

Writing Program Administration

*Journal of the
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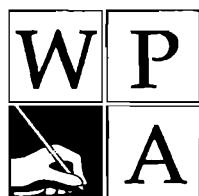
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In 1992 the University Composition Board² members at The University of Arizona (UA) read six portfolios submitted by incoming students and used the results of their readings to place those students in first-year composition. Since then, the Portfolio Placement Project (PPP) has grown to include more than five hundred portfolios, most submitted by students graduating from high schools in the Tucson area. I have worked with the PPP for three years, and I believe that the program that has developed at UA is a model from which other universities can learn when exploring alternative methods of student placement. The use of portfolios for placement, as practiced here, provides a more valid and reliable measure of student writing ability than either a timed essay exam or a multiple-choice test. In addition, the PPP has had a positive impact on the curriculum of both the local secondary schools and the curriculum of the Composition Program at UA.

I have divided this article into several sections. In section one I provide an overview of the PPP, arguing that it differs from similar projects at other universities in two fundamentally important ways: (1) both high school English teachers and university writing teachers score the portfolios, and (2) all portfolio readers give written feedback (and not just a number score) to the student writers. Next I explore the concept of validity as it relates to the PPP, arguing that the positive aspects Peter Elbow and others describe of portfolios

The Trinity of Portfolio Placement: Validity, Reliability, and Curriculum Reform¹

Shane Borrowman

make the portfolio placement practiced at UA a much more valid measure of writing ability than other measures. In section three I explore the concept of reliability within the PPP, arguing that the way in which the scoring rubric is developed and shared with scorers accounts for the high inter-rater reliability that the PPP enjoys. In my conclusion I argue that the PPP has had enormous positive impact on the curriculum of The University of Arizona and the schools whose students submit portfolios for placement.

A Brief Overview of the Portfolio Placement Project

Students, primarily those in Tucson, who are planning to attend The University of Arizona may compile a portfolio of their writing which will be used in place of a timed placement essay (previously written to a common prompt in thirty minutes during first-year orientation, now written in sixty minutes). To be read and evaluated, a portfolio must contain four pieces of writing: a literary analysis, a piece of expressive writing, a text written from a class other than English, and a reflective letter addressed to writing teachers at UA (see Appendix A for the instruction sheet the students are given). Taken as a whole, these four pieces of writing—final drafts only—are used to place students into either English 100, the basic writing course; English 101, standard first-year composition; English 103, honors composition; or English 109, a one-semester honors course which is the equivalent of the normal, two-course sequence.

The Portfolio Placement Project was piloted in 1992, when portfolios were used to place six students in the composition sequence at The University of Arizona. In 1993 the number of portfolios read climbed to sixty, and it has risen each year since. In 1998 420 placement portfolios were read; 120 high school juniors' portfolios were also read. This aspect of the program, begun in 1997, is unique: not only are portfolios read and evaluated for those students from the Tucson area who are matriculating to the University, but portfolios are also read for students who are just moving into their senior year of high school.³ (This aspect of the PPP will be discussed in more detail in later sections.)

Portfolios are scored on a six-point rubric (see Appendix F for the final draft of the 1998 rubric). Scoring is done by both university and high school instructors. A composite score of four or less places the student in English 100. Students whose portfolios receive a score between five and nine are placed in English 101. A score of ten or eleven gives the student the option of placing into Honors English 103. A score of twelve allows the student to

enroll in English 109, the one-semester honors course that fulfills the entire writing requirement for U of A students. Students, however, are never told their score; they are simply told the name of the course into which they have placed. The students do get more than their English course number, though: each student receives written feedback from two—or possibly three if there is significant disagreement—readers.

Each portfolio that is used for placement is read and scored by two readers; in addition to assigning the portfolio a number grade, each reader also responds in writing to the student who compiled the portfolio (see Appendix C for the advice given to readers concerning commenting on portfolios).⁴ This set of written responses is one of the most valuable aspects of the PPP for both students and those who are scoring their work, and it allows readers and student writers to connect in a way that “sudden death” writing exams, as Grant Wiggins calls standard essay testing, do not. The written feedback personalizes the process in a way that a number score, no matter how well-designed the rubric may be, cannot, and it is a response that is philosophically aligned with portfolio evaluation. As Peter Elbow states concerning the personalized nature of portfolios,

[P]ortfolios are inherently more personal than other forms of assessment. When we read only one text per student, we can easily forget the complexity of the person behind the paper and thus be more comfortable scoring it with a single number. But when we read a portfolio we get a much stronger sense of contact with the person behind the texts: an author with a life history, a diversity of facets, . . . someone who had good days and bad days. (“Will” 53)

The written response allows for more feedback than a single score or a set of possibly conflicting scores. By responding to the student writer, rather than only numerically labeling him/her, portfolio readers are able to engage the writer in a discussion about the writing.

Validity and the Portfolio Placement Project

According to Edward M. White, “Validity . . . has to do with honesty and accuracy, with a demonstrated connection between what a test proclaims it is measuring and what it in fact measures” (*Teaching* 283). For example, a driving test is only valid if it tests one’s ability to drive, and a writing test is only valid if it tests one’s ability to write. But what the test

claims to measure cannot be separated from its purpose for measurement. A driving test assesses basic competency in the operation of a motor vehicle, and it assesses nothing more than that. In the PPP, the "test" is measuring writing ability for the purpose of placing students in the composition course for which they are most prepared and from which they will receive the most benefit. Within this context, the portfolio is a much more valid measure than a timed impromptu placement essay.

Writing about the use of impromptu essay testing, White states that "[O]ver 70% of colleges and universities that assess writing use some form of impromptu essay as part of their writing assessments" ("Apologia" 30). Such a statistic is promising, as it suggests that no more than 30% of post-secondary institutions are using multiple-choice tests or other indirect measures of student writing ability. Unfortunately, direct evaluations of writing, such as the traditional timed essay, also suffer from validity problems. Because the timed essay is written on-the-spot and under pressure, in a high-anxiety "test" atmosphere where no feedback or collaboration is allowed, the timed impromptu essay produces what Elbow calls "a faint, smudged, and distorted picture of the student's writing ability" ("Foreword" xiii). Instead of presenting a student's fully-formed writing ability, the timed essay presents a blurred picture of the student's ability to compress the entire writing process into a short time period.⁵

While the impromptu essay allows for only the most abbreviated writing process, portfolios have the potential to "reward students for using a good writerly process: to explore a topic in discussion and exploratory writing; to complicate their thinking; to allow for perplexity and getting lost; to get feedback; to revise; and to collaborate" (Elbow, "Will" 41). Portfolios, under the best of conditions, allow for one fundamental component of the writing process that timed essay testing, by its very nature, cannot allow: time to work and rework a piece of writing. This allowance for time makes a portfolio, potentially, a much more valid measuring device for student writing ability.

The portfolios students submit in the PPP take advantage of all of the positive aspects of the system that Elbow describes. Students learn about the requirements of the PPP at the beginning of the school year; the portfolio is not turned in to the University Composition Board until the middle of March. Thus students have roughly five months to craft, revise, receive feedback on, further revise, edit, and polish the pieces they select for inclusion in their placement portfolio (see Appendix D for the guidelines

students are given concerning the construction of their portfolios and Appendix E for the advice students are given concerning the selection of texts for the placement portfolio).

Ultimately, "The validity of a measurement instrument or test refers to whether or not it does what it purports to do" (Huot 330). The PPP is as valid as any portfolio placement can be. It claims to measure a student's writing ability for the purpose of placement into First-Year Composition, and the portfolio each student compiles reflects his or her level of skill as well as any measurement of writing is able.

Reliability and the Portfolio Placement Project

Defining *reliability*, White writes that "reliability means fairness and consistency" ("Portfolios" 35-36). Elaborating on this definition, Dana Elder and Larry Beason write, "*Reliability* refers to consistency in testing, to the ability of scores or measurements to agree. Historically, writing evaluation has been largely concerned with *inter-rater reliability*, or the correlation between different scorers' evaluations of the same piece of writing" (38). In the PPP, the level of inter-rater reliability has always been relatively high. In 1997 inter-rater reliability was .895; in 1998 the level of inter-rater reliability rose to .96.⁶ As important as the numerical level of reliability, though, is the conceptual foundation on which the numbers rest.

Both definitions of reliability offered above rest on the same fundamental assumption: for an assessment of writing ability to be fair, there must be agreement between multiple readers about the score the piece of writing in question deserves. This is, however, a site of contention in writing assessment, for readers must agree to *read in the same basic manner* in order to produce consistent results. Faced with this challenge to individual choice, Elbow offers this dangerous advice: "Given the tension between validity and reliability . . . it makes most sense to put our chips on validity and allow reliability to suffer" ("Foreword" xiii).

Elbow's contention is that any attempt to force agreement among readers invalidates the reading, and thus the scoring, process by making the reading of the students' work an unnatural one. What Elbow fails to recognize, though, is that an unreliable assessment system, one which produces inconsistent scores for a single piece of writing, invalidates itself by being so unreliable.

Opposing Elbow's position, White argues that validity can climb no higher than reliability allows it to: "Statisticians tell us that reliability is the

upper limit for validity, that no assessment device can be more valid than it is reliable. And that makes perfect sense. Your measure must give consistent results as well as honestly measure what you say it measures" (*Teaching* 17). Because of the interdependent nature of validity and reliability, neither can be given short shrift; any measure of writing must take both into account. In the PPP, reliability rests on two related procedural aspects of the program: the physical conditions in which the scoring of portfolios takes place and the generation of the scoring rubric.

The logistics of scoring play a part in inter-rater reliability in large-scale writing assessment. In David W. Smit's situation at Kansas State University, portfolios are scored by small groups of instructors, all of whom have similar experience levels (Smit 308). At the University of Louisville, portfolios are read by instructors who are selected for their experience teaching in the program.⁷ In both cases, inter-rater reliability rests on the shared background of the readers. The situation at UA is similar to this, although it occurs on a larger scale.

Scoring of portfolios is done in a single day at UA, traditionally on a Saturday. On either the Thursday or Friday before the portfolios are scored, readers take part in a norming session that lasts approximately four hours. During both the training and scoring sessions, readers all sit in the same large room.⁸ As White argues, "Experience with essay tests has shown that reliable readings can take place only in controlled sessions, with all evaluators reading at the same time and place, under the direction of a chief reader. This experience may not hold true for portfolios . . . , but it probably will, as the scoring of portfolios seems in every way even more difficult than the scoring of essays" (White, *Assigning* 69). The norming session coupled with the close proximity of readers to one another and to the chief reader greatly increases inter-rater reliability.

When they score papers in the same room, readers sit together in small groups. They discuss papers that they read. They discuss the scoring criteria. They take coffee and cigarette breaks together, often taking their conversations about the task at hand with them. This close proximity makes high inter-rater reliability possible, but it is also a danger. As Marvin Diogenes, a member of the UCB, states, there are "hardships" associated with the reading of portfolios. After four hours, despite breaks, readers become exhausted. Their scores begin to fluctuate; the written comments to the students become brief and perfunctory—and often much more difficult to read as the quality of handwriting slumps. To combat this degradation, the

UCB plans to divide the reading session over two days. The effects this will have on reliability are not yet known.

The second aspect of the PPP that fosters reliability is the development of the rubric to which readers are introduced during their norming session—a rubric that is carefully crafted during the process of pulling anchor-portfolios for training purposes. Discussing scoring rubrics, Grant Wiggins writes, "All rubrics involve abstractions, based on generalizations of samples of work" (132), and the rubric generated by the UCB for scorers in the PPP is no exception: its criteria for the various levels of the six-point scale are abstractions, but they are abstractions based on real examples of student work. This makes it conducive to high inter-rater reliability.

During the two weeks prior to the scoring of the placement portfolios, members of the UCB begin reading random samples of student portfolios from each participating school. Each portfolio is ranked according to a detailed six-point scale that is based on the rubrics used in previous years (see Appendix F for the 1998 rubric). As UCB members rate the portfolios, they compare and contrast those portfolios with others that received the same score. After several days of such comparisons, the rubric is revised. The new draft of the rubric is tested against the scores that have already been given to sample portfolios, and the UCB members confer again, after more portfolios have been read, about the rubric. A final revision is done before the rubric is presented to the raters.

The recursive process through which the UCB takes the scoring rubric every year increases the inter-rater reliability of the PPP and the validity of the process as well. Because the rubric is produced on-site through examination of student portfolios, it is perfectly suited to judge those portfolios. Because the rubric is revised each year, the UCB is able to keep the rubric's categories finely attuned to the portfolios that students are submitting.

By the time readers arrive for their training session, the rubric has been thoroughly tested, and anchor portfolios have been readied. Although the rubric is not given another formal revision, its meaning is subtly altered during the training session (and the norming session that precedes the Saturday scoring session). As the UCB members guide readers through the anchor portfolios, the group negotiates the meaning of various levels of the rubric. Although an "outside" rubric is imposed on scorers, the subtleties of the rubric are openly negotiated by all participants. Because of this dynamic

process, high inter-rater reliability is always generated—even though portfolios may differ radically in content from one another.

The Portfolio Placement Project and the Secondary/Post-Secondary Curriculum

Proving that the PPP is both valid and reliable is important for political, pedagogical, and professional purposes. Politically, proof of validity and reliability allows the PPP to compete with other tools of writing assessment—tools that are less expensive and less time-consuming. Pedagogically, the power of the PPP is also important; its effects are being felt in composition classes at UA and English courses at all of the participating high schools. Professionally, the PPP has an impact on the teaching of English in the Tucson area: it brings high school and college English teachers together to talk about writing, and it brings writing into non-English classrooms where writing may not have been taught before.

In the high school English classroom, the PPP has brought current ideas about process and collaboration in writing into classes where they may not have been practiced before. The portfolio, by its very nature, encourages communication between teachers and students concerning writing. The portfolio also explicitly connects teachers to their students' portfolios; each teacher must sign the cover sheet that his or her student includes with the placement portfolio (see Appendix B). In a subtle way, this pushes teachers to push their students. Such small incentives can bring about collaboration where none existed before—and reinforce notions of collaboration between students and teachers who already work in this way.

