Writing Outreach as Community Engagement

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University administrators have implemented service-learning programs to engage our communities as a way to advance the mission of a liberal education. Johnnella E. Butler notes, "Colleges and universities must find ways to prepare students for responsible citizenship in a diverse democracy and to help faculty members develop and use knowledge to improve communities" (52). Service-learning initiatives in composition studies curricula have allowed students, on a number of levels, to engage the community. Although service-learning initiatives require tremendous time and workload commitments for WPAs and others, this approach has brought great rewards for administrators, faculty, staff, students, and community members. For example, service learning creates an opportunity for reflection by faculty and students that they would not get by remaining within the walls of their composition classroom. In addition, students (and faculty) grow as writers and as citizens while working in or with the community.

As Linda Adler-Kassner and her coauthors explain, a "microrevolution in college-level Composition through service-learning" has occurred over the last decade (1). But as Aaron Schutz and Anne Ruggles Gere wisely note, "Truly effective and ethical service learning is not easy to initiate" (130). Many WPAs are still struggling with both the ethical obligations and implications of "serving the community" and the development of and reliance on theoretical structures to help us understand why we are or feel responsible for this service: "Theorizing the deep structures of moral and ethical development embedded in curriculum has been an ongoing project in the service-learning literature" (Franklin 25–26). Now that we have pushed to implement service learning for all the right reasons, we have taken steps to analyze what theoretical and practical approaches are best for our students, our schools, and our communities.

One result of theorizing service learning has been that some WPAs have found that traditional service-learning approaches do not work for every institution. Issues concerning budgeting, student responsibilities outside the classroom, connections with organizations in the community, and training and commitment of faculty have made service learning difficult to implement everywhere. To work toward community engagement and reap some of the benefits of traditional service-learning initiatives, WPAs at certain institutions need to devise alternative programs that work within their institutions' frameworks.

This article discusses one type of alternative service-learning program, Writing Outreach, which functions as space for faculty, students, and community members to learn, work, and even write together. Although service learning has "generally been defined as coursework that places undergraduates in community-service activities and relates those activities to academic content," we offer a service-learning program that is not course-based (Underwood et al. 7). Through Writing Outreach, students, faculty, and the community are all engaged; the *learning* part of service learning is available for all participants in the program, whereas the *service* component lies mostly with faculty, a model different from the traditional, course-based, service-learning programs.

In "Sustainable Service Learning Programs," Ellen Cushman calls for a more defined role of the professor in service-learning programs:

> Problems with the research, methods, and curricula in these [service-learning] programs pivot around the as of yet undefined role of the professors in service-related projects. The role of the professor in service learning needs to be more clearly established for community members and organizations who value and need consistency from *all* the university representatives with whom they collaborate. Professors in service learning courses can better sustain these initiatives when they view the community site as a place where their research, teaching, and service contribute to community needs and students' learning. (41)

Although we take a different approach to researching the community site than Cushman does—our analysis here shows our primary research about our service-learning program rather than in-depth research about the par-

ticipants—we discuss Writing Outreach to address Cushman's call for increased faculty involvement of teaching and service, albeit within a somewhat nontraditional service-learning model.

This essay is, then, intended for WPAs who want to engage the community in ways other than traditional service-learning or civic-engagement approaches. In *Writing Partnerships: Service-Learning in Composition,* Thomas Deans, using John Dewey's pragmatism and Paulo Freire's praxis, categorizes service learning for writing programs into (1) writing for the community, (2) writing about the community, and (3) writing with the community. We agree that this framework is a useful way to talk about service learning in writing programs, and Writing Outreach functions within these categories because university students and community members participate on the same level: all participants take on the role of student and collaborate to learn and write. Writing Outreach is a type of service-learning program that may work well in a department interested in connecting or "engaging" with community members for a number of legitimate reasons while unable to implement a traditional course-based program.

