluating the Intellectual Work of Writing Administration

Council of Writing Program Administrators

It is clear within departments of English that research and teaching are generally regarded as intellectual, professional activities worthy of tenure and promotion. But administration—including leadership of first-year writing courses, WAC programs, writing centers, and the many other manifestations of writing administration—has for the most part been treated as a management activity that does not produce new knowledge and that neither requires nor demonstrates scholarly expertise and disciplinary knowledge. While there are certainly arguments to be made for academic administration, in general, as intellectual work, that is not our aim here. Instead, our concern in this document is to present a framework by which writing administration can be seen as scholarly work and therefore subject to the same kinds of evaluation as other forms of disciplinary production, such as books, articles, and reviews. More significantly, by refiguring writing administration as scholarly and intellectual work, we argue that it is worthy of tenure and promotion when it advances and enacts disciplinary knowledge within the field of rhetoric and composition.[1]

1. Introduction: Three Cases

A Literary Scholar: Rewarding the Production of Knowledge

In her fourth year as a tenure-track assistant professor at a land-grant university, Mary C. came to her current position after teaching for two years at a private university where she had established a good reputation for both her scholarship and her teaching. Her present department places considerable emphasis on teaching, at least for a research university, and her col-

leagues have taken special note of her pedagogical skills in their annual evaluations, recognizing that teaching quality will play some role for both the dean and the provost in decisions on tenure and promotion. Nonetheless, Mary has wisely concentrated on publishing refereed articles, poems in magazines with good literary reputations, and a book with a major university press. After all, the format for promotion and tenure at her university identifies these as "categories of effort" that weigh heavily in the awarding of tenure and in promotion to higher rank. The guidelines also emphasize the importance of quality in scholarly efforts as measured not just by the judgment of her departmental colleagues but also by outside evaluators who provide an estimate of the currency and value of her scholarship as well as the prestige and visibility of the outlets in which her work appears.

By describing Mary's achievements in this familiar manner, we may be able readily to understand why she is likely to be promoted—and why her chances for advancement differ markedly from other instructors within the broad field of English literature and composition, particularly those who work as writing administrators. To do this, we need to view her work, despite its undeniably humanistic content, as the production of specific commodities—albeit scholarly commodities—with a clear exchange value, perhaps not on the general market but certainly in academic institutions. While Mary's colleagues and others who read her work can appreciate it for its uses—for the personal value of her insights into literary works or as poetry worth sharing with friends and students—the institution assigns it positive importance because the work assumes recognizable and conventional forms to which value can be readily assigned, and the valuations are likely to be recognized and accepted by most colleagues and academic departments. Because Mary's work takes conventional forms and has a recognized exchange value, her institution uses it as a basis for justifying its decision to award her with tenure and promotion—a justification it owes to the university community, to the board of regents, and to the academic community in general.

A Composition Teacher/Scholar: Rewarding Pedagogy and Pedagogical Knowledge

Twenty years ago Doug R. might have been an uncertain candidate for tenure and promotion. An assistant professor at a regional state university with a large composition program, Doug has published a number of articles in highly regarded journals in rhetoric and composition studies, though his publication record is by no means extensive. Doug's institution, however, has a well-developed system for student and departmental teaching evaluations, and Doug scores especially high on his classroom performance in both student questionnaires and on the frequent faculty observations filed by a variety of senior colleagues within the department, including the chairperson and the writing program director. Moreover, both by contract and by informal agreement, both the department and the administration at Doug's institution are required to take into account demonstrated excellence in teaching when evaluating faculty for tenure and promotion. It helps as well that Doug's specialty is composition, an academic specialty that is viewed by the administration as central to the university's undergraduate mission.

Doug's academic achievements, especially as a classroom teacher, have made it likely that he will be tenured and promoted. His pedagogical efforts take forms recognized by his colleagues and his institution and they are assigned value by accepted procedures. In combination with his published scholarship (and typical departmental committee service), Doug's teaching—which has been evaluated and quantified and made visible—becomes a strong factor in his promotion. Doug is also an innovative teacher who has shared his contributions to curricular design and pedagogy through workshops at his own institution and through presentations at national conferences. Besides having value for his colleagues and for students, these efforts appear on his vita: they constitute an important part of his reputation as a professional.

