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college and university faculty who serve or have served as directors of first-year
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writing workshops, chairpersons and members of writing-program-related
committees, or in similar administrative capacities. The Council of Writing
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*WPA: Writing Program Administration* publishes articles and essays concerning the organization, administration, practices, and aims of college and university writing programs. Possible topics include the education and support of writing teachers; the intellectual and administrative work of WPAs; the situation of writing programs within both academic institutions and broader contexts; the programmatic implications of current theories, technologies, and research; relationships between WPAs and other administrators and between writing and other academic programs; placement; assessment; and the professional status of WPAs.

The previous list is meant to be suggestive, not exhaustive, but contributions must be appropriate to the interests and concerns of those who administer writing programs. The editors welcome empirical research (quantitative as well as qualitative), historical research, and theoretical, essayistic, or reflective pieces.

The length of submissions should be approximately 2,000 to 5,000 words, although the journal occasionally will publish shorter or longer pieces when the subject matter warrants. Articles should be suitably documented using the current MLA Style Manual. For citations of Internet resources, use the *Columbia Guide to Online Style.*

Please submit only *electronic* of manuscripts as WORD or rich text (.rtf) attachments, with the author identified only on a separate cover letter. Submissions are anonymously reviewed by the Editorial Board. The editors aspire to respond within two months after the receipt of the submission.

Authors whose works are accepted for publication will be asked to submit a final version following a style sheet that will be provided. Please double-check all citations. Illustrations should be submitted as print-ready copy in electronic format. Authors will also be asked to submit a 100-word biography for inclusion in the “Contributors” section of the journal.

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**In addition to the general guidelines set forth in the Author’s Guide, book reviewers should include a summary of the text, some discussion regarding the text’s construction, as well as an evaluation of the text’s relevance to the profession. The review should be between 1500-2000 words.**

---

Author’s Guide

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Letter from the Editors

We want to use this space to thank those who have contributed time, effort, and expertise to the journal.

We especially thank members of our editorial board (all of whom are listed on the front pages of the journal) for their conscientious work. These board members have freely offered their time and talent to

- review manuscripts for us, now numbering more than fifty since we started editing the journal in 2004. Each manuscript is sent to at least two readers, and always our editorial board members respond with lengthy, thoughtful comments that help guide authors as they work to revise their manuscripts.

- meet with us at CCCC and at WPA for “grounding sessions,” where we collectively discuss a manuscript under consideration by the journal. This step in our process helps all of us to be on the same page, so to speak, regarding ways manuscripts are evaluated. It also provides a bonus of lively comments and suggestions for the authors of those texts.

We also thank you, the readers of WPA, for sending us your interesting and thought-provoking writing. Because of your many strong submissions, we have planned the next few issues, and we are now scheduling essays for publication in 2007.

As board members know, once a manuscript has been reviewed, we share reader comments among ourselves, so each reviewer can see what his or her counterparts had to say about a manuscript. This process was originally suggested by Ed White. Thanks, Ed.

The fall 2006 issue will be a special ESL issue, currently being edited by Paul Kei Matsuda of the University of New Hampshire. We’re also working with several other people who have suggested special issues of the journal, so watch for future topic announcements in our issues, or contact us directly.

Greg Gian, Duane Roen, and Barry Maid
Arizona State University
Literature Requirements in the Curricula of Writing Degrees and Concentrations: Examining a Shifting Institutional Relationship

Carl R. Lovitt

Setting the Stage

In the early 1980s, the writing faculty in the Clemson University Department of English, a significant minority in the department, developed a proposal for a master’s degree in technical communication. When the proposal was presented to colleagues at a department meeting, it was overwhelmingly voted down by the literature faculty. A member of the committee that developed the proposal recalls that a literature professor who vehemently opposed the proposal insistently equated the study of technical communication with auto mechanics.

Over the next decade, Clemson’s English department underwent changes that made it a more hospitable environment for writing faculty. The department hired four full-time writing specialists; three former literature specialists increasingly focused their teaching and research on writing, and several new upper-level courses in writing were approved and taught. Even to the more traditional literature faculty members in the department, it was obvious that writing enjoyed considerably more prominence within English studies than it had previously and that its stature as an academic discipline had significantly increased in recent years. In this improved climate, the writing faculty felt the time was right to resurrect the plan for a graduate degree in professional writing.

Determined not to repeat the mistake of their predecessors, the writing faculty shared drafts of the proposal and solicited feedback from other departmental colleagues throughout the development process. A suggestion had been made to require at least three credits of literature in the program’s course requirements, but the writing faculty had decided not to take that
suggestion on the grounds that many of the students who matriculate into a “professional writing” program would have neither the background to succeed in a graduate-level literature course, nor would they have an interest in literary study. Yet when the proposal came to the full department for a vote, the literature faculty, which still represented a substantial majority of the department, insisted that they could not approve an English department degree that did not include a literature requirement. Rather than face the defeat of this second attempt to institute a graduate degree, the writing faculty reluctantly agreed to require three credits of literature in exchange for the department’s approval. To this day, students in the program are required to complete a minimum of three credits of literature.

**Framing the Questions**

The preceding case clearly illustrates the influence of power and departmental politics on curricular outcomes. But how representative is this scenario? The present study seeks to determine whether the experiences in this particular department typify the relationship between literature and writing in English departments. This study focuses on three questions raised by the preceding case as they apply to undergraduate and graduate degrees and to concentrations in writing. The answers to those questions will give WPAs a national perspective on the curricula of writing degree programs, as well as give them insights into trends in the evolution of those curricula.

The first question is whether and to what extent degrees and concentrations in writing require students to complete literature courses. John Schilb, for example, indicates that “most graduate programs in [composition] still make their students take some courses in literature” (168). The question does not assume that required courses in literature are inimical to the goals of a writing curriculum, although they may well be, as suggested by the preceding case in which graduate students who may have no academic interest in literary study are required to complete a literature course.

Assuming that some English departments do require literature in the curricula of their writing degrees and concentrations, the second question to be asked is “Why?” On what basis do English departments require such courses? What is the department’s justification or rationale for the requirement?

Finally, as the case also illustrates, the eventual approval of a graduate degree in writing depended on a change in the literature/writing dynamic within the department. Surveys conducted by the Modern Language Association (MLA) and its subsidiary the Association of Departments of English (ADE) confirm that English departments throughout the United States experienced a similar transformation in the relationship between literature and writing during the last two decades of the twentieth century. Many English departments established new degrees in writing, enrollments in many writing degrees increased while those in many literature degrees experienced declines, and writing faculty now wield considerable influence in many English departments. For example, in “The 1981–82 Writing and Literature Survey: Courses and Programs,” Art Young reported, “Many departments have recently made curricular changes in response to demands for writing courses from students, from faculty in disciplines other than English, and from employers. These changes include new bachelor and graduate degree programs, new writing options in existing programs, new minors in writing, and numerous new writing courses” (par. 6). The following year, in “The 1982–83 Writing and Literature Survey: Courses and Programs,” Young and his colleagues Mike Gorman and Margaret Gorman found “[…] evidence that English departments are changing, that the emphasis on writing courses is increasing and the emphasis on literature is decreasing” (par. 17). According to their survey findings, a combined 70% of PhD-, MA-, and BA-granting institutions reported that enrollments in writing courses had increased “significantly in the last five years,” whereas 32% of the same sample of institutions reported that enrollments in literature courses had decreased “significantly” during that same period (Young, Gorman, and Gorman Table 7). In their “Report on the 1983–84 Survey of the English Sample,” Bettina J. Huber and Art Young confirm this trend as it applied specifically to the “technical communication major”: “[…]although technical communication is the least common undergraduate degree program in English, it is the most likely to have grown. . . . Almost three-quarters of the departments offering a degree program in technical communication reported growth, as compared with one-half for creative writing and two-fifths for the English major” (par. 30). Moreover, Bettina J. Huber reported in “Undergraduate English Programs: Findings from an MLA Survey of the 1991–92 Academic Year” that the percentage of four-year departments permitting a concentration in “Writing (e.g., professional, technical)” number had increased to 45.9% from the 29.2% reporting such a concentration in the 1984–85 survey (Table 4, 66).

In “Report on the 1983–84 Survey of the English Sample,” Huber and Young found that these trends applied to graduate English degree programs as well. Of the English departments in their sample that offered a graduate degree in rhetoric, 78.3% reported that the degree program had “experienced growth,” as compared to the 25.8% that reported experiencing growth in their graduate degree programs in British and American literature (Table 1).
Thus, a final question to be asked is whether such changes in the writing-literature balance in English departments have influenced the practice of requiring students in writing degrees and concentrations to complete one or more courses in literature.

Conducting the Study

For answers to the preceding questions, I designed a survey instrument (see Appendix), which I mailed to the 722 members of the Association of Departments of English (ADE) in fall 2002. With 2,722 postsecondary English departments in the United States, the ADE member departments represent 26% of the total. I received 245 responses, which represent 34% of the ADE membership or approximately 9% of the postsecondary English departments in the United States. Because the survey inquired exclusively about the inclusion of literature courses in writing degree curricula, only responses from departments that offered degrees (or degree concentrations) in writing were usable. Of the 245 anonymized responses, 89 indicated that they did not offer degrees in writing (including nine that offered only the associate's degree). In other words, 65% of the responding departments offer at least one degree, or degree concentration, in writing. Because some responding departments offer more than one writing degree, the 156 usable responses (22% of the sample) represent 218 writing degree programs, which break down as follows by degree-granting status: 16 PhD programs, 64 MA programs, 138 BA programs.

Tabulating the Results

Survey respondents were asked to indicate whether students enrolled in the writing degree program were required to complete a course in literature. Overall, the breakdown of writing-degree curricula that include literature as a requirement is as follows:

Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Degree</th>
<th>Number of Degrees</th>
<th>Number and Percentage of Degrees Requiring Literature</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>6 (37.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MA</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>42 (65%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BA</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>116 (84%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>218</td>
<td>164 (75%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These results confirm that literature courses are required in a majority (75%) of writing-degree curricula. However, as the writing degrees become more advanced, the number of degree programs that require literature decreases significantly, with only 37.5% of PhD writing-degree programs requiring literature, as opposed to 65% at the MA level and 84% at the BA level. Such evidence that literary study is excluded from the curricula of many advanced writing programs, at the very least, invites questions about the justification for housing literature and writing in the same department.

The survey results also justify a further analysis based on the specific title or focus of the degree. Tables 2 through 6 indicate the correlation at each degree level between the specific degree titles or specializations and the inclusion of literature in the curriculum.

Table 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title of Degree</th>
<th>Number of Degrees</th>
<th>Number and Percentage of Degrees Requiring Literature</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rhetoric and Composition*</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3 (27%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Writing**</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creative Dissertation</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discourse Theory</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>6 (37.5%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* The term “Rhetoric and Composition” is also used generically in all relevant tables in this essay to refer to such degree titles as “Writing,” “Writing and Linguistics,” “Rhetoric, Writing, and Language,” etc.

** The term “Professional Writing” is also used generically in all relevant tables in this essay to refer to such degrees as “Professional Communication,” “Technical Communication,” “Technical Writing,” “Technical & Professional Communication,” “International Technical Communication,” “Professional Writing and Editing,” etc.

Table 3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title of Concentration</th>
<th>Number of Degrees</th>
<th>Number and Percentage of Degrees Requiring Literature</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rhetoric and Composition</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>13 (81%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Writing</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creative Writing</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>25 (89%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The responses in the preceding tables suggest three notable conclusions:

1. A degree in English at either the BA or MA level will almost certainly include a literature requirement, regardless of the specific writing concentration or emphasis.

2. A degree in professional writing is the least likely to include a literature requirement, with the incidence of such a requirement apparently decreasing with each higher degree level: 39% of BA programs in professional writing require literature in contrast with 8% of MA programs in professional writing require literature. (Although neither of the two PhD programs in professional writing that responded requires literature, the number reporting is too small to support any generalizations.) To some respondents, the relative infrequency of literature requirements in professional writing programs reflects a perception that such programs pursue fundamentally different goals from those of other English programs. As one respondent whose department offers a degree in professional writing puts it, “Literature is not included because the writing faculty are more interested in technology.”

3. A degree in creative writing, at any level, is likely to include a literature requirement. To a slightly lesser extent, that is also true of degree programs in rhetoric and composition. This finding may suggest that the field of “rhetoric and composition,” with its enduring ties in many programs to literature and essayist literacy, is conceptually associated more closely with the field of English than is “professional writing,” which tends to focus more on workplace communication and, increasingly, on information management.

### Table 4.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title of Degree</th>
<th>Number of Degrees</th>
<th>Number and Percentage of Degrees Requiring Literature</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rhetoric and Composition</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6 (60%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Writing</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1 (8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MFA</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7 (64%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other*</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>17 (47%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Teaching of English; Writing, Theory & Criticism; Writing & Literature

### Table 5.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title of Concentration</th>
<th>Number of Degrees</th>
<th>Number and Percentage of Degrees Requiring Literature</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rhetoric and Composition</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>30 (91%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Writing</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>17 (94%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creative Writing</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>29 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other*</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>83 (95%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Language, journalism, public relations, communication arts

### Table 6.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title of Degree</th>
<th>Number of Degrees</th>
<th>Number and Percentage of Degrees Requiring Literature</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rhetoric and Composition</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Writing</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>11 (39%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creative Writing</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other*</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2 (67%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>33 (65%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Journalism, communication arts, literature and writing

### Explaining the Literature Requirement

The survey instrument asked respondents to indicate the principal rationale for including literature in the writing curriculum. Responses to this open-ended question fall into four broad categories:

1. **Reading directly enhances writing** (33%, n=52). Respondents who presented this rationale contend that reading literature leads to improved writing, with some insisting that becoming a good writer necessitates literary study. Reading and writing are seen as necessary complements, with eighteen respondents explicitly stating that writing requires reading, and another eight respondents insisting that writers need to be exposed to models of good—even “the best”—writing through literary study. Eight other respondents believe that...
literary study benefits writers by broadening their perspective on discourse and rhetoric.

2. *Literary study inherently benefits students* (20%, n=31). Nine respondents insist that literary study humanizes students and contributes to their liberal education. Eight others believe that literary study is necessary to develop students’ critical and analytical skills. Similarly, fourteen other respondents support the requirement of literary study because it cultivates skills that prepare students for future employment.

3. *Literary study is integral to English studies* (20%, n=32). As implied by the finding above that a writing concentration within a degree in English is most likely to require literature, 25 respondents declared that degrees in English presuppose literary study, with several stating that it was inconceivable to award a degree in English without requiring literary study. The following statement summarizes that position: “The majority of our department cannot fathom a student getting a degree in English without that student having significant literary exposure. To most in our department, English = Literature.” Another seven respondents believe that all majors in English departments should experience the breadth of the discipline, which must include literary study.

4. *Literary requirements reflect the distribution of power in English departments* (15%, n=24). Nineteen respondents claimed that literature requirements in writing degree programs reflect the dominance of literature faculty in English departments. As one respondent expressed it, “All of our full professors and the great majority of our associate professors are literature specialists who do not want to give up literature as central to English and even central to the liberal arts.” Documenting a similar but inverse influence of departmental politics on curriculum, five other respondents indicated that a shift in dominance within their departments from the literature to the writing faculty had resulted in the reduction or elimination of literature requirements in their writing degree programs.

**Examining a Shifting Relationship**

Although change in English departments is alleged to move at the speed of glaciers, the final example in the preceding section illustrates that departments are not static and that changes in departmental demographics may entail corresponding changes in curricula. This survey confirms that the inclusion of a literature requirement in writing degrees is one of the places where such changes may become manifest. Table 7 records the responses to the survey question about whether and how the literature requirement of writing degrees had changed since 2000 (a year arbitrarily selected as the cut-off point simply to determine whether revisions in writing degree curricula had been recently implemented).

Table 7 confirms that a large majority (79%) of writing degree programs that include literature as a requirement had not changed this requirement in the three years prior to the administration of the survey in fall 2002. While this finding overwhelmingly affirms the legendary stability of academic curricula, the fact that more than 20% of the respondents reported a recent change in their writing degree’s literature requirement suggests that this issue is a node of ongoing debate within English departments. And, while the numbers are still too small to speak of a trend, the survey results also show that writing degrees requiring literature are five times more likely to reduce or eliminate the requirement than they are to increase it.

**Table 7.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title of Degree</th>
<th>Number of Degrees Requiring Literature</th>
<th>Literature Requirement Increased</th>
<th>Literature Requirement Unchanged</th>
<th>Literature Requirement Reduced</th>
<th>Literature Requirement Eliminated</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PhD in Rhetoric/</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PhD in English w/ Creative</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PhD in Discourse Theory</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MA in English</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MA in Rhetoric/</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MA in English</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MFA</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BA in English w/ Rhetoric/</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
None of the increases in the literature requirement occurred at the MA or PhD level. The only increases in the literature requirement occurred in baccalaureate degree programs, with five of the six reported increases occurring in creative writing degrees. The one respondent who reported an increase in the literature requirement of a BA in professional writing degree explained that “the slight increase in [the literature requirement of] the professional writing program reflects the addition of a departmental core which includes a literature course.”

In contrast, respondents at every level and in nearly every degree category reported that the literature requirement of its writing degree(s) had been reduced. Graduate degrees in writing either made no changes in the literature requirement or they reduced it. The reductions indicate that some departments are reconsidering the appropriateness of literature in the curricula of advanced writing degrees. A respondent representing a PhD program in English with a concentration in rhetoric and composition volunteered that the department had converted its literature requirement from a requirement to an elective “to give students more leeway in putting together their programs.” BA degrees in professional writing exhibited the most dramatic patterns of reducing or eliminating the literature requirement, with more than 70% of the degrees reporting such changes.

When asked to explain any changes in the literature requirement of their writing degrees, a number of respondents indicated that literature requirements had been reduced in response to increased offerings of advanced and specialized courses in writing. Whereas several respondents noted simply that more writing and communication courses were now being offered, one respondent described the gradual erosion of the literature requirement as a natural result of the growth of his English department’s professional writing degree:

We started out as a minor in the English dept. And had five courses in technical communication and all the rest were literature. We slowly replaced one lit class after another with courses such as Design of Manuals, Instructional Design, Designing Online Information, Designing Information for the Web and so on to our original five courses. Now we have no literature requirement in our TPC [BA in Technical and Professional Communication] curriculum. Our majors take one literature class just as every other student in the university to fulfill their liberal arts general education degree.

Other explanations for the decrease in or elimination of literature requirements included such diverse responses as dropping a Shakespeare requirement, reducing the overall hours in the curriculum, or converting to the semester system. Two respondents specifically attributed a reduction in their literature requirements to student opposition to taking literature courses, with one noting that “not all writing students want to write about literature” and the other commenting that “the non-lit faculty and students oppose too much emphasis on lit.” One respondent also confirmed the correlation between degrees in English and literature requirements that was noted earlier: when the department converted from a BA in English with a concentration in technical communication to a BS in technical communication (and from an MA in English with a concentration in rhetoric and composition to an MA in rhetoric and composition), “literature became one elective among many.”

Several survey respondents also indicated recent changes in the literature requirement of writing degrees, even though the requirement had not specifically been reduced. For example, one respondent mentioned that the literature requirement had been loosened to allow students more freedom in the choice of literature courses. Another mentioned that the literature requirement in a graduate degree had been changed to a prerequisite. A third noted that substitutions were being increasingly allowed for literature courses, and a fourth observed that fewer writing degree candidates were electing to fulfill a cognate requirement by taking literature courses. Describing the
rationale for its substitution of a “texts in context” requirement for a literature requirement, another department had concluded that exposing writing students to a broader base of texts would do a better job of cultivating their analytical skills than a narrowly conceived literature requirement. Without further explanation, three other respondents similarly stated that the literature requirement had been changed but not reduced.

These indications of change in the literature requirement of writing degrees may not tell the whole story, however. Reporting on writing degree programs that had not changed their literature requirement, several respondents volunteered that some degrees were approved too recently to have undergone curricular revision. Respondents from fourteen departments stated that their writing degrees were less than three years old, with some having been approved the previous year and with two still pending final approval. Although these new degrees at the baccalaureate level typically include a literature requirement ranging from three to twelve credits, whether the degrees will opt to retain the original requirement will probably not be apparent for a few years.

Tentative Conclusions

This survey convincingly demonstrates the persistent association of degrees in English with the study of literature. However, the survey suggests that the presence of literature requirements in some writing degree programs may not necessarily reflect the will of those who teach in and administer those degree programs, but instead reflect the distribution of faculty and power within English departments. As one respondent explained, “The rationale for those required literature courses is not one developed by the writing faculty.” Another respondent elaborated as follows about the fundamental philosophical and cultural differences separating those who teach literature from those who teach writing in the department:

[T]here is a very great difference between the ways that some of our faculty, trained in composition and rhetoric, see the project of teaching reading and writing, as opposed to the ways that literature folks approach these tasks. In practical terms, it is hard to get good and appropriate questions asked about our new course proposals, hard to teach our Personnel Committee to read evaluations of our classes, and hard sometimes to hold a discussion with faculty who assume that we share a belief that the study and practice of language started with Shakespeare. I think this difference is felt more acutely by the comp/rhet folks than the literature folks, and our students feel it as well.

Responses to the survey nevertheless indicate that curricular changes in many departments are leading to a redistribution of that power and to concomitant changes in the culture of English departments. Instead of rejecting the development of writing programs as inimical to their mission and encouraging the separation that some compositionists have called for, many English departments have adopted a strategy of accommodating the increasing demand for writing courses and programs, however begrudgingly. Not only had fourteen of the responding departments recently approved new degrees and concentrations in writing, three others volunteered that they were either “developing” or “considering developing” separate degrees in writing. As three other departments indicated, even some traditional literature curricula are being revised to incorporate more writing courses, with one “considering a path in the literature major that includes more writing,” and another “slowly working toward the possibility of ‘loosening’ the core requirement for the English major, making it possible for professional writing and rhetoric students to take fewer literature courses.” Moreover, the survey indicates that many English departments are relaxing their insistence that literature be included in the writing curriculum. Although two of the responding departments stated that they had recently reviewed and reaffirmed the literature requirement of their writing degrees, 29 of the 164 writing degrees that require literature had either reduced or eliminated the requirement between 2000 and 2002.