The PPP also directly impacts the teaching of writing at both the junior and senior levels of high school in another way. Seniors spend time compiling their portfolios and revising their work, as they are the ones hoping to attend UA in the coming fall, but juniors are also encouraged to submit portfolios to the PPP for review. The comments these students receive open a dialogue about writing and the expectations university teachers might have for it between the students and the English teacher with whom they are working. The dialogue that is created directly impacts the writing instruction the students receive during the remainder of their junior year—and the senior year in which they compile a placement portfolio of their own.

Both the secondary and post-secondary English curriculums enjoy an added benefit from the PPP: in this instance our method of assessment meshes clearly and completely with the manner in which we teach.

Portfolio assessment allows teachers to assess writing as a process that produces a series of products. Students have numerous chances to revise, to rethink, to seek out and then incorporate feedback on the writing they submit for assessment. This is important, for "You are what you assess" (Wiggins 130). Assessing writing in a timed impromptu essay test implies that that is what we value as a profession—the ability to write quick essays that may go beyond the most shallow level of development (but probably not much beyond). When we use portfolios, we teach writing as a process and grade writing that has been improved by that process.

At the secondary level, though, English classes are not the only ones to be affected positively by the PPP. One of the requirements of the placement portfolio is that students submit a piece of expository writing from a discipline other than English (see Appendix A). Through the grapevine, teachers have told UCB members that the effects of this single requirement have been enormous. Administrators overseeing the collection of placement portfolios at some schools learned that no writing was being done in courses other than English. Six years after the inception of the PPP, writing is taking place across the high school curriculum—because of the PPP.

For the secondary and post-secondary teachers involved with the PPP, one "benefit of using portfolios for assessment [is that] they tend to promote a richer and more sophisticated understanding of writing" (Elbow, "Foreword" xiv). Portfolios open the definition of writing up for teachers by showcasing several pieces of work for each student—often with an enormous range of genres represented. Thus the definition of writing cannot become fixed and static. Portfolios have this effect on teachers, but there is another. Being involved in the assessment of portfolios tends to promote a richer and more sophisticated understanding of the assessment of writing.

When teachers work in isolation, alone with their classroom door closed and a stack of papers on the desk, working within the picture of the profession that Elbow describes so well in *Writing with Power*, they do not have to articulate their standards to anyone (including themselves and their students). The PPP brings teachers together for the purpose of evaluating student writing according to communally-defined standards. This is the polar opposite of the normal isolation-method of assessment that most teachers practice. By bringing teachers together to share their ideas about the evaluating of writing, the PPP impacts all of the teachers involved in a positive way, a way that promotes professional development and adherence to (or awareness of) common standards.

Conclusion: Who Assesses Writing and How?

The Portfolio Placement Project at The University of Arizona provides a valid and reliable assessment of students' writing abilities; moreover, the PPP has a positive impact on the curriculum of the schools which take part in the Project and on the professional development of the teachers who come together to score the students' work. Portfolio assessment of writing is an appropriate method of assessing student writing, for it clearly meshes with both contemporary pedagogical processes and the theories of writing that form the foundations for them. But portfolio assessment is of great importance for another reason, and it is on this that I would like to end.

Large-scale assessment of writing is unavoidable. Students need to be placed into composition courses, and often their writing skills are evaluated again at the end of those courses. Another test of writing ability may confront them before they enter upper-division courses. Successfully completing a writing assessment of one kind or another may even be a graduation requirement. With this high-stakes situation in mind, those of us intimately involved with the teaching of writing must ask ourselves two questions: (1) who is best prepared to evaluate student writing, and (2) what is the best way for student writing to be tested? Despite the common misconception, writing is not something that can be taught or evaluated by anyone. It is a job for professionals in the field of writing, and currently most professionals in this field agree that portfolios have the potential to be a more reliable and valid form of assessment of student writing than any other.

As teachers who are accustomed to evaluating writing, we must always remind ourselves that the high-stakes arena of large-scale assessment is not the same as our classrooms. On our own, we can assume that our assignments are valid and that our scores are reliable. But we must not carry these assumptions with us when we speak of large-scale assessment. If we do let either reliability or validity slide, then we prove that the evaluation of writing is as subjective, arbitrary, and idiosyncratic as many students believe it to be. If we sacrifice either validity or reliability, then we will be removing ourselves from large-scale assessment and closing ourselves back in our classrooms. When this happens someone else—someone who does not view writing as a process that produces products—will take over the job of assessing student writing. The stakes are too high for our students and for our profession for us to let someone else decide how writing will be assessed.

Notes

1. I thank WPA reviewers Edward M. White and Rebecca Moore Howard for their thoughtful responses to my original draft and the members of the University Composition Board who graciously allowed me to take part in the Portfolio Placement Project—and offered advice and encouragement throughout the writing and revision of this article. I am also indebted to my wife Elizabeth for, among many things, her multiple readings of this work.
2. The University Composition Board at The University of Arizona was founded in 1983. Its structure is based on that of the University of Michigan's English Composition Board. As Yvonne Merrill, a member of the UCB, states, "The mission of the five-member University Composition Board is to support and improve student writing, the teaching of writing across the campus and in this community, and the awareness of writing as a primary mode of thinking." UCB members teach first-year composition courses, administer both placement and mid-career writing assessments, and are heavily involved in the WAC movement at UA. The UCB members are also a driving force behind both faculty development and high school outreach programs.
3. Anecdotal evidence suggests that a high percentage of the students who submit portfolios as juniors eventually both submit placement portfolios and then enroll at The University of Arizona. This subject is currently being researched by the UCB, and recent software changes have made it possible to begin collecting the necessary data.
4. Names are removed from portfolios, so each receives two blind readings. Only social security numbers are used to identify the students, and a numerical code identifies the schools the students attend.
5. At The University of Arizona, students who do not submit portfolios perform a one-hour writing exam to determine their placement. In the exam, students read a short passage and then respond to a question that requires them to summarize and analyze the reading and to argue their view on the issue.
6. This does not include the 120 portfolios submitted by high school juniors, which were read only once.

7. There is one aspect of reader-selection at the University of Louisville that I find particularly interesting: instructors are chosen for their overall experience, but they are also chosen based on the course they have most recently taught. Thus the teacher who has just completed teaching English 100 will be considered the expert on English 100 for purposes of portfolio scoring.
8. Approximately 50 readers take part in the scoring of portfolios each year, and the scoring session lasts about nine hours.

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Appendix C Reading and Commenting

SOME TIPS ON PORTFOLIO READING

Why a portfolio? Why not just a simple, single timed-writing sample? You probably know the answers that are regularly given. But the truth is that scoring portfolios for placement purposes IS a whole lot more work, and it can be harder work, too. It's easy with portfolios to get into a series of complicated arguments with yourself—especially if one piece is really strong where the others are just so-so, or where one piece is absolutely unacceptable where the others are okay, or where all the pieces are just short of good but the topics and "voice" are engaging. Nothing will make those decisions "easy"—but here are a few tips to consider:

1. USE THE WHOLE PORTFOLIO: this may seem obvious, but many readers say that they form a general judgment very early in their reading. We suggest that if you find yourself making a judgment early on, use it as a sort of "hypothesis" which could be called into question with subsequent evidence. Use all the pieces in the portfolio to illuminate your judgment.

2. WATCH OUT FOR HALO and SHADOW: extending the previous suggestion, be on guard against two common effects of uneven portfolios: a "halo" of good impressions created by an outstanding reflective letter, or a "shadow" created by a less-than-impressive beginning. Remember that, occasionally the letter may not be a reliable indicator of the quality of writing in the selections.

3. READ HOLISTICALLY: don't over-analyze any given paper, and when you're done, think 'across the set': most of the pieces are under-developed...the strongest moments in the papers come when the writer is using narrative examples...all the papers lurch between formal and informal moments...all the texts have strong thesis statements...the texts are very uneven, some pretty good; others very bad.

4. START WITH A THREE-WAY SORT: before trying to apply the rubric in detail, place the paper high—medium—low. Then look at the appropriate range of the rubric if you need to.

5. CONSIDER 'RANGE' IN HARD-TO-CALL SCORES: remember that you do have a variety of writing types to use in making your decision, and look for decisive evidence in contrasting pieces. For example, if a writer's organization seems problematic in the more formal pieces, look closely at the less formal texts, especially the letter: can the student effectively organize less formal language? If those pieces too seem loosely structured, this may confirm your concern. If they are stronger in organization, then perhaps the student simply needs to gain greater familiarity with formal structures.

6. WEIGHT THE ACADEMIC PIECES BUT USE THEM ALL: since the majority of the writing students will do at the University involves more-or-less formal, school-sponsored writing, you may feel that the literary analysis and expository texts are the best indicators for placement. The letter and the expressive text, however, do give you important clues about the student's ability to use language for reflective purposes and in situations where there are fewer "practiced" models of form. How writers handle these more open-ended writing situations can be instructive.

SOME TIPS ON COMMENTING

While you want your comment to provide personal feedback, remember that you are communicating a holistic impression of the student's writing abilities. The rubric suggests some key areas of concern: Development, Organization, Expression, Mechanics.

CONNECT TO THE LETTER: where possible, connect your comment to the student's own self-assessment in the letter: "You say that writing is important to you and your selections convince me of that."

SINGLE OUT MAJOR PATTERNS: your comments should reflect your overall judgment, so highlight PATTERNS of strength or weakness. "All of your papers convey your energy and concern for your topics." or "In each of your selections you raise many challenging ideas, but then fail to develop them in much detail." or "You'll need to learn to focus your writing with more clearly stated theses so that your readers—and you yourself—know what you're trying to prove in each paper."

BUILD STOCK PHRASES: while you want the comment to be "individualized" to some degree, remember that there are "types" of errors, problems, strengths; don't worry about using fairly stock phrases to describe these common features. Individualize through references to particular pieces. It is not inappropriate to tell all your "4" writers similar things.

REMEMBER THE FUTURE: remember that these are high-school seniors who will be starting their college-level study of writing—frame your comments as advice on things to be aware of or look out for.

THINK OF THE COURSES: your comments will be read by students who have been assigned placement in our course sequences. Keeping the courses in mind can help you decide what aspects of the student's performance to highlight. All these courses typically demand greater maturity of thought (and time

management) and greater sophistication about rhetoric and writing than most high school students have developed. Also, the courses usually encourage students to pursue subjects that are interesting both to them and to their teachers—so students can't assume that teachers will be telling them exactly what to "do" for a given paper.

Typically, scores 1 and 2 are very likely to be in 100, which is designed to give students an extra semester in which to develop their reading/writing abilities.

Scores 3 and 4 are English 101 range, and 101 is a challenging course in which students will be expected to work far more independently and in far greater depth than most have done in high school. The more complex ideas required in these papers will make new demands on students' ability to develop and organize.

Scores 5 and 6 are Honors range scores and will typically result in a 103 Placement; and while it is nice to compliment such students on their accomplishments, you need to let them know that they will be expected to use their abilities to explore far more demanding form of expression.

Appendix D
1997-98 Guidelines for Submitting Your
English Placement Portfolio

1. All materials must be submitted on or before March 16, 1998 to your supervising English teacher who is working with the University Composition Board to develop the Portfolio Placement option. The supervising teacher signs a statement on the cover sheet that, to the best of his or her knowledge, all writing in the portfolio is the student's. You sign a similar statement.
2. Arrange your portfolio in the following order: (1) Cover Sheet, (2) Table of Contents, (3) Reflective Letter, (4) Expressive Writing, (5) Literary Analysis, (6) Expository Writing from a Discipline other than English.
3. All items must be free of teachers' comments, grades, or markings of any sort.
4. Your written work must not exceed 15 pages (typed, double-spaced, 8.5" x 11").
5. Do not put your name anywhere except on the cover sheet, but do write your social security number in the upper right corner of each page. Also, number each page on the bottom center of the page.
6. Do not staple your papers together. Fasten the entire portfolio with large paper clips or binder clip. Do not use a folder or plastic cover.
7. When documenting sources, *be consistent*. Use a recognized style sheet (like MLA or APA) for your Bibliography or Works Cited.
8. The University Composition Board will notify you about the evaluation results by May 15, 1998. This portfolio along with your ACT or SAT scores will result in a binding placement in a first-year composition sequence at The University of Arizona. You will be assessed a \$10 processing fee during new student orientation in summer 1998, but you will not take the First-Year Placement Essay during orientation.

Appendix E
Suggestions for Selecting Materials and
Composing Your Letter

1. Select from all the writing you have done those pieces which will best represent your writing at your best. Remember that you may select essays which you have revised in keeping with a teacher's suggestions.
2. Select a set of papers which shows your flexibility as a writer, illustrating the variety of your interests and your range of style and tone. The Composition Program at The University of Arizona values the ability to write well to a variety of audiences in a variety of situations.
3. In composing your letter, remember that you are introducing yourself as a person, as a writer, and as a student of writing. Remember, too, that your portfolio will help us place you in a course designed to get you started as a college writer and student. In your letter, evaluate your abilities as a writer—both strengths and weaknesses—as these are reflected in the samples you are submitting. Questions to guide you:
 - What is your basic attitude about writing? How is this attitude reflected in your selections? (Be specific. Think of incidents which illustrate your attitudes.)
 - What do you usually do when you write a paper?
 - What aspects of writing are hardest for you? What do you do to compensate for these difficulties?
 - What are the most prominent characteristics of your writing?
 - Who are your favorite writers? What do you especially like about each?
 - What qualities do you most value in the types of writing you read?
 - How might writing figure into your future (e.g., school, career, personal interests, etc.)?
4. It may help you to think of your portfolio as a sort of argument: in the reflective letter you claim to be such-and-such a writer, and in the selections which follow the letter is the proof for these claims.

Appendix F
Final Draft of 1998 Scoring Rubric

6 AN EXCELLENT PORTFOLIO: a set of extremely well-written pieces varied in range (e.g., topics, purposes, audiences or situations), at least two of which are exceptionally well-written (the "WOW" response); reflective letter provides a full context for understanding the selections and what they show about the student as writer.