A Writing Administrator: A Problematic Case

Cheryl W. has been working hard as an assistant professor and writing director at a medium-sized university, a position for which she was hired after taking a PhD in rhetoric and composition and teaching for two years (ABD) at a college with a nationally known WAC program. Cheryl has a teaching load of only One/Two, but her responsibilities are overwhelming: supervision and curriculum design for a large first-year composition program, TA training, design and administration of an emerging WAC program

(with faculty workshops and publicity), many hours in the office dealing with student issues and writing reports, and an occasional graduate course in composition theory. In addition, Cheryl has guided development of five upper-level writing courses for both English majors and students in other fields, in the process greatly expanding the writing program. Cheryl's department and her institution support the growth of her program, perhaps because she has carried it out both diplomatically and professionally.

Unfortunately, Cheryl has published only a handful of refereed articles, far below the expected level for candidates for tenure and promotion at her institution. Moreover, because she has a relatively light teaching load, she has not been able to develop as thorough and far-reaching a reputation as a teacher as have most of her colleagues, and she has to face the expectation, held by her university faculty generally, that anyone with such a light teaching load should have published much more. This expectation is not the result of any hostility towards rhetoric and composition as a field; indeed, two of her colleagues, one of whom works in rhetoric and technical communication and the other of whom specializes in composition research and teacher training, have published a good deal and are considered prime candidates for tenure and promotion. Cheryl and her supporters suspect, in fact, that the productivity of these other two writing specialists may become an argument for denying her tenure and hiring someone who will be productive in ways that the department and the institution can readily recognize and value.

While many members of Cheryl's department agree that she has been working hard, they are not sure that she has been doing "real work." Others, who think her efforts have been valuable to the department, have difficulty specifying her accomplishments other than stating that "she has done an excellent job running the writing program." The problem is particularly clear to one of Cheryl's colleagues, the former director of the writing program, who recognizes the specific tasks involved in activities like supervising teaching assistants and who also recognizes that Cheryl has accomplished these tasks with energy, vision, and expertise. This colleague sums up the problem facing Cheryl and her supporters this way: "First you have to be able to specify exactly what it is that you do as a WPA; then you have to convince people

that your work is intellectual work, grounded in disciplinary knowledge, demanding expertise, and producing knowledge or other valued ends, not simply busy work or administrivia that anyone with a reasonable intelligence could do; and finally you have to demonstrate that your work has been both professional and creative—worthy of recognition and reward." Unless Cheryl can do these things, her efforts will not have value within her own institution, nor will they have exchange value when she applies for another position, unless, of course, that institution has already developed a clear definition of the intellectual work of a writing administrator and can evaluate Cheryl's work within these terms. Right now, however, Cheryl will have to list her administrative categories in the small box labeled "Service" on her institution's tenure/promotion form, a category distinguished by its lack of clear definition in contrast to the detailed subcategories under "Research" (books, articles, chapters, reviews, presentations, and grants) and "Teaching" (student evaluations, supervisory reports, curriculum development, presentations and publications). Unless there is a way to demonstrate the intellectual value of her work, Cheryl is unlikely to be rewarded for her administrative work and will be denied tenure and promotion.

2. The Production of Knowledge and the Problem of Assigning Value to Academic Work

Terms like "exchange value" and "use value" and the concepts they embody help lay bare the system of academic judgments and rewards with which we are all familiar, a system that lies behind the three cases described in the previous section. Academic institutions grant tenure and promotion (and hire) because they share the same understandings and values. Although departments of English, and institutions of higher education generally, may differ substantially as to the particularities of what they value—teaching, book publication, scholarly articles, local publishing, community outreach, etc.—there is considerable congruence among them concerning the ways they quantify academic work.