Support for the proliferation of degree programs in writing may be interpreted as a pragmatic response by English departments to a dramatic shift of student interest in English department offerings, as well as to a significant decline in public support for liberal arts education (cf. Hersh). John Guillory has critiqued this social depreciation of literary study as a “cultural capital flight,” which he explains as follows: “[t]he professional-managerial class has made the correct assessment that, so far as its future profit is concerned, the reading of great works is not worth the investment of very much time or money” (46). In contrast, he notes that students now “regard composition as a necessary prerequisite for entry into professional life” (81). But few writing specialists would comfortably identify with Guillory’s attributing composition’s “new institutional significance” to its “providing the future technobureaucratic elite with precisely and only the linguistic competence necessary for the performance of its specialized function” (264). Linda Ray Pratt raises the same concern when she warns that “what the public and our colleagues in other disciplines want from such courses is grammatical competence and computer literacy, not the self-reflexive writer who is conscious of rhetorical strategies and how language reveals values” (29). Concerned
that independent writing programs will be hard pressed to promote the values of the liberal arts, Pratt’s recommendation is to reaffirm the link between literature and writing:

[F]ew of us would want our departments either reduced to little more than a core composition curriculum or split so that writing becomes a separate area from its connections to literary study. Disconnected from the study of literature, composition will face more pressure to serve vocational interests as just a literacy tool for business and information technology. *English* as I use the term describes a loosely organized discipline that attempts to integrate and theorize the study of literature and writing (27).

WPAs in independent writing or rhetoric departments are probably not the only ones who would bristle at this suggestion that literature somehow empowers writing programs to resist pressures to serve narrowly defined vocational interests. Still, Pratt does raise a serious issue that should concern anyone who teaches in English departments when she notes that “in many institutions, business and engineering colleges have already set up their own alternative composition courses tailored to teach the kind of writing that supports the skills of students they aim to produce” (29). Serving a narrowly functional conception of writing, writing programs such as these threaten to impoverish writing instruction in higher education and to deprive students of the critical aptitude they will need to communicate effectively as professionals or to make informed judgments as citizens. In the face of such developments, WPAs must either take an active role in challenging these misappropriations of writing or lobby for an active role in their administration. But writing programs do not need literature to authorize such initiatives. Instead, I would argue that writing programs belong in English departments not because they require the proximity of literary studies to ensure their integrity but because writing and literature programs share a fundamental commitment to cultivating students’ complementary critical literacies as writers and readers, literacies which are integral to their liberal education, the very point Guillory makes when he affirms “the institutional interdependence of composition and literature, widely misrecognized as a disrelation” (79).

For it is not simply that writing programs have proliferated in response to increased demands from students and from information managers but rather that writing programs have evolved within the professional lifetime of our more senior English teachers into disciplines whose academic stature and rigor equals that of literature programs. In many English departments, tenure-line faculty members with PhDs in rhetoric and composition or professional writing teach an assortment of advanced undergraduate and graduate writing courses and publish research in respected journals. Composition programs, writing centers, and undergraduate and graduate degree programs in English departments throughout the United States are now directed by WPAs with those same academic credentials. Yet, as this survey reveals, faculty members who have neither been part of nor understood that evolution still wield considerable influence in many English departments—faculty members whose attitudes about writing courses and programs were shaped at a time when writing in the department consisted of a literature-based composition course and a business writing course contemptuously dismissed for teaching document formats. Such ingrained attitudes may account for the reluctance of some literature faculty to accord writing programs the respect that they enjoy outside of English departments and go a long way toward explaining the insistence on including literature requirements in the curriculum of writing degrees.

The results of this survey suggest these attitudes appear to be losing sway. Such changes are surely attributable to changes in the landscape of many departments that have resulted in greater prominence—and presumably more influence—for writing faculty, courses, and degree programs. But, as the following particularly thoughtful response dramatizes, the shifting relationship between literature and writing may also reflect a concomitant adjustment in the underlying attitudes of some literature faculty, notably those concerning the status of professional writing as a discipline:

At the undergraduate level, the requirements for the specialization have increased at the cost of advanced courses in literature. Respect for the TW [technical writing] courses has also increased. These courses seem to outsiders now to be equivalent to literature courses in substance and depth. (I think they always have been, but the perception has changed.) Constraints on the TW curriculum have relaxed. We no longer have to require students to take literature for their souls or to redeem the corruption of their association with business. (You will hear sarcasm in that statement, but the words are not mine. My own Ph.D. is in literature, and I love literature, but I also respect the corruption of their association with business. You will hear sarcasm in that statement, but the words are not mine. My own Ph.D. is in literature, and I love literature, but I also respect what happens in TW courses and do not think it demeans the people who study it.)

As this survey documents, these are the kinds of changes that have led to a reduction of literature requirements in nearly one out of five departments that offer writing degrees. Insofar as many writing concentrations and degrees are new and several others under development, the number that does not require literature may be expected to increase.
Appendix
Survey of Members of the Association of Departments of English (ADE) in Fall 2002

1. For any writing degree programs offered by your department, please supply the information requested below about the literature component of the curriculum.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program Title</th>
<th>Include Literature</th>
<th>Credits</th>
<th>Include in Writing Degree</th>
<th>Change in Literature</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B.A. in English</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Required</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Unchanged</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.A. in English</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Elective</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Increased</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M.A. in English</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Required</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Eliminated</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. Please briefly explain your department’s principal rationale for including literature in the curriculum of any of your department’s writing degree programs.

3. Please briefly explain any changes in the literature component of your writing degree curriculum in the past three years.

Notes

1 Preliminary results from the survey upon which this essay is based were presented at the CCCC in New York, March 2003. Special thanks to Jeanne Rose and Sandy Feinstein for organizing the panel, and to Art Young and the late Candace Spigelman for their invaluable and generous comments on early drafts of this essay.

2 Throughout this article, the term “professional writing” is also used generically to refer to such degrees as “professional communication,” “technical writing,” “technical and professional communication,” “international technical communication,” “professional writing and editing,” etc.

3 Although I did not originally intend to include “creative writing” programs in the survey, sufficient responding departments included information about their creative writing degrees to warrant including those data in our results. As respondents identified the specific title of any degree for which they provided data (e.g., PhD in Rhetoric and Composition, MFA in English with Writing Emphasis, etc.), there is no possibility that this study confuses “creative writing” programs with other programs in writing. Moreover, as the survey results indicate, creative writing programs stand out among writing programs as those most likely to require literature.

4 In their study of 1995–2000 graduates of doctoral programs in professional, technical, and scientific communication, Cook, Thralls, and Zachry make no mention of literature in their review of the curricula of such programs at twenty-one institutions, supporting my survey finding that the PhD programs in professional writing do not require literature.

5 Persistent beliefs about the inherent benefit of studying literature belie serious and widespread concerns that have been raised about the current state of literary study. As Linda Ray Pratt observes in her contribution to the ADE Bulletin’s special issue on “The Future of English,” “Distinguished scholars such as Robert Scholes and David Damrosch have said that the trouble is we’ve lost confidence that the study of literature means anything” (27). Carl Woodring notes that “Few have questioned that the humanities are capable of preserving values that enhance human life,” but he adds that “Literary study today, then, may be humanistic more by classification than by method or creed” (ix–x). Having abandoned “the search for pure truth that once justified their special status,” the humanities, according to Scholes, are “finding it difficult [. . . ] to explain to the public and to our trustees just what it is that we do—and we are finding it even harder to justify our doing it, especially if we tell the truth about what we are doing” (46–7) John Guillory makes a similar point when he points to “the absence of a rationale for the literary curriculum” (262). Similar arguments have been made by Dinesh D’Souza, Eugene Goodheart, and Roger Kimball, to name but a few.

6 Suggesting the pervasiveness of this perception, John Schilb writes of having to remind the members of a department that is “fairly congenial to composition” that “English” is not synonymous with “literature” (175).

7 These include three MA-level writing programs, five BA degrees in English with a professional writing concentration, three BA degrees in English with a concentration in rhetoric and composition, and three BAs in professional writing. Because the survey did not specifically ask respondents how old their writing pro-
grams were, the number of programs that reported being under three years old is not reliable, but it does suggest that the curricular stability of some programs may partly reflect that they are relatively new programs.  

8 John Schilb has observed a “marked growth of tenure-track jobs in composition,” which he attributes to “that field’s increased professionalization as well as society’s burgeoning need for information managers” (178). As a result, he surmises that “the employment prospects of literature specialists are not likely to brighten soon” (179). An article about the 2004 MLA convention corroborates Schilb’s prediction: noting that “[almost] 50 percent of the graduating Ph.D.’s each year get the full-time tenure track jobs they are looking for,” the article announces that “students in composition and rhetoric face far better chances than those in literature” (Smallwood).

Works Cited

The Progress of Generations

Anthony Baker, Tennessee Tech University
Karen Bishop, University of Southern Indiana
Suellynn Duffey, Georgia Southern University
Jeanne Gunner, Chapman University
Rich Miller, Suffolk University
Shelley Reid, George Mason University

We present this essay as a collection of individual WPA voices addressing the question of how much the WPA experience has changed throughout what we now term the first and second generations of the professionalized WPA. We hold a range of positions, in terms of institutional types, job descriptions, and tenure status; our personal stories are also distinct, by reasons of age, gender, years of (professional) experience, and scholarly interests. Our titles vary, as do our work conditions. But our professional reflections, begun in the 2002 CCCC workshop, “The Intellectual Work of the WPA,” collectively led us to challenge the assumption of progress implicit in many WPA professional development narratives. The progress narrative, constructed as a chronology of increasing institutional status and disciplinary authority, depends on a composite WPA. As our individual WPA experiences suggest, the metaphors that defined and constrained first-generation WPAs—our field’s founders and now-senior members—do not neatly form a past professional era. “Second-generation WPA” may simply mean the latest group to contend with “old” WPA metaphors. We hope our individual views offered in these perspective pieces collectively trouble the WPA progress narrative as we explore our metaphoric houses—and the generations that haunt them.
The WPA on the Professionalization Frontier(s)

Voice One

It’s a heady dream: The Professionalized WPA. So clearly observed in a summer workshop or at a CCC convention gathering, becoming professional in an institutionally defined way makes sense as the goal toward which we all strive—as a field, as individuals. Suppose, then, that all as is as well as can be for a newly hired WPA—for someone like me, entering a department that is for the first time willing to recruit from the relatively new field of composition and rhetoric and from program administration. In one language of progress, the language of generations, I speak from the position of a second-generation WPA: I inhabit grounds well cleared by the department’s first full-time program director. The writing program is well defined; TAs and lecturers are regularly oriented and often educated in regard to composition; the curricular goals bear significant resemblance to elements of the WPA Outcomes Statement for First-Year Composition. The redesigned WPA position comes with course-release time and the assistance and support of a tenured director. Even as a new WPA, I expect to be able to get off the train and step confidently into the new town, “the new immigrant scholar coming to live [. . .] in the culture of the department that hires her” (Fulkerson 134), ready to make further progress.

The generational progress narratives, we WPAs assure ourselves, are grounded in our own recently acquired sense of a national WPA discipline, framed by the slightly older progress narrative of composition and rhetoric. However, the time-based metaphor of generations elides crucial local contexts. Within an institution that has never hired a compositionist, or at a school that hired one twenty years ago and then isolated her in a basement or attic, a WPA progress narrative may be wholly invisible, overwritten by local codes. Except for a few junior faculty members, no one in these situations has encountered a professional WPA before; faculty don’t read CCC or run across George Hillocks or Christine Hult. True, there is now some English Studies cachet to hiring an authentic composition scholar instead of arm-twisting the junior Victorianist into shepherding the TAs, but the department members may not know what an authentic composition scholar is, does, or needs. When Richard Fulkerson worries about the problem of a “mismatch between doctoral preparation and the [new academic job]” (123), his concern is for assistant professors who are unprepared for their departmental roles; but I wonder equally about departments or programs that are unprepared for their new assistant professors. For Fulkerson, active professionalism, which he calls a “professional metacurriculum” (122), is a solution; for me, his idea raises additional questions.

The place-based equivalent of generations is a Turneresque frontier, wherein localities are steadily, progressively being civilized as people move into and through them; yet in reality the frontier is vast, and at any single point in time it hosts simultaneously Kansas City jazz clubs and North Dakota sod huts. In the ten years since I finished graduate school, I’ve seen several frontier English departments come to—and retreat from—various levels of readiness for a professional WPA. One faculty member referred to the department’s new WPA position as “the comp czar,” intending to leave the new professor alone in charge of his or her composition serfs. In another department, a faculty committee promised to rewrite tenure guidelines to recognize administrative work formally, and then the committee simply reinscribed administration under, and subordinate to, “teaching.” A third department hired the WPA candidate whose rhetoric dissertation most involved something like the literature they knew and loved; as she began to publish collaborative essays on feminist rhetorics and electronic discourse theories, though, they grew puzzled, worried, even antagonistic. In a fourth, where all faculty teach writing, there was resistance to the very idea of a writing specialist doing anything but teaching her own classes. Before hiring me, my department made plans to “shelter” its pretenure WPA, as the new professional guidelines recommend, but did so by recruiting tenured faculty in other disciplines to oversee the writing program, suggesting and occasionally saying outright that “anyone could direct the program, really.”

To link time with place, the WPAs attending the workshop played with a third metaphor: the idea of a haunting, ghosts in place and out of time, often as real and influential as Toni Morrison’s “haint,” Beloved. With the past so vividly, institutionally present, the idea of steady progress, wherein all of English studies gradually becomes aware and supportive of the work of composition and rhetoric and of program administration, doesn’t hold true. Nor are departmental ghosts predictable or equally powerful: improvements within the composition program by a committed first-generation WPA may haunt the next WPA, as Voice 3 and Voice 5 note below. That the frontier elsewhere has been tamed and cultivated with much success can be encouraging to a WPA, as Voice 4 points out; that we have such a dizzying range of success stories and metaphors can be overwhelming, as Voice 2 explains. It would be good to have a professionalization guide—yet trying to replicate someone else’s professional success in one’s own institution can be, as Marcia Dickson notes (151), as painfully unsuccessful as Cinderella’s stepsisters cutting off their toes to fit into the glass slipper.

What actually happens when a new WPA arrives at a place resembling PBS’s Frontier House rather more than the competent professional meritocracies of CSI: Crime Scene Investigation or West Wing? We know the
local stories. The new WPA may need to build a professional house before being able to hang a shingle and begin practicing, to plant corn rather than plug in a microwave. While the house remains uncompleted, a WPA may sleep in a canvas tent, wrapped up in copies of the Portland Resolution to keep warm, hoping, meanwhile, for a good departmental weather. A WPA may test the wind: what does it mean when a faculty member points to a prized research topic and asks, “How is that composition or rhetoric?” Or a WPA may examine walls already built, peering through the chinks: can it be equally true, as local mentors seem to suggest, that the WPA will have work diligently to teach her colleagues what professional WPAs do and that her definition of a “professional WPA” will need to conform to the expectations of the institution about what “research” or “composition” is?

Still, on sunny mornings, I find it hard to resist the pressures and temptations—reinforced by years of attentive CCCC-going and by daily pronouncements on the WPA listserv—to help my program wash up and put on its Sunday clothes. I know what a professional writing program should look like, and I want that for our profession (and for me!), but I wonder how we’re going to get the dust off our shoes. Do our lecturers want to be formally educated in the field, and will the arts and sciences dean at an agriculture and basketball school be able or willing to pay for it? Do our TAs, hoping to be film-studies scholars and fiction writers, want to help conduct classroom-based research? If there is no program mission statement, how can we begin to assess our work intelligently? As it turns out, the professional’s mantra of “adapting” to a new institutional location is an understatement: a WPA’s tools and efforts may need to be reinvented or even replaced. If one’s finest professional tools and recipes were designed for stovetop cuisine, they may be of little use for making biscuits over an open flame—and it’s disconcerting to discover that one is simultaneously over- and underprepared.

I wonder, then, what advantage the professionalized WPA will have, if we see professionalization as involving nationally normed coursework and standards created to ensure a set of professional expectations, behaviors, and attitudes? Our CCCC workshop conversations illuminated several points of outright conflict between the national narrative and local contexts. A WPA may be invited to draw up a job description, just as practiced in a summer workshop, only to have upper-level administrators literally cross off elements of the resulting job definition. A WPA may also be told straightforwardly: only this kind of scholarship “counts,” CCCC position statements notwithstanding, because this other scholarship is the province of other, more traditional faculty members. The official “publication/teaching/committee-work” categories on another WPA’s annual report form may leave no clear place to display such staples of our arena of operations as “designed assessment tools,” “ran a national-conference workshop,” “wrote a collaborative e-jour-
The Generation of Metaphor
Voice Two

I have difficulty explaining my job to people in my family, people at class reunions, people I’ve just met, other people in academia, even to colleagues in my department. They understand that I teach English. They may understand that composition courses differ from courses in literature or creative writing. It’s the WPA part of my job that raises questions. Is a director of composition similar to an office manager? A school principal? A department chair? How do I characterize my job to people who associate “WPA” with FDR? More importantly, is there a frame of reference that will help me better understand my job?

WPAs themselves have turned toward the metaphorical realm to explain their roles. The sheer variety of metaphors used to discuss the roles of WPAs suggests a rich complexity of identity issues. For my purposes here, I’ve grouped metaphors employed by WPAs to describe their work into three general categories: metaphors of other professions, metaphors of performance, and metaphors of personal relationship. While I recognize that these categories are artificial, they function in the following analysis as interpretive lenses to facilitate understanding of the types of subject positions WPAs envision for their jobs, which in turn may help me understand the work I do as a WPA.

WPAs look for connections between their own roles and the roles of workers outside the academy. Laura Micciche compares WPA work to the work of flight attendants—a metaphor that helps her discuss the “affective dimensions of our [WPA] work through materialist analysis” (451). She uses the parallels between the emotional labor performed by flight attendants and by WPAs to argue that the “gendered affective production involved in WPA work” is in part responsible for the “exploitation and delegitimization of WPAs and their work” (441). James Sledd’s term boss compositionist is an attempt to make visible the complicity of WPAs in exploitive labor practices in the field of composition (275). “Boss compositionist” brings to my mind the image of the road crew boss with the mirrored sunglasses in Cool Hand Luke, who rules his crew with the implied threat of his rifle marksmanship. In the film, Paul Newman and the other sweaty prisoners have to ask permission for any deviation from their labor regime: “Drink it up here, Boss.” Sledd’s metaphor constructs composition instructors (i.e., graduate teaching assistants, part-time instructors, nontenure-track full-time instructors) as work crew members, factory workers, field laborers, or plantation slaves, depending upon one’s conception of the work environment implied by boss. In Sledd’s metaphor, according to Joseph Harris, WPAs are constructed as exploiters. Both Sledd and Micciche use metaphors of work in other, non-academic fields to strengthen their crucial critiques of what it means to be a WPA.

Other scholars have drawn comparisons between WPA work and the work of entertainers. Two of the three eponymous professions in Kitchen Cooks, Plate-Twirlers, and Troubadours: Writing Program Administrators Tell Their Stories are in show-biz. Mary Pinard employs a plate-twirler metaphor to characterize the multitude of simultaneous tasks she had to perform as a new WPA. Her advice for surviving as a new WPA is couched in the visual and kinesthetic terms of plate-twirling: “Seek balance amongst the many, often swirling issues in your program, but expect discombobulation: a slow wobbling on the one hand, and a blurring speed on the other” (61). In “Mothers, Tell Your Children Not to Do What I Have Done,” Keith Rhodes alters the lyrics of “The House of the Rising Sun” to warn against the early ruin of compositionists by premature administrative positions. Rhodes employs the role of troubadour to articulate, as his subtitle suggests, “The Sin and Misery of Entering the Profession as a Composition Coordinator.” Diana George, in her introduction to Kitchen Cooks, offers yet another show-biz metaphor for WPA work:

More than one WPA has certainly felt like a Song and Dance Man (or Woman), though few I know meant simply to create a good illusion. Still, we’ve run programs that had little or no funding, created live curricula against the painted flat of the undergraduate catalogue, tapped cleanly across the polished stage wondering who picked that music, and some have made promises they knew they could never keep. (xiii–xiv)

It’s important to note that these metaphors of performance compare WPA work to a certain kind of stage performance; none of the performance metaphors involve prestige or accolades. WPAs do not refer to themselves in print as opera singers, classical pianists, award-winning actors, or lead singers in wildly successful rock bands. A troubadour is an itinerant performer, moving from venue to venue, relying on occasion and opportunity to do his or her work, relying for a living upon the patronage of some generous Lord or Lady. A plate-spinner is one act among many in a circus or variety show—an act that never gets top billing. A song-and-dance (wo)man might be a member of a stage chorus who functions as a transition act, filling the space in a vari-
may feel toward their jobs, the sense of identity a WPA may help construct for a writing program, and the sheer sense of responsibility WPAs may feel for instructors and students in their programs. Familial metaphors also suggest an insularity from the rest of the university, as well as a level of demand that may compete for quality time with one’s literal family.

All of the aforementioned metaphorical constructions help to emphasize the performative and caretaking aspects of a WPA position, as well as some of the complex issues of power and authority. The variety of metaphors illustrates the complexity of the roles of WPAs in their institutions. While each metaphor may be applicable and valid, each seems insufficient on its own to explain the range of roles of a WPA. The complexity of a WPA position—the variety of duties and roles involved—is difficult to pin down and package.

The validity of each metaphor creates a need for larger metaphors—metaphors that can accommodate all these other valid metaphors—that can help us manage and visualize the complexity of WPA roles. One such metaphor is that a WPA is a wearer of many hats. However, the hat-wearer metaphor seems inadequate. Hats, after all, in the literal hat-wearing world, are donned and doffed voluntarily by their wearers, hats are tidily distinct from one another, and it’s never appropriate to wear more than one hat at a time. The term multitasking seems a more appropriate descriptor of the simultaneous role management required of WPAs; however, multitasking inaccurately implies a high level of control over one’s own ability to switch and juggle roles as a WPA. Sharon Crowley and Lynn Bloom both account for a lack of control by employing a meta-metaphor of “stickiness” to describe the multiplicity of duties that befall WPAs; Crowley dubs the WPA “the Velcro Professor” (227), and Bloom calls the WPA “a single individual responsible for everything, and to whom a plethora of tasks cling as lint to Velcro” (“Moving” x). Instead of the Velcro metaphor, during the spring of 2002—my first semester as a WPA—I used the metaphor of expanding foam sealant to describe to friends how my administrative duties seemed to fill all gaps in my daily schedule.