Writing Outreach: A Brief History

As with most projects, ours grew into something completely different from what was originally planned. When conceived in 2000, Writing Outreach was intended to supplement our first-year composition (FYC) courses with "workshops" at university to help a few dozen FYC students who were struggling with their writing. What quickly evolved was a program with at least twenty sessions a year and more than six hundred participants from all grade levels (K–12, undergraduate, and graduate); faculty from our university and neighboring schools; and individuals from the nonacademic community, from retired engineers to homemakers, to home schooled children, to freelance writers. Today, we average fifteen to twenty-five sessions per academic year, and our annual enrollment averages around 550 participants for fall and spring semesters.

Writing Outreach is not a course but rather free, voluntary, weekly sessions available to anyone who wants additional assistance with particular writing skills. The program is open to everyone (university students, staff, faculty, and anyone from the community), and the sessions are purely voluntary for all participants. Because Writing Outreach is not a formal university class, there is no registration requirement and no commitment necessary; participants may come to one, two, or all of the sessions. Sessions meet for one hour a week on alternating days and are taught by volunteer faculty members from the English department and other departments across the university. These instructors commit to facilitating a single one-hour session

for the semester and any preparation time necessary. One goal of Writing Outreach is to reinforce necessary skills that are often not covered in class discussions because of time constraints. Some of the topics for weekly sessions include MLA citation, creative writing workshops, effective résumés and cover letters, invention techniques, dealing with writer's block, the writing process, effective introductions and conclusions, style, the art of persuasion, writing about literature, common grammar errors, punctuation problems, research strategies, avoiding plagiarism, and editing effectively, just to name a few. The sessions were developed after Teresa Grettano interviewed several department chairs across the university about what topics would most benefit students and improve their writing.

Grettano, then an instructor-intern, began the program during the 2001–2002 academic year after meeting with the WPA about creating free-of-charge help sessions for writers. That year, Writing Outreach had 21 total sessions and 459 total participants. During the second half of the school year, spring semester 2002, Nicole Amare approached Grettano about volunteering as an assistant coordinator of the program. When Grettano left to enter a PhD program in the fall of 2002, Amare, then a full-time instructor and now tenure-track faculty, took over the program and has been its coordinator since. We worked with our WPA, the director of composition, because at one point both of us had temporary positions. Having a tenured WPA involved was crucial because he acted as a liaison between the program and upper-administration, and as Linda Flower and Shirley Brice Heath note, successful service-learning programs call for a commitment to the community that is "not defined by a one-semester project" (47), so having a permanent faculty member associated with the program gave it stability and the consistency advocated by Cushman.

During the first year, our WPA provided funds for photocopying fliers that advertised the program across campus. Grettano also contacted the university newspaper, the local newspaper, and the local public radio station to advertise this education program; all advertising was free of charge. After Writing Outreach's successful first year, Amare used the statistics gathered from attendance sheets and anonymous evaluation forms to convince the WPA and the associate dean of the College of Arts and Sciences to fund a brochure jointly; it was (and is) distributed at areas such as local libraries to garner greater community participation. Because the coordinator, two assistant coordinators (usually graduate students or instructor-interns), and faculty who teach the sessions are all volunteers, Writing Outreach's annual budget is less than $500 each year, the largest portion of which is spent on printing the brochure.

First, and long before the community-engagement model of Writing Outreach was born, Grettano had conceived of the supplemental instruction program for students. Her journal notes reflect honestly what happened and what we both thought when "the community" was thrown into the mix:

> When I first presented the idea for Writing Outreach to my WPA, I wanted it to be a supplemental tool for the First-Year Composition program. I wanted FYC students to have a place (maybe once a week) to meet to discuss what they were learning in their courses, and possibly a place to workshop their writing. He told me I had a wonderful idea, but instead of focusing on FYC, we should offer more general help in writing and open the sessions up to a broader audience, including all students, faculty and staff, and the community. I smiled and thanked him for the opportunity and his guidance, left his office, and groaned—"the community—ugh!"