- Range: considerable variety of approach, subject matter, style—all executed with exceptional skill
- Development: ideas elaborated in ways which engage reader with subject matter, sources used effectively to advance the writer's ideas; analytic material skillfully contextualized and integrated into whole
- Organization: clarity of structure which serves the writer's rhetorical and conceptual goals and allow reader to be fully engaged with the arguments
- Expression: complex language used effectively, varied syntax adequate to complexity of thought, few flaws result from trying to express complex ideas
- Mechanics: few if any errors in spelling, grammar, punctuation

5 A VERY GOOD PORTFOLIO: a set of strong performances, uniformly beyond competence in meeting readers' expectations and writer's purposes—although some pieces may seem less than completely satisfying; reflective letter provides adequate context for understanding the pieces and their place in the writer's present development.

- Range: varied in approach and subject matter, perhaps some flawed passages resulting from over ambition
- Development: ideas elaborated effectively and engagingly in ways that suggest the writer understands concepts, sources and their interconnections; analyses are adequately contextualized and integrated into a unified argument
- Organization: ideas presented in meaningful and rhetorically effective sequences, with skillful transitions which highlight the structure of thinking
- Expression: effective language for communicating concepts, occasional difficulties in expressing complex/ambitious ideas, but manages most risks successfully
- Mechanics: few if any errors in spelling, grammar, punctuation

4 A GOOD PORTFOLIO: a uniformly competent set of pieces suggesting the writer understands the basic requirements of academic writing; reflective letter provides sufficient context for understanding selections and communicates a sufficient knowledge of writing processes

- Range: limited variety of approach, style, mostly school-related materials
- Development: ideas elaborated with appropriate examples/illustrations which are adequately explained; sources used appropriately to supplement or substantiate writer's thesis; analysis identifies distinct "parts" or concepts but these may not be integrated, each 'part' standing as separate point of focus
- Organization: ideas developed in meaningful (though sometimes slightly mechanical) sequences, with adequate transitions which signal structure of thinking
- Expression: adequate language for communicating concepts, occasional lapses in usage, or uneven control of formal vocabulary, but explores ideas without major confusions
- Mechanics: few errors in spelling, grammar, punctuation are distracting but do not impede understanding

3 A MINIMALLY COMPETENT PORTFOLIO: an uneven set of pieces suggesting the writer faces a challenge in overcoming some clear deficiencies in academic work; reflective letter provides minimal context for understanding the selections

- Range: very limited variety of approach, style, mostly school-related materials
- Development: ideas elaborated with minimal examples but little discussion of illustrations; sources may be used to state major ideas, may not be appropriately integrated into the writer's discussion, and may be inadequately documented; analysis usually unsuccessful attempt to describe distinct "parts" or concepts, but points are usually inadequately developed
- Organization: ideas arranged in somewhat artificial sequences, with minimal transitions which mostly signal little more than change of subject
- Expression: limited language for exploring concepts, lapses in usage and formal vocabulary, occasional confusions about ideas, a mostly mechanical use of technical terms
- Mechanics: distracting errors in spelling, grammar, punctuation, but few if any which impede understanding

2 A WEAK PORTFOLIO: a set of pieces most of which reveal little competence with academic conventions and modes of thought, suggesting the writer will need extensive practice writing and reading before s/he will be able to do sustained academic writing; reflective letter provides little context for understanding the writer's processes, the selections, or the relation of the selections to the writer's development.

- Range: severely limited in style and range of approach
- Development: texts are under-developed and suggest minimal understanding of abstract ideas (narratives may be better developed than more abstract passages); sources are not integrated into the writer's ideas but simply inserted into text often undocumented; "analysis" simply summary of content
- Organization: ideas in choppy sometimes inappropriate sequences, with few if any transitions
- Expression: severely limited conceptual language, serious lapses in usage and/or misunderstanding of technical vocabulary, confusions about ideas, and often inappropriate sense of formal/informal language
- Mechanics: numbers of errors in spelling, grammar, punctuation, sometimes so severe they seriously impede understanding

1 A VERY WEAK PORTFOLIO: the writer needs extensive support and practice with reading and writing as expressive acts before he/she can begin to study writing as an academic tool

- Range: Minimal variety in style and approach
- Development: texts only minimally developed, simplistic examples inadequately explained, minimal movement between levels of generality, sources inadequately integrated/documented (you may suspect extensive cribbing); analysis not attempted
- Organization: paragraphing may be inappropriate, sequence of ideas arbitrary or confusing, transitions missing or inappropriate
- Expression: severely limited conceptual vocabulary and little sense of formal register; language may be highly oral/inappropriate for written communication
- Mechanics: large numbers of errors which regularly impede understanding

Certainly for the pragmatists human action is a topic of central concern. This concern . . . is focused primarily (though not exclusively) upon one aspect of human behavior: intelligent action, that is, purposive or goal-seeking behavior as influenced by reflection. (10)

[T]he human actor . . . at times comes to need a comprehensive understanding of himself and the world in which he acts—and in attempting to supply this understanding the pragmatists are philosophers (12).

Charles Morris

[T]he pragmatists tell us [that] it is the vocabulary of practice rather than theory, of action rather than contemplation, in which one can say something useful about truth (162).

Richard Rorty

The WPA as Pragmatist: Recasting “Service” as “Human Science”

Donald Bushman

The authors of the Council of Writing Program Administrators' "Intellectual Work Document" (WPA, Fall/Winter 1998) argue that certain "service" activities associated with writing program administration ought to be regarded as "scholarship" since much of the composition administrator's work "derives from and is reinforced by scholarly knowledge and disciplinary understanding" (92). They list five separate "descriptive categories within which the intellectual work of the WPA can be best considered" (95), and through examples of WPA work within these categories (such as "Program Creation" and "Faculty Development"), the authors clearly illustrate its intellectual merit, showing how it is largely an application of disciplinary knowledge within the WPA's local context. The authors argue

that such work is indeed "intellectual" and that it should be deemed "worthy of tenure and promotion when it advances and enacts disciplinary knowledge within the field of rhetoric and composition" (92).

However, as many in our field have suggested, "advancing and enacting disciplinary knowledge" often means something very different in composition than it does in other fields. Jasper Neel, for example, illustrates the distinctive nature of composition studies compared to other fields when he explains that

*most academic disciplines have a pedagogical mission, but the pedagogy in most disciplines depends on and serves the true research that can and should be done quite apart from teaching. Most academics agree, for example, that research into sub-atomic particles or the composition history of the *Dunciad* is essential, even if no one can see an immediately practical result from theoretical physics, even if only three people each decade actually read through all the forms Pope's poem took before he died. (79).*

But composition studies is different because, as Neel puts it, "the teaching of writing begins and ends in pedagogy" (79); in composition studies, Neel implies, *research* "depends on and serves" pedagogy, not the other way around. That is, we undertake our research—often *in the classroom*—in order to find more effective instructional methods. So disciplinary knowledge is often "advanced" in the classroom via teacher research, but since that knowledge is also a means to the end of more effective future pedagogy, it is also "enacted" in the classroom (or in some other instructional environment) through the composition instructor's work with students and student texts.

The quotes from Charles Morris and Richard Rorty with which I begin this essay are meant to suggest another way of classifying the work we do with students and student texts, for the concern of the pragmatist philosopher, as defined by Morris and by Rorty, can also be deemed the primary concern of the teacher of writing: the promotion of a self-consciousness of human actions, in the form of the specific "purposive or goal-seeking behavior[s]" of writing and reading. As a discipline we have come to see that this self-consciousness—a rhetorical sensitivity wherein a writer takes into account the needs of a reader—is developed best in student-centered classroom, that students learn to write best when they

produce texts while interacting with their instructor and their peers. And, as the quote from Rorty suggests, the "truth" of an effective writing pedagogy, regardless of its theoretical sophistication, is found solely in its being successfully enacted. For the WPA, these pragmatic concerns are made manifest in the promotion of a self-awareness of *teaching* writing and reading among the instructors in our programs—the teaching assistants we train, the disciplinary instructors to whom we give WAC advice, and so forth—as well as in the effective execution of that pedagogy by those instructors. This active, instructional role is one in which a typical WPA spends a good deal of time, and because it is aimed at promoting reflection and self-awareness in others, it is a role that coincides with the active role of the teacher of writing.

I wish to suggest in this essay that this pragmatic concern for self-understanding through *reflection and action* is central to the role of the WPA, and that recognizing these two principle elements of a pragmatist philosophy in the work of WPAs bolsters the argument of the "Intellectual Work Document." For when we look at composition studies through a pragmatist lens, we see that it is through *reflection* that writing teachers and WPAs advance new disciplinary knowledge, and it is through pedagogical *action* that we enact disciplinary knowledge.¹ In connecting the active and reflective work of the WPA to pragmatist philosophy, I wish to offer this essay as a supplement to the "Intellectual Work Document." As I describe the tenets of pragmatism more fully, I will also draw upon another work with a purpose similar to that of the "Intellectual Work Document": Louise Wetherbee Phelps's *Composition as a Human Science*. The pragmatist's interest in promoting self-awareness coincides with what Phelps calls "human science," which, according to Calvin O. Schrag, is a science in which "the investigatable data are human agents," and in which the issues of particular interest are "human actions, motives, purposes, and concerns which directly inform the self-understanding of the agents . . . under consideration" (qtd. in Phelps 25). Seeing the work of WPAs as the embodiment of a pragmatist philosophy, as a "human science," provides another way to distance it from the label of mere service.

Composition Pedagogy as Experimental Praxis

As John Patrick Diggins puts it, pragmatism is a philosophy that seeks to show us "not what to think but how to think and how to move confidently ahead instead of dwelling behind in a metaphysical wondersickness" (21).

And as James A. Mackin explains, the distinctive nature of pragmatist philosophy requires that we understand terms like "knowledge" in a slightly different way:

For the pragmatist, the knower is an agent, not merely a spectator. Knowing is an act of inquiry performed by the agent for the purpose of changing an indeterminate situation into a more determinate one. The problem that interests the pragmatist is not how we know or how we know that we know but rather what methods will best solve the problems that occasioned our need to know. (279-80)

Because it is concerned with "how to think" and with "methods" of problem solving, pragmatism is a philosophical system that views "knowledge" not as something to be possessed but rather as something to be enacted. Accordingly, John Dewey defines an essential feature of philosophical pragmatism as "maintain[ing] the continuity of knowing with an activity which purposely modifies the environment" (*Democracy* 344). Put another way, "knowledge" refers only to "that which has been organized into our disposition so as to enable us to adapt the environment to our needs and to adapt our aims and desires to the situation in which we live" (344). This way of defining knowledge is ideally suited to the discipline of composition studies because what students "know" after taking a composition class is not primarily some discreet set of facts; instead they "know" an activity, and that activity certainly has the power to "adapt the environment to [their] needs," whether those needs are to express important thoughts, to work through problems, or to clarify ideas. George Herbert Mead, another pragmatist and a contemporary of Dewey's, states that "knowledge is an expression of the intelligence by which animals meet the problems with which life surrounds them" (384). Rorty would say that Mead, by virtue of his defining knowledge in relation to the activity of meeting and solving problems, is speaking in "the vocabulary . . . of action rather than contemplation" (162).² Likewise, for the students in our composition classes, the evidence that they are good writers—that they have "knowledge" of writing—is in the way they actually "meet the problems" of the writing assignments they face. Proof of their knowledge is found in how well they undertake the complex task of writing.

Dewey and Mead were key figures in an educational reform movement that took place during the first few decades of this century, and

the centerpiece of the reforms they championed was the experimental or scientific method. Dissatisfied with the traditional, teacher-centered instructional paradigm of the day, these educators theorized and developed a social, student-centered pedagogy that was in keeping with the participatory ideals of a democratic citizenry. Darnell Rucker explains the aim of Deweyan progressive pedagogy as follows: "Awareness, capacity, and ways of doing are cultivated by leading the child into scientific inquiry, in the sense that 'scientific' is opposed to authoritarian" (99). In order to engage students in scientific activity, Dewey and his pragmatist colleagues developed a student-centered environment that provided learners with "firsthand experience and a problem as the focus of effort" (Rucker 99; see also Mead 118). As Phelps notes, composition instruction partakes of this same method, whereby student writing is the "problem" that becomes the focus of the combined efforts of writers, their peers, and the instructor (70-76). In the case of the WPA, it is not the writing of a single student that is the focus of effort, but that of the local population of students. And in tackling this "problem," the efforts of the WPA take the form of the sort of descriptive categories supplied in the WPA "Intellectual Work Document"—Program Creation, Curriculum Development, Textual Production, and so forth. That these categories are stated as *activities* is not a coincidence, I am arguing.

As Hepzibah Roskelly and Kate Ronald explain, "pragmatism is a method of making ideas real by following their outcomes, by understanding how meaning connects to practical use" (83). Experience—as exemplified by the scientific method—holds a central place in pragmatist thought. But as John P. Murphy explains, pragmatists like Dewey possessed a much fuller conception of the term "experience": unlike the empiricists who "took experience to be a sequence of ideas or sensations that are *of*, but not *in*, nature," Dewey defined experience as "familiarity with a matter of practical concern, based on repeated past acquaintance or performance" (Murphy 64). In connecting the "truth" or "reality" of something to the human experience of that thing, pragmatists are rejecting the notion of a Platonic "reality" beyond the physical or experiential realms (Rorty 160-64). Truth isn't something that simply *is*; instead, truth *is experienced*. As Rorty puts it, pragmatists believe that "'truth' is just the name of a property which all true statements share" (xiii). A result of this anti-essentialist thinking is that pragmatists prefer to see the world "as ours rather than as *nature's*, [as] *shaped* rather than *found*" (166; original emphasis). And different people (and groups of people) are free to shape or construct their worlds, their

communities, in different ways, choosing from among various alternative means and ends. This same form of social-constructionist thinking is apparent in the work of WPAs: from one school to the next, composition programs and curricula are developed in innumerable ways, depending upon the local conditions in place. There exists no single "correct" way to teach writing or to construct a writing curriculum, so WPAs attempt to produce the best possible curriculum within their local contexts, taking into account such particulars as the dominant philosophy of composing adhered to, the available teaching staff, as well as countless other ingredients of an institution's culture. And just as pragmatists believe that the test of truth is in experience, the test of a writing program's effectiveness is in the way it meets the given goals of that program—the student outcomes regarding writing, reading, and thinking skills.