Another metaphor that has helped me conceptualize my own work as a new WPA is shapeshifting. A shapeshifter is a hybrid identity, characterized by changes in appearance, changes in character, and changes in power. Shapeshifters crawl all over our collective cultural consciousness: think of dual-identity superheroes such as Diana Prince-Wonder Woman or Peter Parker-Spiderman, think of the mercury-melting cop who chases Arnold Schwarzenegger in Terminator 2, think of werewolves, masters of disguise, chameleons. While it isn’t particularly helpful to see myself in my professional life as a dual-identity superhero or a moon-cursed monster, the con-

In addition to looking toward other professions, WPAs have employed metaphors of personal and family relationships to characterize their work. Lynn Bloom describes the underappreciated tasks of the WPA in her article, “I Want a Writing Director.” By alluding clearly to Judy Seyfer’s “I Want a Wife,” Bloom uses the metaphor of the wife to illustrate the countless thankless chores and duties that befall a WPA in a department that privileges its literature program. Doug Hesse draws personal parallels between his own role as a WPA and his role as a husband in his Kitchen Cooks chapter, “The WPA as Father, Husband, Ex.” Hesse’s spousal and paternal metaphors allow him to critique his “combined motives of being provider and being prover” and to elucidate the blurred boundaries between strategies of being a spouse and parent and directing a writing program (47). In Bloom’s foreword to The Writing Program Administrator’s Resource, she compares that WPA volume to Dr. Spock’s Baby and Child Care, which constructs the new WPA as new parent. These family-centered metaphors allow WPAs to conceive their roles in important ways, including the strong commitment WPAs
cept of shapeshifting helps me understand my WPA roles in terms of agency. The shapeshifter may shift shapes consciously and with specific intent, or the shapeshifter may find that his or her shape has shifted without specific knowledge or control. That is, sometimes the shapeshifting WPA controls his or her role or authority; sometimes others control the WPA’s roles. The shapes and roles of the WPA are unstable and not clearly distinct from one another.

Hildy Miller theorizes a postmasculinist approach to administration in which the WPA combines feminist and masculinist orientations to address both the collaborative, supportive aspects and the hierarchical, managerial aspects of a WPA position: “In the bi-epistemological institution, personas have to change with context” (83). Yet, as Irene Ward points out, conflicting roles, role ambiguity, and role overload can also contribute to job burnout for the WPA (54–55). Movement between masculinist and feminist stances requires a self-monitoring of identity—a reflective, theorized shapeshifting.

I see metaphors as tools to focus my understanding better about ways I’m constructing myself for others and how others perceive me. I’m working hard to know when it’s inappropriate or unwise for me to take on a new task or to work alone instead of collaboratively on a project. I want to be aware when I’m perceived by my colleagues as a plate twirler, a boss compositionist, or a spouse, and I’m working to know when it’s appropriate or wise to invoke one identity metaphor over another as I engage in discourse in meetings with administrators on my campus, in committee and department meetings, professional development workshops that I lead, and informal situations. While the political utility of identity metaphors might help me do my job better, metaphors also function as a way to understand myself in my position as a WPA.

WPA Legacies or Skeletons in the Closet?
Voice Three

The professionalization of writing program administrators presents special challenges because of the diverse constituencies the WPA serves, the many subjectivities the WPA inhabits to serve them, and the delicate balance that WPAs must maintain when negotiating relationships between themselves as practitioners, their institutions, and the field (Cambridge and McClelland; Gunner, “Politicizing”; Peeples). Despite this shifting ground, our progress narratives trace a history that currently includes seminars in graduate programs in rhetoric and composition; apprenticeship positions in those same programs offering graduate students the benefit of experiential learning they will later apply whether they seek explicit WPA positions or not; and national conferences, workshops, listservs, journals and publications that describe knowledge-making for the WPA. Even our progress is making progress, as we notice a movement in our own journals and publications. Texts that once relied heavily on describing WPA-ness through narrative accounts of local contexts now devote considerable space to defining the intellectual work of the WPA, recognizing our role as researchers in our own right (Anson and Brown; Mirtz; L’Eplattenier).

Recognizing that the administrators in these positions must constantly articulate their own identities and recreate the identities of their programs for audiences unfamiliar with our work or untrained in our field, we have made yet another move toward theorizing the ways WPAs accomplish these articulations (Rose and Weiser, Theorist).

Unlike many other professions which rely on standardized measures to reconcile any differences that might exist between principle and practice (Rose), those of us in WPA positions invariably find ourselves adjusting principles, practices, and perhaps our own philosophies to fit a particular set of institutional conditions and constraints. Although we, too, can claim foundational documents like the Portland Resolution and a growing corpus of shared theories and practices, often our disciplinary and experiential knowledge does not communicate neatly across institutional contexts. The dissonance created between what we know, what we do, and how we do it often hinges on how well we can reconcile our personal identities and public responsibilities against existing institutional conditions. In doing so, WPAs have the additional challenge of striking the delicate balance that delineates the WPA as an individual from the work of the WPA on behalf of the program. Such a separation can be complicated by an invisible predecessor—a ghost or skeleton—whose past is indelible in the departmental and institutional memory, but whose presence the current WPA must assimilate and process when faced with making decisions that result in programmatic change.

In my case, reconciling aspects of my identity with aspects of the institutional culture began with studying the documentation that I inherited about the program and documentation I subsequently produced articulating major shifts in the composition program. Of the inherited documentation, the most influential was a 126-page handbook authored by the previous director, Jacob. It contained statements of objectives connecting the teaching of composition to the university’s core courses, and expanded descriptions and discussions of those objectives. Additionally, the handbook contained detailed discussions of policies and procedures, goals for courses in the composition sequence, and explanations of the academic grievance procedures. There were also many mini-essays that cogently explained everything from composition pedagogies to word processing features, and at least a half-
dozen sample syllabi from a variety of contributors. The handbook covered placement exams, rubrics, prompts, and model essays. The document was widely circulated: all composition instructors, full-time and part-time, had copies; many campus administrators had copies; and copies were circulated in the community to several high-school teachers and administrators responsible for area dual-credit courses. In all fairness to my ghost, a first-generation composition director with specific training in rhetoric and composition, the handbook was, for me or anyone inheriting the legacy of the position, a miracle in documentary reality. The material was not a mere compilation of models and procedures but a discursive representation of the teaching of composition in ways translated in and for the local context. Sifting through the hefty documentation, I found myself vacillating between a closeness and a distance that was at times comforting and at other times disarming. Engaging with the handbook early in my tenure in the position was an efficient way to get acquainted with the local history and more important than being motivated by a particular exigency. I was conscious of my maintaining a healthy distance from the materials. After all, I was in a new situation and more than likely would not have the benefit of talking to my predecessor. I was trying, as it were, to check my own “prejudices and cultural perceptions” (Connors, “Dreams” 15), as WPAs must often do when engaging in the historical work of their programs (Mirtz 120).

In an institutional setting just over two decades old, Jacob managed to anticipate questions and capture philosophies that would explain and justify the teaching of college composition to a range of audiences. He re-created the program on paper. After documenting all of these principles, Jacob achieved tenure and then decided to move on. After his departure, the WPA position went unfilled for two years, until my arrival. During that time the handbook, which had undergone no substantive revisions for many years, became the authority for administering the program; it was proudly presented to me: “You might want to update some things, but for the most part Jacob’s already done everything—it’s all here.” And it was—except that the institution had added another decade to its history since Jacob had first arrived and begun to develop the program; the number of local high schools participating in the dual-credit program had nearly doubled; the student population had shifted from commuter to primarily residential; literally hundreds of composition textbooks had been published since the most recent texts suggested in the college handbook; and most significantly, the part-time faculty that Jacob hired had been converted, during his last term, to full-time instructor positions.

It was not long before I fully understood the extent to which the university community depended on the handbook and, further, the effect of that dependence in a changing institutional climate. In the meantime, however, I received a phone call from a twenty-five-year veteran high-school teacher and adjunct faculty member at the university. Widely respected among the teachers in the dual-credit program, she was not shy as she expressed her disdain for the recently scored placement exams that essentially did not reflect what she perceived to be her students’ high level of writing competence. Yet as events evolved, some of her best students had received ratings of “2” and “3” on a five-point scale. Before I could respond, she promptly referred me to page 62 of the handbook—a writing sample of a 2-rated essay, roughly one paragraph in length with quite a few grammatical errors. She informed me that all of her students had written at least two pages with fewer misspellings and grammar problems—clearly making them superior to the example in the handbook. “Jacob would never have scored these essays so harshly!” she said. The extensiveness of the documentation provided in the handbook gave, at least minimally, those in and around the institution a language for discussing “the comp program,” and that documentation established the expectations about what the program should be (and consequently what I, the new WPA, should be doing) and what that meant for the constituencies it served (and consequently how I should be doing “it,” whatever “it” was). I was not troubled by the fact that my actions appeared to be so inconsistent with the program’s history; to the contrary, I felt empowered because I saw my strategic responses to what existed as an opportunity to educate and effect change. Ruth Mirtz discusses the value of intra-institutional historical research in relationship to strengthening program identity: One of the values of intra-institutional historical research is in program definition and identity, which can place the WPA in a stronger position, as a conceiver rather than just an inheritor of a set of courses. We have to see it as a gain in power through knowledge. In a recent article, Lisa Ede ponders the methodology of composition studies, asking, “How should we conceive of—and enact—the relationship between theory and practice, between our multidisciplinary discipline’s two related goals: the production of knowledge and the advancement of literacy? Similarly, how should we view the relationship between our experience [. . .] and the work we produce?” (129)

I used the example of the placement exams as a springboard for the annual summer conference hosted for those high school instructors who taught the dual-credit course. This particular example gave me a way to discuss program and course goals very specifically and doing so served as an...
opportunity to introduce a revised evaluation rubric. The revised rubric and conversations about placement extended into the semester in the form of continuing conversations and norming sessions among the composition faculty. Confronting the handbook turned out to be an opportunity to reconsider and revise the goals for that part of the program, and it was an occasion to norm my experience with that of the faculty teaching composition.

Understanding the intellectual and political implications of this incident was one thing, but reconciling the need to distinguish my decisions from Jacob’s in light of the current institutional context was something I had not anticipated. Making such a distinction between Jacob and me was complicated because, in theory, I agreed with his rationale for most of the content that was spelled out in the handbook, but because of changing circumstances, I could not act in exact accord with some of the existing protocols. The institution had transitioned through a change in leadership, and at the same time I was changing the institution by introducing new protocols to accomplish the work. Such changes had social consequences that threw into relief the contradictions between Jacob’s philosophy, my training, and the impact of both on the new institution. Yet, for two semesters I had been referred to across the institution quite simply as “the new Jacob.”

There were occasions when I found myself being loyal theoretically to Jacob, however confused I was in practical ways. For instance, articulating an evaluation protocol for composition faculty was another program goal. At the outset I was determined to solicit input from the instructors and also to retain as much as possible from the previous protocol to smooth out the transition, but at the same time I was committed to integrating current theory and practice. After consulting the handbook, and after many meetings of the formal evaluation committee and informal conversations with composition faculty, I presented a draft of the new protocol at a composition faculty meeting. Referring first to the required components for the teaching portfolio as outlined in the handbook, I began to share ideas for a revised evaluation procedure, for example, considering alternative definitions of “scholarship” and incorporating peer classroom visitations. When asked for their input concerning the revised evaluation procedures, several instructors shifted uncomfortably and exchanged glances. Finally someone said, “I wonder what Jacob would do?”

At that moment I realized Jacob had not left at all; in fact, he had taken up residence as a skeleton in my closet and he had company. His occasional bumping around underscored a few disparities: (1) the gap that existed between the documentary reality (the handbook) and the current institutional landscape, (2) the contextual differences between the institutional site where I gained practical experience in writing program administration and

knowledge of my new institution, and (3) the composition faculty’s expectations of a director of composition predicated on the knowledge of the previous director. In essence, we were all clinging to some version of the past, mentally and physically, in the documents and practices held over from the earlier era; more often than not, it was Jacob’s “intervention” that helped us brush away the cobwebs. In Modern Skeletons in Postmodern Closets, James Sosnoski describes the tensions that can exist when redefining our programs and our persons:

[B]eing unaware that some of the motives we acquired in the past are inconsistent with our current beliefs [itself] might be called “anachronistic.” [. . .] You might say such anachronistic beliefs are skeletons in the closets of our minds. Though we consciously amend beliefs that are challenged, many ingrained beliefs associated with those we’ve abandoned remain as they were. We all have such skeletons in our cognitive closets. Our mental residences may be remodeled continuously, but many of their private compartments escape renovation, going unnoticed until something happens to open them. (5)

These renovations, Sosnoski argues, allow space for a productive critique of disciplinarity because we must reread our cultural experiences against reconfigured circumstances (12). As WPAs, we often find ourselves in situations functioning as inheritors and reacting to these anachronisms rather than functioning as conceivers and anticipating reconfigurations. To function more proactively, I believe, requires that we find strategic ways to translate our knowledge and experience from one institutional context to another. The professionalization of WPAs, for instance, should include spaces for performative and reflective exercises that allow WPAs to try on various subjectivities and examine how we might position ourselves in alternative institutional contexts. Furthermore, when accepting new positions and responsibilities we must respect the previous generation and understand that the work that came before us was the product of a set of social conditions acted upon by a person, the WPA, and not restricted to the WPA acting individually and in isolation. It is important that we recognize that the WPA position is always in relation and acted out in complex relationships and roles. And while it is the WPA’s role to negotiate these relationships, the clearer the distinction between the individual and the position, perhaps the less difficult the transition will be for the next generation.

A year had passed since I initially shared my thoughts about faculty evaluation when I overheard two instructors in their office discussing coming deadlines for peer observations and the required contents for the teaching portfolio: “You mean [this author’s] policy, right?”
An Entrepreneur in Pioneer’s Clothing
Voice Four

Like our literary colleagues who specialize in historical, national, or ethnic
categories, rhetoric and composition candidates are being asked, in job
descriptions, to display specific skills in decidedly administrative areas,
such as creating a WAC/WID presence on campus, supervising computer
use in English courses, managing the department’s writing center or, as
this collaborative article reflects, directing a writing program. Can junior
faculty be expected to answer these challenges with no protection of
tenure, no experience outside of graduate school, and with perhaps a single
course release? How many voices would respond “Yes!” to this scenario?
Hundreds. Just ask anyone on a hiring committee for such administrative
positions in the last five years.

I was one of those voices that was heard and then hired in what the
profession is calling a “junior WPA” position. I was also the first composi-
tion person hired in a department of fifteen full-time faculty devoted to liter-
ary studies; thus, my position, in a sense, is twice charmed—or twice chal-
lenged. On one hand, I teach composition courses outside first-year English,
am expected to shape the composition program, and have been given some
released time to do so. On the other hand, I never would have been hired
on the tenure track “simply” to teach writing here, and simultaneously I do
not yet have the protection of tenure as I face the task of altering the exist-
ing administrative and political structures. Shaping my identity, then, has
become a process of embedding myself with both faculty and administrators
on my own campus while coming to grips with the institutional and profes-
sional forces that identify and reify WPA work today. To survive the inher-
ent professional dangers of such a position, one must see opportunity in the
administrative mandates that accompanies the WPA role. For example, the
additional committee work of most WPAs provides increased chances of get-
ing to know the politics, personalities and power-relationships that may play
out in one’s tenure and promotion down the line. Also, one must make great
pains to update and stay in close contact with one’s chairperson and senior
colleagues in the English Department. Planning one’s actions and agendas,
especially in the beginning, is something that should be done with plenty of
advice and discussion with people who have been at an institution through
its ups and downs.

What will the professional narratives of junior WPAs sound like in
twenty or thirty years? Will they be tales of working as a WPA for an entire
career? Will they tell of moving to other administrative jobs such as depart-
ment chair or dean? Will they tell of “doing time” as a WPA to finally be
tenured and freed to simply teach? Or will they reflect the results of prepro-
fessionalization, making of me (and those similarly positioned) a mutation in
a trend toward an applied approach to the PhD in English studies? My own
doctoral-granting institution now offers graduate courses and internships in
WPA, and other institutions have begun to offer a WPA specialization at the
PhD level. My generational voice as a WPA, then, closely resembles that of a
teenager in the full bloom of puberty, a voice filled with changing angst and
one impatient for maturity but stuck in a holding pattern that, like teenage,
seems to last forever.

Detangling my own “preprofessional” or “junior” voice, I first grasp the
most important people, the role models, from my college education: my
academic advisers. All of them had administrative duties shape their profes-
sional identity. My undergraduate advisor was head of the writing center and
developmental writing program. Similarly, my graduate advisers consisted of
a department head, a graduate coordinator, an associate dean, and a WPA.
All of these academics claimed rhetoric and composition as their expertise,
but they spent more than half, if not all, of their time in administrative roles.
None had coursework, internships, or professional development opportu-
nities to prepare them for these roles; like many senior WPAs today, they
arrived at their positions through volunteering or through institutional fiat.

Perhaps, unconsciously, I imprinted administrative expectations on my
future academic career. Such impressions were affirmed as I studied the
historiographies of the English studies discipline and the edited collections
on WPA work. I cannot think of a more valuable thing for past, present,
or future WPAs to do than to study works such as James A. Berlin’s Rheto-
ic and Reality, Gerald Graff’s Professing Literature, and Duane Roen, Stu-
art Brown, and Theresa Enos’s Living Rhetoric and Composition. The last is
extremely important in showing how one’s circumstance and work combine
to form an academic career and in showing the surprising number of twists
and turns the senior scholars of our community endured in legitimizing
rhetoric and composition’s claim in English studies. Our field needs more
of these narratives to demystify the distorted vision many graduate students
have of their professors and professions—rarely is a career a straight line from
BA to MA to PhD to full-time, tenure-track employment. Such literature
also proved integral in raising my consciousness of the ways the static his-
tory of departmentalization and periodization collides with the dynamics of
the academic labor market and economy. Through such literature, one will
begin to see the tectonic integrity of writing and writing instruction in post-
secondary education. Bascially, the more one can learn about the origins and
developments of the study of English and the special role writing and admin-
istration has played in this history, the better one will be equipped to deal
with the variety of demands one will face as a WPA.
At the 2004 Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) in San Antonio, I attended a special interest group entitled “Junior Writing Program Administrators: Who Matters and Why?” and recognized immediately that this group was onto an emerging labor trend, one that I occupy. The professional status of those involved in this session varied widely from full professors to graduate students, yet all of us were united through our WPA duties and through an overall concern with what such a position meant to the academic labor market, English studies, and rhetoric and composition specialists in general. Several tenured or “senior” WPAs discouraged junior faculty from taking such positions; junior WPAs concurred but empathized with the job-seeking graduate students present, knowing that such an appointment was one of the few ways to secure a full-time job. I agree with both perspectives here because I have recently been promoted to associate professor while a junior WPA, but I am still nervous about my soon-anticipated tenure review.

As a result, pursuing WPA work at the entry level has allowed me to see opportunities in administration. I originally identified myself as a pioneer, one who enjoys a pre-WPA status in claiming virgin territory and occupying unknown professional space; however, I must also claim to be an entrepreneur, by organizing, managing, and assuming responsibility for the real and imagined circumstances and opportunities surrounding the position held and the department’s activities. I see the WPA position, not only WPA work, as itself entrepreneurial. I do not think that WPA entrepreneurship necessarily devalues or corporatizes the work of the junior-faculty pioneer, but it does usefully reify the reality of the academic marketplace and the junior WPAs evolving place in it.

**Reading the Local**

**Voice Five**

As this essay unfolds, it shows more and more how the metaphor of generational succession and the narrative of disciplinary and professional progress it suggests are problematic. As other voices have already pointed out, when we, like Studs Terkel, look to individuals in their local spaces, we find that the generational metaphor, best employed, does not simply characterize the individual WPA herself but may “reside” in any number of places—in the faculty and other instructors; in the program’s goals, policies, and procedures; in the ideology governing the program, department, and wider institution—as well as in the preparation, knowledge, and experience of the WPA. Additionally, generational identities may be shaped at points of interface, for example, between a WPA and her colleagues, between the WPA and her program’s history, structures, curriculum, practices, and pedagogies, or between the WPA’s schooled sense of best practices and her take on what’s best in the local setting. Further, as my story will show, we may find, in any one or another of these generational sites and interfaces, generations layered in complicated ways, such as in blended or very large families in which one can have a niece who is older than oneself; an uncle, younger, or a stepmother who is one’s own age. Indeed, the more closely we look at any particular local history and institutional forces, the less ably we can employ even the metaphor of “generation” to fully construct a WPA’s identity.

Although it is clear that the temporal, spatial, and interactional aspects of the generational metaphor are problematic, let me continue using it to illustrate my own difficulty in reading the local, my own experience in one scene of the complex and closeted generational interactions that affected my and my colleagues’ success. Voice Four’s experience can be construed as one in which a second-generation WPA enters a first-generation department (or, perhaps, a regenerational department, like the Garden of Eden before the Fall). While there is a generational difference between this WPA and the department, there is no apparent generational conflict. Since the WPA is the first composition specialist around, there are probably no ghosts. The department very likely has had no prior exposure to rhetorical or composition theory and consequently would not know that it can threaten the epistemologies, value systems, and pedagogies of many English departments and thus maybe their own, especially if they were trained as formalists. The WPA in Voice Four has entered “virgin territory” and as a trailblazer may be may be like the early French fur traders in the upper Midwest and Canada—before other Europeans arrived to create settlements. The traders traveled rivers and lakes relatively unimpeded, conducted their commerce in conjunction with the indigenous inhabitants, and shared with them enough similar ways so that the two groups could to some extent coexist. In this instance, what figures more significantly than generational status in the WPA’s success is an apparent laisser-faire intersection between the WPA’s and the department’s goals, practices, belief systems, and so forth.

When I joined a regional institution, judged excellent by public measures (such as US News and World Report), my generational expertise was different from my department’s—but the generational differences were disguised so that in addition to conflicts arising through what used to be called a “generation gap,” additional conflicts arose because I misjudged my department’s and colleagues’ identities. Had I known I was entering a mixed family, I would have approached my leadership, relational, and collegial tasks differently. The following aspects of the department led me to assume different generational knowledge among my colleagues than in fact
the parameters of what they knew composition to be, parameters that were
scholarship, but overall, their knowledge of the field was varied, ambiguous,
ing a WPA. Some of the faculty were even familiar with the composition
existence, and it knew the English studies cachet in hir
the position languished. The department knew that specializations in rheto
and assessment existed, and it knew the English studies cachet in hir
in its descent, for in all my years there, the department had never been
had the composition component as a part of a team” (even though he definitely was not an outsider in the department).
This revelation is surprising, especially because the professor contrasted it
his experience of finishing up the literature courses he taught. At the
of these courses, he said, he was always clear about his achievement.
my father’s remark can lead one to several conclusions (about epistemolo
gies, for example), but I want to focus simply on his perception and my belief
that his underlying angst reveals what many of his literature colleagues who
also taught comp probably felt but were unable or afraid to express. They
wanted certainty. They taught first-year composition every semester. They
had been led by WPAs who had focused their teaching on writing process
pedagogies, and so they had a modicum of professionalized expertise. They
knew a field of composition studies exists, but their real or perceived knowl
edge, epistemologies, and theories of language were inadequate to see them
positively shaped my expectations about their knowledge of the
field. Indeed, some faculty had composition backgrounds; a few more were
English educationists, and one was engaged in doctoral study at a nearby
research institution, well-known for its composition scholars. Having had
two or three WPAs over the preceding twenty or so years, the department
I joined seemed, from that marker alone, to be of a generation beyond the
small liberal-arts school Voice Four discusses. In retrospect, I can see the
hidden signs of generational identity that I missed during the search process
and in my first months and year there.