> I didn't want *them* there. *They* are not serious about writing. They will see the program as a forum through which they can express their issues about education or a place to go instead of Bingo on a Wednesday afternoon. I pictured retirees griping about how things were taught when they were in school, monopolizing instruction with irrelevant questions and discussions. But I figured my WPA knew what he was doing.

> I also figured Outreach could be good for funding. The community in Mobile is full of "old Southern money" and is usually not very supportive of education (in general) and English departments (especially). So, maybe Outreach could "show" these people that education is important. Maybe the next time they'll vote for tax increases so we won't have to worry about budget cuts. Maybe one of them will die and leave the English department everything. Either way, I saw inviting the community to Outreach as a financial opportunity, nothing more.

> I included the community in Outreach. I advertised through the local newspaper and NPR. And they called. And they came. And to my surprise, they helped.

Although our original opinions regarding the community were not positive, we were happy to be proved wrong. During that first academic year (2001–2002), community involvement was more than 50% (of 459 participants). Immediately, the students in the seminars began to see the importance of "real world" writing. Faculty also felt the positive influence of community involvement. Grettano wrote in her journal, "What I learned through Writing Outreach is the community helps writing programs more than just financially. The community involvement in our program made writing real for students. The idea we communicate in our classes—that the skills we try to teach are useful outside of the classroom—was reinforced by community involvement in the program."

From the very first session, students began to engage with individuals from the community, as Grettano noted in her journal:

> But the students who saw the community members participate in Writing Outreach saw the truth first hand. One community member attended Outreach because she writes a newsletter for seniors in her church and wanted to learn how to make her writing more interesting. When a student heard that, she asked if she could write one for her Youth Ministry and the teens in her church. This community member showed people write in the real world to establish and enhance communities. Another community member was in legal disputes with the Veteran's Board fighting for better benefits for drafted veterans and wanted to learn how to make his writing more formal. Another student said his father was a Vietnam vet, and to his knowledge his family didn't get anything. Could he write a letter? Students also saw a published fiction writer with five novels under her belt come in for an "invention" lesson and wondered why she would need one. She showed that even professional writers need help and work to improve their writing and methods throughout their careers.

> Writing Outreach so far has made writing real for students. The program solidified the notion that the skills we teach are transferable. Students learned how important writing is in the real world and in their lives. They were able to see what we were talking about when we say writing makes a difference, that writing is powerful.

Writing Outreach has continued to be comprised of more than 50% community participants, and many alliances between students and individuals from the community as well as between students and faculty and faculty and community members formed. Our goal is to continue to provide a space where this alternative to traditional service learning can occur, where the faculty perform the service and the participants—students and community members alike—learn about writing and community engagement partially from us but mostly from each other.

Writing Outreach and Course-based Service-Learning Programs

Because it is not course-based, Writing Outreach volunteers and participants have benefited from the program's flexibility and are not bound by any actual or metaphoric contract between them. For example, when Hurricane Katrina hit our area in the fall of 2005, professors, students, and community members all experienced hardships. To alleviate stress on already taxed faculty and low resources (i.e., gas shortages), we decided to run an abbreviated schedule (half the sessions) for the fall semester. To save funds, we did not print the brochure. Another benefit of Writing Outreach is the informal setting it provides for authentic and constructive communication between students, faculty, staff, and individuals from the community. Even though sessions are not held off campus, Writing Outreach creates a space typically understood as "safe "for questions, collaboration, and comprehension about writing issues and real-world writing, because performance is not grade- or contract-driven. Some service-learning initiatives encourage collaboration through one-semester course projects; the format of Writing Outreach allows students and community members to interact weekly throughout the academic year and spend extra time meeting, talking, e-mailing, and writing outside of these scheduled sessions. All such perceived and structural differences hinge on professors doing the service and advertising to the public to welcome community participation.

In addition, our type of community engagement may alleviate some of the complexities associated with course-based service learning. Certain questions arise: should our students perform service learning at a nonprofit or for-profit business? (See McEachern). Should we assign organizations or let the students choose? How do we avoid the dynamic of "our students" vs. "them: the community" when we send our students "out" into the community to serve the "other"? (See Green and also Himley).