Drawing upon the ideas of Dewey and other pragmatists, Phelps proposes that the very act of teaching composition should be considered an intellectual endeavor because "it is *experimental* in the Deweyan sense" (79; original emphasis). That is, it follows the methods of science by foregrounding first-hand experience (composing) and focused reflection on that experience (208-10). *Teaching* composition, she argues, is like the act of composing itself—it is a dynamic activity undertaken in a self-reflective manner. It is a "praxis," Phelps says, "that applies organized inquiry (research and theory) and personal reflection in order to help the developing person move through literacy toward reflection" (71; original emphasis). As the authors of the WPA "Intellectual Work Document" suggest, the work of a WPA is likewise a praxis, one that draws both upon the organized body of knowledge generated by the field of rhetoric and composition and upon the WPA's personal experience within a local context, the aim of which is to develop the most effective literacy instruction within that context by advancing and enacting that disciplinary knowledge.

Just as the ancients viewed the concept of "praxis," with its concern for practical action, as superior to mere philosophizing, Dewey and his fellow pragmatists likewise believed that only an education that stressed personal experience and reflection can serve as a tool for social change. The ability to reflect, Dewey believed, is the "only authentic means at our command for getting at the significance of our everyday experiences of the world in which we live" (*Experience* 88). The centrality of reflection to the experimental method is apparent in Dewey's definition of "reflection" as "the reconstruction or reorganization of experience" (*Democracy* 76; see

also *Experience* 87). Reflecting upon one's experiences, he insists, "adds to the meaning of experience . . . [and] increases [one's] ability to direct the course of subsequent experience" (*Democracy* 76).

Just as Phelps has pointed out the centrality of first-hand experience and reflection to composition instruction, so has Erika Lindemann, whose description of the steps in the process of teaching composition are likewise in keeping with Dewey's interest in reflection. "Teaching, like composing, is a process of communication characterized by rhetorical choices," Lindemann explains. "It requires planning, execution, and review" (248). Enacting the social pedagogy of the composition classroom, unlike the more teacher-centered pedagogy of other disciplines, she adds, requires "making adjustments, sometimes from one moment to the next, if our audience or subject matter requires them" (248). Phelps, too, notes that composition instruction, because it requires making these constant adjustments, is usefully understood as "a complex nested set of dialogues" occurring between teacher and students and the organized set of data (Theory) we have at our disposal as professional teachers of writing (214). The concern for an understanding of the *immediate context* in which one is acting, as the first quote from Morris at the start of this essay suggests, is central to pragmatist thinking. And a self-reflective understanding of *how one acts* within that context, as the second quote suggests, is also key to pragmatism. Phelps's purpose is generally to help us understand this second concern, to reveal the complicated and intellectual nature of *teaching* composition. Likewise, the purpose of the "Intellectual Work Document" is to reveal the complicated and intellectual nature of WPA work. Teachers of writing, Phelps says, are constantly immersed in "situation[s] in which ends (what is to be taught or learned, its effects on the student) are not predetermined but are constantly shaped by means and context, so that no prescriptions are possible" (215). The same can be said for the instructional work of WPAs.

Because of the sorts of adjustments that are required of the teacher in such a student-centered pedagogy, we can view composition instruction, as Dewey might, as a form of "experimenting" or "laboring"; it possesses an active, dialogic quality that teaching in other disciplines typically cannot claim, a quality that marks the composition classroom as a "laboratory" for Phelps's "human science." Certainly, the teaching that occurs in other disciplines—especially those schools that boast WAC programs—isn't always undertaken via lectures in a teacher-centered fashion. The point, though, is that instruction in composition is *almost never* undertaken in that

way; in almost every facet, composition instruction follows what Dewey calls “the method of intelligence,” which is dynamic, dialogic, and inquiry-oriented, rather than the more prescribed and monologic “doctrinal method” (qtd. in Roskelly and Ronald 85). And when we see the job of the WPA as a particular form of instruction in composition—instruction that includes teacher training classes, faculty development workshops, holistic scoring sessions, and other such activities—we can illustrate another “complex, nested set of dialogues” that occurs between the WPA, the instructors within that program, and disciplinary theory.

The WPA as Pragmatist

I have been suggesting so far that the WPA serves, in the completion of a portion of his or her duties, as a type of composition teacher, one who performs a similar sort of “experimental,” context-driven instruction but on a different scale, instructing teachers and teaching assistants within the English Department and providing WAC support for instructors in the disciplines, for example. And along with that similar instruction—what the authors of the WPA “Intellectual Work Document” would classify as “Faculty Development”—comes a similar pragmatic purpose: to promote a self-awareness of one’s actions (the teaching of writing) through opportunities for reflection. If we consider pragmatism’s focus on action and reflection, the WPA “Intellectual Work Document” does an excellent job illustrating the sorts of *action* a typical WPA undertakes. But what of reflection? What opportunities does the WPA-as-pragmatist have for reflection? And, more importantly, in what ways can the WPA encourage reflection in those he or she instructs and oversees? By way of illustrating how a WPA’s activities might be seen more directly from a pragmatist perspective, I want to provide an analysis of an essay that shows its author engaged in action and reflection in the course of an activity that would probably fall under the heading of “Program Creation” or “Curricular Design” in the WPA document. I provide this analysis to suggest that the WPA’s pragmatist mission can be realized even in activities that aren’t overtly “instructional,” that opportunities to promote reflection and self-awareness are by-products of nearly everything the WPA does.

The essay I have in mind is Geoffrey Chase’s “Redefining Composition, Managing Change, and the Role of the WPA.” Of particular interest is the way Chase foregrounds in his essay a concern for the “local conditions” of the composition program he directs. Although this concern for the local

seems like a given for anything written by a WPA about his or her program, it is the fact that Chase highlights the local conditions as one of the “host of complex factors” he must consider that makes his essay ripe for a pragmatist analysis. When Chase says that performing a programmatic self-analysis requires that those involved “think about the *local conditions* at our institutions, evaluate the *internal coherence* of our programs, and consider the degree to which our programs are *externally relevant*” (47; original emphasis), he is instructing us to engage in (to use Phelps’s phrase again) a “complex nested set of dialogues” between these points of consideration.

Chase tells how he and his colleagues at Northern Arizona University overhauled the composition program there in order to do a better job with the available resources—resources that include, among other things, money, graduate assistantships, and a departmentally-funded and staffed writing center. One particular problem Chase and his colleagues sought to eliminate in their program was the heavy workload of his graduate teaching assistants. In the old, six-hour composition program (which consisted of a sequence of two three-hour classes), Chase’s graduate students taught two sections of composition each semester in addition to taking nine graduate hours. In the new four-hour program (which consists of one four-hour class), graduate assistants teach one section of composition, as well as perform other duties, such as tutoring in the writing center. Chase was thus able to ensure that “a GA’s teaching load could not easily be doubled should enrollment increase” (50). Implicit here is the idea that most unreflective teachers are unreflective because they lack the *time* to reflect: a decrease in workload should lead to an increase in time for reflection, which ought to result in better teaching. Another change he implemented with his graduate student teachers in mind was a common syllabus which he and the other composition specialists in his department prepared for use in the new four-hour class. About this change he notes:

We realized that if we were going to use these inexperienced students as the primary instructors in a required course, we had an obligation to provide as much guidance and support as we could. The standard syllabi helped do so by giving these graduate students a scaffolding. . . . [I]t provided a common experience for GAs so that they could work together as a community to address the challenges of teaching . . . [and] went a long way toward creating possibilities for focus and coherence. (51-52)

In his role as WPA, Chase understands the benefits of providing his graduate instructors time to reflect on the activity of teaching and in "creating possibilities for focus and coherence." In creating these conditions, he is shaping his school's curriculum in significant ways and doing so in accordance with a coherent philosophy.

Additionally, in NAU's new program, since GAs teach one section of composition instead of two, more GAs are available, as part of their regular duties, to staff the department's writing center and to work with writing-intensive courses in the disciplines. An important consequence of such a change in policy is that students in writing classes at all levels are provided with more direct contact with tutors, which enhances the *social* nature of the writing pedagogy across campus. This promotion of a social pedagogy was fundamental to progressive era educational reforms: it increases students' opportunities for exposure to "scientific" (as opposed to "authoritarian") instruction, which provides more opportunities for students to engage in the "reconstruction of experience" (Dewey) through dialogue with others about their writing.³ Because it creates the conditions that provide a higher incidence of a "pedagogy of direct intervention" (North) for writers, Chase's new program does a better job promoting reflection and is thus more in keeping with Dewey's ideas.

Another example of a WPA's endeavors being aimed at promoting reflection can be found in Shirley K. Rose and Margaret J. Finders' use of "situated performance activities" in their training of teaching assistants and pre-service high school teachers. These activities, which ask students in teacher-training classes to place themselves in the role of a teacher or a student in an imaginary classroom situation, are a form of experiential learning that the authors refer to as "'fictional' experience" (33). As Rose and Finders explain,

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 . . . (36)

These exercises are risk-free opportunities for experiential learning, situations that allow the participants to reflect on and imagine ways to revise

their actions. Because students physically act out these classroom mini-dramas, they come to a fuller understanding of their roles and the roles of others involved. "By imagining and stepping into a teacher position," Rose and Finders say, preservice teachers "can try out different teaching stances and think through a sequence of events" (44). And by playing the part of a student in such exercises, beginning teachers can also come to a fuller understanding of more nuts-and-bolts issues like "course-design and lesson planning" by seeing how a particular assignment or classroom activity might be received by students (44).

By providing teachers-in-training with experiential learning activities and productive opportunities to reflect on these activities, Rose and Finders act in a way that is in keeping with Dewey's insistence that an education, in order to promote social change, must be concerned with *present experiences*. Chase, too, takes certain actions out of concern for the present experiences of the GAs who teach in his program and for the students in those GA's classes. His actions are designed to positively influence his instructors' actions (their pedagogy), which will in turn positively influence students' actions (their writing and how they approach writing tasks), both in the present and in the future. The problem with teacher-centered, lecture-style methods of schooling," Dewey says, is that they "tend to sacrifice the present to a remote and more or less unknown future" (*Experience* 49). That is:

*Because the studies of the traditional school consisted of subject matter that was selected and arranged on the basis of the judgement of adults as to what would be useful to the young sometime in the future, the material to be learned was settled upon outside the present life-experience of the learner. In consequence, it had to do with the past; it was such as had proved useful to men in past ages. (Dewey, *Experience* 76-77)*

An unfortunate result of this method of schooling is that "it comes to be believed that the educator has little responsibility for the kind of present experiences the young undergo" (Dewey, *Experience* 49). As the "Intellectual Work Document" suggests, however, WPAs prevail upon the present experiences of students in innumerable ways.

Sometimes, though, the predominant attitude of non-compositionists across campus is that composition has little to do with students' present experiences—that it is instead a "service" course. Jasper Neel gives voice to this stance when he notes that the work of composition instructors is often

seen as wholly “transformative”: their task is “‘preparing’ students for the challenging work that lies ahead” in other classes (80). When such a view persists, Neel laments, the consequence is that the job of composition instruction becomes “[l]ike any other type of housekeeping”: it “remains always to do,” and so “by definition it cannot be done.” And something that is never done, alas, “can never be described as having been done well” (80). When composition is understood to be a “service” course, it becomes easy to see the administration of a composition program as performing “service,” something that always needs to be done, like advising students or ordering books for the library. But teaching and scholarship always need to be done, too, and when we see our jobs instead through the lens of Phelps’s characterization of composition instruction—as a complex, “experimental” activity—we see composition and the job of a WPA as an intellectual undertaking that is concerned with action and reflection; we see it as a *praxis*.⁴

Neel’s characterization of composition-as-service helps, as well, to illustrate a distinction that is at the center of much of Dewey’s educational theory: that between “knowing” and “doing.” To the traditional way of thinking, Dewey says, “the higher the activity the more purely mental it is” and “the less [it has] to do with physical things or the human body” (*Democracy* 254). Thus, we tend to differentiate between, on the one hand, the thinker or theorist and, on the other, the practitioner who *applies* theory.

[T]he free citizen who devotes himself to the public life of his community, sharing in the management of its affairs and winning personal honor and distinction, lives a life accompanied by reason. But the thinker, the man who devotes himself to scientific inquiry and philosophic speculation, works, so to speak, in reason, not simply by it. Even the act of the citizen in his civic relations, in other words, retains some of the taint of practice . . . (Dewey, Democracy 254; original emphasis)

Dewey plainly disdains this state of affairs, this subordination of “doing” to “knowing,” and so should we, for it is this same “taint of practice” that holds sway against composition instruction and the work of WPAs. Hence, less value is assigned to the social pedagogy of the composition, where *doing* is a priority of the teacher, than to the more teacher-centered pedagogy of other classes, where *knowing* or displaying knowledge is a priority of the teacher. But when we consider the activities

of somebody like Chase in light of his obvious disciplinary knowledge, and when we see the steps he takes to provide a more beneficial learning environment to both the instructors and the students in the composition program he oversees, we see that the dichotomy between “knowing” and “doing” is a false one.

Mead argues the pragmatist point-of-view succinctly when he asserts that there is really “no fundamental distinction” between the research methods of professionals in different academic fields: “Each is approaching problems that must be solved, and to be solved must be presented in the form of carefully gathered data. For their solution hypotheses must be constructed and tested by means of experiment and observation. With the complexity of the phenomena, of course, the application of the scientific methods will vary” (61). While this description of an active method of problem-solving clearly suits the term “research” as it is understood in the hard sciences, it also stands in for “teaching composition,” where the “problems” at hand are student writers and their texts, to which professionals in composition apply their own disciplinary knowledge. When we see the teaching of composition and the work of WPAs in the context of pragmatist concerns over solving immediate problems and over a self-awareness of action through reflection, our professional tasks—and our professional identities—benefit by association.