Most faculty had been trained in literature, and those with composition
backgrounds acquired them primarily through teaching assistant training in
the 1980s, so the datedness in departmental pedagogies and assessment were
supported rather than signals that the department was ready to change—
even though it overtly acted as if it wanted to. Take, for example, the com-
petency test. Designed in-house (with at least one of its designers still in
the department), it included a severely flawed multiple-choice grammar and
usage test. Many in the department wished to abolish at least this portion
of the exam, as I had learned in my on-campus interview. Further evidence
of the department’s “enlightenment” was its desire to return local control of
the written exam to the department, that is, to begin scoring the essay por-
tion in-house, as it had done many years previously. Because such desires
were overtly stated, I believed the department to have assessment expertise
and savvy that I found out, painfully, it lacked. Calibration scoring sessions
were unworkable; exam results were disastrous, and many of the assessment
nightmares that can arise did.

In this department, the WPA position had languished, unfilled, for
nearly three years, a sign, I see now, of problems awaiting me, one who
entered this territory with more than fifteen years of WPA experience, with
graduate specialization in rhetoric and composition, with substantial expe-
rience in writing assessment projects, and with confidence in my ability to
develop collaborative working environments. Let’s look more closely at why
the position languished. The department knew that specializations in rho-
teric and composition existed, and it knew the English studies cachet in hir-
ing a WPA. Some of the faculty were even familiar with the composition
scholarship, but overall, their knowledge of the field was varied, ambiguous,
dated, and conflicted. And they wanted leadership and change only within
the parameters of what they knew composition to be, parameters that were
unclear and, if they had been clear, would have circumscribed a territory I
did not want to work within. The faculty at this institution had also had
enough experience with WPAs to know that a WPA’s policies and recom-
manded practices might not closely match their own. A suppressed history of
conflict seemed to bubble to the surface occasionally, like spectral images—
blurred and almost unseen. Considerable angst underlay the surface of this
situation.

An incredibly important insight into the local situation came in a faculty
member’s remark, which, will, on examination, illustrate how hard it is to
read the local, particularly if it is beyond the first generation. An American-
ist, this faculty member had taught for thirty years, and for most if not all of
them, he had taught first-year composition. He enjoyed the course, was com-
mitted to its importance, and was an excellent teacher. In an offhand remark
one day, he revealed that he always felt uncomfortable when he completed
his composition courses. He never felt sure he’d done the right thing; he was
never sure he’d taught what should have been taught; he never felt “part of
a team” (even though he definitely was not an outsider in the department).
This revelation is surprising, especially because the professor contrasted it
with his experience of finishing up the literature courses he taught. At the
end of these courses, he said, he was always clear about his achievement.
Pondering this remark can lead one to several conclusions (about epistemolo-
gies, for example), but I want to focus simply on his perception and my belief
that his underlying angst reveals what many of his literature colleagues who
also taught comp probably felt but were unable or afraid to express. They
wanted certainty. They taught first-year composition every semester. They
had been led by WPAs who had focused their teaching on writing process
pedagogies, and so they had a modicum of professionalized expertise. They
knew a field of composition studies exists, but their real or perceived knowl-
dge, epistemologies, and theories of language were inadequate to see them
through the semester with a sense of accomplishment. In uncomfortable
ways, their literary grounding (formalist and modernist, for many) compi-
lcated their expectations of what composition courses should achieve.

The invisible, unexpressed angst expressed by one faculty member but
probably felt by others certainly shaped the context in which I worked. My
colleagues may well have wanted me to eliminate their (unexpressed) angst
and insecurity, emotions that derived in part from knowing they were not
specifically trained and in part from how persistent teaching comp became
in their regular work load. Because they were “professionals,” they asked for
what sounded like second-generation expertise and sophistication. But what
they wanted instead was day-to-day surety in their teaching lives—which
second generation professionalization might only have undermined.
So what’s the upshot of all this? A WPA’s generational identity is not necessarily one that she can see reflected in her interactions with the material conditions of her working life. Even attempts to analyze the interface between generational identities and the relationship the WPA has with her department, her colleagues’ ideologies and histories, and the pragmatics through which they live out their daily work lives do not lend themselves to clear generational characteristics. If we, as WPAs (new or veteran) entering a new job scene, appraise our skills and our departments in terms of the generational metaphor, we may well be confused, paralyzed, and ineffective. We can try mixing metaphors to read the local, to develop our plans and enact them, to shape our identities anew, but the generational identity of WPA scholarship may only repeat and intensify the frustrations that the Generation One WPAs lived through.

RETURN OF THE SPECTER

Voice Six

As my colleagues and I shared brief sketches around the workshop table about our WPA situations, I heard striking stories indicating how much the theoretically informed and politically savvy young WPAs knew about “old” WPA issues, challenges, and frustrations, from historical reading and from lived experience. Before that meeting, I had not recognized a peculiar hybridity informing their positions: the professional experience of most of these new WPAs recalled WPA dilemmas of the 1970s and 1980s—the uses and limits of authority; the disciplinary outsider syndrome; the composition missionary position; the role of cog in the machine. What became painfully clear is the extent to which preprofessional paradigms persist: the disciplinary nature of their fields, they also assumed their arrival as experts and colleagues, but their acceptance masked an assimilationist dominance through their role in the Foucauldian process of disciplining. Robert J. Connors puts it even more forcefully: “[T]oo many rhetoric PhDs have been willing to blunt their own perceptions and act as the overseers of oppressive ideological practices in WPA work, their essays focusing on the inevitable reproduction of inequity and elitism that results when WPAs “identify with the existing order of the academy” (Gere 126). Trimbur examines how WPAs themselves are implicated in practices of mastery and dominance through their role in the Foucauldian process of disciplining.

Trimbur writes, “The contradictory politics of professionalization are enacted [. . .] at the point of production, in the everyday workings of writing programs, and therefore it may be useful to describe how these politics shape the living experience of writing program administrators” (142). The workshop tales indicate that the “living experience” of new WPAs is shaped by oppressive constructs and practices embedded within the signs of professional progress that run alongside their composition-rhetoric expertise, tenure-track appointments, and formal job descriptions. In most workshop tales, the new WPAs were well treated professionally and were accepted as experts and colleagues, but their acceptance masked an assimilationist assumption: while the departments into which they had been hired recognized the disciplinary nature of their fields, they also assumed their arrival would change nothing. They were expected to engage in what might be called current-traditional administrative work. The departments’ operating paradigms often used local lore to displace or compete with individual WPA knowledge.

One result was a kind of self-defensive closeting of knowledge. In one instance, we heard of a WPA doing his program work silently, as it were, in private. His program development happened in a space apart—in the closet,
so to speak, of the department and larger discipline. This work was further cloaked by terms—WAC, technical writing—that were established in the departmental familiar and so unthreatening and in this way the administrative discourse that stands in for the social and cultural issues of writing program work itself assisted the cloaking effect. The politically vulnerable, new (that is, tenure-track) WPAs saw the pragmatic value of focusing on such curricula. Authority and collegial status would derive from and depend on perceived adherence to the locally invoked paradigm of WPA work—in one particular case, it was a paradigm of WPA as (male) technician overseeing the machine of composition instruction, adding new parts as needed, but most of all keeping things running smoothly. Conversations with (literature) colleagues were guarded so that the disciplinary version of heteronormativity was carefully preserved. Several as-yet untenured WPAs reported a similar guarding in departmental exchanges and program work. Some did so because they lived with the ghosts of rejected predecessors, as with Voice Three, “the new Jacob.”

Perhaps all of us perform our work and lives among oppressive shadows. In Spects of Marx, Jacques Derrida plots out a theory of “hauntology”:

Repetition and first time: this is perhaps the question of the event as question of the ghost. What is a ghost? What is the effectivity or the presence of a specter, that is, of what seems to remain as ineffective, virtual, insubstantial as a simulacrum? Is there there, between the thing itself and its simulacrum, an opposition that holds up? Repetition and first time, but also repetition and last time, since the singularity of any first time makes of it also a last time. Each time it is the event itself, a first time is a last time. Altogether other. . . . Let us call it a hauntology. (10)

“The new Jacob”: a first time is a last time. We live with ghosts. The narrative of professional progress is disrupted at the level of individually lived experience by other, spectral narratives that materially affect our work and identities, the dialectic of which can never transcend the hauntology.

The expectation that Connors indirectly voiced—that the certification of rhetoric-composition PhDs will forward the narrative of progress, moving us beyond our history of exploitation and amateurism—ought to be complicated by a recognition of the spatiality of time. Understanding and addressing the inevitable persistence and presence of past paradigms and narratives is especially important today, when interest in WPA history is high and new narratives are emerging. Consider the recent interest in WPA archival work. If seen as a commodification of history in the form of the archive itself, archiving can become an attempt to contain and leave behind that history—

to imbue it with use value for “argu[ing] persuasively within institutional settings” (L’Epplatenier 136) to enable progressive change. Derrida discusses such certification rituals as exorcisms in which one pretends to declare death only in order to put to death. [. . .]
The certification is effective. [. . .] But here effectivity phantomalizes itself. It is in fact [en effet] a matter of a performative that seeks to reassure but first of all to reassure itself by assuring itself, for nothing is less sure, that what one would like to see dead is indeed dead [. . .] it says (to itself), what used to be living is no longer alive, it does not remain effective in death itself, don’t worry [. . .] it is often a matter of pretending to certify death [. . .] the restless dream, of an execution. (48)

Linda Brodkey has argued that the “institutional future of composition is in the moments when a piece of common sense is dislodged and along with it the presumption that it goes without saying that the familiar is natural” (xvi). Brodkey’s “moments” and Gere’s use of Raymond Williams’s concept of “the long revolution,” which “embodies contradictions between different parts of the general process of change” (119) are most helpful if treated as spatially material, not just temporally ideal. The moments of lived experience, as we see in the tales from the new WPAs, are occupied, haunted, happening and rehappening within and beyond linear time. In the postmodern mapping project that Tim Peebles has forwarded as a means of moving from a unitary WPA identity/role to a perception of the fragmented subjectivities and positionality of the WPA (153), the spatiality of time is a needed additional axis.

Perhaps WPA agency does depend on our recognizing the moments that allow for the undermining of paradigmatic “common sense.” But in these moments that are also spaces in time, each WPA is carrying the professional DNA of earlier generations. New and old, we live with ghosts, and our narratives must inevitably be haunted.

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Beyond Quality Control: Writing Assessment and Adjunct Accountability at a Small Public University

Joseph Eng

As with many institutions of higher education in the United States, Shawnee State University (SSU), a small undergraduate public institution of 3,000 in Portsmouth, Ohio, relies heavily on part-time or adjunct faculty for implementing its composition program. While SSU is not the first institution to be interested in qualified, affordable instructors, it is unique in expecting these few good people to be highly accountable and willing to stay in the region. Established in 1986, the relatively new state-supported institution is located at the southern tip of Ohio bordering northern Kentucky, a historic area stressed by a struggling economy, semi-abandoned mining and oil-refining industries, and conservative politics. Nearby Appalachia, according to many locals, has also contributed to a historical and cultural distrust in higher education. By any measure of ethics, adjunct instructors seem to be shouldering a missionary responsibility consisting of many callings to teach in this geographically, economically, and educationally challenging area. Nonetheless, adjuncts continue to staff an average of eighty composition sections each year, along with their few tenure-line, mostly literature-trained colleagues.

Besides staffing, one major challenge I had in 1996 as a new coordinator of composition was to establish accountability for the faculty’s teaching performance and the students’ writing abilities; such an initiative, interestingly, came as an exigency, since we were bracing ourselves for the ten-year North Central Association (NCA) accreditation review. Somewhere along these lines of conversation, SSU’s acting English chairperson, who is a founding faculty member, and the former composition coordinator, who is a Yale-trained Shakespearean scholar, suggested that I focus on the grading pattern, if one existed, of adjunct English faculty members. Two crucial concerns in the eight-member English department were (1) that students’
learning outcomes, such as writing and research skills, should match the course grades they received, and (2) based on the then 40%–60% staffing split, that the assessment approaches and grading patterns used by tenure-line and adjunct faculty should agree reasonably well in terms of their assessment approaches and grading patterns.

Traditionally, issues such as these would be confronted by publishing term-grade distributions each quarter. A particular instructor’s grade distribution, for instance, might be compared to the departmental norm or average. If an instructor gave mostly As (or Ds and Fs), he or she might need to meet with the composition coordinator or the English chairperson for a discussion of grading philosophy and practices. Often, I was told, the discussion would lead to a good-spirited conversation about grading that involved the faculty and the administrator; very rarely did it bring about an investigation, let alone any discrediting of the instructor’s professional judgment and sincerity. (The implicit underpinning of this process was that the department and SSU knew that this university was attractive as an adjunct employer to those living in the area.)

This practice of holding people responsible for in-class assessment seemed commonplace and democratic enough; however, it made no solid argument for any improvement of the grading process, especially at a time of (hyper-) accountability. While the validity of reported grades was the point of interest, instructors did not normally share observations about students’ writing skills or publish them. Grading rubrics certainly did not exist in every section, much less any enforcement of standards across the board. Instructors thus were the sole evaluators (and thus standard-setters) of submitted essays within their individual classes. A common departmental concern, then, was that the assigned grades, although resulting from a variety of instructional measures, should significantly reflect major composition goals, such as acquiring desired writing skills in contexts of structure, content, mechanics, and research. This concern had never been dealt with directly, either in the composition program or in the department.

As it happened, I was able to approach a few internal assessment issues by participating in a pilot portfolio project within a campus-wide assessment effort. Through a quantitative descriptive study that compared the results from analytic scoring by a cross-disciplinary reading team with the original grades assigned by instructors, I was able to approach the questions regarding the relationship between assigned grades and writing skills, and examine grading differences, when they existed, between tenure-line and adjunct faculty, at least for the limited sample size. While the imminent NCA visit ultimately provided an exigency for campus writing assessment, SSU has benefited from its smaller size as a close-knit teaching community enabling frequent and direct contacts among the new WPA, the adjunct composition faculty, and SSU’s central administration.

This essay, then, presents writing assessment logistics in the context of a newly established small public college, illustrating a unique opportunity for adjunct faculty development through the use of a valuable rubric, relevant data from the pilot descriptive study, and follow-up meetings and workshops.

A Brief Chronology of Campus-wide Writing Assessment at SSU, 1993–1997

1993 Charged by the board of Regents, SSU’s central administration established an assessment office with Dr. David Todt, an appointed director from the department of education on campus.

1995 In preparation for the NCA visit, the director of assessment approached different departments, explaining assessment time-windows, essential respective needs regarding individual program assessment and campus-wide writing assessment; during the same year, collection of writing samples began within identified majors and courses.

1996 The director of assessment invited the newly hired composition coordinator to join the assessment committee, which monitored assessment progress and developed two writing rubrics (see Appendix 1) and one critical-thinking rubric. Later in 1996, the assessment committee applied a pilot reading to selected writing samples (for an essay excerpt, see Appendix 2), reported the data, and publicized its intradepartmental discussion to the campus community. The committee also did a descriptive study comparing the sample scores based on the rubrics to the original paper grades (see Figure 1).

1997 The composition coordinator met with composition faculty to discuss results from the descriptive study, based on a draft of the annual composition program report.

1997 Using data from a second reading (see Appendix 3), several members of the assessment committee, including the composition coordinator, led a half-day assessment workshop at the annual convention of the American Association of Higher Education (AAHE) in Miami, Florida.
From 1998 to the present, the assessment committee enlisted new members from different disciplines while continuing its efforts in assessing writing samples collected from identified courses and majors. Results of assessment are now published in the committee’s annual reports.

**The Institution and Its Mission**

Shawnee State University is a dedicated teaching institution. At a quick glance, its state university title and designation as a public institution of higher education suggest it is a regional campus of the well-established Ohio state university system (such as Ohio State, Kent State, or Cleveland State), with a sizable state-funded enrollment, a few professional schools or research centers, several graduate programs, and, in some cases, a university press. However, SSU can be positioned somewhere between a community college and a comprehensive university that is challenged simultaneously by a nearly rural (but changing) population and by a state budget, said locals, dominated by the larger institutions in the northern, more populated part of the state. Regarding the institution’s specific nature and mission, the then-president of the university, Clive Veri, sought to appeal to the local student population: “When I was searching for a college to attend in the mid-1950s with no money in my family to support me—a college did not exist that told me it would help me be a successful student. Every college I looked at had competitive admissions policies [. . .]. Shawnee State is a very special place that prides itself in helping students to be successful” (SSU 1996–97 Catalog 5). In addition to declaring the school’s accessibility and student-centeredness identical to the spirit of two-year colleges, the President emphasized further by saying that “At Shawnee State, faculty and staff take special pride in having had the opportunity to earn college degrees, and thereby enjoy satisfying and productive careers. **All of us are eager to offer students the same chance we had . . .** We call it ‘Sharing the Spirit of Opportunity’” (SSU 1997–99 Catalog 6). Apparently, Veri understood the demography well, for Shawnee State consequently strove to reach a balance between standards that created academic gatekeeping and admission of every student courageous enough to knock on its gate. As a small public college with traditional liberal arts and professional programs, its position and existence presented something of a paradox.

Compare to other institutions in the state or nation, Shawnee State recognizes its specific responsibility for meeting the educational needs of the region—including south-central Ohio, northern Kentucky, and the entire Appalachian area—because of its historic development from a technical school, a branch campus of Ohio University, and a community college. For the first ten years since its inception in 1986 as a four-year school, SSU grew from a junior college to a four-year college that offered associate degrees in twenty majors, baccalaureate degrees in eighteen majors, certificates in elementary and secondary education, with a handful of new majors being developed each academic year. (In 2002, the school started in partnership with other universities offering graduate classes in occupational therapy and education, but the Board of Regents confirmed once again that SSU committed all resources to quality undergraduate programs.)

Especially related to composition instruction during the period our pilot study was pursued, SSU’s mission statement highlighted a commitment to fostering “competence in oral and written communication, scientific and quantitative reasoning, and critical analysis/logical thinking” (1997–99 Catalog 6). It further included the following emphases: Dedication to undergraduate education; Focus on excellence in teaching; Dedication to motivating college attendance and graduation; Commitment to increasing quality; and Conducting multiple assessments of student learning outcomes (6–7; italics, mine). Such objectives, it seems, had directed efforts of the design and adoption of outcome-based rubrics and arrested the attention of the entire campus from the very beginning. In other words, we knew we were to conduct writing and outcome-based assessments on all fronts to further essential student and faculty needs. As the newly hired WPA, I also sensed that the composition program was being held accountable for the entire university by accident beyond the original departmental grading context or even the accreditation context (!).

**Assessment Efforts: The Portfolio Project and an Inadvertent Study**

At the university level, the process of randomly identifying students and collecting writing samples began in early 1995, which primarily included writing samples (copies of actual class papers) gathered by faculty teaching in the general education program (GEP). In 1996, the university assessment program formally inaugurated the portfolio project, which aimed at assessing the writing and critical thinking skills students acquired by completing the GEP courses. Later that year, the assessment committee drafted three rubrics—two writing-skills rubrics (research-based and nonresearch-based) and one critical-thinking rubric—for evaluating these varied skills as learning outcomes exhibited in student writing. This paper focuses on only one, the research-based writing-skills rubric (Appendix 1).

**Applying the Rubrics: First Readings**

On December 11, 1996, a group of faculty including the director of assessment, the GEP coordinator, faculty from history, math, and education departments, the English chairperson, and me, applied the rubric (designed for research-based writing) to reading
the samples requiring formal documentation. As mentioned, we were also interested in comparing rubric-based scores and the samples’ original grades as a pilot descriptive study within the English composition program, with the primary intent of observing any existing grading patterns between tenure-line and adjunct faculty members.

The day began with an introduction to the portfolio project, an explanation of the scoring process, and an overview of the rubrics offered by the director of assessment. Norming samples of individual student essays were used to generate a discussion about validity and reliability. (In this case, readers approached individual student essays instead of portfolios, although essays had been collected as required items in the portfolio project. The scoring practice is analytic, not holistic see Appendix 1.)

After four or five applications and discussions, the scores for this initial use of the rubric were within two points (of a possible twenty) of one another. We agreed that norming had occurred and that the rubric seemed to be applicable for evaluating writing skills on the essay samples we had all read and rated. Then each committee member read up to ten essays, collected from English 112, a source-based composition class. Arbitrarily, we had a total of sixteen papers from sections taught by four tenure-line faculty members and eighteen papers from five adjuncts. Each paper was read by two participants; their scores were tabulated and compared. Discrepancies of more than two points were discussed and resolved by the two readers. Of the thirty-four papers read, seven required discussion and score adjustment. Scores for each paper were averaged for data analysis. For the pilot descriptive study, the original grades students received in English 112 courses were later added to the data for further analysis.

Results. The average rubric score for the thirty-four papers was 12.78, translating into a description of writing skills as slightly above “adequate” for research papers. The average grade for the thirty-four students was 2.88, a little above a B–. A slight difference, then, was noted between the overall scores on samples taken from sections respectively taught by tenure-line and adjunct faculties (t = 1.39, df = 32, 0.05 < p < 0.1); a second difference existed between overall grades based on a 4-point scale assigned by tenure-line and part-time faculty (see Table 1 and Figure 1).

Table 1.
Comparison of English 112 students’ grades and writing-skills rubric scores based on writing samples collected from sections taught by tenure-line and adjunct faculty, winter quarter, 1996, at Shawnee State University.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FACULTY</th>
<th>NO. OF SAMPLES</th>
<th>AVERAGE RUBRIC SCORE/ BASED ON A POSSIBLE 20</th>
<th>AVERAGE GRADE/ BASED ON A POSSIBLE 4.0</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tenure-line</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>13.76</td>
<td>2.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjunct</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>11.90</td>
<td>3.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTALS</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>12.78</td>
<td>2.88</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Variance based on the original rubric scores from tenure-line faculty V1 = 11.94
Variance based on the original rubric scores from adjunct faculty V2 = 16.35
Independent t-test result based on the original rubric scores t = 1.39
Degree of Freedom (df) is (16-1)+(18-1) = 32
Percentage Spreads:
☐ between the average rubric scores of tenure-line and adjunct faculty: 69%, 60%
☐ between the grades of tenure-line and adjunct faculty: 63%, 80%

Figure 1.
Comparison of Grades and Rubric Scores (Adjusted)
Two more workshops were conducted, and results were analyzed and tabulated (see Appendices II and III). Encouraged by the participation and discussion, the assessment team presented its findings at an interactive session titled “Assessing Writing and Critical-Thinking Skills Using a Rubric Applied to Portfolio Entries” at the American Association of Higher Education Annual Convention in Miami Beach, Florida, in June, 1997. Workshop participants were given a hands-on experience reading two essays and applying two rubrics, one for writing skills and another for critical thinking. (The conference session was also well received; of fifty-two attendees, forty returned their optional end-of-workshop surveys with mostly positive comments. The response rate, which is over 76%, indicates a high degree of interest.)