Moreover, WPAs in overworked or financially strapped departments may benefit from this type of program because of the low cost of establishing Writing Outreach and maintaining its publicity in free-of-charge outlets like local newspapers (not the larger, citywide publications), radio stations, and campus contacts. Writing Outreach may also offer an effective and ethical way for the WPA to establish a community outreach at an institution where upper administration is pushing for more connections with the community. Through this forum, students, faculty, and community members all make connections, and the level of exploitation is low, allowing all parties to benefit from the program with limited disenfranchisement. In addition, when programs such as this one are "integrated into first-year learning communities," students are able to "determine a college major in an informed manner" (McNenny 58). Because of the nature of Writing Outreach's topics (grammar, style, writing for literature, etc.), many first-year students attend the sessions, and it is our hope that the topic, the influence of diverse faculty, and the interaction with the community will help the undecided student to determine an appropriate major more effectively.

The final and most unexpected outcome of Writing Outreach is its potential benefit for marginalized students. In traditional service-learning programs, students often must travel off campus and/or commit to several hours to perform well in the program. Because the University of South Alabama is an open-admission commuter school, several students are older (the average age of an undergraduate student at our university is 29); most work at least part-time and many work full-time. In addition, many are low income students, single parents, or both, making many hours outside of class or hours for travel to remote locations difficult if not impossible. Because Writing Outreach is an open program without either registration or commitment as necessary components, participants can (and have) learned a new skill and forged a partnership with another participant before the end of just one session. As compared to service learning, civic engagement, and charity, our program might be well suited for the WPA who wants to incorporate community outreach programs into the composition curriculum without developing more responsibilities for students and other participants.

Writing Outreach accrues some benefits because it is a service-learning program that is not course-based: participants are not limited to a one-semester only project that involves obligations to a local nonprofit group. Yet, there are some simultaneous risks. Writing Outreach may appear to some to be more networking than collaboration. Although the networking may assist the writing program and its students, our model of community engagement was not initially set up to be based on a social action principle. However, this "networking" has enabled more community and campus awareness and has created support for the mission of the university writing program. Because "writing program administrators understand and intuitively enact a networked model of administration," WPAs might find programs such as Writing Outreach to be an easy extension of this ability and need to network within and without university walls (Kelly-Riley et al. 130).

Linda Flower advocates a service-learning program in which students and community members engage to solve a problem, thereby creating collaborative dialogic discourse (105). Although partnerships formed through Writing Outreach may have this component, we are not always aware of this level of inquiry because, for obvious reasons, we do not always formally monitor the student-community member's relationship. Because the program is not restricted to a course project, it is sometimes difficult to track and assess alliances and other developments. However, as Barbara A. Holland notes, evaluating any service-learning program is a difficult task. She proposes an assessment framework that asks such questions as "What do we want to know?" and "How will it be measured?" (55). We answer these questions using attendance sheets which ask for contact information so we can create a mailing list and anonymous evaluations which ask for specific information about goals for the program and requests for future sessions, locale, etc.

Moreover, unlike some course-based service-learning programs with narrative journals or reflective writing projects, no formal system of reflection is implemented in Writing Outreach instruction, so we have relied heavily on our evaluation forms and conversations with participants, faculty, and administration to improve Writing Outreach. More traditional "Service learning, which distinguishes itself from volunteerism by its emphasis on reflection as well as action, combines community work with classroom instruction" (Schutz and Gere 129). While our program does not involve the formal reflection of more traditional service-learning programs, even these programs have found this type of reflection difficult to achieve. Increasingly, students are becoming aware of how they are expected to act in service-learning partnerships, and the discourse used in their reflective essays has become clichéd (Carrick et al. 57). Through Writing Outreach, our students

do not regard the work they do with community members as "service to," because these partnerships are formed voluntarily on campus in an informal setting and are typically mutually beneficial.