Notes

1. Among the interesting revisions to the wording of the “Intellectual Work Document” from the draft [WPA (Fall/Winter 1996)] to the final version is the last sentence of the opening paragraph. The 1996 draft argues that WPA work “is worthy of promotion and tenure when it both produces and enacts disciplinary knowledge . . .” (92). The word “produces” is revised to “advances” in the final version (85), a word that connotes a slightly different relationship to its object (“disciplinary knowledge”), suggesting that knowledge is less a *static* entity (something to be produced) than it is a *dynamic* and *functional* entity.
2. The quote from Rorty only begins to suggest the differences between the “pragmatism” of John Dewey and philosophers of his era and the brand of “neo-pragmatism” forwarded by Rorty, Donald Davidson, and other contemporary philosophers. But as Roskelly and Ronald note, a level of theorizing about *language* is a key “differentiating factor between pragmatism and neopragmatism” (114). They quote Diggins, who

- explains, "Whether the point of traditional philosophy was to interpret the world or to change it, the point of 'post-philosophy' is to find ways of legitimizing what we say instead of proving what we know" (114).
3. In the work cited by Fishman, he provides an example to illustrate the benefits of a social pedagogy—the use of writing groups—and to suggest how working with others to construct a "new text" results in the "construction of a new self" (326).
 4. Diggins explains that while pragmatism is primarily a future-oriented philosophy in the sense that "the meaning and significance of the present await the future" (20), a desirable future cannot be attained without conscious attention to present experience.

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Geneva's Story

Geneva sits at one end of the long conference table, facing full-time faculty members of the English department where she's worked part-time for the last twelve years. Sam, a full professor and long-time friend, asks her the first question.

"Geneva, I sometimes find that students don't always respond usefully to each other's work. How do you get students to respond to peer writing in helpful ways?"

"Well, Sam, I've never really gotten peer response to work well for me, either." She goes on to describe her problems, in response to Sam's confession of his own difficulties. She also knows from talking over the years to other faculty, both full- and part-time, that everyone has had problems with this technique.

She mentions some approaches she's tried and concludes that sometimes they work and sometimes they don't. "It depends upon the class," she says.

She feels herself shrugging just a bit, then stops. As a classroom teacher, she believes final solutions are the domain of those who write the textbooks and spout theory at conferences. Teaching, on the other hand, is a matter of trial and error, and good teachers are always on the lookout for new and better approaches.

She scans the room, registering the silence, searching first Sam's face, then the others in the room. She's known them for twelve years, but she can't tell what they're thinking, their faces smooth and bland as marble.

(Re)Presenting the Work of Writing Program Administrators

Mary Ann Cain and
George Kalamaras

"Is that correct?" she asks. She asks herself, Is that what they wanted to hear? She feels impatient with them but then with herself for not, somehow, knowing. After all, she's worked with these people for a dozen years. These are her colleagues. Some visited her classes when she first began teaching here. She's attended department parties and university functions. She's even consoled some through divorces, and been consoled by them for her own life's troubles. She's gone to lunch and dinner, and taken in movies with some. She's attended department meetings for years as a de facto leader of the part-time faculty. Her kids and their kids have gone to the same schools, played on the same sports teams. What could be so different now that she's interviewing for a full-time teaching job?

It had seemed like a good idea to apply. The position was for a lecturer, a two-year, nonrenewable contract to teach four classes a semester. With her children grown, she had decided she'd like the challenge. Two years ago, she had held a one-semester temporary lectureship, without benefits, and remembered how good it felt to have an office and a phone of her own. Going back to part-time teaching had felt like a demotion after she'd had a taste of full-time work and its privileges.

Geneva is honored that she's been chosen from a regional hiring pool. Yet she isn't sure what in her credentials impressed the department. She assumes they know how dedicated she is to students and the department. But she knows that the richness of her history with them didn't translate onto her resume.

Now they are asking her questions in the same room where she's sat for all those department meetings—only now she's at the head of the table. They want her opinion; they are treating her as if she were an expert. It's alternately flattering and unnerving: she's an authority, yet she still has to prove it. It's nice to have center stage, if one knows the lines, but she's not sure she does.

Neither do the full-time faculty, who have been divided from the outset on how broad a search to conduct and what credentials to require. Some of them, with strong support from part-time faculty, argued to limit the search to in-house candidates. Others thought that a regional search could not only provide a wider range of choices, but potentially bring fresh perspectives to the writing program, not to mention being more in keeping with conventional hiring practices.

Qualifications were another thorny issue. Until now, the lecturer rank had been used only for temporary and visiting appointments on a limited

basis, both within the department and the university at large. Some, including part-time faculty, argued that the PhD made those with Master's degrees less competitive. PhDs, they argued, would not be happy "just teaching" and would soon seek research appointments elsewhere. AAUP guidelines were invoked, citing the devaluation of the PhD and the erosion of tenure-track professorships when PhDs were hired into lower ranks. Others argued that limiting applicants' degrees might not only be illegal, but undesirable; candidates with research degrees could be, by virtue of their academic experience, just as, if not even more, effective as teachers. Some applicants might have long, successful histories as teachers as well as active research agendas, so why should they be excluded from consideration?

The university administration offered lectureships as a permanent solution to the "problem" of part-time faculty, whose ranks have increased dramatically as campus enrollments skyrocketed. The English department views such positions as a first step toward responding to the CCCC 1989 "Statement of Principles and Standards for the Post-Secondary Teaching of Writing," and thus improving the status of writing instruction on this campus.

This "improvement," however, poses serious complications for the department. The lectureships may raise the writing program's status yet threaten the department's overall status as a discipline rather than a mere "service." The university's call for functional literacy competes with the discipline's liberal humanist tradition of learning for learning's sake. While enrollments in writing courses and on campus are rising, the number of English majors is lagging. Writing instruction and administration consumes more and more of the department's time and resources, to the detriment of literary studies.

Geneva, however, primarily anticipates the privileges that a lectureship would offer her. What she hadn't anticipated was the difference of the terms on which she would have to compete. It's no longer enough to do what she does as a teacher. Now she has to talk about her teaching in authoritative and reflective ways. She's got to have answers and be able to defend them. She has to know why she does what she does, constructing herself as "professional" in ways for which neither her current status nor the institution has socialized her. But perhaps this call for professionalism is just a preliminary hoop which, once jumped, will allow her to return to being who she really is: a teacher.

The Costs of Professionalization: Issues for the WPA

While Geneva may have reason to believe that professionalization may be a fleeting concern for her, most WPAs face an ongoing struggle with the contradictions of "improving" their programs. The costs of professionalization have serious consequences for WPAs and their programs, as Geneva's story illustrates. For example, hiring Geneva may bring some temporary relief to the WPA who is struggling to hire from an ever-shrinking pool of often minimally qualified part-time instructors. It will appease her fellow part-timers, who may see her hiring as cause for hope that some day they, too, may reap the rewards of loyalty, devotion, and dedication to the institution. It certainly comes as a boon to Geneva, one of many exploited workers, not coincidentally a woman. And yet this apparent "progress" poses serious complications for the long term professionalization of the writing program. It fosters the development of a two- or three-tier hierarchy of hiring, in which writing faculty make up more and more of the lower rungs. In Geneva's story, the WPA is in the "upper" rung as a tenure-track hire, yet it's clear that her professional expertise as a composition specialist is seen as distinct from the "practical" aspects of administering the program. The WPA's commitments are, in this respect, set into conflict. The costs of professionalization are the maintenance of a professional hierarchy that remains largely intact despite a few surface changes. Such professionalization also creates tensions within faculty ranks over the appropriate qualifications, credentials, and professional development for a full-time faculty position. Yet there is no overarching resolution to the contradictions at work; instead, the WPA's work is necessarily improvisational and conditional insofar as the WPA must act upon knowledge that is always partial and take positions that may seem on the surface contradictory to long-term programmatic goals and professional commitments. The next story offers further illustration of these contradictions.

Steve's Story

Steve stands at the front of the classroom where he teaches basic writing two evenings a week. His three-piece, navy blue suit and striped tie elicit some good-natured ribbing from his students, since they're used to his jeans and pull-over shirts. But tonight, the Director of Writing, who himself often wears a tie, is observing Steve's teaching as part of the English department's evaluation of first-semester part-time instructors.

It's not like Steve's never worn a suit and tie before. The dean of a

local boys' high school, he's in a suit every day; he just changes for his nine p.m. class to relax himself and his university students for writing. As a high school administrator, he has to dress formally, but as a university professor, he may dress more casually, reflecting the greater freedom enjoyed by college teachers.

He reaches for chalk and feels his sleeve tighten around his shoulder as he writes next week's assignments on the board, then decides to remove the jacket. Administrators wear jackets, he thinks. But teachers roll up their sleeves.

He begins with some dramatic reading, a technique he used during his twenty years teaching high school history. He couples the reading with journal writing, which he has recently learned in a course taught by the director on teaching composition, another requirement for new part-time instructors.

Steve assumes that the director notices his use of journals. While students write, Steve uses the extra time to fine-tune tonight's class plan. He can feel the director watching him and making notes on a yellow legal pad.

Last spring, when Steve noticed the ad for writing instructors in the local newspaper, he thought university teaching might provide some intellectual stimulation. He didn't anticipate that seven weeks into the term, the responsibilities of teaching, not to mention the extra hours studying for the teacher-preparation course required of first-semester part-time instructors, would isolate him so completely within the department. The only two instructors he ever saw outside of class were usually busy with their own students or in a rush to go home.

Last week, after spending the entire weekend writing a sequence of persuasive essay assignments for his required class, Steve found himself in the unexpected and uncomfortable role of student writer. The director had told the class to exchange and write to another student's sequence for the next meeting. In addition, they had to theorize about their partner's sequence and write a response to it. Steve was humiliated by this role reversal, as he had been as a student struggling for teacher certification. At that time, he knew he was still supposed to be learning. But now, as a professional, Steve expects to teach and exchange ideas with other teachers, not assume the role of his students. Teachers teach; students learn—as dean, Steve knows how important clear roles are for maintaining the order and discipline students need to develop.

After students finish writing, Steve discusses methods of researching topics. Class discussion winds down sooner than he expects, so he lets the

students out fifteen minutes early. The director approaches Steve afterwards, complimenting his performance, and asks him to stay a few minutes to go over class. But tomorrow is parents' day at Steve's high school, and he'll be up past midnight finalizing his plans, so he says he'll stop by soon to talk. He never does.

The director is not terribly surprised by Steve's silence, given his resistant attitude in the required course. Created a few years earlier with teachers like Steve in mind, the course addresses those whose experience in teaching writing is minimal or who have experience but lack sufficient knowledge of current composition theory and practice. However, unknown to Steve, the history of this course includes departmental struggles which affect his position.

Steve does not know to what extent the course helps the English department justify hiring instructors who have little experience not only in teaching writing, but with academic culture in general. It broadens an otherwise shrinking applicant pool for part-time instructors, and as a result, allows the department to meet university enrollments. Yet it brings in many individuals who are outsiders to academic culture and, because of the nature of part-time teaching, remain that way.

Like the required teaching course, freshman writing classes are designed to bring students into academic culture. Ironically, these courses are taught by academic outsiders themselves, the part-time faculty. In response to being outsiders, instructors enact powerful resistances to their education as writing "professionals," in which theory, integrated with practice, is supposed to help them enter academic culture as "insiders." Yet theory seems more a luxury than a necessity, given instructors' workloads, pay, office space, etc. As one instructor put it, theory isn't relevant to "those of us in the trenches." The course actually isolates instructors even more because they experience it as just another obstacle, something to keep them busy and separate from each other and from full-time colleagues.

Steve knows firsthand the conflict this course presents for his status as a professional. On one hand, he was hired for his professional accomplishments and experience as a teacher. Yet he is, upon entering the university, treated as an apprentice requiring special training and supervision. He is grateful for the support this class offers him, a newcomer, yet ambivalent about this status as a supervised apprentice rather than a full-fledged professional.

Further Complications: Ethical Dilemmas

Geneva and Steve's stories speak powerfully to us about the complications that shape the development of composition's professionalization, some occurring on a daily basis, others as one-time crises, still others as the challenges of a semester, a year, or even a career. Such complications are fraught with contradictions, including ethical dilemmas for the WPAs. Tensions inevitably develop in the struggle to follow professional ideals, survive the chaos of program administration, and develop a broad-based coalition for changing long-standing institutional injustices. Yet it is these very tensions that reveal the possibilities for action. If WPAs can relinquish fixed images of their role, and work more improvisationally and conditionally, such tensions can become constructive limits for shaping decisions.

Teacher education is one professional ideal that WPAs typically embrace. However, this ideal may put WPAs into competing and conflicting situations between the interests of their programs' survival, the needs of instructors and students, and WPAs' own professional survival. For instance, if WPAs regard education as a site of liberatory praxis, with students as not only learners but also co-workers in an unjust system, then the consequences may jeopardize the stability of not only the WPAs' institution but, ironically, of the writing program itself. For example, Steve's resolution to the tensions presented by liberatory education was to leave the institution. This may be a necessary step in his liberation, yet it creates a problem for the WPA concerned with slowing the revolving door of part-time staffing. Requiring a course in teacher training may be the most ethical way to ensure adequate teacher preparation. Yet how ethical is it to actively invite discontinuity of instruction within the program? One resolution might be to avoid bringing such tensions into the teacher preparation classroom. But what are the consequences for these teachers' students, whose inclusion in and exclusion from the academy may go unchallenged? What are the consequences for the personal and professional growth of instructors, the program, and the WPA?

Composition's emerging disciplinary visions often heighten the tensions WPAs may experience in relation to administrative work. Disciplinary and administrative visions are sometimes at odds; for WPAs, what may be good for the discipline (research and theory) may be bad for the program's administration (where "local" research is, often as not, unpublishable). Another dilemma for WPAs who claim disciplinary

authority in their administrative role is that full-time colleagues across the university may construct this authority in conventional ways and thus marginalize the administrative work as nondisciplinary. Program research, for instance, is not considered "real" research but rather "service." As a result, WPAs' disciplinary authority may not extend, in the eyes of departmental colleagues, to hiring decisions of full-time nontenure-track writing faculty such as Geneva. In Geneva's case, the more a WPA might claim disciplinary expertise in evaluating Geneva's application, the less relevant it may seem for a position that seems to call for a "nonexpert." Furthermore, while a strong disciplinary vision may be essential to tenure-track WPAs' careers in composition studies, it may distance them from their colleagues' vision of administrative authority, in which disciplinary authority is merely a specialty whose reach within administrative practice is necessarily limited.