Findings and Implications Related to English Composition

Validity and Reliability of the Rubric Applied. The writing skills (research-based) rubric appears to be consistent with assessment literature (by, most recently, Hamp-Lyons and Condon, Haswell and Wyche-Smith, Huot, White, and Yancey) in terms of the concrete language used in common judging categories: structure, content, mechanics, and research. With our assessment committee’s approval, I added language about audience to the content category. In terms of its purpose and design, the rubric shares most of the reasons inherent in writing evaluation processes, including grade relevance, diagnosis of particular writing problems, and tracking correlations regarding aspects of writing performance (Cooper and Odell), such as administrative, instructional, and evaluation and research functions; its five-point gradation is also similar to most rubrics presented in professional literature, such as those stated in “Dimensions and Standards in Writing” by Alan C. Purves, et al., which ranges from “basic,” to “proficient,” to “advanced” (although “inadequate” is not specified in this source, but it is present in our rubric as “Not Adequate”) (52).

Instead of looking at the portfolio holistically as a collection of various, multiple entries, the Shawnee State rubric targets the individual essay. In the “superior” or “strong” categories, one also notices the rubric’s emphasis on appropriateness and correctness (instead of “risk-taking,” “engaging voice,” or “sophistication/style” as might be expected in such categories); such a criterion description perhaps issues from the rubric’s cross-disciplinary nature or, arguably, from SSU’s mission of inclusion, focusing as the mission does on sufficiency and acceptability rather than on uniqueness and distinction. “Competence,” not necessarily excellence, is indeed the key term at this small school that services a population in cultural transition.

The rubric targeting skills of formal documentation were apparently exercised reliably between scorers. Faculty from various academic disciplines applied the rubric to writing samples with fairly consistent results. Discussion by raters occurred (as mentioned) and centered on the nature of the original assignment, document styles, and the student writer; adjustments of scores by some faculty resulted, and the raters differed no more than two points on the six-point scale per sample. It took an average of ten to fifteen minutes to score a sample of around six hundred words, although there was considerable variation in the speed with which faculty worked. Experienced essay readers such as the English chair and I (who also frequently read writing samples holistically) tended to read and score faster.

Discrepancy between Tenure-line and Adjunct English Faculty. During earlier visits, NCA expressed a concern about the proportionately large number of adjunct faculty teaching the composition sequence at Shawnee State. In most quarters the number of adjunct faculty teaching English 112 courses was greater than 50 percent. (For example, in the fall semester 1996–97, with eleven sections of E112 total, six were taught by adjuncts; in winter, twenty-one sections, ten were adjuncts’ courses; and in spring 1997, of twelve sections, five were taught by adjuncts.) According to this pilot study (see Table 1), no statistically significant difference existed between the writing-skills scores of students in sections of English 112 taught by tenure-line and those taught by adjunct faculty (i.e., given the sample size, the independent t score is 1.39). Nonetheless, data indicate that the adjunct faculty gave higher grades than may be warranted by the writing samples of their students (Figure 1).

If it is comforting to know that the writing skills reflected by these rubric scores are about equally recognized by the tenure-line and adjunct faculties, the higher grades the adjunct instructors tend to award is indeed an issue worth pursuing. In Figure 1, students taught by tenure-track faculty (numbered 1 through 16) received grades that seem to match their skills, except for students 7, 10, 11, and 15, whereas students taught by adjuncts, 17 through 34, received grades that don’t seem to match their skills (except for 20, 23, 25, and 34). These two findings are, of course, preliminary because of the small sample size.

Despite creating an expected level of controversy, the chart did not seem to offend the twelve adjunct members who came to a follow-up meeting. Most, in fact, wondered if they could use the rubric in their instruction and agreed as a group to look into the grading issues. I was never more

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Note: “Score/6” means raw rubric scores have been adjusted by dividing each by a common value of 6 in order to fit the comparison table. Tenure-line faculty: Students 1–16; Adjunct faculty: Students 17–34.
thankful for the positive feedback and almost immediately saw an opportunity for good adjunct support in reaching standardization of grading. (More discussion appears later in this article.)

The Research Paper in the First-Year Sequence. English 112 was described in the university catalog as “an introduction to the relationship between research and composition.” The course’s final paper, which was the source of the essays we collected as samples, was argumentative by design. The writing task required that each student take a position on an issue and then defend that position with documentation and references. It was clear to the assessment team that this goal had not been met. The great majority of papers were summaries of information about topics, much like encyclopedia entries. Presenting straight expositions, some students did not take a position and argue a stance on the topic they had selected.

As a pilot study, the results of this quantitative descriptive analysis, however, did point to accomplishment of the portion of the SSU mission related to written and oral communication. In addition, the committee encouraged the English department to use the information from the study to begin discussion of outcomes expected in English 112. An effort to standardize the writing prompt for the final paper in English 112, along with a faculty workshop on the expectations for the course, was consequently planned for the following quarter. Faculty’s patterned grading habits (including some adjunct faculty’s interest in adapting the rubric to instruction) would also be explored.

Plan for the Entire Campus. Beyond our pilot study applying the research-writing skills rubric on English composition papers, great value was created through the use of the general portfolio project and applications of our three rubrics for scoring a variety of writing samples. After the pilot readings, project participants applied the rubrics and their recent adjustments to a larger number of papers from writing-intensive courses in a variety of subjects. As noted by Wolcott and Legg, a confirmed value exists in using writing assessment in content-based disciplines and programs. (As faculty-initiated efforts, some departments at SSU have adapted the rubrics for writing projects within the context of program assessment purposes.) Depending on different programs’ purposes and interests, we also discussed the possibilities of reading portfolios holistically. As the collection of portfolio entries of individual students expands, the assessment team plans to take a longitudinal look at writing in the GEP at Shawnee State.
to instruction. At Shawnee State, perhaps because of its size and mission, assessment efforts evidently have led to a good-natured, campus-wide discussion and to specific program implementations.

**Promises and Challenges.** The first and foremost note of caution concerns teaching to the rubrics. While assessment rubrics may become statements of standardized grading criteria, even in the good name of formative evaluation, they have limits in actual classroom applications as tools of instruction. In such a perspective, while students began to attend to the rubric requirements, our instructors continued to underscore the meaning of criteria within specific assignments and sought to offer examples. Some instructors, when emphasizing the drafting process, brought samples to class and had students practice scoring, intending, perhaps, for them to internalize the rubrics as target criteria.

Other challenges of program or campus-wide portfolio assessment focus less on applying the rubrics than on the procedures of collecting appropriate writing samples, maintaining funding sources, and following up with faculty and even with student interests. We had asked our students to maintain portfolios of “major research papers” from each class until graduation; we did not suspect that keeping papers could be a major ordeal for most of them. Absent-mindedness is more common than we know. In addition to student responsibilities, our funding sources needed to be consistent in order to cover costs of copying, hiring and maintaining reader subcommittees and secretarial assistance. The administration must be convinced that this is an ongoing, competitive project worthy of every bit of our scarce resource.

Likewise, faculty who have shown their interest through workshop participation and by having their students’ papers scored must be encouraged for follow-up activities. As assessment representatives, these faculty participants take the rubrics back to their departments and further involve their colleagues, who in turn will serve as future contacts across campus. Program implementation also needs to involve them. In such a buy-in process, assessment teams disseminate findings regularly to the university community through sensible schedules and clear presentations that accommodate all.

**Adjunct Faculty as Stakeholders.** If chairing an academic department or program is “leadership among peers/equals” (Tucker 4), the small-school WPA must strive to balance between recruiting and maintaining a quality staff. At SSU this balancing act necessitates a long-term commitment. Assessment efforts and positive teaching evaluations certainly support adjunct contract renewals; beyond that, some extra empathy and care would help ensure quality payback.

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Reading the SSU scenario, one notices that these adjunct instructors are expected to do more at Shawnee than other schools—in terms of their loads, uniformity, and quality as well as expected teaching accountability—since, unlike big research institutions, SSU has teaching as its primary mission. We must produce quality instruction or we have no reason for existence, in addition to consistent recruitment and keeping academically inclined students. That these adjuncts, almost twenty of them, were generally cooperative in pursuing their daily responsibilities and those added for this particular study should be most encouraging to WPA’s and provide them with goals for their own adjuncts’ participation.

As the institution’s survival depends on enrollment, so the composition program’s survival in this small, geographically-challenged university depends on the program’s retention of committed adjunct faculty. There was (and is) no question about our reliance on their service; at the same time, we knew that these professionals, M.A. and Ph.D. degree holders, who for the most part grew up in the area, had employment challenges in the region. As a new hire, I was told the first week that I should not evaluate adjuncts with typical measures such as class observations, course evaluations, and mandated workshops; despite that, I was concurrently told that I should start tracking their class practices and grading patterns. I remember holding meetings and workshops with very few attendees and handling the same instructors’ complaints about students. I sincerely believe that, given the situations and adjuncts’ challenges, we, as peers wearing many professional hats and who came and stayed for different reasons, had done our best teaching writing and then assessing our teaching performance. Once, an adjunct, who is also a county librarian, came to my office at 8:00 p.m. to share her mixed responses to working with our students, all the while saying emphatically that she remained interested in teaching them. At 7:00 a.m. the following day, a faculty spouse explained that she needed an additional section and had students practice scoring, intending, perhaps, for them to internalize the rubrics as target criteria.

As the institution’s survival depends on enrollment, so the composition program’s survival in this small, geographically-challenged university depends on the program’s retention of committed adjunct faculty. There was (and is) no question about our reliance on their service; at the same time, we knew that these professionals, M.A. and Ph.D. degree holders, who for the most part grew up in the area, had employment challenges in the region. As a new hire, I was told the first week that I should not evaluate adjuncts with typical measures such as class observations, course evaluations, and mandated workshops; despite that, I was concurrently told that I should start tracking their class practices and grading patterns. I remember holding meetings and workshops with very few attendees and handling the same instructors’ complaints about students. I sincerely believe that, given the situations and adjuncts’ challenges, we, as peers wearing many professional hats and who came and stayed for different reasons, had done our best teaching writing and then assessing our teaching performance. Once, an adjunct, who is also a county librarian, came to my office at 8:00 p.m. to share her mixed responses to working with our students, all the while saying emphatically that she remained interested in teaching them. At 7:00 a.m. the following day, a faculty spouse explained that she needed an additional section because her husband’s program had just been canceled. The following night, a high-school teacher volunteered for staffing an odd-hour class and offered to assist in organizing a forthcoming teaching colloquium.

Just as I was their understanding, supportive, and reliable “boss” compositionist, these adjunct colleagues were my fellow teachers and could be expected to perform at a high level. I have my national WPA knowledge base, and they have their local professional experience; together, we share our teaching priorities of working with many of SSU’s special type of first-generation college students.
WPA AND CAMPUS-WIDE WRITING ASSESSMENT

Opportunities arose when I was invited to talk about WAC theories and practices. Faculty from different disciplines were genuinely interested in students’ writing performance—including some faculty who argued that, among SSU’s students, understanding the assignment and ability to think critically seemed more important than “getting everything right” grammatically for the first time. A few, in fact, knew about process pedagogies. Further, we had many faculty, both tenure-line and adjunct, accessible as readers and many retrievable essays as samples. Without a doubt, small is flexible. In this case, faculty members were not unlike family, clarifying things quickly, somehow working together, and moving on.

As a whole, my experience began with a series of meetings in the dean’s office, moved through a pilot reading at a local resort club, a presentation to English department faculty, a series of more formal readings, a conference presentation, and a follow-up meeting, and my first-year experience finally culminated with the year of implementation. Collectively, the activities brought people from different fields or levels together, discussing and practicing shared criteria for good writing, curriculum policies, graduation standards, faculty development, and a short list of other unplanned but student-centered topics. Occasions permitting, we invited deans, vice-presidents, and the provost to our meetings, and they all came. We copied these administrators and the president directly with our memos and proceedings. (And I copied our adjuncts theirs to create an inclusive experience for them.) Probably not all of these events would happen in large institutions, at least according to my personal experience in a school of more than eighteen thousand students. Yet at Shawnee State, we could interact during a single assessment experience, putting aside our academic and philosophical differences, prompting interesting questions such as “How might this sense of collegiality spill over to other things on campus?” and “Would campus-wide assessment aid faculty morale, even indirectly?”

We had much to gain and very little to lose. We learned from one another, certainly. In the process of fine-tuning the rubrics, I discovered the reception and receptibility of writing and the teaching of writing, including how and what writing was done in other disciplines, and what discipline-specific interests or concerns might already exist in the departments. Faculty outside English, for instance, while emphatic about assignment formatting and styles, generally supported the use of writing as a learning aid; they were all quite curious about student-engagement. Progressively, faculty from math, history, education, accounting, and biology further discussed the relationship between the first-year sequence and capstone seminars, and they explored the potential relationship between on-line instruction and assessment. Much communication developed during that year.

Among the several issues concerning assessment and accountability, at center stage seems to be the close relationship between institution-wide assessment and adjunct faculty development within the small university setting. My maxim now is that nothing about SSU’s and our department’s enterprise is really small. The interesting paradox is that, before a small school decides to do institution-wide assessment, especially of writing, the entire human team while numerically small must simultaneously function as large and powerful. That is, while the physical components such as the student population, the number of buildings, departments, and personnel involved might seem “small,” “fewer,” or “little,” no matter how we qualify and quantify them, the actual opportunity, results, and implementation are necessarily influential and far-reaching. In the SSU case, the opportunity was educational for all its community members because our efforts foregrounded the composition program and its adjunct faculty as stake-holders. If I should take on the assessment task again, here are the lessons learned:

1. More pre-design conversation and collaboration between the assessment officer and the WPA can help to ensure a good theoretical and praxis footing.
2. An ad hoc advisory committee can be involved to chart progress.
3. A larger assessment team (of more than seven members) involving participants from the administration, tenure-line, and adjunct faculty is advisable as a team of stakeholders.
4. Beyond the immediate campus, such an assessment team could also involve area high-school instructors in a summer institute or articulation projects in order to reinforce institutional aims.
5. Follow-up work is necessary:
   a. The rubrics need to be imaginatively used in teacher-training and campus-wide workshops, connecting, for instance, to the WAC or WID initiatives; and
   b. the assessment conversation can be enlarged to establish a teaching and learning center is a highly desirable effect of the program.
While my experience may have been positive because of the close interaction among faculty members, my arguments are these:

1. In a small institution such as Shawnee State, the WPA occupies a distinct vantage point from which—based on the relatively modest size of composition staff of eighteen and central administration of four—a large body of student texts and their assessment scores as raw data is readily available upon call, which then becomes an invaluable source for varied research methodologies and projects.

2. Being considered a small institution does present an illusion in terms of the education, training, time, and politics involved. In other words, an institution-wide writing assessment is necessarily a large process in scope and practice. Its benefit for us, unlike larger institutions that are our counterparts, is that as a small university faculty we learned to take on big issues. While teaching, not research, is usually the mission and consequently the focus of SSU faculty, institution-wide writing assessment has been educational for all SSU’s writing faculty—including our adjunct colleagues because of the necessary exposure to the professional literature and practices and to our conversation about learning, teaching, and assessing writing.

**Envoi**

After the AAHE workshop the assessment team received several invitations for program consultation on various campuses. While opportunities like these are relatively rare, they also suggest that our college clientele have changed so much in recent decades that assessment, an issue of interest primarily for lower-division colleges not long ago, is now a common concern for many more open or selective four-year institutions. The assessment need has risen because access to higher education has continued to widen while society concurrently searches for even more curricular and instructional accountabilities.

At SSU, we strive to show the NCA our assessment efforts not only in emphasizing specific goals of performance consistency as shared criteria but in teaching essential writing skills in our courses, which holds that SSU’s composition program—including its adjunct faculty—is highly accountable for the entire institution. Based on its fundamentally cross-disciplinary character, campus-wide writing assessment is a worthy act especially in a small school. Through expanding dialogues and, more importantly, professional development opportunities, I hope to retain our accountable adjunct colleagues as a dedicated and stable teaching force.

**Appendix 1:**

**Research-based Writing Skills Rubric, and Scores of “No Applause”**

(SAMPLE TOTAL)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating (13)</th>
<th>Structure (3)</th>
<th>Content (3)</th>
<th>Mechanics (4)</th>
<th>Research (3)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>5 Superior</strong></td>
<td>Clear beginning, development, and conclusion; appropriate paragraphing; clear and appropriate transitions</td>
<td>Appropriate length to cover topic; clearly, coherently focused; a good sense of audience; thoughts clearly organized/presented; logical and clear progression; assertions clearly supported/illustrated</td>
<td>Correct sentence structure; correct spelling; correct punctuation; correct capitalization; correct usage; appropriate word choice</td>
<td>Reference page included and in correct format; appropriately cited sources; appropriate number of resources; appropriate resources to support thesis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4 Strong</strong></td>
<td>Generally clear beginning, development, and conclusion; generally appropriate paragraphing; generally clear and appropriate transitions</td>
<td>Appropriate length to cover topic; clearly, coherently focused; a general sense of audience; thoughts generally organized/presented; generally logical and clear progression; assertions generally supported/illustrated</td>
<td>Generally free of errors in sentence structure; spelling; punctuation; capitalization; usage; word choice</td>
<td>Reference page included and mostly in correct format; sources generally cited correctly; appropriate number of resources; mostly appropriate resources to support thesis</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Title: No Applause for Television Violence

I belong to a generation that cannot remember life before television. We grew up with televisions in our homes and in our lives. It’s easy to recall what day of the week it is by what is showing on television this evening. [. . .] All this visual and audible violence seeps into our minds and into our lives. It is time that we take notice of the negative influences television violence has on our society. It is time to take a stand against violent programming on television.

The negative effects that TV violence has on our children are too serious to be ignored. “A study by the Center for Media and Public Affairs disclosed that an average child—regardless of family income or educational status—views 8,000 murders and 10,000 other acts of violence on TV before finishing elementary school” (Weir 14). Television, whether we like it or not, acts as a teacher in many ways. Children learn from educational shows like Sesame Street, but they learn from shows like The Power Rangers, too. A recent study by Boyatzis, Marillo, & Neshitt finds “an important and alarming discovery [. . .] that children’s aggression was immediately and markedly greater following exposure to but a single episode of The Power Rangers (53). Children imitate the violent behaviors they see on TV. I can see it in the young children who I babysit. When they are watching a show like The Power Rangers they begin to imitate the jumps, kicks, and punches they see. [. . .]

Children are not alone in being misled by television violence. “Viewing violent will make people insensitive to the issue of personal violence as well as violence in society” (Signorielli 96). When we see a particular violent act for the first time, it shocks us. This is a good and fitting response. We ought to be stunned by violence. The Commission on Violence and Youth of the American Psychological Association found that “evidence clearly reveals that viewing and hearing high levels of violence on television, day after day, were correlated with increased acceptance of aggression and more aggressive behavior” (qtd. in Hepburn 310). [. . .]

TV violence encourages real life violence. [. . .]

Supporters of violent programming have argued that TV has little or no affect on our society. If this were true, I doubt advertisers would dump millions of dollars into trying to get people to buy their products. It would be terribly unwise to use a medium for advertising which has so little effect on peoples’ attitudes and decisions. [. . .]

**APPENDIX 2: AN EXCERPT FROM AN E112 ESSAY**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3</th>
<th>Adequate</th>
<th>Adequate length to cover topic; adequately focused; some sense of audience; thoughts adequately organized and presented; adequate progression; assertions adequately supported/illustrated</th>
<th>Relatively few errors in sentence structure/spelling punctuation capitalization usage word choice</th>
<th>Adequate reference page; some errors in citations; sources generally cited correctly; adequate but limited resources; adequate but limited choice of resources to support thesis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>Weak beginning, development, and conclusion; weak paragraphing; weak transitions</td>
<td>Frequent errors in sentence structure spelling punctuation capitalization usage word choice</td>
<td>Significant errors on reference page; citations; choice of resources; not adequate resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Not Adequate</td>
<td>Does not cover topic; not focused; little to no sense of serious and persistent errors in organizational structure; paragraphing</td>
<td>Serious and persistent errors in sentence structure spelling punctuation capitalization usage word choice</td>
<td>No reference page; numerous format errors, or both; sources uncredited or incorrectly cited; few and inappropriate resources</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Clearly people are affected by what is seen on TV. Ex-president of Columbia Pictures, David Puttnam, said shortly after he resigned, “Someone has to say ‘Enough’—because this is disaster, we are destroying ourselves. [. . .]

Television is sure to be a part of American life for many generations to come. We must take notice of the negative influences which TV violence has on our society. Something must be done. The time is now.

APPENDIX 3:

SCORE RESULTS FROM SENIOR RUBRIC, MAY 21, 1997

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No./Title</th>
<th>GTA1</th>
<th>GTA2</th>
<th>Wrt 1</th>
<th>Wrt 2</th>
<th>Reader 1</th>
<th>Reader 2</th>
<th>Senior Seminar</th>
<th>GPA</th>
<th>Major</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Inequality in Ohio’s Schools</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Hamilton</td>
<td>Todt</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>3.91</td>
<td>Computer Science</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Tropical Rain Forests of the Sea</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>18.5</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Eng</td>
<td>Todt</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>3.18</td>
<td>Biology</td>
<td>75.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Negative Effects of Privatization</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Huang</td>
<td>Todt</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>3.13</td>
<td>Occupational Therapy</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Reintroduction of Industrial Hemp in Kenya</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Lorentz</td>
<td>Todt</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>2.66</td>
<td>Natural Science</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Vaccination: The Key to Malarial Eradication</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>14.5</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Hamilton</td>
<td>Eng</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>Biology</td>
<td>71.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. China Population Control</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Hamilton</td>
<td>Huang</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>2.17</td>
<td>Biology</td>
<td>34.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Birth-Control Use</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Hamilton</td>
<td>Eng</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>2.91</td>
<td>Chemistry</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Medical Freedoms &amp; Alternative Therapy</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Huang</td>
<td>Eng</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>2.72</td>
<td>Biology</td>
<td>65</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. Effects of Ancestral Traditions in Africa</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>22.5</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>15.5</td>
<td>Lorentz</td>
<td>Eng</td>
<td>B+</td>
<td>2.75</td>
<td>Biology</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Human Forced Changes on The Amazon</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Lorentz</td>
<td>Huang</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>Natural Science</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: A nearly error-free Works Cited page was attached to the original student paper.

NOTES

This author wishes to thank David Todt, Dana Elder, and the entire WPA editorial team for their invaluable input throughout the different stages of this article.

WORKS CITED


Huot, Brian. “Reliability, Validity, and Holistic Scoring: What We Know and What We Need to Know.” College Composition and Communication 41.2 (1990) : 201–213.