We use the term "quantify" advisedly. Tenure and promotion are granted on the basis of criteria that might be said to be objective. They are too familiar to rehearse here, but they might be generally described with the

phrase "professional accomplishment" as measured and indicated by books, articles, conference presentations, teaching evaluations, etc. These accomplishments are concrete and can be evaluated; they can be counted, weighed, analyzed, and held forward for public review. In most departments of English, for example, to have a book accepted by Oxford, Yale, or Harvard University Press is to be assured of tenure and promotion. In colleges that place a primary value on undergraduate instruction, a faculty member whose teaching evaluations place her in the top three percent is similarly likely to be tenured and promoted. Perhaps more important than their quantifiable nature, these accomplishments are largely familiar to faculty and administrators; they are exactly the kinds of accomplishments that have been considered by universities for years in cases of tenure and promotion. Familiarity breeds ease of use; university machinery works most smoothly and efficiently when there is little or no quarrel about the means by which decisions are made. Indeed, in the case of scholarship, many of us might agree that the all-too-prevalent tendency to prefer quantity over quality is a clear sign of intellectual work turned into a quantifiable commodity. What this tells us, however, is that academic systems of evaluation and reward have for a long time assigned clear exchange values to scholarship and are now on the way to doing so with teaching.

Activities other than research and teaching, however, have little exchange value, no matter how highly they might be valued on an individual basis by fellow faculty, by administrators, or society. Only when such activities lead to a move outside faculty ranks, to a deanship, perhaps, do they take on exchange value. Otherwise, they generally appear under the ill-defined and seldom-rewarded category of "service" in promotion and tenure evaluations, a category to which the work of writing administrators is too often relegated.

In academe, work that long has been categorized as "service" occupies a wide spectrum and has proven extremely difficult to describe and evaluate. The 1996 report of the MLA Commission on Professional Service "Making Faculty Work Visible: Reinterpreting Professional Service, Teaching, and Research in the Fields of Language and Literature" states the problem clearly:

> *Service has functioned in the past as a kind of grab-bag for all professional work that was not clearly classroom teaching, research, or scholarship. As a result, recent efforts to define it more precisely (as "professional service") have tended to select out one subset of these activities and fail to account for all the clearly professional work previously lumped together under this rubric. . . . Yet it is hard to come up with a principled definition based on common features or family resemblances among all these activities and to avoid confusions with the concept of citizenship. (184)*

We do not expect to resolve the problem completely in this document. The MLA report provides useful information with its distinctions between applied work and institutional service (see 184-188). It also challenges the traditional view of service as a separate category of faculty work by identifying service, teaching, and scholarship as sites of both "intellectual work" and "professional citizenship" (162-63, 173)—an approach which means that "research is no longer the exclusive site of intellectual work" (177) and that service "can also entail substantive intellectual labor" (178).

Another helpful perspective is found in Ernest Boyer's *Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professioriate*. Boyer argues that scholarship is not one category but is rather distributed over four somewhat distinguishable categories: Discovery, Integration, Application, and Teaching. The one that concerns us here is Application. Boyer makes clear that "colleges and universities have recently rejected service as serious scholarship, partly because its meaning is so vague and often disconnected from serious intellectual work" (22). More importantly, Boyer argues that:

> *a sharp distinction must be drawn between citizenship activities and projects that relate to scholarship itself. To be sure, there are meritorious social and civic functions to be performed, and faculty should be appropriately recognized for such work. But all too frequently, service means not doing scholarship but doing good. To be considered scholarship, service activities must be tied directly to one's special field of knowledge and relate to, and flow directly out of, this professional activity. Such service is serious, demanding work, requir-*

ing the rigor—and the accountability—traditionally associated with research activities. (22)

Let us emphasize the main point here: "To be considered scholarship, service activities must be tied directly to one's special field of knowledge and relate to, and flow directly out of, this professional activity. Such service is serious, demanding work, requiring the rigor—and the accountability—traditionally associated with research activities." What Boyer is arguing is not that all service should count; rather, service can be considered as part of scholarship if it derives from and is reinforced by scholarly knowledge and disciplinary understanding. As Boyer makes clear, in work of this sort, "theory and practice vitally interact, and one renews the other" (23).

Clearly there are many service activities that support and enhance departmental and university structures. Service on departmental and college-level committees is one of the clearest examples. Serving as the director or coordinator of an academic program may be another. Such service is considered a form of scholarship, however, only if it flows from and contributes to the scholarship of the field. In our terms, such work is intellectual: it requires specific expertise, training, and an understanding of disciplinary knowledge.

An example may be in order. Let us presume that the director of a first-year writing program is designing an in-house placement procedure so that students new to the college can be placed into the appropriate course in the first-year composition sequence. She will need to decide whether to use direct or indirect measures of writing ability; will need to assess the implications that the placement procedure will have on high school curriculum; will want to consult research on such things as the nature of writing prompts, whether an objective test and a writing test should be used together, and the optimal amount of time for the exam. Thus what some see as a simple decision (place students according to an ACT score) is, in reality, complex intellectual work involving disciplinary knowledge, empirical research, and histories of practice.