Our participants may not have written reflective pieces for us, but reflection does take place. As one community member wrote to us last year, "This program has made me reevaluate not only my career goals but my personal goals as well. Where am I going? What tool do I need to get there?" This year, a physician attended some sessions and wrote in a letter that he had already dreamed of the day he would retire and become a writer, but after attending our creative writing workshop center, he's not clear that writing "the great American novel" is all that it's cracked up to be.

Community Engagement and Service Learning

There are several different community-university models of engagement within which we can contextualize Writing Outreach. For example, Jeffrey Howard defines the term "service learning" as "a pedagogical model that intentionally integrates academic learning with relevant community service (22). In "Academic Life and Civic Engagement: Tensions and Strains," David Smith defines civic engagement as "involvement in the community, in the 'public sphere,' which includes politics and public policy, but also the social and commercial dimensions of human relationships" (67). In "Reading and Writing the World: Charity, Civic Engagement and Social Action in Service-Learning," Betty Smith Franklin describes charity as "challeng[ing] the invisibility of sufferers and express[ing] a good intention towards them, often in an interpersonal way but also in institutional forms" (25) and social action as "critical of things as they are and seek[ing] change in structures, institutions and practices" (26). Of all of these forms of community-engagement programs, Writing Outreach is most like service learning but with professors performing a service with the goal of engaging the participants and encouraging collaboration with one another (students and community members).

To "engage" means to involve. Our program best fits Deans' "Writing with the Community" community-engagement model of creating a space where students, faculty, and community members can write together, solving individual problems that might be forced or contrived in a course-based model. As Bruce Herzberg notes, "service learning doesn't always work well. It requires a great deal of mere managing and arranging, and things can go terribly wrong" (403). While we are by no means saying that Writing Outreach is not without its problems as an alternative to the course-based service-learning model, community-engagement programs like ours are fundamentally different from the typical service-learning, civic engagement, and

even charity programs that WPAs see in composition studies in the specific respect that Writing Outreach's participants (including the faculty) are all volunteers who come together.

In "Constructive Communication: Community-Engagement Writing," H. Brooke Hessler defines community-engagement writing as the "study and practice of constructive communication—communication in which people come together to build something of mutual interest or benefit" (128). Our program was not originally designed to be a forum for community-engagement writing, but by creating a space on campus where students, faculty, and community members could meet, learn, and talk about writing issues, constructive communication occurred among all groups. Several student-community "partnerships" were formed. At times, the community member served as the "mentor" instead of the student or professor. For example, Laura (all participant names have been changed), the five-time novelist who participated in the invention exercise, offered to examine the work of some undergraduate creative writing majors interested in improving their novels. At other times, a student took the lead role. TuJuana offered to design a document for an individual from the community: a flyer for the local domestic violence shelter. In addition, the faculty teaching the sessions and we, the program's attending coordinators, were able to create alliances with the students, faculty members from within the university, and those teaching at other schools in the Mobile area, and the community members. For example, Doris, a sixty-four-year-old community member, decided to enroll in college for the first time after attending a Writing Outreach session called "The Writing Process." Writing Outreach provided her with an avenue to faculty at our university so that she could connect with us, eventually resulting in her calling on us for recommendation letters. Another participant had just begun teaching writing at a local community college and attended the sessions both as a means of professional development and method of gauging how writing was taught at the university so she could better design her courses to prepare students to perform at that level once they transferred. Many of her colleagues and other community college instructors have joined the "regular" crowd at Writing Outreach, and their presence has fostered constructive dialogue among university and community college writing teachers. These relationships provided both a type of service learning *by the faculty* for the community participants as well as a source of community support for the WPA and the writing program. Writing Outreach has created community connections for us and our students, something that is very important in these days of declining financial and other support from within and without the university walls.