Internal Outsourcing of Academic Support:
The Lessons of Supervised Study

Neal Lerner

Writing Program Administrators are well aware of a continuing challenge to their work—the nearly universal reliance on graduate student and part-time, contingent labor to do the bulk of the teaching of first-year composition. In trying to cope in the role of “boss compositionists” overseeing the “comp droids” (J. Harris 43), WPAs must try to strike an impossible balance between ensuring quality writing instruction while having to “make do” with a shrinking pile of resources. No wonder, then, that one critical area of writing instruction—support for student writers in terms of writing centers and other forms of out-of-class teaching—is easily overlooked when it comes time to dish out the prized but diminishing resources. “Sure, we have a writing center,” the WPA tells colleagues, “and it’s amazing how much it does, given how strapped for resources we are.”

In this light, I wonder how most WPAs would react to the following scenario: Your dean says, “We’re trying to reduce redundant services, so the Learning Center will now provide tutoring in writing. That means we’ll have to close the Writing Center. However, you’ll get to keep that money in your budget.” Hmm. Seems like an attractive proposal in many ways: your resources aren’t cut, your college’s students will continue to receive writing support, and your dean’s decision is far better than outsourcing tutoring in writing to one of the many for-profit providers dangling “cost efficiencies” before axe-wielding, budget-chopping administrators (DeCiccio 1). Thus, you’ll get to do some “internal outsourcing” and turn instructional support over to a player who’s often ready to meet this need (and who has long met a student-support need)—the campus learning center or academic resource center.

Such a move, I argue here, would be a mistake. While learning centers offer important services to students, their struggle for status, resources, and institutional leverage are challenges that Writing Program and Writing Cen-
ter Administrators work hard to overcome. WPAs—and increasingly writing center directors—often represent a model for situating administrative and pedagogical expertise fully within the academic heart of our institutions. In contrast, learning centers are often aligned with student services or student affairs, and their directors often have no faculty status and consequently lack direct access to the committee and governance structures that faculty control, particularly in terms of curriculum. Their resulting alignments can create far less influence on students, on faculty, and on administration.

In this article, I trace the roots of these contrasting alignments through an account of the movement toward “supervised study,” a popular approach of the late 1920s and early 1930s to individualize instruction as educational enrollments bulged. Supervised study represents the historical precedent for the work of contemporary writing centers and learning centers; however, the differences in institutional positioning of writing and learning centers stem from their relative success in resisting some of the more disturbing assumptions about teaching and learning that mark supervised study. Still, a writing center and writing program’s influence on our institutions is often tenuous, a situation made more so by the pressure to lower costs. Supervised study is a face of academic support that thrives just down the hall or a few buildings over, a parallel world that might easily become the dominant approach as resources dwindle and administrators troll for efficiencies.

**Teaching and Learning in the 1930s**

Supervised study blossomed in the 1930s, when attending college was no longer solely the provenance of those students historian Laurence Veysey describes as “a parade of Anglo-Saxon names and pale, freshly scrubbed faces” (271). From the turn of the century to 1930, while the American population grew by 75 percent, enrollments in higher education increased by 400 percent (Levine 68), and these students, often children of the immigrants who had come to America at the turn of the twentieth century, were far more diverse and more variously prepared than previous generations. As Winfield Rogers of Cleveland College noted about freshman English in 1939, “One class may have an age variation of from eighteen to eighty, [with] variations in social background running the gamut from a red cap to the president’s wife” (397).

The lecture and recitation that had dominated schooling at all levels up to this point—described in 1915 by Frederic Burk as “the smug impertinence of an ancient, persistent, and preposterous pedantry” (1)—were no longer adequate for students with such varied preparations for academic rigor. Individual methods of instruction responded to individual needs, breaking the “Lock-Step” of mass instruction (Burk 1). Every teacher could supervise students’ learning in close ways, could act, in the words of Preston Search, as “one who knows how to keep out of the way, and yet is ever present to inspire and to direct” (9). Many plans of individualized instruction for K–12 classrooms were developed at this time, often named for the city of origin: the Batavia Plan, the Winnetka Technique, the Dalton Plan (Stephens 22–36). One of the more popular plans was a program of supervised study, first offered in 1917 by Alfred Hall-Quest, then a professor of educational psychology at the University of Virginia. Supervised study operated on a simple premise: In the face of increasing urbanization of American society, one could not assume that students would have the time, guidance, and support to be able to study at home. The problem, in the words of Hall-Quest, was that

> [t]he family, with its variability in size, lack of room, and diversified industrial and social activities, offers little or no opportunity for the efficient guidance or supervision of the child’s study habits during their school years. If assistance is offered, it is strained, nervous, often inaccurate. *(Supervised Study 11)*

When students’ home lives were no longer the dependable and stable situation of earlier generations of students, it became the school’s role to provide the necessary order and instruction. In Hall-Quest’s view, however, schools were failing to provide for these needs:

> In studying, there is perhaps more waste of time and more waste of nervous energy than in any other department of educational life[. . . .]. Mass teaching, hurried assignments, indiscriminate marking, together with the expectation that study is a self-evident process, have wrought grave injustice to the pupils and have delayed a finer efficiency of school product *(Supervised Study 18)*.

As a result, studying itself—the very practice of learning in every discipline and classroom, from English and history to math and science—needed significant reform or supervision. According to Charles Handschin of Miami University of Ohio, in the supervised study approach, “the teacher gives his [or her] time to each student in turn or to such as are particularly in need of help, aiding them by suggestion, etc., or by mapping out work for those who have completed the assignment” (159).

The popularity of supervised study as an alternative to lecture and recitation was immense. In 1917, Hall-Quest noted that supervised study was not found in the “educational literature of five years ago” *(Supervised Study 16)*, yet by 1930 George Mining’s review of the literature on the topic yielded 257 sources (63–79). Viola Bower’s 1933 thesis on supervised study culled
Supervised Study and Laboratory Methods of Writing

Composition as a subject for supervised study was part of a larger movement at the end of the nineteenth century that positioned itself against the teaching of writing as the memorization of abstract rules; instead, students would learn to write with frequent practice and instructor feedback (Kitzhaber 220). Hall-Quest’s 1917 description of “supervising the study of English composition” sounds remarkably contemporary:

Composition work is much like modeling in clay. There must be the raw material, properly mixed, deposited on the board, roughly pinched, pounded, and thumbed here and there before the finer work begins. First knowledge; then careful selection of topics of individual interest, the rough sketching of the first draft; and then frequent revision, improvement, and finally achievement. (Supervised Study 251)

In the scheme of supervised study, then, writing was a task for students to complete in classrooms that were “chiefly a laboratory or a workshop” (Hall-Quest, “Editor’s Introduction” xii). Indeed, “laboratory methods” in the teaching of English were often classified as one form of supervised study (Mining 15), and the idea of teaching writing as a “laboratory subject” forms the basis for much of the work done in contemporary writing centers (Carino 105), as well as in composition classrooms with their reliance on teacher-student conferencing and peer feedback. The challenge for schools, whether pre- or postsecondary, was to create environments most conducive to such teaching.

This challenge, of course, has always been the rub. Individual methods of teaching are a tremendous drain on available resources. As educational researcher Benjamin Bloom offered more than twenty years ago, “an important task of research and instruction is to seek ways of accomplishing [the effects of tutoring] under more practical and realistic conditions than the one-to-one tutoring, which is too costly for most societies to bear on a large scale” (4). Writing centers have achieved a certain amount of cost-effectiveness by relying on peer tutors, a byproduct of which is the creation of a core undergraduate community of committed writers and writing teachers (Wingate 9–10). In the struggle to choose between available resources, institutional commitment, and student need, writing centers have long shown the ability “to do more with less,” which, ironically, can result in the kind of low price that makes shifting writing center services over to the learning center an easy decision.

Supervised Study and the Learning Center

The supervised study movement is not only a key historical precedent for the development of the contemporary writing center—and for encouraging the teaching practices common in composition classrooms—it can also be seen as the precursor to many of the activities grouped in current learning centers, such as tutoring in math, science, or study skills. Gwyn Enright and Gene Kerstiens trace the history of the college learning center to the development of “study techniques guides” in the early twentieth century, which, in their words, “supported the sentiment that potentially good students could be salvaged if they knew how to study” (2). The connection between learning centers and supporting students’ studying can also be found in the use of the label “study skills centers” to describe many learning centers created in the early 1970s as the open-admissions movement brought large numbers of students to college campuses (Enright and Kerstiens 9).

Another historical root for the learning center is the work done largely by campus libraries in the early 1970s. The concept was to make resources available for students, and a 1973 survey showed that three out of four colleges had “integrated their libraries and learning resources” (Burlingame, Fields, and Schulzetenberg 26). While the development of study guides and the availability of other learning resources (whether print, audio, video or computer-based) seem to imply a certain storehouse metaphor—as opposed to offering students the type of instruction central to supervised study—learning centers have long tried to link the availability of these resources and student instruction. As one contemporary learning center’s mission describes, “Come to study; stay to learn” (National College Learning Center Association, par. 20). A more complete connection between learning centers and supervised study is in the definition Dwight Allen supplied more than 30 years ago:

The resource center is an integral part of the instructional program. It is a site for personal, individual study. It is a center for supervised practice and remediation. It equalizes study conditions and reduces mislearning. (29)

While Allen’s use of the term remediation would be contested by both writing centers and learning centers—as I describe next—his definition bears striking resemblance to what Alfred Hall-Quest offered in 1917: “[Supervised study] is that plan of school procedure whereby each pupil [. . .] is instructed and directed in the methods of studying and thinking.”
Lerner / Internal Outsourcing for Academic Support

WPA 29.1/2 (Fall 2005)

All in the Family

As I have described, the family tree of academic support contains a single trunk that grew from the seed of the supervised study movement, subsequently branching into learning centers and writing centers. The attributes shared by both types of centers are many: a belief in the superiority of individual instruction, an often uneasy relationship to the institution itself, and a history grounded in higher education’s unease—if not distaste—for dealing with students who are underprepared for the necessities of academic challenges.

It is the differences between contemporary writing centers and learning centers that intrigue me, particularly in terms of their directors’ relative status within their institutions. Writing center directors have long worked to raise their professional status (see the commentaries of Olson and Ashton-Jones; Simpson; Healy; Lerner “Confessions”), but no parallel theme runs through the learning center literature. This contrast becomes clear in the results of two national surveys conducted in academic year 2000–2001, one by The Writing Centers Research Project (WCRP) and the other by the National College Learning Centers Association (NCLCA). As shown in Table 1, the directors of writing centers tend to hold higher academic degrees and are more likely to occupy faculty positions than do their learning-center counterparts, and these differences hold across similar sorts of institutions.

Table 1.
Comparison of Writing Center and Learning Center Director Responses to Surveys by WCRP and NCLCA in 2000–2001

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institutions Responding</th>
<th>Writing Centers (184 responses)</th>
<th>Learning Centers (144 responses)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Four-year institutions</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two-year institutions</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 Faculty category was separated into tenured (29%), untenured tenure-track (13%), and untenurable full-time faculty (21%). Sources: The Writing Centers Research Project; National College Learning Center Association.

In making these comparisons, I do not intend to claim that the work of learning centers isn’t, hasn’t been, or won’t continue to be vital to any institution. Learning centers often house efforts such as supplemental instruction, learning-disabled student services, and federally funded TRIO and Educational Opportunity Programs. However, this association with traditionally underserved students and the federal programs targeted at that population aligns learning centers squarely with remedial instruction. Higher education’s need to remediate underprepared students has always been a source of contention, a reminder that “standards” are threatened and that degraded standards quickly become a challenge to the meritocratic beliefs that shaped colleges in their earliest forms. Writing centers have long resisted being tied solely to remedial instruction, arguing that all writers need writing tutors (M. Harris 27), given the idea of a writing process built on frequent practice and meaningful feedback. An exclusive relationship to remediation potentially results in the characterization of writing centers as, in the words of Stephen North, “some sort of skills center, a fix-it shop” (435) with its college patrons having a “limited conception of what such places can do” (436). Writing centers want far more central role, a place that functions as “the centers of consciousness about writing on campuses” (North 446). A strong association with remedial instruction has not proven to be the most constructive path to that place.

Learning centers have likewise resisted the remedial label, at least according Enright and Kerstiens, who assert that for learning centers “by 1950 the term remedial had fallen from grace” (5). Nevertheless, fifteen of the twenty-five articles listed on the National Association of Developmental Educators’ website as “Resources for Political Discussions” use the word “remedial” in
their titles (http://www.nade.net). By the end of their article, Enright and Kersten’s assert that “[l]earning centers are assuming a leadership role in staff development, assisting faculty and staff to improve instruction and more effectively serve students who have learning problems” (emphasis added; 17). Such problems abound, for in his historical sketch of the field, Norman Stahl aligns learning assistance with developmental education (and offers “basic composition instruction” as a “subfield”) (3), largely precluding the idea that such work is central to an institution’s purpose.

Such differences between writing centers and learning centers are perhaps a measure of how well writing centers and writing programs have acted against the assumptions central to supervised study and how intently learning centers continue to be defined by them. One key assumption has to do with attempts at individualizing instruction. In the educational climate of the 1920s and 1930s, determining students’ individual needs led rapidly to a barrage of testing instruments and the subsequent labeling, sorting, and segregating of students of varied abilities. The intent of this “efficiency movement,” as described by Arthur Applebee, was that “[b]y using the tests to form groups of ‘similar’ students, the school would be able to provide instruction geared more closely to their particular abilities. And this—as English teachers and their more scientific colleagues all recognized—would be more efficient” (82). Efficiency, however, also meant the segregation of students with similar abilities, at least based on the results of their tests. At the high-school level, this segregation was the system of tracking that led—and continues to lead—in the words of educational researcher Jeanne Oakes, to “structured inequality” (2–9). In higher education, tracking is most clearly seen in the many levels of composition that students might place into, the basic writing net that captures the underprepared before they are deemed worthy of more advanced practice.

While composition continues to make progress in overcoming the legacies of tracking—particularly through approaches such as allowing students to opt for “directed self-placement” in composition classes (Royer and Gilles)—learning centers and their student affairs patrons have not been so successful. It is not uncommon for learning centers to align themselves with the testing and sorting that leads to “structured inequality.” For example, the University of Central Florida Callarman Center for Academic Excellence consists of the Student Academic Resource Center and the University Testing Center. The mission of the latter is to assist UCF students and the surrounding community is [sic] assessing their knowledge, skills, and abilities as they relate to higher and continuing education by providing a variety of local and national testing opportunities. This is accomplished

through the use of written and computer-adapted assessment testing instruments. (Student Academic Resource Center, par. 2)

Indeed, embracing the “opportunity” to be aligned with standardized testing is one of the key contrasts between learning centers and writing programs. On the learning assistance listserv, LRNASST-L, discussions of computer-based writing placement instruments such as WritePlacer or ePlacer rarely question the validity of such measures, while similar discussions on WPA-L are sure to generate screenfuls of ire against the enterprise of testing and sorting. For example, when a someone recently asked on LRNASST-L about the use of WritePlacer, she wasn’t asking looking for a critique of the exam’s validity; instead, she had an operational question about scoring cutoffs:

We adopted WritePlacer with electronic scoring this past August. If anyone else is using it, could you share with me/us what cutoffs you use to mark the boundary of developmental writing versus the first college-level writing course? If you use any other placement criteria in conjunction, such as a sentence skills score, that would be very helpful information, too.

(Pratt)

I don’t mean to imply that the learning-center world’s acceptance of standardized testing as part of its mission is the result of ignorance or malevolence. Instead, it’s a question of resources and of grabbing whatever handholds of power might seem available. Consider, for instance, this note from a school of education department heads meeting at Arkansas Tech University: “Testing and Learning Center has announced that they are short on support staff. Therefore, they cannot offer assistance in learning and will only be providing testing services” (School of Education n.p.). When funding of TRIO and other federal programs becomes increasingly threatened (Selingo 1), turning a testing and learning center into a testing center, a truncated version of its former self, is sure to be one way people adopt to stay in business.

Different attitudes towards testing lead to another point of divergence between writing centers and learning centers: each field’s approach toward accreditation. Writing center directors have considered the idea of having their professional organization, the International Writing Centers Association (IWCA), certify member centers, but after often-contentious debate, the idea was scrapped (Davis). Fear of a one-size-fits-all mandate and concerns over costs and logistics moved the accreditation discussion to an alternative plan—to advocate successfully for the Council of Writing Program Administrators to place in its Consultant-Evaluator Service those WPAs

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pace, branches naturally off of supervised study: After all, some students 
tively inexpensive, that allows each student to progress at his or her own 
reliance on worksheets, on instruction that is easily monitored and rela
help students to learn, working, that is, not merely to contain them. Still,
one reliance on worksheets, on instruction that is easily monitored and rela-
expensive; issuing to students sets of rou
regating students by standardized tests—which may or may 
not be realistically diagnostic; issuing to students sets of rou
tine exercises—written, taped, filmed, or occasionally com-
ized—which students are required to complete on their own; 
and measuring success by scores students achieve on another 
standardized test. (1–2)
This all-too-familiar picture is easily embraced by administrators bent 
on efficiency and cost savings, but heavily resisted by those of us working to 
help students to learn, working, that is, not merely to contain them. Still, 
a reliance on worksheets, on instruction that is easily monitored and rela-
expensive, that allows each student to progress at his or her own pace, branches naturally off of supervised study: After all, some students 
with noted expertise and experience with writing centers. Aligning itself 
with a natural ally seemed far more strategic for the IWCA than to wade 
into the very murky waters of policing its members. Learning centers, on the 
other hand, have embraced the idea of accreditation quite fully. Two pro-
fessional bodies offer accreditation for learning centers: the National Tutor-
ing Association “certifies” individual tutors (www.ntaututor.org), while the 
College Reading and Learning Association (CRLA; www.crla.net) certifies 
tutoring programs. The CRLA notes in its guidelines that “certificates help 
set up a standard for the minimum skills and training a tutor needs to be 
successful” (College Reading and Learning Association 1). Just as testing is 
one broad—and highly contested—way to screen for abilities and achieve-
ment, certification fulfills a similar function. It assumes great variability in 
the quality of learning center work and offers a hierarchical way for learning 
centers and their staffs to find validation in what they do, validation that is 
perhaps more difficult to find in a learning centers’ relationship to its host 
institution.

While testing and placement form one disturbing legacy of supervised 
study, another evolved easily from its original premise. It is clear, the think-
ing goes, that if we are going to make instruction individual but do not 
have a private tutor for each student, then perhaps we should give students 
worksheets to keep them busy. Indeed, at all instructional levels, one teacher 
working with one student usually means that fourteen, or twenty-four, or 
thirty-four other students are likely filling out worksheets while waiting their 
turns for individualized instruction. Worksheets—perhaps the true wood 
product of our family tree—have long been tied to both writing and learn-
ing centers (Lerner, “Drill Pads” 122–123)). In its 1976 report, the NCTE-
sponsored Committee on Learning Skills Centers offered a dire picture of 
the test-sort-assign worksheet-retest cycle:

In the worst sense, “individualized instruction” can mean seg-
regating students by standardized tests—which may or may 
not be realistically diagnostic; issuing to students sets of rou-
tine exercises—written, taped, filmed, or occasionally com-
ized—which students are required to complete on their own; 
and measuring success by scores students achieve on another 
standardized test. (1–2)

This all-too-familiar picture is easily embraced by administrators bent 
need more supervision than others—some get worksheets and others get aca-
demic challenges—some get containment and others get opportunities. Our 
educational systems have always featured unequal treatment. That, after all, 
is why learning and writing centers were created in the first place. Funding 
and organization are premised on the idea that some students need academic 
support more than others. Ironically, then, growing demand for academic 
support services—if academic support is really to mean more than remedia-
for the least prepared—puts exactly the kind of strain on a writing pro-
gram administrator’s budget that makes the shifting of services to the learn-
ing center seem so attractive.

The Future of Supervised Study
Lest my central claim—that WPAs will find increasing pressure to off-load 
writing support to their campuses’ learning centers—seems Chicken Little-
ish, consider the pitch that for-profit providers might make to your dean 
or provost at the next AAHE meeting. Huntington Learning Centers, for 
example, offers the following enticement on its Web site:

As the oldest national provider of supplemental education, we’ve 
established our success by responding to the urgent national 
need for supplemental education services. According to News-
week, “Huntington [is] working to make remedial instruction 
a commodity as ubiquitous and accessible as frozen yogurt.” 
(Franchise Update, par. 3)

Like any good capitalist, Huntington attempts to fill a market niche, an 
attractive alternative to meet the demand for learning support without 
anyone on campus getting his or her hands dirty. In the face of “remedial 
instruction as a commodity,” the services of the learning center might cer-
tainly seem the lesser of two evils. Such a move might even seem like the 
cost of doing business in the economic climate that Downing, Hulbert and 
Mathieu describe:

As spending has been redirected or cut from state and land-
grant university budgets, academics compete more vehemently 
for scare resources, research grants, and government support, 
even as they claim intellectual autonomy. But autonomy can 
be illusory. The cost-cutting that follows conservative politi-
cal agendas leads to retrenchment or freezing of positions, pro-
grams, and sometimes even departments. (3–4)

Pitting writing programs and centers against learning centers would not 
be in anyone’s interest, despite the long-standing division between academic 
and student affairs (Banta and Kuh 40). Outsourcing academic support to a

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for-profit provider will never allow for those students most in need of such support to be more than tangential to the institution. Such moves are a contemporary version of Yale University’s creation of an “Awkward Squad” in the late 1920s, to which “freshmen who are considered deficient in writing are assigned” (Noyes 678). This description might seem an anachronism of earlier times, but while our contemporary language is more positive, our treatment of underprepared student writers can often be just as punitive. Bringing all writers into the center of an institution’s efforts to understand and improve its teaching and learning practices is an admirable goal for any WPA. Outsourcing academic support—whether on- or off-campus—precludes any hope of attaining that goal.

If academic support should not be locally outsourced to the learning center and not be externally outsourced to for-profit providers, just what should that support look like and where should it occur? One increasingly popular strategy is to create centers for teaching and learning, administrative units that manage faculty development, academic support, and institutional assessment—a potentially cost-saving streamlining of a variety of essential activities. These centers’ several functions are situated within the teaching and research roles of the faculty (Haviland, Fye, and Colby 88–89). When the directors of such entities are tenure-track faculty, the message across the campus is that the institution sees teaching and learning in all settings as central to the faculty’s work and not as activities to be outsourced or marginalized. It is easy to imagine WPA activities as part of—or closely aligned with—such centers, reinforcing the importance of writing across the institution.