Another complication arises in the ambiguous authority WPAs are granted as professionals. WPAs may find themselves struggling between competing modes of authority at any given moment in their work. These include persuading others about one's ideology, nurturing and protecting "dependents," and isolating oneself from unsupportive or even hostile views of composition to protect one's professional commitments. These modes are not ones that are fixed or necessarily even dominant in any WPA's construction of authority. Rather they describe habits of mind that WPAs move between and enact simultaneously (to varying degrees, at various times) rather than simply imitate. They must improvise among various modes of authority as a given situation requires. Within this framework, power is not "fixed" nor is marginalization "essential" to WPAs' identity, since WPAs are simultaneously marginalized and central, powerless and powerful. What shapes the WPAs' work is in what way they are powerful and powerless within a situation, and how they resolve these contradictions to make and act upon decisions.

For example, the WPA is confronted with an ethical dilemma over whether and how to exercise his authority when Steve dismisses his class early to prepare for parents' night at his school. How should the WPA approach such an inappropriate behavior? Does Steve's disregard for the class's scheduled hours signify resistance to the WPA's authority (including his presence in class that night)? Does it reflect a harried instructor trying his best to balance competing responsibilities? How harmful is it to students to dismiss class fifteen minutes early? Is Steve ignorant of basic expectations of

college writing classrooms where improvisation is often the rule and class time generally at a premium? Might his own education as a history major have presented images of the college teacher as a proficient lecturer who, as a sign of efficiency, ends class when the lecture is completed?

The WPA in this situation has the responsibility and authority to inform Steve about classroom practices and departmental expectations. The WPA can also correct Steve's "error" even as he sympathizes with Steve's workload. He can question Steve about why he thought his action was appropriate. The limits to this WPA's authority, however, will condition his response to Steve. For instance, this WPA has to consider his program's serious problem of recruiting and retaining part-time writing faculty. The WPA has no power to refuse to staff sections when qualified candidates are scarce. The teaching course was designed to help enlarge the hiring pool, but Steve's behavior may suggest that even those who receive training may not, finally, be qualified. It's a delicate balance for the WPA about how and whether to approach Steve: to warn him, to appease him, to win him? Maybe all of the above? Maybe none.

Social and Political Complications

The complications in Geneva's story dramatize how contradictions in the American social justice equation come into conflict as part of the cost of professionalizing writing programs. On one hand, affirmative action stresses that individual differences (gender, race, ethnicity, class, etc.) ultimately shouldn't influence employers, and on the other, in the process of weighing individual candidates' merits, requires employers to take such differences into account in terms of representation. Hiring decisions aimed to improve a writing program's permanence and influence within the university will inevitably place WPAs within this contradiction.

To ignore Geneva's gender and class means to ignore the history of her exploitation. She has taught for twelve or more years as part-time faculty, a position which not only does not encourage professional development, but in some ways actively discourages it. Of course, the extent to which "professional development" will be valued in the position she's applied for is unclear, since it is primarily a "teaching" position with no research expectations, only vague statements about "professional development." Nonetheless, Geneva's pink-collar academic class and her gender may make it impossible for her merits to be understood within conventional professional expectations, since Geneva so clearly constructs

her professional identity as separate from, even at times, in opposition to, those of some of her full-time colleagues, including the WPA (as she does regarding the role of theory and research in relation to practice).

If one ignores Geneva's gender and class, it is not difficult to conclude that Geneva has little or no merit as a candidate. For example, she admits failure with a practice (peer groups) that is, by professional standards, virtually indispensable in writing instruction. What's more, she reveals this "failure" before a group who she knows is evaluating her "merits." Although most faculty have no doubt had similar experiences with "failure," the fact that Geneva has presented such a failure in lieu of a tangible professional merit positions her as "less than" professional in this context.

Yet if we opt to consider Geneva's gender and class differences as significant within this context, we can understand how she sees her own "merits." Her "failure" in the previous context takes on new meaning, as in her admission of "failure" with peer groups. She has constructed the full-time faculty as "peers" rather than "evaluators" and thus appeals to their shared sense of the everyday challenges of teaching. Her talk is teacher-to-teacher, "teacher lore" as Steve North has put it. Furthermore, as Deborah Tannen has noted in her research on gendered styles of conversation, Geneva may see herself as engaging in "troubles talk." She may not see herself as admitting "failure" as much as acting meritoriously, demonstrating her honesty as a teacher who bucks trends and fads in favor of cautious trial and error.

How this faculty values Geneva's merits—her *de facto* leadership among part-timers, her knowledge of local bureaucracy, her sympathy and devotion towards a body of students who, for the most part, have few images of professional merit themselves—is reflected in their invitation to interview Geneva. Her merits as a local authority and dedicated teacher have helped her arrive at this opportunity. She is different than the other candidates in this respect. Yet if those differences finally land her the job, they also reinscribe her professional identity in the same, limited ways as they were before—the teacher as consumer and transmitter of (someone else's) knowledge. Her apparent lack of innovation, her inability to engage in the professional conversation of her field, her lack of preparation to lead other, part-time faculty into something other than the publishers' rehashings of the same old stew ensure that the position will be little more than a glorified part-time position. Furthermore, Geneva's hiring suggests to other part-time instructors that if they put in their time, they, too, may reap the rewards of

loyalty and devotion, without ever having to develop themselves beyond the local limits.

Geneva's case dramatizes the struggle over the meaning of "equality" within a democracy. Does equal mean "no differences" or does it mean "differences between" equally valued groups—in this case the masculinized "professionals" and the feminized "teachers"? In either case, these definitions of "difference" occur not simply within a context that is supposedly blind to social differences but within a meritocracy based upon differences in "qualifications" and "talents." Of course, the governance structures that shape faculty hirings may be more or less "democratic" in terms of equal (or equally valued) access and participation for faculty, students, and staff, depending upon which level of governance at what institution. For instance, within the department, Geneva may be treated as more of a peer, with an office to herself, a phone, voting privileges, etc. But within the university, she may receive little or no travel funds and no recognition or support for professional development. She may constantly risk her nontenured position over conflicts with student "customers" or administrators. In short, her "equal" status is not the same across various levels of governance.

Thus, if Geneva is hired, does it represent a step forward in democracy, towards the professional standards laid out in the CCCC's "Statement of Principles and Standards for the Postsecondary Teaching of Writing"? After all, a part-time position has been "increased" to full-time. The students benefit in tangible ways from an instructor who has more of a presence and a stake in their success and the university's livelihood. Gender equity is served: a woman is promoted. Geneva may be motivated to learn new ways to teach, to become more "professional" by attending conferences, reading and talking to other composition specialists.

On the other hand, Geneva is hired precisely because she is who she is now; who she might become is difficult to predict. Tenure-track faculty are often hired on the basis of promise, but that promise is codified and documented by transcripts, publications, and candidate interviews, for instance. In contrast, Geneva's "promise" for professional development is difficult to document, since her achievements do not conform to the conventional standards of evaluation. Furthermore, it is unclear what "promise" means in such a position, untested as it is to this faculty and university. Consequently, her "difference" as "only" a teacher is reinscribed into this discursive vacuum. Hiring her may keep the peace with the part-

time faculty, who may read Geneva's Horatio Alger story as a sign of social justice. Yet her "difference" is not, finally, "equally valued" by her professorial-rank colleagues but "less than" the "professional" faculty. In turn, composition's "professional" status remains more or less the same: anyone with "common sense" and the right basic "skills" can learn how to teach it, and once they learn, they've got it. The composition teacher's knowledge is seen as "foundational." And in the meantime, administrators can maintain the attitude that new tenure-track lines aren't necessary, that such lecturers are a "good compromise" to meet the university's needs—not just in the short run, but for the long haul.

Conclusion: Writing Programs as Improvisation

The problems these stories illustrate inscribe the site where the work of all WPAs begins, specifically in the improvisatory and conditional nature of their decision-making and action. Improvisation is a matter of drawing upon as many pre-existing forms as possible in order to create, within a particular moment in time, a new form that reflects as well as responds to conditions that do not easily fit within conventional categories. But in order for the improvisation to work, one must first have access to many different, even competing forms of thought from which to draw upon. For instance, Jeanne Gunner's discussion of de-centering the role of WPA in a writing program illustrates the importance of WPAs reforming their own roles in light of the many different contexts they work within, not simply as the tenured head of a program (which Gunner, in fact, argues against entirely), but also as a colleague, collaborator, and political advocate. With an abundance of forms available to the WPA to draw upon, improvisation becomes richer and more meaningful within particular contexts. In fact, because of the contextual nature of writing programs, such improvisation is ultimately necessary to respond to, on one hand, pre-existing forms of order that reinforce dominant and unjust hierarchies and, on the other, chaos that is generated by the many contradictions that shape a writing program.

In the end, Geneva's story illustrates the WPA's need for improvisation when faced with pre-existing forms of hiring rationales. If the WPA regards the choice as either between promoting a teacher whose labor has been exploited for years and hiring someone with a higher degree, more professional savvy, and/or broader experiences within the profession, then that WPA is likely to decide in favor of the one role she most identifies with herself. Gunner would argue that the WPA-centric model would necessarily

shape such decisions, to the detriment of the program's faculty. Thus, the WPA in this case might be better off improvising a more generous rationale for hiring Geneva as addressing particular conditions of the current program, based on a perception of multiple and competing roles the WPA plays within and outside of the program. Consequently, the WPA might also advocate for the higher administration's support in simultaneously hiring at the tenure-track level. Furthermore, the chaos surrounding requirements for Geneva's professional development needs to be resolved; again, improvisation is necessary since no such position has previously existed on this campus.

In the case of Steve, the required teacher preparation course may actually contribute to the instability of the writing program, as it prompts Steve to "liberate" himself by quitting. Adjusting the course toward a more "practical" and less theoretical model may help retain the teachers, but at what expense to the students? Here is an instance where a WPA's improvisation among modes of authority may generate a useful fluidity between liberatory ideals, program needs, and the WPA's own professional survival. The WPA may, on the one hand, improvise among various roles available in the required course, including facilitator, peer, mentor, even learner, emphasizing such improvisation as a model for the part-time teachers. On the other hand, he may also give the teachers ample opportunities to reflect upon the many roles they inhabit (such as their experiences as "students" and those of their own students). But if teachers like Steve cannot, for whatever reason, improvise within more fluid modes of authority in the classroom and department, the WPA's commitment to such a training course may need to be more conditional. He might, for instance, suggest to his department that he will teach the training course on the condition that he is also given some authority to restrict the number of sections that the writing program offers each semester based on the number of adequately prepared teachers available to fill them.

In the end, such stories are rich sites for WPAs to reimagine the seemingly endless contradictions that shape their work, including the difficult dilemmas that the professionalization of writing programs presents. Knowing the costs, both real and potential, of such professionalization can change the way WPAs construct their authority and the choices available to them. Instead of binary oppositions, a more improvisatory and conditional view of the contradictions presented can help WPAs imagine beyond more conventional resolutions that maintain the marginalization of writing programs and all those within.

Notes

1. For a further discussion of "difference," see Teresa Ebert, "Ludic Feminism, the Body, Performance, and Labor: Bringing Materialism Back into Feminist Cultural Studies." *Cultural Critique* 23 (Winter): 5-50.

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A Modest Proposal

As histories of Rhetoric and Composition demonstrate, the development of first-year composition has not been linear even in recent iterations. Rather, it has taken various forms, in the last thirty years, for instance, ranging from process pedagogy to cultural critique. Likewise, given the diversity of institutional type—two-year schools, liberal arts schools, comprehensive universities, historically black colleges, and research one institutions—and the influence of institutional type on what is taught, composition has seemed almost kaleidoscopic in nature. Accordingly, it is easy to see how both members of the public at large and our colleagues in the academy might be mystified as to what it is that we do in the first-year composition classroom.

What in fact is it that we do? In the spring of 1997, this question was taken up by a working group of faculty from across the country. The aims of the group were several.

First, the “Outcomes Group,” as we began to be called, wanted to determine what it is that we do teach in first-year composition.

A second aim was to determine if there was sufficient commonality among programs and courses for a common programme to be defined.

A third aim was to articulate this programme, if it existed, as a way of understanding what we do and establishing a set of common outcomes for postsecondary students, that is, a

WPA Outcomes Statement For First-Year Composition

statement of what students know and do as a function of having completed first-year composition.

Such an agenda carries with it, of course, both risk and opportunity. On the one hand, as the first meeting of this group made clear, such a document could be employed by others to serve ends that we might not endorse. On the other hand, to the extent that faculty and administrators can identify the central goals of first-year composition, we could have a common ground on which to build both intellectual work and support for that work.

The following, then, is a penultimate draft of the Outcomes Statement. It was developed by a group of faculty whose membership shifted somewhat over time, as the list of participants below suggests. The Outcomes Statement was presented at sessions and workshops at CCCC, NCTE, WPA, and C&W from 1997-1999, with feedback from presentations incorporated into each successive draft. It was presented to the Council of Writing Program Administrators Executive Board at its meeting in Tucson in July 1998, and the Board endorsed the document in principle. The Board also asked that this document be published widely so as to gather response. The document has been posted on the web at <http://www.mwsc.edu/~outcomes>. *Writing Program Administration* provides another venue.

Introduction

This statement describes the common knowledge, skills, and attitudes sought by first-year composition programs in American postsecondary education. To some extent, we seek to regularize what can be expected to be taught in first-year composition; to this end the document is not merely a compilation or summary of what currently takes place. Rather, the following statement articulates what composition teachers nationwide have learned from practice, research, and theory. This document intentionally defines only "outcomes," or types of results, and not "standards," or precise levels of achievement. The setting of standards should be left to specific institutions or specific groups of institutions. Learning to write is a complex process, both individual and social, that takes place over time with continued practice and informed guidance. Therefore, it is important that teachers, administrators, and a concerned public do not imagine that these outcomes can be taught in reduced or simple ways. Helping students demonstrate these outcomes requires expert understanding of how students actually learn to write. For this reason we

expect the primary audience for this document to be well-prepared college writing teachers and college writing program administrators. In some places, we have chosen to write in their professional language. Among such readers, terms such as "rhetorical" and "genre" convey a rich meaning that is not easily simplified. While we have also aimed at writing a document that the general public can understand, in limited cases we have aimed first at communicating effectively with expert writing teachers and writing program administrators.

