

First-Year Writing in First-Year Seminars: Writing across the Curriculum from the Start

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In spite of its universality as an institution, first-year composition (FYC) is local in its instances. One of the innovations in FYC that has received little critical attention from writing teachers and writing program administrators is the first-year seminar (FYS). In 1998, the Boyer Commission issued a call to America's research universities to "construct an inquiry-based freshman year" featuring a writing-rich seminar and to "link communication skills and course work";¹ several of America's smaller liberal arts colleges had already established such seminars. In this essay, I argue that the first-year seminar is an important instantiation of first-year composition, well-suited to small colleges, but perhaps not without significance to larger, research-oriented, institutions. The FYS offers a third alternative to the FYC-or-no-FYC debate, but has received very little attention in the dominant professional discussion. I propose to open that discussion, first by describing the major variants of FYS. Drawing extensively on my own experience as the WPA in two different colleges with FYS programs rather than FYC programs, I map the development of the FYS in those institutions. I discuss the philosophical and pedagogical fit of the FYS with writing across the curriculum programs and with individual institutions' missions. I analyze other structural characteristics that suit the FYS to liberal arts colleges. Finally, I speculate about why these innovative programs have received so little professional notice and suggest that writing program administrators might find such discussion useful.

FEATURES AND VARIETIES OF FIRST-YEAR SEMINARS

The FYS programs I discuss here will perhaps seem ideally—if not exclusively—suited to small liberal arts colleges, where an emphasis on teach-

ing is paramount. In this context, the description of first-year seminars as vehicles for first-year composition includes the following features:

- The college/university catalog recognizes the FYS as *the* initial writing course.
- The catalog requires the FYS of all first-year students.
- The catalog assigns full course credit to the FYS.
- The catalog indicates that full-time, permanent faculty from several disciplines have responsibility for teaching the course.

That is, the FYS under consideration in this essay is not the first-year seminars whose primary purposes are instruction in study skills, high school to college transition, or retention—those which frequently carry only partial academic credit and do not serve as writing courses. Nor do I initially refer to pilot projects, FYC alternatives for specific curricular tracks or programs, or seminars taught by a discrete writing faculty—although all of these might well be developments well suited to a wide range of institutions. Rather, I consider the seminar in the form that most sharply delineates it as a programmatic innovation in first-year writing.

First-year seminars share many features, wherever they are taught. They are often described as interdisciplinary and carry either no departmental designation or a special interdisciplinary or core curriculum designation. Class sizes are small (typically 12-18 students) to allow for discussion and a substantial amount of writing. Catalog descriptions of FYS frequently point to critical thinking and engagement with the enduring questions of human societies as their hallmarks. Unlike the many broadly introductory, text-book-based courses students take in the first year, or even first two years, the FYS focuses on a limited number of primary texts, developing students' understanding of what it means to do careful, critical reading and writing. Faculty are drawn primarily from the tenured or tenure-track ranks of departments across the curriculum and, in many cases, serve as students' first-year advisors as well as their seminar professors.

There are two predictable varieties of seminar: the common course and the topical course. In the common course, like the "World Views" course I currently teach at Willamette University, all sections read the same texts, following roughly the same schedule.² In fact, at Willamette, all sections meet during the same hour to allow for three or four convocations with guest lecturers during the semester; all papers are due on the same dates four times during the semester. Faculty shape the discussions and paper topics for their sections individually—based on their own experience and interests and on those of their students—and students are explicitly encouraged to expect and appreciate this kind of diversity. Faculty remind students, explicitly and implicitly, that common conversations about impor-

tant questions benefit from the contributions of people with very different perspectives. They also, of course, demonstrate to students that writing, conversation, and critical thinking identify the intellectual work of all disciplines, not merely the humanities. Texts and organizing theme change periodically in common courses, though generally not every year.