In Alfred Hall-Quest’s words, “The best of plans must fail unless they are directed by persons who have enthusiastic faith in their ultimate success” (Supervised Study 392). Certainly, we feel this way about our writing centers and writing programs. What the history of supervised study tells me is that enthusiasm is only one element in the success of our work. Effective institutional alignment, sound assumptions about teaching and learning, and practices consistent with our values are all essential to negotiating the conflicts that supervised study has left for us.

Acknowledgements

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Reenvisioning WPAs in Small Colleges as “Writing People Advocates”

Judith Hebb

Tom Amorose, the WPA at Seattle Pacific University, defines “small schools” as “four-year institutions that offer undergraduate education primarily,” that use full-time faculty and some adjuncts to teach composition on the first-year and other levels, that enroll fewer than 5,000 undergraduate students, and whose ethos of “smallness”—such as teaching orientation, liberal-arts mission, and individualized student attention—is tied to their identity (104). Although my four-year institution, where total enrollment hovers between 450 and 500, does not meet Amorose’s definition of small schools based on the principle of size (we are smaller than his “small”), I share the same concerns as all writing program administrators—successful, collaborative teaching and learning through worthwhile, challenging courses in an environment where faculty and students are encouraged to develop as individuals and in academics. While I do not claim that my local context is representative of all schools with total student populations of under 5,000, the voice of “petite” schools that lie on the far end of the college-size spectrum should be included in our thinking about the small-school experience in order to complete and enrich the diverse WPA narrative.

Amorose points out that the “small-school composition scene” has been eclipsed by large-university composition programs (at those institutions with more than 5,000 undergraduates) and that the models and discourse for WPA work developed from these “large-school cultures” have not sufficiently addressed the needs and the realities of the small-school writing program or its administrator (91–93). Certainly, these comments apply accurately to the smallest of composition programs, such as mine. After citing the research of Stephen P. Witte and Lester Faigley, Carol Hartzog, and Linda G. Polin and Edward M. White, Amorose concludes that “[d]ifference in size […] corresponds to a panoply of qualitative differences in a writing program and its administrator’s material conditions” (92). These differences
include disparities in faculty development opportunities and differences in hiring practices and patterns as well as in classroom dynamics and activities, in who is doing the teaching, and in the effect of composition program decisions on staff (Amorose 92). However, writing programs vary widely because they are designed according to particular local circumstances (Amorose 92), as they should be.

Until recently, the small-school WPA culture has been omitted from the "official records" that we create and circulate among ourselves. Amorose indicates that this omission results in an "inexact description of the concept of WPA power," which overshadows WPAs using alternative political instruments available to us (93). In fact, the existing discourse of power as a gauge of healthy growth and status is not particularly helpful to small-school WPAs, and so Amorose, along with Paul Hanstedt, was prompted to edit a special issue of Composition Studies in 2004 that focused on small-school WPAs "Composition In The Small College." This issue expands the WPA narrative, but these essays don't complete for us the entire span of WPA professionalism since it omits the petite-school culture (all are schools well over 1,000 undergraduates).

Christine Hult, a former editor of the WPA: Writing Program Administration, reports on the increase of published articles that comment on power and its use by the WPA in order to address a WPA's issue of professional identity (125–26). Amorose, aware of the inherent difficulties on the small campus, notes: "The solo exertion of power when it is available, which isn't often, can prove problematic and even dangerous on a small campus" (Amorose 94, 98). The effectiveness of the small-school WPA may, in fact, be eroded by the "exertion of power" (Amorose 94). The "boss-compositionist" model present at some larger institutions, while crucial in corporate politics, may not serve any WPA well, and, especially, not the heads of small-college enterprises, where WPAs would be well advised to examine and use their roles of authority and influence to be effective leaders (Amorose 102). Since the WPA may not be as politically marginalized at a small school as at a large one, she will not need to wield power as a weapon to achieve status within the local institution. On the other hand, taking a more feminist view of control, Jeanne Gunner's idea (not model) of "collaborative administration," which emphasizes "community, shared responsibility, and open exchange of information, ideas, and criticism" (254), is a step toward establishing the small-school ethos, which is more people-oriented than program-oriented. Of course, the personality of the individual WPA will determine how the leadership role is played out in the quest for professional identity.

By necessity, writing program administration performed at large institutions requires the management of a huge labor force and a global focus. I would liken the WPA in such a setting to the CEO of a large corporation, who operates at a distance from his writing faculty and may not know all of them personally. He or she must focus on the macro view, the "big" picture. On the other hand, writing program administration at a small college is more like the job of the major holder of a small, partner-owned business. Because the territory of the small business enterprise is necessarily smaller, the leader personally knows and works side-by-side with his business associates, and each person has a metaphorical capital investment in the success of the partnership. The smaller the school, the more localized the focus of the WPA—the "little" picture. While all WPAs may seek to balance the "people" with the "program," I propose that the small-scale WPA will naturally think of himself/herself less as a "program administrator" and more as a "people advocate." I do not mean to imply here that large-school WPAs value programs over people, but if the program is the focus of its administrator, the value of the people within that program may be diminished. My purpose is to suggest that my experience at a "petite" institution might well be able to inform the practices of larger-scale programs that could benefit from what Amorose sees as good advice, "incorporating small-school composition’s ethos" (101). At my petite school, the people are the program, more or less.

A "small-school ethos" is embodied in an intimate community. Because my college community is so small, most faculty, staff, and students know each other, many by name. This amicable advantage is also a disadvantage. Everyone knows what we do and say; what each individual does affects the rest of us to some degree. The small-school WPA, and to an even greater degree the petite-school WPA, needs to always be aware of being high profile and having campus-wide exposure. Doug Hesse, offering advice on ways to negotiate departmental politics, suggests that "small-school WPAs depend more on persuasion through a strong ethos" rather than "flat" (43). Although I hold what Irene Ward calls "expert power," derived from the perception that I am knowledgeable and from the perceived soundness of the writing program, I also have earned a "referent power" derived from my ethos, or how I treat others (64). According to Hesse, to achieve this ethos “expertise, competence, sensitivity to local situations, and pursuit of the greater good [are] essential” (44). Speaking to WPAs at large institutions with graduate programs, Louise Wetherbee Phelps similarly observes that “[r]hetorical skill and other sources of influence are far more significant to vigorous leadership in the academy than positional authority, even though the powers of the office are essential tools to do the job” (27). Whereas some WPAs may
have to rely on “hard sell” tactics to promote the writing program, my greatest functional asset is diplomacy. For the furtherance of the profession en toto, perhaps all WPAs could or should interrogate assumptions of power as a model for WPA work, particularly allowing professional narratives from institutions of smaller sizes to suggest ways of coping with situations that seemingly result from size but are essentially caused because we and the people we administer and serve are human.

Recently, a member of the WPA discussion list issued a call for WPA job descriptions because he was being asked by his administration for a written document specifying his duties. This plea for help was the impetus for me to compose my own job description, which ultimately included fourteen duties. I forwarded my written description to the issuer of the call. A couple of weeks later, he responded by thanking me for being the only one out of a huge list of several hundred members to respond! One hopes our colleagues’ silence does not indicate that WPAs generally operate without a written job description, which, as Hult points out (128), is crucial for validating the work we do. At my institution I am the only faculty member trained in rhetoric and composition; before my arrival three years ago, no organized writing program existed. Since there was no written job description for a WPA, I created this one for myself:

1. Review and contribute to current scholarship/practices in rhetoric and composition.
2. Define the writing program goals and design the curriculum.
3. Write course descriptions.
4. Write and institute policies.
5. Determine and administer placement instruments; make placement decisions for enrolling students into our school’s three levels of English 101.
6. Choose textbooks for all writing courses and write generic syllabi and writing assignments for English 101 and 102.
7. Train, observe, mentor, supervise, and evaluate all adjunct, junior, and senior writing faculty; participate in hiring decisions.
8. Assign teachers to writing classes each semester.
9. Provide leadership for English faculty, function as role model for teaching writing, and maintain professionalism among a team of writing instructors.
10. Encourage adjunct faculty by listening, offering suggestions, providing professional development.
11. Request books for the library, request teaching aids to support our writing program and materials for our department as needed (I oversee a small budget for the Department of Humanities and General Studies, which includes course instruction).
12. Meet with students, mediate disputes, and administer discipline when needed, including plagiarism cases in writing courses.
13. Evaluate our writing program.

Edward M. White advises WPAs to use their “considerable power” for the “good of the program,” with the most important aspect of the WPAs’ job being to improve instruction (“Use It” 111, 113). Indeed, all of the tasks I have listed in my job description exist to accomplish that end.

In my petite program, I strive to improve instruction by focusing on the people teaching writing. In my capacity as WPA at my institution, I function as the leader, manager, and advocate of a closely knit team of writing instructors, which includes one other full-time faculty member besides myself, one part-time faculty member, and adjuncts. As with many (if not most) small-school WPAs, besides directing the writing program and conducting active scholarship, I routinely teach a full load (four courses per semester) and serve on committees, fulfilling the expectations of the college.

Since my focus is on the people I work with to build a successful writing program, we interact and communicate with each other frequently. At least once a semester we have a team meeting that includes a pedagogical exchange, mutual support, and professional development; we also participate in teaching workshops. My team and I make decisions together, and I value their input even though I have the final authority and responsibility. I try to involve my team members in new policies, procedures, and pedagogies through collaboration and consensus, rather than by delivering them without consideration of colleagues’ opinions; we learn from each other. My team members are the players who must successfully carry out curricular and pedagogical reforms that I envision and implement if writing instruction is to improve.

Amorose suggests that the political and moral (largely symbolic) authority held by a small-college WPA may rise to the level of a sacred icon, which can be used to the WPA’s advantage (98–99). For example, questions on writing and grammar are referred to me by members of the administration
and the faculty, who view me as the local writing expert on campus. Further, I serve on the editorial board of our school magazine, I perform proofreading tasks for campus publications, I am the yearbook advisor, and I monitor unofficially the content of our school Web site. The academic dean sometimes delegates me, either individually or as a member of an ad hoc committee, to write official policies, procedures, reports, and descriptions. While some of these tasks are voluntary on my part because of my twenty-year mission to teach at the college level, I realize that my willingness to complete these assignments enhances my influence throughout the college community and my ability to lead. In a small-school culture, where the WPA has “little real power and diminished direct authority,” the “position carries with it significant moral authority” (Amorose 99). Because composition is valued so highly, “faculty and administration feel a need to personify it” (Amorose 99). Through my positive ethos as the “writing icon,” I earn my “right to speak”—meaning to express my opinion—when decisions made by faculty and administration affect the writing program.

Although small-school WPAs may regard themselves primarily as faculty, Joyce Kinkead and Jeanne Simpson, in their “crash course” in understanding the administrative culture, challenge WPAs to seize the “opportunity to shape and reshape the institution in ways that matter” by sharing with presidents and vice presidents “the responsibility to ‘serve and lead’” (77). Becoming effective change agents within their institutions requires finding “the common ground they share with other administrators” and using their knowledge and position actively (Kinkead and Simpson 68–69). Frequent interaction and positive exchanges involving common problems and issues with the other department chairs and with higher administrators is essential. For instance, because of the writing program’s positive ethos, I have been able to participate in administrative decisions regarding ancillary support services that especially affect freshmen enrolled in English 101 and English 102 but are not under the direct purview of the writing program. These decisions include a revised description of support services, policies, and procedures needed; implementation of these changes; hiring a staff member to oversee the support center; initiating a writing center; and hiring student writing tutors.

Despite the fact that my job includes some “paper shuffling,” most of my responsibilities are people-oriented, not task- or program-oriented. Similarly, Ward, citing research at universities with graduate programs, calls the WPA both a leader (a people-oriented system term) and a manager (a program-oriented term); the leader establishes the basic vision, and the manager implements the vision that the leader establishes (62). She claims that “increasing the leadership aspects of the job and balancing them with the managerial aspects can lessen the risk of burnout” (Ward 63). New theories of leadership envision leaders as “facilitators and coalition builders,” who empower and serve others (Ward 63). These leaders lead through respect, understanding, acceptance, appreciation, interdependence, and fellowship (Ward 64). Ward defines the practices of leadership as “[e]arning a reputation as a leader, learning confidence in your own leadership, gaining a voice that others are willing to listen to, and having allies in place to help” (64–65). According to Lynn Bloom, viewing writing program administration as a creative process that combines necessary bureaucratic tasks with creativity (“the butterflies”) can make a significant difference to the people and programs it affects. She advises WPAs always to “envision the butterflies beneath and beyond” the confinement of managerial tasks (“Making a Difference” 73).

It is important to find balance between these bureaucratic and creative responsibilities. Even though my writing staff is small, each person on it is unique. As a creative “people advocate,” I must be attuned to each individual’s personality, strengths, and weaknesses. Once or twice a year I observe my team members teaching in order to assess their effectiveness in the classroom; they also observe each other and me teaching, and we talk together later. I have to discern ways to critique their performances in a positive yet challenging manner. I need to balance the individual and the team needs and then consider how these writing instructors can best contribute to the growth of our joint collaborative project. This part of my job is more satisfying than paper shuffling because the results are visible in the lives of the people who teach and learn in the program. Perhaps more importantly, a synergy results from a spirit of community. I agree with Ward’s declaration that some WPA work (which I see as “people work”) can be “worthwhile, rewarding, challenging, and downright fun,” while at other times the paperwork is “frustrating, draining, repetitive, and downright drudgery” (50). Indeed, based on her informal survey of fifty WPAs across the country, Bloom concludes that “the happiest WPAs are those who have transformed learning confidence in your own leadership, gaining a voice that others are willing to listen to, and having allies in place to help” (64–65). According to Lynn Bloom, viewing writing program administration as a creative process that combines necessary bureaucratic tasks with creativity (“the butterflies”) can make a significant difference to the people and programs it affects. She advises WPAs always to “envision the butterflies beneath and beyond” the confinement of managerial tasks (“Making a Difference” 73).

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with my staff, coupled with ongoing training, fosters improved instruction and attainment of changes that trickle down to student writers. Those WPAs who teach writing courses while performing their administrative duties continue to shape student learning directly. They must strive to become people advocates as well as program advocates. As a petite-school WPA, it is easy for me to find those creative “butterflies” in the balance I need between the fun and the drudgery (code words for socializing and paperwork). That is, since my writing staff is small, I have time to invest in strengthening our working relationships and in supporting them personally and professionally (people tasks). Also true is that since this college’s writing program is small, I have time to complete my accountable responsibilities (all are paper tasks). As I scan my list of administrative duties, I see that every decision I make has been seen first from the perspective of “What aids learning at our institution?” I agree with Bloom that what I do best is mentor, teach, and solve problems; I believe that I’m well suited for the job that I enjoy. Although experienced WPAs would not necessarily recommend that a newly minted assistant professor (such as I was) be put in charge of a writing program, I was fortunate to have a positive mentoring experience at Texas A&M University-Commerce under Dr. Donna Dunbar-Odom that prepared me for this “petite” administrative role. Since the writing program enjoys a high status at my college and the work I do is highly valued, I earned associate professor rank at the end of my third year.

To lead effectively, WPAs must work well with the people below and above them in the political hierarchy; in fact, their success depends on “people” skills. Not only do WPAs lead, but, as Phelps contends, they are responsible for teaching leadership and cultivating leaders among their peers (6). She advances the metaphor of academic leadership as “turtles all the way down” (5). One should view oneself as a turtle on the back of other turtles whose own shell supports the weight of other turtles in a larger enterprise. Phelps proposes a collaborative model of “active participation and shared reflection among leaders and learners at all levels” within a dynamic system—layers of leadership at all levels of the academic organization (5–8). She views power as process, not product: “Power is activity, the energy of life made efficacious” (27). There are several reasons to view power as a dynamic, ongoing process. First, the professionalization of WPA work (and writing programs) is a continuing project that involves not only the identity of the field of rhetoric and composition but the professional identity of writing instructors. Second, each local writing program is a “work in progress”; changes enacted in the past and present should be extended and revised in the future. Third, we must be vigilant to assure that any ground gained in authority, influence, and allies is not lost as people come and go. Fourth, leaders must be trained to carry on the work. Effectively training teachers in the writing program will make a major difference in changing any departmental and institutional expectations and practices (Bloom, “Making a Difference” 74).

My complex role as WPA at my college is what, in his primer for new WPAs, David Schwalm labels a “task,” not a “position”; that particular labeling literally means I have no “positional standing in the administrative hierarchy” (10). My institution is not unique in using as few “official” titles as possible, while paying for roles assumed well enough to make those of us assuming them comfortable. Being an effective WPA requires making positive contributions to the local college culture and forming successful relationships with people, who have more status at my school than can be gained through programs and titles. Although I hold no official WPA or director of writing title and no such title is consequently stated on my college business card, I have palpable affective standing among administrators, a clear signal that our small-school ethos quite literally puts people above programs. However, since I also serve as chair of the Department of Humanities and General Studies, my quasi-administrative WPA appointment is subsumed within a higher administrative position. I have come to believe, functionally, that this embeddedness is beneficial to the writing program because it eliminates one possible level of political clashes; I report directly to the academic dean, who is very supportive of the writing program and the English department. Furthermore, although I function as an advocate for the writing program and faculty, I can harmonize and balance the needs of the writing team within the context of the larger, inclusive department, which includes such wide-ranging faculties as those teaching literature, humanities, and philosophy.

As I reflect about my joint positions, I find that some of my WPA duties in fact overlap with my departmental responsibilities, such as developing long-range goals; initiating and evaluating curricula and programs; representing the faculty and the department to administration; providing leadership, reducing conflict, and encouraging professional development for the department; and recruiting, placing, mentoring, and evaluating faculty (see end note for a list of typical department chair tasks). This combined effort conserves energy and financial resources, compared with having two mutually exclusive job descriptions. This consolidation of labor also allows me more time to focus on people in the programs. Perhaps this freedom is directly proportional to the amount of money for which a department head is responsible; since my budget is small, I have fewer fiscal decisions to make than my counterparts at larger institutions.
Another benefit of these dual positions is that I have the best of two worlds—both making and dispensing knowledge and even, sometimes, wisdom. As Hult points out, while the department chair “has a truly professional, credentialed faculty to work with” and “can be a scholar with the rest of the faculty,” the WPA “often leads a constantly shifting staff of novices, [. . .] is perpetually engaged in teacher training and evaluation, [. . .] and must be the scholar for the composition ‘faculty’” (121). I have the privilege of engaging in intellectual discussions with other full-time colleagues and of brainstorming with the team members, including adjunct faculty, for innovative ideas. I work more closely with the adjuncts in my department than do department heads in other departments, where there may be little or no contact among colleagues. As a result of their professional status, the adjuncts on the writing team feel they are an integral part of a professional enterprise, not ancillaries to the “real” faculty. Before I arrived at this institution, the writing instructors were virtually ignored; they traveled as lone rangers with no support system. Furthermore, I succeeded in obtaining office space, computers, and travel funds so they can attend professional conferences. I encourage them to attend with me, and we sometimes present papers together. Since there are fewer players on my team than at a larger college, I can devote more individual time to each faculty member. Because freshman composition offers more sections than any other subject taught on my campus each semester, the writing staff is the center of the entire department. An adage like “Ain’t no one happy if mama ain’t happy” contains wisdom that’s applicable to my department—“Ain’t no one happy if the writing staff ain’t happy.”

My authority also extends outside of English and beyond the Department of Humanities and General Studies, which includes such wide-ranging disciplines as communication, developmental courses, English, history, humanities, mathematics, natural science, philosophy, physical education, and Spanish. Arguing for the “scholarship of administration,” Hult recommends that WPAs “use disciplinary knowledge to inform their teachers and improve their programs” (not only within the writing program but across the disciplines) (121). In my situation, positive team relationships are highly visible and crucial to the success of the writing program, and they greatly affect the rest of the faculty in writing across the curriculum. Because we all work together on a small campus, our colleagues interact with us writing teachers on a daily basis, and they report to us about the results of our work to lay the foundation for the critical reading, writing, discussing, and thinking that students will do in all academic discourse communities across our campus. Some other ways we make our positive ethos and the reputation of the writing program more visible are to publicize our team meetings to faculty and administration and to demonstrate our collaboration to students by sitting in on each other’s classes. Perhaps the size of a school is inversely proportional to the degree of personal relationships that must be built and nourished among the faculty, the influence of these associations on writing program administration, and the effect of administrative decisions on the writing staff.

I have had some informative and effective interchanges with my colleagues about writing across the curriculum. I take advantage of the privileges of my position whenever possible by delivering minitalks about the writing program, making the presence of the adjunct faculty known, soliciting comments about writing expectations across the disciplines, and offering help in designing and evaluating writing assignments. Besides validating our writing program, I am a resource for all faculty on my campus. I am highly visible around campus and in our monthly faculty meetings. I sometimes invite colleagues in other disciplines to come to my English 101 classes to talk about writing, both as process and product, within their particular fields. Some have asked me to review their writing assignments. Through such collaboration, we learn from and encourage each other in valuable ways. The students who attend these cross-curricular presentations have expressed gratitude for the demystification of writing from their other professors. I am continually delighted when our expectations and our views of writing overlap, reinforcing both my philosophy and my pedagogy. Furthermore, the other instructors on my team also benefit from this shared knowledge.

According to Amorose, the most effective tool that the small-campus WPA possesses is influence (99). At my small school, I have many “opportunities for persuading or convincing” (Amorose 99). I enjoy frequent interaction with everyone who works here, from the president to the maintenance crew. By fostering a positive working relationship with every person in this close-knit, small community, I hold influence across campus. I heed Amorose’s warning not to use my “very limited power” often, so that I won’t “lose it” (100). Throughout the college, we are all committed to our school mission, we follow the principle that people are more important than programs, and we share common values, which include critical thinking and effective writing. To further these goals, I know that my subtle influence is more effective than wielding a “big stick.” I am careful not to abuse the power I possess. I also realize that my influence may be both “near-limitless” and long-lasting, since my tenure at this institution will probably extend for years (Amorose 100). Inevitably, people transcend programs. Nurturing people strengthens and transforms the writing program, and establishing diplomatic relations with other campus entities validates it.
By being attentive to the political climate, the situated context of the writing program within my college, the centrality of my campus role, and, further, by building congenial relationships among my fellow workers, I have established a writing program based on sound composition theory and practice and have instituted several new policies. Any new WPA at a small school will have to assess how quickly changes in the writing program can be instituted; he or she may encounter resistance to change (Amorose 101). Thanks to the support I receive at my school, I have made significant changes in the writing program in my four years as WPA. We have added honors sections of English 101 and English 102. We mainstream all writers into English 101 in the studio model, in which developmental writers are enrolled in a one-hour writing workshop that supplements English 101. Before I came on board, these writers enrolled in English 100—focusing on grammar and paragraph-level texts—for three noncredit hours. We now have a placement exam for all entering students (including special students who may enroll in five or fewer hours) that consists of a timed essay. Students are placed in one of three levels of English 101 based on their SAT/ACT scores, high school GPA, this placement exam, and a first-day essay. Previously, the placement exam was a Scantron grammar test. All students are now required to be enrolled in English 101 or English 102 each semester after entering the college until they pass English 102; in the past, students habitually postponed their composition requirements until their last years. Since we want our students to be better prepared for writing needs throughout the college, the minimum passing grade for English 101 and English 102 is a C. Furthermore, we no longer accept CLEP or AP credit for English 102, and we accept only the test versions for English 101 credit that include a writing portion. Finally, we have established three English minors—in literature, in writing, and in English (which is a combination of literature and writing courses). In the fall of 2005 we will begin to offer four new degrees in English—BA, BS, and the BA or BS with a dual major in Biblical Studies. I managed to enact these policies relatively quickly because of my successful working relationships with the academic dean, the registrar, and the developmental writing teacher.