These statements describe only what we expect to find at the end of first-year composition, at most schools a required general education course or sequence of courses. As writers move beyond first-year composition, their writing abilities do not merely improve. Rather, students' abilities not only diversify along disciplinary and professional lines but also move into whole new levels where expected outcomes expand, multiply, and diverge. For this reason, each statement of outcomes for first-year composition is followed by suggestions for further work that builds on these outcomes.

Rhetorical Knowledge

By the end of first-year composition, students should

- Focus on a purpose
- Respond to the needs of different audiences
- Respond appropriately to different kinds of rhetorical situations
- Use conventions of format and structure appropriate to the rhetorical situation
- Adopt appropriate voice, tone, and level of formality
- Understand how genres shape reading and writing
- Write in several genres

Faculty in all programs and departments can build on this preparation by helping students learn

- The main features of writing in their fields
- The main uses of writing in their fields
- The expectations of readers in their fields

Critical Thinking, Reading, and Writing

By the end of first-year composition, students should

- Use writing and reading for inquiry, learning, thinking, and communicating
- Understand a writing assignment as a series of tasks, including

finding, evaluating, analyzing, and synthesizing appropriate primary and secondary sources

- Integrate their own ideas with those of others
- Understand the relationships among language, knowledge, and power

Faculty in all programs and departments can build on this preparation by helping students learn

- The uses of writing as a critical thinking method
- The interactions among critical thinking, critical reading, and writing
- The relationships among language, knowledge, and power in their fields

Processes

By the end of first-year composition, students should

- Be aware that it usually takes multiple drafts to create and complete a successful text
- Develop flexible strategies for generating, revising, editing, and proof-reading
- Understand writing as an open process that permits writers to use later invention and re-thinking to revise their work
- Understand the collaborative and social aspects of writing processes
- Learn to critique their own and others' works
- Learn to balance the advantages of relying on others with the responsibility of doing their part
- Use a variety of technologies to address a range of audiences

Faculty in all programs and departments can build on this preparation by helping students learn

- To build final results in stages
- To review work-in-progress in collaborative peer groups for purposes other than editing
- To save extensive editing for later parts of the writing process
- To apply the technologies commonly used to research and communicate within their fields

Knowledge of Conventions

By the end of first-year composition, students should

- Learn common formats for different kinds of texts
- Develop knowledge of genre conventions ranging from structure and paragraphing to tone and mechanics
- Practice appropriate means of documenting their work
- Control such surface features as syntax, grammar, punctuation, and spelling.

Faculty in all programs and departments can build on this preparation by helping students learn

- The conventions of usage, specialized vocabulary, format, and documentation in their fields
- Strategies through which better control of conventions can be achieved

Response

Clyde A. Moneyhun

As the WPA Outcomes Statement has evolved, I've heard (and expressed) many opinions about what it should or should not contain, what specific language should be used, what points should be emphasized over others, and so on. For example, I side with those who wish that the document had more to say about teaching writing to heighten social and political awareness among students, about writing as a civic act. However, I also understand that as a compilation and synthesis of opinion in our field, the document (like all such documents) is necessarily and inevitably conservative.

While others may continue to discuss the content of the document, I'm going to assume that it's a finished product and turn my attention instead to the possible uses and misuses to which it has been put and may be put in the future. I'll illustrate what I mean with a bit of personal experience.

As a tool in the many struggles a WPA wages on a campus, the document is useful in many ways. It carries the endorsement of the only national organization of writing program administrators, which gives it the kind of clout you get from a directive issued by the American Medical Association.

It is comprehensive and therefore open to interpretation, a good thing if WPAs are doing the interpreting. We may choose to emphasize this or that aspect of the document depending on our agenda in a given situation. It

expresses many of the most cherished tenets of our field: that global issues of audience and evidence take precedence over local issues of mechanical correctness; that writing is best taught as process; that faculty across the curriculum must continue the work begun by the composition class or sequence. Though these ideas are now our tradition, they are news to many faculty outside the field.

As a participant in the revision of the general education curriculum at a previous school, I used the document in all these ways. I was the only writing specialist on the university's general education committee, for example, and when pressured to concede points that I knew ran counter to the fundamentals of writing pedagogy, I would sometimes pull rank by using the full weight of my professional group to support my points. When I wanted to redefine the first-semester composition course as a "critical thinking/reading/writing" course for approval by the committee, I pulled out relevant language from the document. As the committee developed criteria for writing intensive courses in the disciplines and turned to me for guidance, I highlighted the ways in which the document says that faculty from across the curriculum can build on the preparation students receive in first-year composition. Together with colleagues from the composition program, I quoted the document many times in memos to the committee during the several years that the curriculum revision was in progress.

At the same time, I worried about giving my colleagues from across the campus direct access to the document. They might have ignored the warnings of the Introduction that the document defines only "outcomes" and not "standards," and that the document is intended for a specialized audience of WPAs who understand its jargon and will interpret it according to conventions of the field. They might have chosen to emphasize the material on "control of surface features" over material on rhetoric, critical thinking, or process. They might have made mischief with phrases such as "flexible strategies for revising" in ways that gutted the meaning of writing as a process. If I happened to endorse certain "outcomes" that were not covered by the statement (for example, fostering a sense of the political or ethical purposes of writing), they might have accused me of violating the intentions of my own professional group. In the end, though, even with these worries, I sometimes appended a copy of the statement to memos that quoted it, and it never came back to haunt me.

My current school is also in the process of revising its general educational curriculum, and I have injected myself into discussions of the

place and purpose of writing on the campus. I will no doubt continue to put the Outcomes Statement to good use, and I will feel ethically bound to give colleagues access to the full document to make of it what they will.

So far its usefulness has outweighed its possible misuses, and with luck this will continue.

Response

Keith Rhodes

I have been asked to write in favor of the Outcomes Statement. It is natural to assume that someone who has worked actively on its creation would be in favor of it, and I am. One can only understand my support in terms of "fuzzy logic," however. That is, on most days, and to the largest extent, I favor adoption of the Outcomes Statement by the Council of WPAs. For me, what started with a bang of outrage is ending with a shrug of acceptance. In a few short strokes, I want to persuade others that my attitude of support with ambivalent enthusiasm is most appropriate.

Most importantly, the original outrage remains justified to this day. The discipline of composition and rhetoric is entirely founded upon the first-year composition sequence, and yet we have studiously, even aggressively avoided giving this existing foundation a public definition. I am currently teaching an undergraduate course in composition theory, and if one thing is clear to these novice scholars, most of whom are mainly interested in their own writing or that of K-12 students, it is that nearly everything they are reading assumes that "composition" means writing in a required first-year college course. We have expanded and diversified our work, but without the foundational course we have no discipline, not even an "interdiscipline." Our diversity and interdisciplinarity makes it even more important that we make a conscious effort to define what students can expect from a first-year college composition course. We have many fine excuses, ranging from fear of ignorant accountability police to love of elegant postmodern problematizations, but none of them outweigh the basic decency of telling students and their high school teachers what they can generally expect from our courses.

When it comes to actually defining the course, the emotions end up being less extreme. To our fairly universal if mild surprise, we found a very general statement of goals to be much less controversial than we had feared. The course already had more inter-institutional coherence than common opinion suggested, at least in terms of the imagined and desired results. This

realization cemented in the term “Outcomes” to describe our work. After generating more detailed descriptions in our favored professional language, we found that the terms translated more readily than we might have imagined into fairly common language. As an aside, perhaps the “jargon” that remains—terms like genre, rhetorical, and text—indicates the most satisfying areas for focused professional inquiry of the most rigorous kind. But in general, deeper and broader work with the statement, in workshops of many kinds in many places for many audiences, demonstrated that it was all, in the end, rather mundane.

This is not, then, a great moment in the history of composition. It is an ordinary moment, done (we hope) well enough to pass with only minor tweaking. Those of us who did the work certainly appreciate its difficulty; those who have already been using the document as a touchstone for local, more specific articulations appreciate its quality; but to the general public it both is and ought to appear to be a fairly simple and sensible bit of administrivia; and among ourselves, we should mostly just admit that it was about time.

Response

Mark Wiley

The desire to articulate what every student will know and be able to do after his or her first year of college-level writing instruction was initially expressed as a question on the WPA listserv in March of 1996. Several of us voiced our worries over the increasing political pressure to be accountable for what we do in our composition classrooms and to justify the resources used for maintaining huge writing programs. Participants in that listserv conversation were gravely concerned over having the goals of our composition programs defined *for* us by others who knew little of the relevant scholarship and current thinking in the field, but who, nonetheless, had the power to tell us what we ought to be teaching and holding students accountable for in our writing classes.

This fear of getting done to us before we could do for ourselves was additionally fueled by the standards-setting efforts that were taking place in a variety of disciplines at various educational levels. Many of these discipline-specific standards in K-12 were being formulated by small committees often convening in large states (such as my state of California) where extensive discussion over these standards’ integrity, relevance, and pragmatic value didn’t happen. Better to be proactive than to stand by

passively complaining about encroachments on academic freedom and having a standardized curriculum imposed on us. At least that was my view.

Undeniably, the Outcomes Statement is a political document, a negotiated document, one of compromise, one articulated at a sufficiently general enough level to allow local interpretation and implementation. But the conservative right and the radical left may both agree over what it lacks. The right may find it inadequate or too vague; the left at the least may find it too timid, and at the worst an unnecessary imposition. The document’s “middle-of-the-roadness” I fear may render it one more of those proclamations issued by professional organizations that sound, well, “official,” but lack any pragmatic value because no significant consequences follow its adoption.

I hope the Outcomes Statement becomes a “living” document, one subject to continual inquiry, debate, and revision. I hope it is not interpreted as a mandate to standardize a given curriculum in some local context in order to justify regimenting and disciplining adjunct writing faculty or to justify some wrong-headed assessment instrument. I hope the Outcomes Statement encourages diversity in how it is interpreted locally and in how student writing is read and evaluated. I hope it begins a national scholarly conversation among writing teachers, administrators, and, yes, even the wider public. But most importantly, I hope these outcomes serve as promises to our students that we, their teachers, will help them develop into rhetorically savvy, critically aware, versatile writers.

Response

Kathleen Blake Yancey

At first glance, the Outcomes Statement seems such a short document—and hardly revolutionary. It talks about the more non-controversial of our practices in first-year composition, writing process and rhetorical knowledge, for instance, and it doesn’t prescribe. Let me break that line out so we don’t miss it: it doesn’t prescribe. Faculty are not required to practice liberatory pedagogy, the curriculum doesn’t mandate portfolios, and students are not obligated to write expressivist prose or engage in service learning—although a class might include any these elements. According to this document, what students do, more or less, is write.

That’s it.

The Statement, it seems to me, then, is a manageable document that uses the language of rhetoric and composition to describe what it is that

most of us, in one way or another, do day in and day out, with our students.

Some of us will never need such a document. Others of us will find such a document useful—to contextualize our own programs for faculty and students, to develop our programs, to connect our own programs and classes to high schools and WAC programs and co-op experiences, and not least, to defend our programs.

Can such a document be mis-used? Yes. Will it be mis-used? Probably. Is that a reason not to endorse it? No. You have to ask yourself, Are you better off with a document that provides a foundation and a language, or are you better off working without such articulation? It's a curious thing when teachers of language prefer silence on curricular issues. Less philosophically (and perhaps more to the point, you'll say), the history of reform documents within composition studies suggests that in the main, our documents are not used against us: quite the reverse. The CCCC Position Statement on Assessment, for instance, has helped many, and to my knowledge, hasn't been used against a single program in the country. (Neither, admittedly, could it save certain programs.) The Portland Resolution is another case in point, and the Intellectual Work Document is in similar process. In sum, we have a history here, and it bodes well.

The history of this particular reform document also bears comment. Ordinarily, within our field at least, an organization understands that a need wants to be met, it charters some group within it to draft a document and to present it to members and/or the leadership, and thus policy is born. The Outcomes Statement developed almost in reverse: a number of people who were electronically associated agreed that it would be useful to have a statement of what we do. A few years and a couple of in-person meetings later, members of what became a "group" brought the statement to the WPA for endorsement. Is this process of development itself revolutionary? That seems a large claim, and yet, I want to consider it:

The Statement was neither mandated nor developed by official leaders of any group. The exigence, rather, was defined and responded to by a myriad group of faculty and program directors and graduate students, some of whom knew each other, some of whom became acquainted electronically. Electronic media, in fact, have been central to the development of the Statement.

The Statement has continued to change; there is an assumption that the Statement is a living text and thus will change. Necessarily, then, questions will arise as to how to accommodate change once/should the

document become "official," and precisely because of the role of electronic media in creation and distribution of texts, all organizations will need to address them.

We'll be in good company.

I defer to others who know their history better than I, but to my knowledge, this is the first time in composition studies in recent memory that a national group of teachers and students and program administrators have come together on their own to articulate a first-year curriculum that can speak to the needs of students in a range of institutions anywhere in the country. At the least, then, such a document provides something to argue against; at the most, it provides a foundation; and regardless, it provides an occasion for dialogue.

So, you see, I think that we might be witnessing a revolutionary moment, after all.

The Outcomes Group Requests Readers' Responses

At its April 2000 meeting, the WPA Executive Board will consider formally adopting the Outcomes Statement. Until then, we invite comment and response, addressed to the Outcomes Group Steering Committee (Susanmarie Harrington, Keith Rhodes, Rita Malencyzk, Irv Peckham, and Kathleen Blake Yancey).