In the topical course, faculty propose seminars based on their own interests and disciplinary expertise. The topical seminars program—like the one I once promoted, directed, and taught in at Gustavus Adolphus College (modeled on an older seminar at Grinnell College)—invites faculty to propose seminars that fit a set of pedagogical guidelines.³ At Gustavus Adolphus, for example, faculty specify the critical questions and questions of value that the seminar would address and sketch out the nature and number of writing assignments for the course. Entering students, who register in June for their first fall semester courses, receive brief descriptions of every seminar and instructions to list at least five choices. In contrast to the campus-wide conversation in common course FYS programs, the topical course programs support social groups based on intellectual, or at least curricular, identity; that is, the FYS serves as a kind of primary social group that often persists long past the first semester of the students' academic careers.

FROM GENERAL EDUCATION TO WRITING ACROSS THE CURRICULUM TO THE FIRST-YEAR SEMINAR

The mission of many undergraduate colleges has understood inquiry as the defining characteristic of a liberally educated person and critical thinking, speaking, and writing as inquiry's attendant technologies. These technologies have long been fostered, carefully and cooperatively, by faculty across the curriculum in liberal arts colleges—not only among senior majors, but from the beginning with entering students. The FYS is, as I have described it here, principally a phenomenon of the private baccalaureate liberal arts schools, and beyond that, of the more selective private schools.⁴ Their mission and goal statements frequently envision communities united across rank (especially faculty and student) and discipline, which jointly pursue truth through critical inquiry, writing, and discussion. Willamette University lists first among the three central goals in its “paramount task: passing on the tradition of liberal learning” a mastery of precisely these tools: “First, the College of Liberal Arts seeks to strengthen students' intellectual powers. These include the ability to think, to speak and to write with precision, depth, and cogency, as well as the capacity to perceive and expose fallacious reasoning” (10).

Arguably, a distinguishing feature of the liberal arts college is its sense of the general education program as its signature. The commitment of the permanent faculty at large, not graduate students or large numbers of adjuncts,

to general education enables interdisciplinary teaching cooperation in FYS programs, in WAC programs, and, in a significant number of schools, in both. At the two schools which serve as examples here, it was reform in general education which led to the creation of the writing across the curriculum program and eventually to the designation of a seminar as the first writing course. Gustavus Adolphus College had since 1972 no writing requirement, or even any English requirement, when it undertook an overhaul of general education in the early 1980s. Faculty assigned writing, of course, but by then had become generally convinced that a more deliberate practice of teaching writing would better prepare its graduates for lifelong learning, personal and professional pursuits, citizenship, and service. And they were convinced that this would be done best in a curriculum that extended across and through the curriculum. Thus, the new curriculum of 1985 required students to take three designated writing courses, in at least two different departments, with at least one of these in the upper division. The English department continued to offer an elective course called Reading and Writing as it had under the old curriculum, but could offer enough sections for only about one-third of the students.⁵

When I arrived in the fall of 1987 as a member of the English department to fill the newly created position, Coordinator of the Writing Program, I found that the faculty fully owned the writing program. Large numbers of faculty representing every department had spent summer weeks in workshops with consultants, most memorably James Kinneavy. There were existing writing-designated courses in most departments, often several courses. Faculty were conversant in the language of writing process, understood the value of writing for learning, and generally enthusiastic about teaching their students to write in the discipline. As the new WPA, I met with all department chairs in my first year, asking them what their departments were doing, what they wanted from me, and what they saw as pressing concerns for the writing program. Repeatedly, I heard that faculty offering upper-division courses, mostly to their own majors, often met juniors and seniors taking their first designated writing courses. And they found this fact problematic: they understood writing abilities to develop *through* engagement in increasingly complex problems and repeated practice, and they were concerned that students were getting too few occasions. But few wanted to introduce a mandatory FYC.

