

## A Letter from the Editors

### On Economy

Over the past year, as manuscripts began to arrive in the WPA office in Houghton, Dennis noticed an interesting trend: WPAs were thinking beyond the writing program and talking about administration at the level of the institution. As he describes it, a special issue on administering beyond the English Department, began to take shape. Together, Dennis, Marguerite, and David are happy to bring readers this special issue.

Although the essays in this volume have a common theme of connecting writing program administration with concerns beyond those of the first-year classroom, we can also consider this to be an issue on various types of economy. Greek and Latin roots of the term economy refer to the management of a household. For many WPAs, this type of management and order is the norm of their professional life. However, as Charles Schuster points out in his essay, higher administrators are concerned with the modern sense of the word economy: the “careful management of resources,” as the OED terms it.

The contributors to this issue explore the nature of management from the perspectives of WPAs, Writing Center Directors, and an Associate Dean. Behind each essay is a concern for political economy or power. In each university, department, or program, who is allowed to make decisions regarding the distribution of resources? What shape do those resources take? Is there ever an equal distribution of theoretical knowledge, practical application, and rewards?

Rita Malenczyk opens our issue by discussing the principles behind the founding of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) in 1915. The AAUP brought to fruition policies governing the protection of academic freedom. Malenczyk notes that the early activism of the AAUP is similar to that of the WPA. Opening with her own experience, she examines that experience in the wider context of academic freedom. As she describes, her academic freedom as a WPA was challenged because higher administration did not value her expertise as a compositionist and WPA; rather, her decisions were seen as “negative.” Two lessons for all WPAs are embedded in this story: first, the higher administration viewed composition courses in terms of cost-benefit relations, while Malenczyk saw her decisions emanating from a discipline with particular expertise; second, academic freedom may too often be expressed only in terms of classroom teaching and research products—not administration.

From Malenczyk's personal and institutional history, Richard E. Miller turns to the stories that compositionists have created about the profession. These stories have something of the Beowulf about them, in which valorous teachers of writing stave off the administrative barbarians at the gates. But as Miller points out, higher administrators do not view composition programs or writing centers in such glorious terms. Their viewpoint is more technical; it is "the business of managing an instructional work force." Composition is a gatekeeping course and can be quantified in numbers: how many sections of composition can the institution afford to offer each semester? How much will the instructors be paid? How many students will pass the first-year writing requirement? The administrators want numbers: 6000 grades, 206 sections, 112 instructors. Thus, for Miller, the question is ultimately one of discourse. With two groups speaking different tongues, the ability to successfully communicate is compromised.

Thomas P. Miller also senses dichotomies between groups in the profession of composition and rhetoric, but these are of a more theoretical nature. Miller's work points toward a way of reconciling service learning with the classical rhetorical principals of civic leadership. While he opens with the question of how directors of graduate programs will train the next generation of WPAs, he moves beyond the work of course design and TA training to situate writing programs in an academic culture that is divided between *belles lettres* and public responsibility. The duty of graduate instructors in composition is to develop "critical intellectuals" who may "advance institutional reforms." As Miller notes here, this imperative is more than just management training. It demands a return to the ideal of the public intellectual that has been rearticulated since the eighteenth century.

Valerie Balester and James C. McDonald contribute a piece that is timely for the WPA organization, on the relationship between Writing Center directors and WPAs. Currently, the Council is working with the National Writing Center Association (NWCA) in some new ways. First and most immediately, the leadership of both organizations has approved a three-year term for the NWCA to participate in the WPA Consultant Evaluator Service. Second, and more generally, Kathleen Blake Yancey, President of WPA, has invited Paula Gillespie, the Vice President of NWCA, to write to WPA members in our newsletter about ways we might work together. In this issue, presenting the result of a survey of 176 WPAs and WC directors and comparing the results to Olson and Ashton-Jones's survey of 1988, Balester and McDonald examine the working relationship between writing program administrators and writing center directors. The results of their research are unsettling. Underlying the relationships are distributions

of power, money, and status. Not surprisingly, these are often unequally assigned, leaving the writing center marginalized in the composition program. All too frequently, WPAs and WC directors do not share ideas or resources; agreement on “philosophies and goals” is scarce. Finally, most of the WC directors had little or no training in administrative decision-making, adding to their sense of disenfranchisement. On a more positive note, however, Balester and McDonald note that relationships between WPAs and WC directors have improved since the 1988 report.

To close this issue, we hear from former WPA President Charles Schuster. Schuster brings readers the reflections of a WPA who moved temporarily into higher administration. The first part of the article examines Schuster’s adjustment to the culture of higher administration, especially to the difficult task of saying “no” to nearly everyone who asked for programmatic funding. Behind the economic realities of administration, however, are professional organizations, publications, and predictions of trends in the university. In other words, as Richard E. Miller introduced in his article, higher administration speaks a different discourse than that of academic departments. Schuster warns WPAs that they must learn about the changes predicted to affect the university world—the world of recruitment and retention, distance education, and first-year experience programs. WPAs must adjust, and economize successfully, or their academic freedom will be challenged.

What we learn from these pieces is that composition’s dream of common goals and purposes in composition programs are always interrupted by realities of power and exchange. When power is unequal, the theoretical symmetry in programs is difficult to achieve. When conceptions of economy are not aligned between higher administration and WPAs, writing programs are challenged from the outside.

Bringing together writers whose voices, styles, and theoretical backgrounds differ is a journal editor’s job. When these voices, styles, and theories merge in such a harmonious result is more than serendipitous. It points to a ground of concern among those who teach, write, and administer.

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