An additional dimension of this kind of intellectual work is that it neither derives from nor produces simplistic products or services. Rather, it draws upon historical and contemporary knowledge, and it contributes to the formation of new knowledge and improved decision making. These kinds of practices lead to new knowledge and innovative educational programs and contribute to thoughtful and invigorated teaching.

3. Evaluating The Work Of Writing Administration

What this document is arguing is that a definition of writing administration as intellectual work in colleges and universities must take into account the paradigm established by research and scholarship. At its highest level, this means the production of new knowledge (what *Scholarship Reconsidered* calls the "scholarship of discovery"). But the contemporary scholarly paradigm embraces a much broader spectrum of intellectual work. For instance, *The Disciplines Speak,* the report of a national working group of representatives from sixteen different professional associations (including CCCC and MLA), indicates that scholarly activity can be demonstrated in ways as diverse as "publishing the results of one's scholarly research, developing a new course, writing an innovative textbook, implementing an outreach program for the community . . . or assisting in a K-12 curriculum project" (Diamond and Adam 13). The MLA's "Making Faculty Work Visible" offers this list of some of the "projects and enterprises of knowledge and learning" in English Studies:

- *creating new questions, problems, information, interpretations, designs, products, frameworks of understanding, etc., through inquiry (e.g., empirical, textual, historical, theoretical, technological, artistic, practical);*
- *clarifying, critically examining, weighing, and revising the knowledge claims, beliefs, or understanding of others and oneself;*
- *connecting knowledge to other knowledge;*
- *preserving . . . and reinterpreting past knowledge;*
- *applying aesthetic, political, and ethical values to make judgments about knowledge and its uses;*
- *arguing knowledge claims in order to invite criticism and revision;*
- *making specialized knowledge broadly accessible and usable, e.g., to young learners, to nonspecialists in other disciplines, to the public;*

- *helping new generations to become active knowers themselves, preparing them for lifelong learning and discovery;*
- *applying knowledge to practical problems in significant or innovative ways;*
- *creating insight and communicating forms of experience through artistic works or performance. (MLA 175-76)*

Within this contemporary scholarly paradigm, writing administration may be considered intellectual work when it meets two tests. First, it needs to advance knowledge—its production, clarification, connection, reinterpretation, or application. Second, it results in products or activities that can be evaluated by others—for instance, against this list of qualities which, according to *The Disciplines Speak*, "seem to characterize that work that most disciplines would consider 'scholarly' or 'professional'":

- *the activity requires a high level of discipline-related expertise.*
- *the activity . . . is innovative.*
- *the activity can be replicated or elaborated.*
- *the work and its results can be documented.*
- *the work and its results can be peer-reviewed.*
- *the activity has significance or impact. (Diamond and Adam 14)*

In order to be regarded as intellectual work, therefore, writing administration must be viewed as a form of inquiry which advances knowledge and which has formalized outcomes that are subject to peer review and disciplinary evaluation. Just as the articles, stories, poems, books, committee work, classroom performance, and other evidence of tenure and promotion can be critiqued and evaluated by internal and external reviewers, so can the accomplishments, products, innovations, and contributions of writing administrators. Indeed, such review must be central to the evaluation of writing administration as scholarly and intellectual work.

Defining and evaluating the work of writing administrators is a process that needs to be made explicit so that those who do this work—and they are often beginning faculty who are over-worked, over-stressed, and untenured—stand a real chance of succeeding professionally within departmental and institutional contexts. On a national level, this process not only can provide guidelines to help institutions and faculty understand and properly evaluate the work of writing administrators, but also produce some degree of empirical data that can create an exchange value for administrative accomplishments parallel to that already in place for research and teaching.

The remainder of this document will suggest guidelines which we hope will prove useful to individuals, committees, and departments working to develop materials and policies for evaluating writing administrators ("WPAs," as they are often called). First, Section 4 will propose five descriptive categories within which the intellectual work of a WPA can be best considered. Then, in Section 5, we will suggest several evaluative criteria by which merit pay increases as well as tenure and promotion decisions can be made fairly and thoughtfully in terms of the quality and the quantity of intellectual work achieved by a writing administrator. Finally, Section 6 will provide a framework that can be used to organize the accomplishments—and to help in the evaluation—of individuals devoted to writing administration.