With the support of the dean, my English department colleagues, and several members of the faculty particularly dedicated both to general education and interdisciplinary work, I requested and received faculty permission to pursue a planning grant and, subsequently, a full faculty development grant from the Bush Foundation to implement a seminar. So the Gustavus faculty, already at home with WAC, agreed to develop an across-the-cur-

riculum FYS, guaranteeing an intensive writing experience integrated into a seminar which would satisfy another general education area requirement in the first semester. The “first-term seminar” was first fully implemented in 1993, with thirty-seven faculty members from twenty-one departments.

The English department ceased offering Reading and Writing, though it continued to offer a number of creative writing and more advanced expository writing courses as electives. For the first several years, each member of the English department taught one section of the seminar, accounting for almost one-third of all sections. As the program has developed, the English department’s dominance has declined.

At Willamette University, the history of the FYS becoming the FYC course is also a result of general education reform, though its history is different from Gustavus’s. The FYS, World Views, began at Willamette University in 1987. For the first eight years, it existed with a required one-semester College Writing course, the only college writing requirement, taught by the English department and several adjunct instructors. In the early 1990s, the faculty undertook an extensive revision of the general education program, defining distribution in terms of “modes of inquiry” rather than disciplines. Although the faculty did not originally intend changes to College Writing in the new curriculum, the review nearly coincided with a FIPSE-funded three-year review of its own literature and writing curriculum by the English department. The department surveyed faculty from other departments about their practices of teaching writing, surveyed students about their learning, sought the help of two consultants, and studied writing across the curriculum programs at other institutions. By the end, it successfully proposed to the faculty a new writing across the curriculum program and eliminated College Writing from the catalog.⁶ When the faculty voted to replace the old FYC writing requirement with a four-course WAC program in 1995, it seemed logical to develop the writing component of the World Views seminar as the first “writing-centered” course. Faculty had already been teaching a first-year course with a substantial writing component—and more important, had been meeting weekly as a faculty to discuss the teaching of that course. Thus, they knew what they would be facing in agreeing to teach writing to first-year students.

This is not to say that college faculty uniformly welcome the opportunity to teach writing-intensive courses, especially the important seminar, to first-year students. Or that they expect the task to be easy. WPAs who direct WAC programs are familiar with the difficulties of encouraging departmental faculty to develop courses for lower-division students. Faculty generally prefer to assign and teach writing to advanced students in the major. A few, maybe quite a few, will continue to believe that FYC is the responsibility, even the duty, of the English department. Faculty, even

at selective baccalaureate institutions —those requiring minimal combined SATs of 1200, for example —regularly lament the lack of adequate preparation in incoming students and conjure up images of that Golden Age when students arrived at college in love with the classics and in perfect command of standard edited English. But in my experience in two colleges, faculty who have become converts to WAC by teaching advanced writing intensives in the major find the experience of teaching first-year students in seminars a difference of degree rather than kind—and quite doable, even rewarding. They believe that writing across the curriculum, from the first year on, is the best way to teach writing.

In addition to the congruence of college mission to FYS teaching, several structural features probably make baccalaureate institutions, and again especially private institutions, peculiarly hospitable environments for the FYS.

Size is, of course, an issue. Small school faculties find interdisciplinary collaboration a familiar way of life. Entire teaching faculties the size of research university departments or divisions do not agree on everything or overcome their disciplinary preferences, prejudices, and ways of seeing. But they meet together and have very active roles in college governance, particularly over the curriculum. So they talk together about students, curriculum, pedagogy, even assignments, often in meetings where almost all faculty are present and certainly at least several representatives of every department. A variety of interdisciplinary faculty collaborations flourish in small colleges, partly I suspect as an extension of the collaboration involved in general education. The FYS might be seen as the largest interdisciplinary endeavor.

Moreover, class sizes at small colleges are also likely to be small, especially at the private schools. Thus, when a department assigns a faculty member to FYS teaching rather than to a departmental offering, the change in student load may be minimal. That is, if most classes in an institution are held to 25 or fewer, the seminar of 16 or 18 does not require as disproportionate a share of faculty resources as it would at a large research institution where general education classes regularly enroll hundreds.