Focusing on our faculty providing the service also alleviates the some-times uneven relationship between students and community members in traditional service-learning programs. Although one assumption is that ser-vice learning might be an idealized servicing of the "in need" community by our university students, Lorie J. Goodman correctly asserts that "it is also necessary to recognize that the *service* in service-learning is altered, infected by motivations and goals that have nothing to do with an idealistic 'call of service,' that have less to do with the well-being of those 'served' and much more to do with the educational outcomes in those 'serving'" (60). With Writing Outreach, both community members and students are positioned in the role of "learner," so hierarchies established by traditional service-learning programs are broken down and participants enter the program with simi-lar goals and similar power. This approach has also opened space to answer Flower's invitation for the university and the community to engage as shared problem-solvers.

Cushman's answer to avoiding exploitation and students' feeling "forced" to serve is to have the professors do research on site, alongside the students. We concur and add that benefits of service learning can also come from hav-ing the faculty (not the students) performing the service themselves and not only the research on site. When Bruce W. Speck so pointedly asks "Why ser-vice-learning?" we agree with him that students must not be the only ones asked to reflect and change: "Professors also must change. They must come to see that a collaborative style, which puts them in the place of learners so that they can identify with students, is critical if the pedagogy of service-learning is to transform the academy and, concomitantly, American culture at large" (7).

What We Learned about Community Engagement from Writing Outreach

Probably the biggest learning curve we experienced with Writing Outreach as a community-engagement program was watching our concept of commu-nity change. We discovered new concepts of community, which helped us reassess community as heteroglossic and avoid common binary and reduc-tion of the two groups. Joseph Harris envisions a "specific and material view of community: one that, like a city, allows for both consensus and conflict, and that holds room for ourselves, for our disciplinary colleagues, our uni-versity coworkers, *and* our students" (20). Through Writing Outreach, our sense of community grew to include not only ourselves and others in the English department, but faculty from across the curriculum. These faculty genuinely contributed to the formation of the program by meeting with Grettano to discuss reasons they thought students struggled to write in their

disciplines—surprisingly never blaming the English department; they also generously encouraged the development of the program by offering feedback like the note Grettano received from a professor in the university's School of Medicine, who hand-wrote "Productive!" on an index card attached to a photocopy of the Writing Outreach schedule; others actively participated in its sessions as both teachers and learners.

We would simply add to Harris's definition of "community" the phrase "*and* non-university students" who participated in community engagement. We also learned how the community is usually and unintentionally the silent partner in the service-learning and even the community-engagement relationship. As Ball and Goodburn note, "There is not much discussion of what community members learn from these encounters" (82). We responded to this valid criticism about the traditional service-learning design by encouraging—via oral feedback *and* written evaluative forms—in Writing Outreach the voices of the community as individuals in the alliances formed within the sessions. Ball and Goodburn accurately argue that the "us vs. them" binary and the mass-mentality metaphors of "university" and "community" are problematic in any community-engagement program, but we hope that the relaxed and optional forum of Writing Outreach overrides these binaries to create an equal and reciprocal relationship.

According to Cushman, university composition teachers should recognize their civic duties in order to "empower people in our communities, establish networks of reciprocity with them, and create solidarity with them" ("Rhetorician" 23). Because community-based writing programs have been traditionally aimed at community members in order to empower them, the Writing Outreach Program at our university was developed partly to share writing "expertise" with those who did not traditionally have access to college-level writing instruction. It was also an effort to bring the community to "us"—the English department —in order to foster a rapport that would encourage support for our writing programs from outside the university. So far, this "writing service" has served both sides of the equation well; community participants are attending the sessions to learn the writing and rhetorical skills they seek, and the appreciation for what we do as academic writing teachers is growing. This appreciation is evident in the letters we receive (personally addressed to the program coordinators or the Writing Outreach Program); coverage in the school and local papers; and comments on the anonymous evaluation forms that participants fill out for each session.