Susanmarie Harrington, Steering Committee Chair

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The Outcomes Statement Authors

The Outcomes Statement was drafted by a group known as the Outcomes Group who in July of 1998 became an ad-hoc committee of the Council of Writing Program Administrators. The Outcomes Group, as this committee is still known, has been comprised of many members over time, some of whom have participated throughout the process, others who have been active for more limited periods of time. Members have included: Linda Bergmann, Glenn Blalock, William Condon, Patricia Ericsson, Ruth Overman Fischer, Emily Golson, Susanmarie Harrington, Veronica Keane, Patricia LaCoste, Barry Maid, Rita Malencyzk, J. L. McClure, Irvin Peckham, Nancy L. Peterson, Chet Pryor, Keith Rhodes, Duane Roen, Betty Shiffman,

Karen Vaught-Alexander, Edward M. White, Mark Wiley, Stephen Wilhoit, Donald Wolff, and Kathleen Blake Yancey. The Outcomes Group thanks the many people who have responded to discussions of the Outcomes Statement online and attended sessions and workshops about the evolving Outcomes Statement at the meetings of the Conference on College Composition and Communication, the National Council of Teachers of English, The National Writing Project, and the Council of Writing Program Administrators, as well as at the Computers and Writing Conference and the Pedagogy of the Oppressed Conference.

Announcements and Calls for Papers

Essay Proposals are invited for an edited collection titled *City Comp: Teaching Writing in Urban Spaces*, edited by Bruce McComiskey and Cynthia Ryan. Proposals for *City Comp* should address the specificity of teaching writing in urban spaces, including (though not limited to) literacy centers, prisons, homeless shelters, medical institutions, public libraries, community centers, urban corporations, as well as inner city high schools, community colleges, public and private universities, and urban National Writing Project sites. Proposals should also address special challenges and opportunities of urban spaces, such as internship and service learning possibilities, diverse student populations, economic inequalities, physical conditions in schools and classrooms, alternative literacies, and unique community resources. Send one copy of one or two page single spaced proposals by June 1, 2000 to: Bruce McComiskey or Cynthia Ryan, Department of English, University of Alabama at Birmingham, 217 Humanities Building, 1530 Third Avenue South, Birmingham, AL 35294-1260. Queries: Bruce McComiskey, mccomisk@uab.edu, (205) 934-5228; Cynthia Ryan, cynryan@uab.edu, (205) 934-8593.

Call for Year 2000 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. All current WPA members are eligible to apply. Please organize your proposal as follows: 1) A cover page that gives the names of all investigators (please don't identify yourself or your institution in the rest of the proposal); 2) A maximum of two pages in which you explain the project and how it will address issues of common concern to WPAs; give a timetable detailing how the project will proceed; describe 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 and to present the results of their research at the annual WPA breakfast during the CCCC convention); 3) A realistic, detailed budget on a separate page. Please send four copies of the proposal to Chris Anson no later than February 1, 2000. Winners will be announced at the 2000 WPA breakfast at the CCCC meeting Minneapolis, April, 2000. Chris M. Anson, Chair, WPA Research Grant Committee, Campus Writing and

Speaking Program, Box 8105, North Carolina State University, Raleigh, NC 27695-8105.

WPA Consultant-Evaluator Service for Writing Programs. The WPA consultant-evaluator service helps colleges and universities develop and assess their writing programs. Operating on a method similar to regional accreditation agencies, WPA evaluations have several stages. WPA requests a written program self-study, sends a team of two trained consultant-evaluators to campus for interviews and on-site evaluation, and then compiles a final report. A six-month follow-up report from the campus completes the process. WPA consultant-evaluators are leaders in the field of composition. They come from four-year colleges, community colleges, and universities. All are experienced writing program administrators with a national perspective on composition teaching and program administering. Institutions pay the travel and accommodations cost for the consultant-evaluator team, plus an honorarium. While WPA suggests a \$1,500 honorarium to each consultant-evaluator, client institutions agree on a honorarium with the consultant-evaluator. Applications for the service should be initiated three months before consultant-evaluators visit a campus. WPAs, department chairs, or college administrators may apply to: Deborah H. Holdstein, Professor of English and Rhetoric, Governors State University, University Park, Illinois 60466, gas54r0@ecom3, (708) 534-4586; or Edward White California State University at San Bernardino, ewhite@wiley.csusb.edu.

Essay Proposals are invited for a volume entitled ***Reconciling Feminism and Catholicism: Witnesses for Change***. We are soliciting pieces that demonstrate the possibility of synthesizing faith with feminism. We invite writers to draw on personal experience, feminist theory or feminist theology, history, literature, sociology, cultural studies, or American studies, to describe and illustrate the unification of politics and religion. Is the American feminist experience unique, or can parallels be found in other countries? What experiences prompted this reunification? Does feminist Catholicism differ from the traditional conceptions (or misconceptions) of feminism? If not, how are issues such as divorce, birth control, and abortion—that is, the expectation that women subordinate their personal desires for the sacred obligation of motherhood—reconciled? And how does this unification thus broaden the definition of feminism? Language should be accessible to readers inside and outside the academy. Send, by July 1, 2000,

two copies of letter-quality manuscript, MLA style, approximately 15-20 pages including Works Cited to: Sally Barr Ebest, co-editor, Department of English, University of Missouri-St. Louis, 8001 Natural Bridge Road, St. Louis, MO 63121, sebest@umsl.edu.

The WPA Summer Workshop will be held from July 9-July 13, 2000 at the University of North Carolina, Charlotte. The workshop is an intensive session for new and renewing WPAs, co-lead by Martha Townsend and David Schwalm. The workshop will be held on the UNC-Charlotte campus, beginning with a reception the evening of July 9. Sessions continue through noon July 13. The complete registration fee will include all registration materials and fees, most meals, and campus housing. For details, contact Marty Townsend, townsendm@missouri.edu.

Biographies

Shane Borrowman teaches advanced composition, technical writing, and business writing at the University of Arizona and is the associate editor of *Rhetoric Review*. In addition to large-scale writing assessment, his work focuses on the connections between history, memory, the news media, and the Korean and Vietnam Wars.

Don Bushman is an Associate Professor of English and the Director of Composition at the University of North Carolina at Wilmington, where he teaches first-year composition, upper-level writing, and graduate-level composition theory and pedagogy classes. He is one of the core faculty in his department's MA concentration in Critical Literacy. His published work has appeared in *Rhetoric Review*, *Writing Lab Newsletter*, and numerous other journals and edited collections.

Mary Ann Cain is Associate Professor of English at Indiana University-Purdue University Fort Wayne where she teaches rhetoric and composition, creative writing, and women's studies. She has published a book, *Revisioning Writer's Talk: Gender and Culture in Acts of Composing* (SUNY 1995) and articles in journals such as *College Composition and Communication*, *Dialogue*, *Composition Studies*, *Written Communication*, and others. Her fiction, creative nonfiction and prose poetry appears in many literary magazines. She is a former Director of Writing.

George Kalamaras is Associate Professor of English at Indiana University-Purdue University Fort Wayne, where he teaches courses in rhetorical theory, creative writing, and composition, and where he served as Associate Director of Writing in the early 1990's. His articles have appeared in *College Composition and Communication*, *English Education*, *Composition Studies*, *International Journal of Hindu Studies*, and other places, and he is the author of *Reclaiming the Tacit Dimension: Symbolic Form in the Rhetoric of Silence* (SUNY Press, 1994). He recently won the Four Way Books Intro Series in Poetry Award for his collection of poems, *The Theory and Function of Mangoes*, which chronicles his months in India in 1994 and which will be published by Four Way Books in March 2000.

Clyde Moneyhun is Director of the University Writing Center and Director of Basic Writing at the University of Delaware. He has directed writing centers and composition programs at the University of Arizona, New Mexico Highlands University, and Youngstown State University. His articles

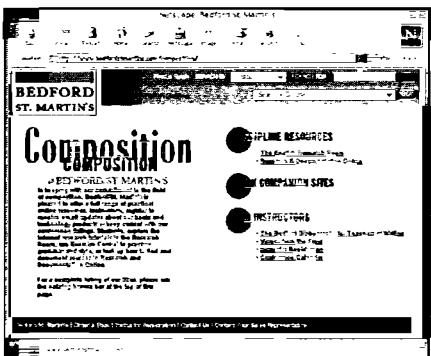
and reviews have appeared in *CCC*, *JAC*, and *Rhetoric Review*. His composition reader *Living Languages* (edited with Nancy Buffington and Marvin Diogenes) was published by Prentice-Hall in 1996; his creative writing anthology *Fiction: Theory and Practice, Tradition and Craft* (edited with Marvin Diogenes) is forthcoming from Mayfield in 2000.

Keith Rhodes is the Director of Developmental Writing and Placement in the Department of English, Foreign Languages, and Journalism at Missouri Western State College. He has worked on the Outcomes Statement since the initial forum session at the 1997 Conference on College Composition and Communication. Currently, he serves on the Outcomes Statement Steering Committee and maintains the Outcomes Statement website (<http://www.mwsc.edu/~outcomes>). His publications, often somewhat off-beat, have considered ethnographic inquiry, critical pedagogy, the preparation of composition administrators, and the psychodynamics of rhetoric. His teaching focuses exclusively on writing and the teaching of writing.

Mark Wiley directs the writing program at California State University, Long Beach. He teaches a range of classes from basic writing to graduate courses on composition theory. Over the last few years he has been actively involved in an ambitious project to develop "seamless education" for kindergarten through university with the Long Beach Unified School District and with Long Beach Community College. He is the co-author/editor along with Barbara Gleason and Louise Phelps of *Composition in Four Keys: Inquiring into the Field*. He has also published essays and reviews in, among other journals, the *Journal of Advanced Composition*, *Rhetoric Review*, and the *Journal of Teaching Writing*.

Kathleen Blake Yancey taught at UNC Charlotte for nine years, working with the National Writing Project site, the first-year writing program, and the writing-intensive program. In the fall of 1999, she moved to Clemson University to become their first Pearce Professor of Professional Communication. From 1995-1998, she served on the Executive Board of WPA; she is currently a member of the Outcomes Group and Vice-President of WPA.

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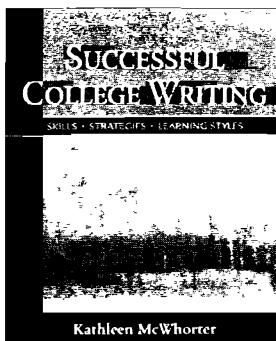
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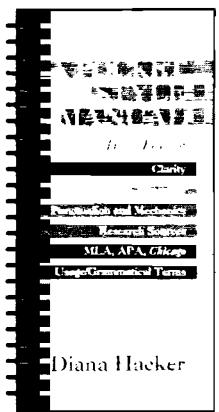
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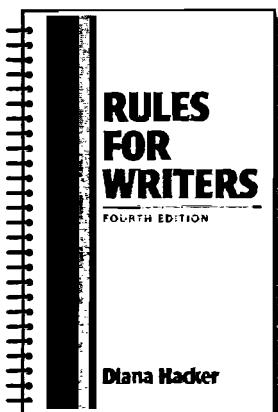
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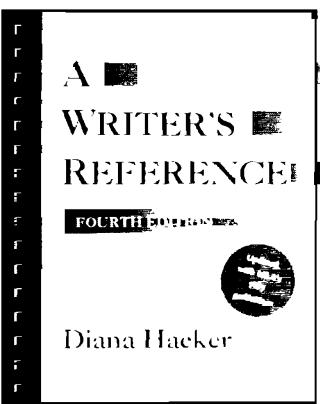


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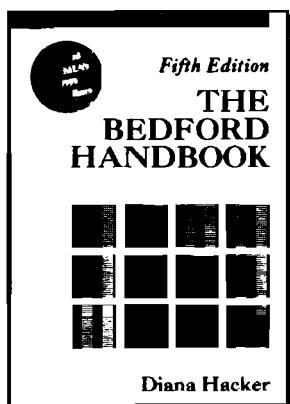
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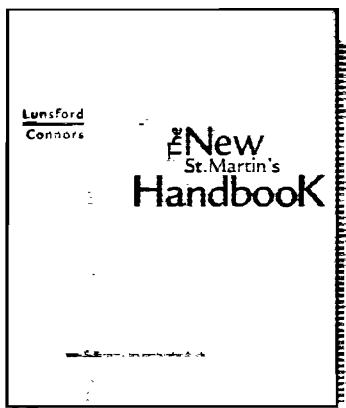
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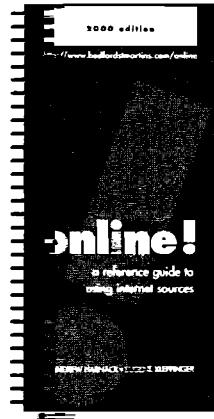
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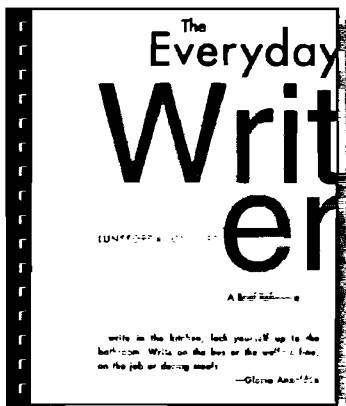
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The 2000 WPA Summer Conference, July 13-16, 2000
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In the Thick of Things

**Plenary Speakers: Richard Lloyd-Jones, Jeanne Gunner,
Robert Connors, Patricia Bizzell**

A common observation is that WPAs work in the middle: between teachers and "higher" administrators, between managerial and scholarly interests, between disciplinary and institutional concerns, between programmatic dreams and budgetary realities, between student needs and public desires. Proposals are invited addressing the conference theme or issues of concern to WPAs, including those who work in WAC programs, writing centers, technical or professional writing programs, departments of writing, graduate programs, and freshman composition programs. What can we know about and learn from past programmatic efforts to organize the teaching of writing? How might writing and writing programs be situated within departments, institutions, the academic landscape, the larger culture? How might we understand the circumstances in which we find ourselves? What models, practices, or theoretical perspectives should WPAs pursue at this juncture? Also invited: reports on assessments of writing programs or features within them, including "local" studies; discussions of effective practices in program design, faculty development, working conditions, and so on; analyses of issues like distance learning, articulation, technologies and writing, education reform, etc.

The Conference will be held at the Omni Hotel and at the UNC-Charlotte downtown conference center. Registration costs include breakfasts, receptions, breaks, and a banquet.

Proposals due February 15, 2000. Please send four copies of 200 word proposals to:

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Illinois State University
Normal, IL 61790-4240
ddhesse@ilstu.edu
(309) 438-3667