Staffing is also an issue. Small liberal arts colleges do not have graduate teaching assistants to staff FYC courses. If the English department is charged with FYC, and it does not or cannot hire a substantial pool of adjuncts, its members will devote up to two-thirds of their teaching to composition, or frequently, the old “Freshman Lit and Comp” course. Thus, FYS courses taught by faculty across the curriculum allow the English department to offer a richer variety of courses, including elective writing courses, and curtail the practice of advertising a writing course but teaching a literature course. In small college English departments that do employ

adjuncts, FYC teaching accounts for the majority of adjuncts on campus.⁷ The small college sends a strong message to its students and their parents about the value of writing when it devotes its full-time, tenured faculty in all disciplines to the teaching of writing.

Finally, teaching is at the heart of smaller, liberal arts colleges. Discussions in the CCCC special interest group on small college/university composition suggest that while the more selective and more highly ranked the college the greater the expectation for scholarship and published research among the faculty, teaching is the *sine qua non* in tenure decisions for liberal arts colleges. The significance of this value cannot be overstated in considering the applicability of the FYS model to large research institutions.

THE WRITING PROGRAM ADMINISTRATOR AND THE FIRST-YEAR SEMINAR

The WPA plays a crucial role in the success of the FYS as a composition course. During the development of the seminar curriculum, she must be active in working with other course leaders and the faculty in shaping the language that will describe the course, its aims, and its pedagogy. Founding documents go through many drafts to assure a high degree of faculty consent, and once vetted through the committee structure and accepted by the entire faculty, acquire a kind of constitutional authority over future decisions. Because it is not uncommon for a faculty member in a baccalaureate institution to live out an entire career there, the founding document's framers may well be there to reassert their intentions until the next major curriculum replaces it. Of course, every institution has its own unwritten rules about how explicit the pedagogical expectations for any given course can be. And especially in private colleges, where the hand of external regulators is relatively light, tolerance of individual faculty autonomy in bending curricular and pedagogical guidelines is fairly high. Thus, as Tom Amorose argues, the WPA—in the small undergraduate college most often one among equals—wields authority most effectively by persuasion (90).

Like the WPA who coordinates a WAC program, the WPA in an FYS program must educate colleagues about best practices in composition pedagogy. She must offer many examples of ways to incorporate best practices into the seminar curriculum, preferably examples drawn from colleagues in several disciplines. She must help with assignment design, with ways to structure peer response, and with providing feedback to students on preliminary drafts as well as final drafts. Unlike the WPA's work with faculty teaching writing in their own disciplines, however, this work asks faculty to see themselves in the role of FYC instructors, preparing first-year stu-

dents to read critically and to use writing as a way of thinking and engaging in the critical, analytical discourse of democratic, as well as academic, citizenship.

The introduction to the “WPA Outcomes Statement for First-Year Composition” cautions,

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. (60-61)

The WPA must take an active role in the faculty development programs attached to the FYS and perhaps even create additional opportunities. In my own experience, and in the reports of other FYS programs that I researched as principal writer for the Gustavus Adolphus College program, faculty development most commonly takes the form of a summer workshop (perhaps a week long) and some meetings as the seminar is underway. At Gustavus, faculty meet in an intensive, stipended workshop for an entire week at the beginning of summer and then periodically through the year. The workshop focuses on the common components of the first-term seminar: critical thinking, writing, discussion, addressing questions of values, advising the freshman student. Not surprisingly, the teaching of writing spills over into all of the other categories and faculty design courses with significant opportunities for students to use writing for learning as well as for writing and revising formal papers. At Willamette University, with its common readings World Views course, half-day workshops begin a semester ahead, resume a week or two before school starts, and include a full day devoted to the teaching of writing. During the fall semester, the entire World Views faculty meet weekly to discuss how they will approach the texts, what writing assignments they will make, and how their own disciplinary interests affect their teaching.