4. Five Categories Of Intellectual Work

Although writing administration, like the work of any other administrative figure on campus, is subject to a variety of different interpretations, we propose that much of it can be understood as falling within one or more of these categories: Program Creation, Curricular Design, Faculty Development, Program Assessment, and Program-Related Textual Production.

Program Creation

Whatever the specific focus of administration (first-year course, WAC program, writing center, etc.), one of the primary scholarly accomplishments of writing administration is the creation of a program. By creation, we mean those specific activities that reconceive the philosophy, goals, purposes, and institutional definition of the specific writing program. Program creation is not something that every writing administrator does or should do; if a WPA inherits a well-designed program that is generally viewed positively by students, faculty, and campus administrators, then it is likely that the program will be maintained. Even in such cases, however, a person engaged in the intellectual work of writing administration can add, modify, or otherwise develop a significant new emphasis or supplementary support

system. For example, a writing administrator might create a Writing Center to support and enhance undergraduate instruction or he might revise the emphasis of second-semester composition by altering the programmatic goals from a traditional research paper to shorter essays emphasizing academic discourse or cultural studies.

Our point here is that program creation is a strong indication of intellectual work, since successful programs are grounded in significant disciplinary knowledge, a national perspective that takes into account the successes and failures of other composition programs, and a combined practical and theoretical understanding of learning theory, the composing process, the philosophy of composition, rhetorical theory, etc. An obvious corollary is that writing programs that fail, other than when attacked on the basis of budget and ideology, often do so because they lack this scholarly foundation.

Curricular Design

Although closely related to program creation, curricular design is a somewhat differentiated use of scholarly knowledge that is still strongly representative of intellectual work. Indeed, although we separate the categories for the sake of elaboration, they greatly overlap. Curricular design is the overall articulation of the administrative unit: the establishment of a programmatic architecture that structures and maintains the various components of the composition program being evaluated. Curricular design does not inevitably depend on or illustrate scholarly knowledge; in combination with program creation, however, it is strongly indicative of intellectual work.

Once a WPA has engaged in program creation, for example by developing an innovative curricular emphasis for English 101, the next step is to integrate that new emphasis within the curriculum. That is likely to mean reconfiguring course requirements, altering curricular emphases, choosing new textbooks that more fully endorse the new vision, etc. Another example can be drawn from Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC), a program that is often independent of any specific department but whose director must often be promoted and tenured within English. Program design for a WAC director might include the articulation of requirements and standards by which the program includes some courses and excludes others, the development of criteria for evaluating the success of specific courses, the creation of well-articulated expectations so that faculty across the disciplines include writing in their courses with some degree of commonality. Curricular design is not a purely technical matter; it requires an understanding of the conceptual, a grounding in composition history, theory, and pedagogy. This is inevitably the case since its chief goal is to lead the writing program toward a coherent and explicit philosophy.

Faculty Development

Whether working with faculty, teaching assistants, lecturers, adjunct faculty, or undergraduate peer tutors, it is clear that no writing program can succeed unless its staff is well trained and generally in accord with the overall programmatic goals and methodologies. Thus one of a writing administrator's chief responsibilities is to maintain a strong staff development program. The chief responsibilities, here, are to: develop and implement training programs for new and experienced staff; communicate current pedagogical approaches and current research in rhetoric and composition; provide logistical, intellectual, and financial support for staff activities in course design, pedagogical development, and research; maintain an atmosphere of openness and support for the development and sharing of effective teaching ideas and curricular emphases; maintain open lines of communication among administrators, support staff, and faculty; etc.

Although it is often overlooked, faculty and staff development depends primarily on one factor: the degree to which those being administered value and respect the writing administrator. Staff development cannot be accomplished by fiat. Instructors cannot simply be ordered and coerced, no matter how subordinate their position within the university. Thus faculty development, when it truly accomplishes its purpose of improving teaching and maintaining the highest classroom standards, is one of the most salient examples of intellectual work carried out within an administrative sphere. To be an effective administrative leader, a WPA must be able to incorporate current research and theory into the training and must demonstrate that knowledge through both word and deed.