My authority and influence as a people advocate extend beyond the administration and the teaching staff to the students. At my college, the writing faculty share in common a semester-long topic and use the same textbooks and writing assignments. This allows the writing instructors to consult and encourage one another and to exchange ideas. The continuity in our first-year program also means that students may interact with others outside their own local discourse community about common topics and issues. At the end of each semester, I collect writing on the common theme from each of the classes and edit a collection of student writing for our college Web site. In this way, I am functioning as an advocate for our students, who see that their writing is valued by this intellectual community and can be viewed on the Web by those beyond it. My position as WPA allows me to represent our students and their writing accomplishments to the outside world. This practice not only builds a positive ethos for our writing program but for our students as well.

The unique cultures of small and petite colleges demand that we reexamine and reenvision the work of the small-school WPA. The large-school WPA model does not adequately describe the role of the WPA who serves on a small campus, where influence, not power, is the most effective tool. The small enterprise must be attuned to the people who build and endorse the program. Because writing is valued as integral to our institution’s mission, educational goals, and identity, my personal authority and influence are more extensive, more intensive, and more crucial than they might be at a larger institution. This favorable gaze allows me to focus on building people relationships. Becoming a Writing People Advocate is the advantage small-school and petite school WPAs embrace. Consider that the WPA approach might be beneficial for writing program administrators at all institutions, regardless of size.

Notes
The twelve top tasks for a department chair, identified through the Gmelch-Miskin survey, are as follows:

1. Recruit and select faculty.
2. Represent the department to administration and the field.
3. Evaluate faculty performance.
4. Encourage faculty research and publication.
5. Reduce conflict among faculty.
6. Manage department resources.
7. Encourage professional development of faculty.
8. Develop and initiate long-range department goals.
9. Remain current within academic discipline.
10. Provide informal faculty leadership.
11. Prepare and propose budgets.
12. Solicit ideas to improve the department. (Strygall 77)

Works Cited


Hanstedt, Paul and Tom Amorose, eds. "Composition In The Small College." Special issue, *Composition Studies* 32:2 (Fall 2004). (Note: This issue had not been released when I wrote this article.)


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Review


Lisa Cahill

The first thing that a reader might notice about Stuart C. Brown, Theresa Enos, and Catherine Chaput’s edited collection is a key phrase in the subtitle: *reflective institutional practice*. Not only does this phrase denote the character and quality of the discussions presented throughout the text, but it also emphasizes that writing program administrators must place their choices in the context of their local institutional infrastructure, population, resources, and stakeholders. The thirty chapters combined with Lynn Z. Bloom’s foreword (ix–xvi) and Brown and Enos’ introduction (xvii–xix) work together to encourage readers to broaden their perspectives and to reflect about their professional pathways and administrative work.

Brown and Enos describe the edited collection as “an essential desk reference, a text as close at hand as the *MLA Handbook* or a dictionary, a resource to consult as the daily complexities of WPA life occur” (xix). The book’s scope is vast and covers issues of curriculum development, the preparation of graduate students for WPA careers, decision-making heuristics, the effect of institutional climates and contexts on writing program design and maintenance, and professional development issues. This is, without a doubt, a book that both practicing WPAs and graduate students interested in learning more about writing program administration will refer to and recommend.

Peterson Haviland and Stephenson’s chapter (377–392) highlights a key contribution that this volume makes: “However, as this book complicates our views of WPAs as more than schedulers of FYC and of the different ways writing program directors are positioned both by themselves and in relation with others, it offers greater understanding of the terrain” (377). This resource thus becomes a way for those already involved in WPA work to expand their views about what constitutes the “terrain” of writing program administration and becomes a way to educate others—such as departmental
colleagues, other institutional units, and the community—about what writing program administration is and can be. This guide makes one thing clear: writing program administration is a multifaceted activity.

Brown, Enos, and Chaptu’s *Resource* significantly contributes to writing program administration theory and practice by incorporating multiple perspectives that put readers in touch with a variety of institutional contexts and issues that a WPA may encounter in one day, one week, one semester, or over many years. In *The Writing Program Administrator’s Resource*, readers will find scenarios and advice that complement their membership on the WPA listserve, participation in conferences, and daily discussions with colleagues in meetings or in hallways. Ultimately, it is a resource that readers will not quickly outgrow. A reader will turn to this text for different reasons and at different times in his or her career because the contributors offer advice and philosophies that address WPAs as scholars, teachers, and administrators. Therefore, readers’ needs for this book will change over time as their experiences, philosophies, and institutional settings change.

The text is divided into two sections, “Instituting Change” and “Instituting Practice.” This division reflects the dual nature of the WPA role: acting as change agent within one’s institutional context while simultaneously taking responsibility for implementing policies, assessing programs, and addressing staffing issues. Chapters in the first section provide a theoretical foundation for the work done by WPAs and for the leadership they provide. Readers may be inspired to revisit their administrative philosophies after reading the chapters by Wetherbee Phelps (3–39), Hesse (41–58), Enos (59–70), Stygall (71–87), McLeod (113–124), and Schwalm (125–135). Additionally, chapters in section one offer a well-informed overview of the complex issues faced daily by WPAs. These include ethical decision-making (Brown 155–163), department politics (Schilb 165–179), and curricular reform and development (Merrill and Miller 203–217). Chapters by White (101–112) as well as Desser and Payne (89–100) include an important discussion of ways to prepare graduate students for WPA careers. Schell’s chapter on staffing and labor issues (181–201) complements Pantoja, Trimbacnee, and Roen’s presentation of legal issues (137–153). When these two chapters are read together with Crowley’s chapter on elective first-year composition (219–230) and Brown’s heuristic for ethical and consistent decision-making (158–162), readers gain a wider perspective of the many issues that surround writing program administration on departmental, disciplinary, and institutional levels.

The editors’ organization of chapters in both sections one and two is certainly one of the hallmarks of this text since their distinctions enable readers to make important connections between ideas and practices. Section two explores a variety of WPA practices. Chapters address WPAs’ roles, such as being trainers of educators (Ferganchick 331–339; Morgan 393–409; Brobbel et al. 411–428), independent writing program designer (Maid 453–466), and assessment specialist and researcher (Rose and Weiser 275–290; Glaz 291–302; Burnham 303–314). Also addressed are suggested methods for situating one’s administration in the local institutional context (Anson 233–252; Gunner 253–262; Royer and Gilles 263–274), within a Writing Across the Curriculum model (Townsend 439–452), and within a writing center environment (Peterson Haviland and Stephenson 377–392). Issues surrounding instructional computing (McAllister and Selfe 341–375), community outreach (Hall 315–330), and community college WPA work (Holmsten 429–438) round out the discussion of practice and underscore the dynamics of WPA work. Jackson and Wojahn’s annotated bibliography (467–490) offers readers additional sources that complement themes presented in prior chapters.

Brown, Enos, and Chaptu include three important appendices: the Portland Resolution (491–497), which provides guidelines for WPA working conditions and job descriptions; a statement of ways to evaluate the intellectual work of writing administration (499–517); and the *WPA Outcomes for First-Year Composition* (519–522), a statement describing common goals for first-year composition programs across the United States that has been adopted by the Council of Writing Program Administrators. The range of information provided in the guide makes it a usable and convenient resource for those involved in writing program administration.

The audience for this book is inclusive. New and veteran WPAs as well as graduate students will find the book to be valuable because of its thorough descriptions of the parameters of WPA work. The guide captures the complexity of WPA work while highlighting the excitement and the good that such work can produce.
Review


Larry Beason

Rubrics have been an essential part of writing assessment for so long that it’s hard to remember a time when we did not use them to evaluate samples of student writing. It is even harder to envision abandoning rubrics in large-scale evaluations of writing, especially when these assessments have high-stake goals such as making pass/fail determinations for students. Yet this is precisely what Bob Broad argues that the “age of the rubric has passed.” *What We Really Value* does not prove this new age has actually arrived, but the author makes a convincing case that WPAs should rethink the pivotal role given to rubrics. This book offers not only an alternative tool but an alternative model of assessment a model that reflects contemporary perspectives of composition and rhetoric.

*What We Really Value* describes this revolutionary approach by reporting on the results of an intensive qualitative study conducted at “City University” (a fictional name). From this study, which actually began with a somewhat different purpose, Broad developed a means of assessing writing that, with modifications, could be used in most, if not all, composition programs. This alternative model, which he calls Dynamic Criteria Mapping (DCM), is certainly a more complex approach than the conventional rubric that grew out of the research of Paul Diederich and others. But as the author argues, writing—because it is a complex act—requires more than the conventional five-point rubric to represent what composition teachers value.

As the author argues, the fundamental problem with most scoring rubrics is that they are aimed at securing inter-rater reliability, which is not the same as determining if sample essays reflect what teachers normally value in student writing. Most rubrics are simple, clear, practical, and focused (for example, Educational Testing Service uses a rubric based on the basic criteria of ideas, form, flavor, mechanics, and wording). Such rubrics, as Broad states, are admirable in many ways, but “their great weakness is in what
they leave out” (2). DCM offers a robust explanation of the multifaceted and often conflicting values teachers have about the teaching of writing and about a set of student essays.

This book describes a sophisticated qualitative study, explains the sound but uncommon portfolio system used at City University; it then extrapolates the basic principles of DCM that could manageably be used at other schools. Because these and other descriptions blend into one another, I often found it difficult determining which procedures best defined DCM itself, though the final chapter does offer a clearer picture of the model and how it can be adapted. Broad calls for replacing traditional rubrics with “live” decisions by three teachers about each portfolio (or essay sample). In essence, evaluators discuss each sample and argue its merits before casting a pass/fail vote (conceivably, a score of some sort could be assigned other than pass/fail). This sort of negotiated or communal evaluation is, as the author notes, not new, but it is the work done before the communal assessment takes place that is most definitive of Dynamic Criteria Mapping. During norming (or what Broad refers to as “articulation”) sessions, the evaluators and assessment coordinators discuss samples of student writing selected because they would be most likely to reveal diverse ways in which student writers create rhetorical success, or fail to do so. Typically, norming sessions in conventional assessments focus on papers selected because they can serve as benchmarks or obtain agreement. With DCM, the sessions are intended to create open discussions about the many ways a paper might succeed or fail. Rather than securing interrater agreement by constraining criteria for evaluating papers, articulation sessions clarify the range of values teachers hold and why they disagree.

DCM does not simply promote hearty discussions. Participants (teachers and program administrators) at a site carefully analyze notes on these discussions along with relevant documents, such as mission statements or other program materials. From this analysis, participants would next “establish the identities, contents, boundaries, and interrelationships of the various criteria” (131). If all this sounds challenging and perhaps intangible, it is. However, the result is a visual representation that summarizes the dialogues and analyses in a format that, while not as simple and clear as a rubric, is accessible and useful. Broad suggests using assorted maps and visual devices that join similar criteria in clusters and allow teachers to see how criteria relate to one another. (For example, students see constellations of criteria that are placed onto overlapping circles, or diagrams that represent a continuum rather than an either/or relationship between categories of criteria). When a simple list or table suffices, such maps become unnecessary. Not shying from complexities, though, Broad encourages even the simplest of criteria or lists to be complemented by a range of definitions and synonyms actually used by the teacher evaluators, enabling participants to appreciate the diverse ways of describing a value.

The author’s study provides useful examples of DCM. In his intensive study of City University, Broad found three types of criteria: textual criteria (which he divided into textual qualities and textual features), contextual criteria, and a category he called “other factors.” These categories were made up of numerous criteria that emerged during data analysis. For instance, textual qualities include thirty-one criteria, and contextual criteria comprise twenty-two criteria. Broad represents these criteria through various maps and tables.

I will not focus on these criteria or categories because the point of the book is to describe Dynamic Criteria Mapping itself, not to present a list of “the” criteria teachers use to evaluate all writing. Nonetheless, it is worth noting that the findings from City University are extremely interesting, making the book worthy of reading just to explore the values teachers might hold. Broad found, for example, the criterion of mechanics (punctuation, spelling, etc.) to be the most dominant value based on the number of times it came up during evaluators’ discussions. This is not the first time a study has shown the impact of mechanics, but it is still surprising given that the program at City University is not a traditional one in which we might expect teachers to focus most often on mechanics. As Broad notes, it is exactly this sort of contradiction that DCM is designed to highlight.

Equally interesting is the attention the study gives to contextual criteria in formal assessment. These criteria deal not so much with the text of an essay but with “pedagogical, ethical, collegial, and other aspects of the environment surrounding students’ texts” (73). Contextual criteria include factors such as goals of first-semester composition, the purpose of assessment, and the possibility that a student might have plagiarized. Contextual criteria are also important because they represent the values that most rubrics are designed to minimize or mask, even though the contextual nature of discourse is something many teachers value in theory and in their own teaching.

Points are not assigned to criteria listed on a map. In this model, a map is not part of a mathematical formula but instead provides information for evaluators using dialogue to determine if writing samples reflect the values held by teachers in the writing program. Broad believes that the map should be provided to students and others who would benefit from knowing what teachers expect in successful student writing. He also suggests that a map evolves as a program changes, meaning that mapping might not be an
annual occurrence but should certainly not be viewed as a one-time project. As any worthwhile assessment should, DCM leads to pedagogical and program improvements, not just to scores.

DCM has its drawbacks. Clearly, it is time-intensive, and the maps are not as simple to use as a rubric. Broad says little of how often evaluators at City University agreed and disagreed, but it seems unlikely the criteria maps secured more agreement than a rubric would have. As he argues, though, a rubric is designed to secure interrater agreement by constraining choices, while a map is intended to forefront a range of values and the discrepancies that arise in writing programs. Other limits of DCM are less obvious. Despite the author’s scrutiny and carefully gathered data, his categorizing, counting, and definitions of criteria are open to debate. Broad frequently notes how certain criteria might seem very much like others he found, yet he explains why he separated them anyway. Such subjectivity occurs with any study, particularly a qualitative study in which apparently only one person performs the fundamental coding and analyses of data. Any conventional rubric is also open to debate and interpretation, but criteria mapping is especially likely to be viewed as arbitrary if for no other reason than the fact that maps must be inclusive and thorough. A rubric might have five or more criteria offering opportunities for debate, whereas a map such as City University’s has eighty-nine points of departure.

At times, the author may overstate the case for DCM, referring to the “unparalleled potential for Dynamic Criteria Mapping” (120) and the “unprecedented quantity and quality of information” (121) it provides. However, his enthusiasm is understandable. With no suitable alternative, rubrics have rarely been seriously challenged. Dynamic Criteria Mapping is more than a mere instrument; this model calls for a contextualized assessment that leads directly to teacher reflection and program improvements. Is it worth the additional work it takes to implement such a radical change? DCM may not work at every site, particularly where open dialogue about values and change is risky for nontenured faculty. But it is exciting to think of the ways in which a more robust, thorough assessment might inform teachers and students. I found myself thinking I would like to see Dynamic Criteria Mapping applied not only to student writing but various types of teacher and student. I found myself thinking I would like to see Dynamic Criteria Mapping applied not only to student writing but various types of settings and from an awareness of how radically different these settings are.

Suelynn Duffey directs the first-year writing program at Georgia Southern University and has previously directed both basic writing and writing across the curriculum programs. Her interest in “The Progress of Generations” originates in a career of generational mixing in different institutional settings and from an awareness of how radically different these settings are. She has published on WPA-related issues in CCC, Rhetoric Review, Writing on the Edge and in the forthcoming book on the junior WPA.

Joseph S. Eng is associate professor of English and director of English composition at Eastern Washington University. He teaches courses in rhetorical theory, writing pedagogy, research methods, and first-year composition. He has written about connections between literature and composition and identity politics in the classroom. Currently, he occupies himself with readings about empirical methodology, teaching and learning centers, and the concept of co-inquiry.

Jeanne Gunner is associate provost for academic programs and professor of English and Comparative Literature at Chapman University. Her primary research interest continues to be writing program theory. With Donna Strickland, she is editing a collection of essays on critical issues in writing program administration.
Judith Hebb is associate professor of English and Spanish at Atlanta Christian College, where she teaches courses in writing, linguistics, literature, and Spanish and is the yearbook advisor. She is chair of the Department of Humanities and General Studies and director of the writing program. She holds an MA in Spanish Literature and a PhD in English composition and rhetoric, both from Texas A&M University–Commerce. She has published in *English Journal, Journal of Basic Writing, and Academic Exchange Quarterly*.

Neal Lerner is lecturer in Writing Across the Curriculum at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, where he teaches scientific and technical communications. He is co-editor (with Beth Boquet) of *The Writing Center Journal* and co-author (with Paula Gillespie) of *The Allyn & Bacon Guide to Peer Tutoring, 2nd ed*. His publications have appeared in *Composition Studies, Writing Center Journal, Writing Lab Newsletter*, and several edited collections. He is also a three-time recipient of the International Writing Centers Association Outstanding Scholarship award; his current research focuses on the history of teaching both writing and science via “laboratory methods.”

Carl R. Lovitt is associate dean for academic affairs and professor of English at Penn State Berks-Lehigh Valley. Prior to joining Penn State in 2000, Dr. Lovitt served for ten years as founding director of the Pearce Center for Professional Communication at Clemson University. He also co-founded the National Writing Across the Curriculum Conference. Dr. Lovitt is the editor of a book on international professional communication and author of numerous articles on teaching, writing, and literature. He is currently completing a textbook on the teaching of writing. Dr. Lovitt holds degrees from Washington University, the Sorbonne, and the University of Wisconsin.

Rich Miller is an associate professor and director of composition in the English department at Suffolk University in Boston, Massachusetts. He received both his PhD (Bowling Green, 1999) and MA (New Mexico State, 1993) in rhetoric and composition. His research interests include WPA, computers and writing, and outcomes assessment in composition studies. He thanks his coauthors for their help and patience in composing and revising this article.

Karen Bishop Morris is an assistant professor of English at Elmhurst College, where she teaches courses in composition and rhetoric, professional writing, and a graduate seminar that explores current issues in writing. While serving as WPA at the University of Southern Indiana, she was named Writing Fellow in recognition of her efforts to work with faculty across the curriculum to form public writing partnerships and to integrate writing into their disciplinary areas. Her scholarship focuses on documentation strategies and program design aimed toward strengthening campus and community partnerships—for this she draws upon her experiences as a consultant to nonprofit organizations and WPA.

Shelley Reid is an assistant professor of English and director of the first-year composition program at George Mason University (which is not the school she writes about for this article), where she teaches writing as well as courses in composition theory and pedagogy. She has published articles on curriculum development in writing programs and on the difficulty of teaching multiculturalism in first-year writing courses; she is currently investigating strategies for preparing TA mentors in composition programs and writing about the joys and stresses of pretenure writing program administration.
Announcements

2006 WPA Summer Workshop, Institutes, and Conference
The 2006 WPA Summer Workshop, Institutes, and Conference will be held at the Chattanooga Choo Choo Convention Center in Chattanooga, Tennessee, July 9-16. Leaders for the four-day workshop, July 9-13, will be Lauren Fitzgerald, from Yeshiva University, and Greg Glau, from Arizona State University. The theme for the conference, July 13-16, is “Keeping on Track: Looking Back, Looking Forward, Looking Out for New Opportunities.” One-day institutes on writing assessment and technology issues will be held on July 13. For more information about the workshop, institutes, and conference, visit the CWPA website at http://wpacouncil.org.

Announcement of Award for Excellence:
Best Article in the 2003 and 2004 Issues of WPA: Writing Program Administration

At the request of the WPA president, Shirley Rose, the Best Article Award committee comprised of Joe Janangelo, Libby Miles, Duane Roen, and Joel Wingard evaluated all the articles in the 2003 and 2004 issues of WPA: Writing Program Administration. Although these issues contained many strong articles, the committee chose Candace Spigelman’s article, “Politics, Rhetoric, and Service-Learning,” because it effectively challenges some all-too-familiar administrative practices and does so with an eye toward the larger political and economic context in which WPA work is necessarily situated. Her work is thorough, careful, theoretically informed, and respectful; it leaves us with much to ponder as we take her insights back to our own institutions. Hers is provocative, generative research. Her article appeared in the Fall 2004 (28.1–2) issue.

At the WPA conference in Anchorage in July 2005, the Best Article Award was given posthumously to Candace Spigelman. CWPA also made a $500 donation to the Candace Spigelman memorial fund at Penn State Berks-Lehigh Valley College.

Feb. 6-28, 2006, Computers & Writing Online 2006: Making Knowledge on the Digital Frontier(s)
The 2006 Computers & Writing Online Conference deals with the interface between writing scholarship, writing pedagogy, and technology. The conference involves asynchronous sessions whose discussions run over an extended period of time as well as real-time presentations. For more information about the conference, visit http://english.tru.edu/cwonline2006/ or contact Lennie Irvin at lennie.irvin@tru.edu.

Call for Submissions: Young Scholars in Writing: Undergraduate Research in Writing and Rhetoric seeks theory-driven and/or research-based submissions from undergraduates on the following topics: writing, rhetoric, composition, professional writing, technical writing, business writing, discourse analysis, writing technologies, peer tutoring in writing, writing process, writing in the disciplines, and related topics. Submissions to this refereed journal should be 10-20 pages, in MLA format, and should be accompanied by a professor’s note that the essay was written by the student. Please send four copies of manuscript without author’s name on manuscript. Please include author’s name, address, affiliation, email address, and phone number on separate title page. Send inquiries and submissions to Dr. Laurie Grobman, Editor, Penn State Berks, P.O. Box 7009, Tulpehocken Road, Reading, PA 19610-6009. E-mail inquiries to leg8@psu.edu.
Extending an invitation to join the Council of Writing Program Administrators

The Council of Writing Program Administrators offers a national network of scholarship and support for leaders of college and university writing programs.

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• Invitations to submit papers for sessions that WPA sponsors at MLA and CCCC
• Participation in the WPA Research Grant Program, which distributes several awards, ranging from $1000 to $2000
• Invitations to the annual WPA breakfast at CCCC and the annual WPA party at MLA
• Information about the WPA Consultant-Evaluator program

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