What is a bit more difficult, as everyone with WAC experience has discovered, is sustaining and renewing interest in pedagogy. At Willamette University, where the creation of the WAC program and the designation of the existing FYS program as the first writing-centered course were simultaneous, faculty had many opportunities to participate in workshops on teaching writing, but little with serious attention to the FYS as distinct from writing-centered courses in the disciplines. For the fall 2000 faculty, I wrote a small grant to fund additional faculty development in writing. A working group of ten faculty met throughout the summer to study problems in teaching writing. During the fall semester, they met before

assigning each of the four papers to discuss appropriate, effective, challenging assignments; they met again to read samples of the papers these assignments generated. This practice was so helpful that faculty continued to meet to discuss assignments over lunch the next year, and shared their discussion and assignments on the faculty email list. In Summer 2003, a similar working group will form to discuss and adapt for our campus the “WPA Outcomes Statement,” with which many seminar faculty are already familiar (see below), and a new plagiarism statement, as well as review the assessments of student writing in the seminar and program assessments of the seminar conducted this year.

The “WPA Outcomes Statement for First-Year Composition” was published during my first year as the WPA at Willamette University and as a member of the faculty teaching in the World Views seminar. I distributed it to my World Views colleagues during the annual summer workshop for the next fall. They read it almost as insiders, noting its congruence with Willamette’s goals for creating a culture of writing on campus. Some examples might justify this claim. The current iteration of World Views focuses on ancient Athens (other iterations have included Latin America, Victorian England, and the Middle East). Students read a variety of primary texts from the fifth century, BCE: Aeschylus, *Oresteia*; The Acropolis and the Parthenon (architecture as text); Euripides, *The Bacchae*; Aristophanes, *The Clouds* and Plato, *Republic* or the dialogues of trial and death (*Euthyphro*, *Crito*, *Apology*, *Phaedo*); Aristophanes, *Lysistrata* and Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian Wars*. Reading each of these texts engaged faculty and students in talking about rhetorical situations and genres. What does it mean that a play presented at the foot of the Acropolis, to what may well have been an all-male audience, figures Athenian and Spartan men as victims of their passions and a woman as superior strategist? How do Plato and Thucydides use dialogue differently? Why does each of them fear the power of oratory? How does the Parthenon tell Athenians who they are? How does the Oregon State Capitol (literally across the street from Willamette) tell Oregonians who they are? Faculty quite explicitly introduce questions of how genre shapes reception, how writers address different audiences differently, and how language, knowledge, and power are related.

Many also ask their students to write in a variety of genres—to create a dialogue, for example, about culture, language, power, and emotion between the Lapiths and Centaurs or a messenger speech for a Melian escaped from the siege. Some faculty ask their students to produce first a dialogue and then to represent the argument in an essay. As is common of most writing-intensive courses at most institutions, faculty are expected regularly to incorporate informal writing into classroom activity as well as

to assign formal writing that will go through stages of generating, regenerating, revising, editing, and proofreading, with feedback from multiple audiences.

My colleagues welcome the stated expectation that first-year students “control such surface features as syntax, grammar, punctuation, and spelling” (WPA 63); they also applaud its position at the end of the list of outcomes. To varying degrees, they understand how it is related to sections on process and rhetorical knowledge. Like all other audiences for whom writers write, they differ in their assignment of importance to various of these features.

Perhaps the FYS taught by faculty from across the curriculum—that is, without formal, graduate school training in composition—seems an unreliable, ill-advised first-year composition course. I hope I have described curricular and pedagogical practices that make it clear that the FYS is neither a reduced, simple way to attempt the outcomes which lie at the very heart of liberal education nor an undertaking by faculty ill-prepared or unconcerned to understand “how students actually learn to write.”