Program Assessment and Evaluation

Accountability is one of the over-riding concepts in higher education generally, and in writing administration specifically. No single method or

paradigm exists that is appropriate for all composition programs; on the contrary, each writing administrator must develop site-specific measures for the assessment and evaluation of the goals, pedagogy, and overall effectiveness of the composition program. In a composition program, that assessment may take the form of portfolios; in that case, the scholarly expertise of the WPA takes the form of designing the portfolios, creating a rigorous and meaningful assessment procedure by which the portfolios can be evaluated, etc. In a WAC program, the writing administrator would likely need to develop assessment measures in order to demonstrate that writing-enhanced classes are indeed consolidating the knowledge of majors across campus and producing undergraduate students that have achieved a genuine measure of compositional ability.

In order to achieve meaningful assessment (by which we mean overall determination of programmatic effectiveness) and meaningful evaluation (that is, specific determination of students and instructors), writing administrators must bring to bear scholarly knowledge concerning holistic scoring, primary trait scoring, descriptive analysis, scoring rubrics, and other information that spans various disciplines. This knowledge and its application are essential if the program is to demonstrate its value and be assured of continuing funding.

Program-Related Textual Production

By this category, we mean the production of written materials in addition to conference papers, articles in refereed journals, scholarly books, textbooks, and similar products that would be evaluated the same whether produced by a WPA or any other faculty member. (Textbooks are a special case. Clearly, not every textbook offers evidence of intellectual work; a grammar workbook that asks students to fill in the blanks or a reading anthology that is highly derivative and lacking in substantive pedagogical apparatus may not meet national and departmental definitions of intellectual work. Many textbooks, however, represent significant advances in instruction, both locally and nationally, and are, therefore, important ways for compositionists to demonstrate their scholarly expertise.)

Besides such products, numerous other texts must be considered as part of the writing administrator's resume of scholarly production. These include such things as innovative course syllabi which articulate the WPA's curricular design; local, state, and national funding proposals for the enhancement of instruction; statements of teaching philosophy for the composition curriculum; original materials for instructional workshops; evaluations of teaching that explicitly articulate and promote overall programmatic goals; and resource materials for the training of staff as well as for the use of students in classrooms, writing centers, and other programs. Clearly boundaries must be set; not every memo, descriptive comment, or teaching evaluation embodies the concept of intellectual work. But any responsible system of evaluation needs to acknowledge that individuals engaged in the intellectual work of administration concretize their knowledge—and build a reviewable record—through the authorship of a body of textual materials related to program creation, curricular design, faculty development, and program assessment.

5. Evaluative Criteria

Writing administrators provide leadership for many different kinds of programs—such as first-year courses, WAC, writing centers, and law programs—and they work in a wide variety of institutional settings—among them, two-year colleges, private four-year colleges, and large universities with an array of doctoral offerings. So it is it not possible to establish a fixed set of criteria by which to evaluate writing administrators. It is possible, however, to offer general guidelines and suggestions which WPAs, personnel committees, department chairs, and others can use as they prepare materials and develop personnel policies that fit specific institutional contexts.

Guideline One

The first guideline is based on the previous section, which describes five broad areas in which the intellectual work of writing administration occurs. We urge that materials and policies for the evaluation of writing administrators focus on the following areas:

- Program Creation
- Curricular Design
- Faculty Development
- Program Assessment and Evaluation

- Program-Related Textual Production.

Guideline Two

The second guideline attempts to clarify what sort of activities and products within the five categories should be considered "intellectual work." We suggest that a particular product or activity of a writing administrator is intellectual work when it meets one or more of these four criteria:

- It generates, clarifies, connects, reinterprets, or applies knowledge based on research, theory, and sound pedagogical practice;
- It requires disciplinary knowledge available only to an expert trained in or conversant with a particular field;
- It requires highly developed analytical or problem solving skills derived from specific expertise, training, or research derived from scholarly knowledge;
- It results in products or activities that can be evaluated by peers (e.g., publication, internal and outside evaluation, participant responses) as the contribution of the individual's insight, research, and disciplinary knowledge.