THE RELEVANCE OF THE FIRST-YEAR SEMINAR FOR WPAs

Perhaps the institution of the FYS has received so little critical attention from writing program administrators and rhetoric-composition scholars because it has seemed an instance of abolitionism, a misconception I hope I have corrected.⁸ Perhaps the fact that FYS now exists most visibly in baccalaureate liberal arts colleges relegates it to the periphery. The writing programs of liberal arts colleges—and their administrators—as Tom Amorose has pointed out, are generally unremarked in the literature (85). Perhaps in the form I’ve described—as the college-wide first-year composition course, taught by faculty across the disciplines—it has seemed an innovation unavailable to institutions whose budgets depend on graduate teaching assistants and adjunct faculty for major portions of undergraduate education, particularly general education.

If the FYS model were to be adopted at other kinds of institutions—with different faculties, different students, different missions—it would surely take different forms, just as there are local variations within the overall common course/topical course division. But it surely *could* find local names and habitation at many more institutions than it does now. It seems most likely that the FYS model would move first to more of the baccalaureate institutions, where commitment to general education and to teaching generally is strongest (as evidenced in the criteria for tenure and promotion). But that it *could* be adapted also to the master’s institutions and research universities also seems likely, if perhaps only as an option among other forms of FYC. In any event, baccalaureate colleges make up 39% of

the institutions granting four-year degrees (master's colleges and universities another 43% and research universities 18%); that's a lot of WPA positions, a large share of the future for new rhetoric and composition PhDs, and reason enough to consider the innovations in FYC that baccalaureate liberal arts colleges contribute.

The well-developed FYS programs have much to offer other institutions from their experience, most notably in faculty development. Because the FYS is taught by faculty across the curriculum—as nothing else is—it generates considerable enthusiasm for faculty development programs on campus. At both colleges, I have found that faculty enter FYS teaching with considerable anxiety about teaching writing. Because the FYS *is* across the curriculum, nobody is afraid to express this anxiety. For a chemist, for example, admitting uncertainty about how to teach writing isn't as threatening as admitting uncertainty about how to conduct a lab. It isn't even as threatening as admitting uncertainty about how to evaluate the chem lab write-ups the majors produce. Faculty come willingly to these workshops—and follow up with phone calls, emails, and visits—because they genuinely want to teach writing well. Of course, it is also true that like faculty teaching FYC, their continued commitment to best practices and curricular agreements varies widely.

The success of faculty development initiatives for freshman seminars is seen in two additional ways. First, faculty discourse about writing changes, slowly perhaps, but it changes. A well-conceived faculty development program begins by providing a theoretical basis for understanding best practices. The commonplace dismissal of peer response workshops as a waste of time gradually gives way to the recognition that there are other reasons for students to read each others' papers than to correct spelling, for example. The suspicion that comments on drafts will simply lead to grade inflation gradually gives way to an appreciation for the role of reflective readers as a writer's ideas are forming in words. Second, faculty report that they use writing for learning techniques in other classes now, too. They report that they can no longer teach any other way. They find that they want to assign more papers and encourage more revision in their disciplinary courses. They support WAC programs by redesigning their courses to receive a writing designation. Writing across the curriculum, both with and without formal recognition, flourishes at the colleges with a first-year seminar program. Thus, the great writing program goal for faculty development—to so infuse writing across the curriculum that it no longer requires special designation—becomes quite imaginable.

How the FYS would, in new sites, reform FYC, invigorate WAC, and affect the careers of the current composition workforce remains the work of the writing program administrators and their colleagues in those sites.

There is much work yet to be documented in how local FYS programs work with the Outcomes Statement and, in fact, how FYS courses affect student learning, WAC, and disciplinary knowledge about writing and learning to write. What I have attempted to demonstrate is that the replacement of first-year composition by a first-year seminar can advance the college mission, elevate the teaching of first-year writing, free writing faculty to create and staff courses beyond FYC, invite greater participation in writing across the curriculum, and enhance faculty development opportunities.