Guideline Three

The third guideline suggests more specific criteria that can be used to evaluate the quality of a product or activity reflecting a writing administrator's intellectual work:

- Innovation: The writing administrator creates one or more new programs, curricular emphases, assessment measures, etc.
- Improvement/Refinement: The writing administrator makes changes and alterations that distinctly and concretely lead to better teaching, sounder classroom practices, etc.
- Dissemination: The writing administrator, through workshops, colloquia, staff meetings, and other forums, is able to communicate curricular goals, methodologies, and overall programmatic philosophy in such a way as to lead to positive and productive results for students, instructors, and school.
- Empirical Results: The writing administrator is able to present concrete evidence of accomplishments; evidence may take the form of pre- and post-evaluative measures, written testimonials from students and staff, teaching evaluations, etc.

This list, of course, is far from comprehensive. Indeed, as "Making Faculty Work Visible" puts it, "[i]ntellectual work in a postsecondary setting may excel in various ways," among them, "skill, care, rigor, and intellectual honesty; a heuristic passion for knowledge; originality; relevance and aptness; coherence, consistency, and development within a body of work; diversity and versatility of contribution; thorough knowledge and constructive use of important work by others; the habit of self-critical examination and openness to criticism and revision; sustained productivity over time; high impact and value to a local academic community like the department; relevance and significance to societal issues and problems; effective communication and dissemination" (MLA 177).

Guideline Four

The fourth guideline emphasizes the centrality of peer evaluation to describing and judging the intellectual work of writing administration. The Council of Writing Program Administrators encourages the use of peer review in evaluating the intellectual work of writing administrators. This will likely require the writing administrator to create a portfolio that reflects her or his scholarly and intellectual accomplishments as an administrator; this portfolio would be reviewed by outside evaluators selected by the department in consultation with the person being evaluated.

6. Implementation

The Council of Writing Program Administrators is convinced that WPAs can be evaluated on the basis of their administrative work and that the four guidelines sketched above can help in the process by providing clear categories to organize the work of the writing administrator and by providing meaningful criteria by which to review that work.

Implicit in the guidelines of Section 5 is a framework that can be used to organize accomplishments—and to help in the evaluation—of faculty who are involved in writing administration:

A. The Work of Writing Administration

Description of activities and products organized by the five categories in Guideline One. (As the final paragraphs of Section 4 indicate, evaluation

could include a wide range of program-related written materials in addition to conference papers, articles in refereed journals, scholarly books, textbooks, and similar products that would be evaluated the same whether produced by a WPA or any other faculty member.)

B. Evidence of Intellectual Work

Representative activities and products with evidence relating to Guideline Two.

C. Quality of Intellectual Work

Representative activities and products with evidence relating to Guideline Three.

D. Peer Review

Reports from scholars and writing administrators qualified to evaluate the materials against broad professional standards.

This general framework may serve as an heuristic device for writing administrators preparing personnel materials and as an organizational structure for their portfolios, and it might work to guide reviews of portfolios by the institution. Given the wide range of duties possible for a given writing administrator—and the wide range of institutions within which WPAs work—that framework can also serve as a starting point for revision and refinement by writing administrators, personnel committees, department chairs, and others working so that the evaluation of writing administrators fits distinctive local conditions. If you are engaged in such work, the Council of Writing Program Administrators hopes you find this document a useful source of ideas about the intellectual work of writing administration and how this work can be evaluated.

Notes

1. "Evaluating the Intellectual Work of Writing Administration" evolved over several years since the WPA Executive Committee began developing an "intellectual work document" on the scholarly and professional activities of faculty involved in writing administration. Robert Schwegler, Gail Stygall, Judy Pearce, and Charles Schuster—consulting widely with Executive Committee members and others—developed approaches which Charles Schuster drafted into the version published in the Fall 1996 issue of Writing Program Administration as a way to solicit additional responses. Following Executive Committee discussion of that draft at its July 1997 meeting, Richard Gebhardt coordinated a revision effort and drafted the version discussed, modified, and approved by the Executive Committee during its meetings in 1998. The Council of Writing Program Administrators recommends this document as a source of ideas about the intellectual work of writing administration and about how this work can be evaluated responsibly and professionally.

Works Cited

There are, of course, many other resources that you can turn to as you develop responsible means to evaluate writing program administrators. Here is a brief list of reports, articles, and books (the first three of which were quoted in this document):

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Biographies

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