NOTES

¹ See the fuller text for these recommendations in the full Boyer Commission report:

II.2. All first-year students should have a freshman seminar, limited in size, taught by experienced faculty, and requiring extensive writing, as a normal part of their experience. (from “II: Construct an Inquiry-based Freshman Year”)

V.2. The freshman composition course should relate to other classes taken simultaneously and be given serious intellectual content, or it should be abolished in favor of an integrated writing program in all courses. The course should emphasize explanation, analysis, and persuasion, and should develop the skills of brevity and clarity. (from “V: Link Communication Skills and Course Work”)

One might quibble with the Commission’s implication that FYC does not generally have “serious intellectual content,” or indeed that “brevity” merits special recognition as a goal of FYC.

² For additional information about the Willamette University FYS, World Views, visit its Website: www.willamette.edu/cla/wviews.

³ The generic description of the Gustavus Adolphus College “first-term seminar” is under “graduation requirements” in the catalog, online at www.gustavus.edu.

⁴ The 2000 Carnegie Classifications introduce new categories and descriptions. What was, since 1973, the distinction between Baccalaureate I and II was “selectivity.” The distinction now, between Baccalaureate-Liberal Arts and Baccalaureate General is curricular: liberal arts schools are characterized as having more than 50% of their majors in liberal arts fields. The data which support my claims come from a survey I conducted of the Websites of all of the Baccalaureate, Master’s II, and Research University (“Extensive” and “Intensive” now replacing R-1 and R-2 categories) institutions and approximately 20% of the 500 Master’s I institutions. I found information about writing requirements for approximately 75% of the Baccalaureate and Research institutions, and, taking into account the Master’s institutions, for 52.5%, or 735, of all 1398 institutions listed in the

Carnegie classifications. I plan to report on this survey more fully elsewhere. Of 53 FYS programs which met my criteria as the only FYC course and as taught by faculty from across the curriculum, 40 were in schools classified as private Baccalaureate-Liberal Arts.

⁵ It is likely that the absence of any existing writing requirement muted any arguments that English was “not doing its job,” or that the department’s faculty should be reduced; indeed, the new writing program resulted in an additional position, that of the writing program coordinator. I am grateful to my colleague Claude Brew for these insights. A narrative of the first years of the Gustavus Adolphus writing program may be found in chapters 2 and 4 of William Zinsser’s *Writing to Learn*.

⁶ The history of the creation of Willamette University’s writing program is included in Karen Langdon’s master’s thesis “The Willamette Writing Program: Faculty Perceptions during Its Pilot Year,” 41-47.

⁷ The MLA’s 1997 Report by the Committee on Professional Employment cites the following statistics for the staffing of first-year composition:

- In the PhD-granting departments, graduate student instructors taught 63% of the first-year writing sections, part-timers 19%, and full-time non-tenure-track faculty members 14%, on average.
- In the departments where the MA was the highest degree granted, graduate student instructors taught 11% of the first-year writing sections, part-timers 42%, and full-time non-tenure-track faculty members 11%, on average.
- In the departments where the BA was the highest degree granted, part-time faculty members taught 38% of the first-year writing sections and full-time non-tenure-track faculty members 12%, on average. (MLA)

This means that tenured or tenure-track faculty taught 4% of the sections, on average, at PhD-granting institutions, 36% at Master’s degree-granting institutions, and 50% at Baccalaureate institutions. If we can’t staff FYC out of the English department, will we find it any easier to staff a First-Year Seminar? Nevertheless, many small college WPAs have developed undergraduate writing programs that meet these challenges.

⁸ The abolition debate has a long, discontinuous history, summarized and annotated in the “Conclusion and Postscript” to James Berlin’s *Rhetoric and Reality* and given new arguments by Sharon Crowley’s “A Personal Essay on Freshman English,” (*Composition in the University*), and given the label of “new abolitionism” by Robert Connors (1995). It has flourished sporadically on the WPA-L listserv, particularly in April 1993, June 1994, November-December 1997, and August-September 2000.

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