What was unforeseeable when this program began, however, was how the Writing Outreach experience would change the definition or concept of "community" in the phrase "community-based classroom." Prior to coordinating Writing Outreach, the common conception of community was

simply "them" or those outside the campus walls. But we as Writing Out-reach instructors and coordinators soon found ourselves challenging the us/them binary as have other compositionists (Ball and Goodburn). While the term "community" is often recognized as applying to pockets of popu-lation within the academy (e.g., community of professors, students, etc.), the "community" that we had conceived consisted only of members of the nonacademic community. Little did we know how much coordinating this program would alter our concept of classroom in community vs. commu-nity classroom. "Community" since has been applied to many intrademo-graphic dynamics—student/student, teacher/student, teacher/teacher, par-ticipant/student, participant/teacher, participant/participant, and these pairs interacting with one another. In short, the attempt to empower community members and gain reciprocal empowerment via educational support showed us that we writing teachers were the ones *outside* the community, and that Writing Outreach was actually *pulling* the Writing Outreach instructors into a heterogeneous community of writers, researchers, workers, students, and teachers—among many others.

During a qualitative research workshop at CCCC 2002 in Chicago, Ruth Ray remarked that community-based classes were "the classrooms of the future." Perhaps our Writing Outreach is not specifically what Ray had in mind, but our program has created a "classroom" space for commu-nity members as well as student and faculty participants to communicate constructively about writing. Although advocates of service learning argue for community engagement to take place off campus so that students may develop as citizens in a "real-world" atmosphere, Goodman argues that this aspect of service learning is often problematic for students, faculty, and, we argue, even the community who may resent being "served":

> The authors in *Writing the Community* argue for the benefits of service learning and its integration with composition, sug-gesting that it seems a logical outgrowth of the movement in composition away from a "safe haven" classroom model toward one that embraces a rhetorical perspective of 'writing as social action' (Heiker)—that it actualizes the transformation of *stu-dents* into *writers* (Bacon), reconnects university with the com-munity (Flower), and prepares students for real-world writing. [. . .] Does this, however, sound too good to be true? It is. As the editors and authors acknowledge, there can be an incredible increase in work load, problems with logistics, and administra-tive nightmares. (61)

Our program demonstrates that WPAs can use Writing Outreach as a form of community engagement for composition programs, one that provides service and benefit for all participants without the specific difficulties that Goodman describes. Through many experiences with Writing Outreach, we have learned that these classes have helped us as writing instructors to empower participants and ourselves and to forge alliances, but it has also provided avenues ripe with the kind of instructor research that allows us to envision these future classrooms. As Barbara Walvoord notes: "It is the power of the communities we will form in the future as we widen our scope, disperse our tactics and followers, serve as networks for new movement, [and] collaborate with colleagues [. . .]." (75). It is up to us to decide how we want to define and use service, community, and writing in our composition programs.

Traditional service-learning models are not for everyone. "The heart of academic service learning is the notion that community programs and academic programs can and should be synthesized to create synergy" (Scarlett et al. 407). As we have argued in this essay, this synergy can occur in community-engagement programs such as Writing Outreach that are dependent on mutual service and mutual learning. A traditional service-learning program was not the ideal initiative for our school and community. Writing Outreach worked for us because our university has several commuter students, many of whom are working class, and the particulars of their financial, work, transportation, or family situations meant they had neither the time nor the means to engage in a traditional service-learning program. We hope that community-engagement programs like ours will open the doors for alternatives to service learning for the sake of our students, our schools, ourselves, but mostly our communities. In a recent *WPA* article, "Politics, Rhetoric, and Service-Learning," Spigelman states that "[t]o date, there is no body of literature that links writing-focused community outreach directly to writing program administration" (107). We hope that theoretical and administrative support of programs like Writing Outreach will help create that link and that WPAs—particularly those at underfunded schools and at schools with marginalized students—will consider this community-engagement model as a service-learning option.

Conclusion

Course-based service learning can be an effective program that benefits students, faculty, and the community. One of the underlying goals of service learning is to allow students to engage the communities in hopes that they will both (1) develop as citizens by working with (not for) community

members and (2) understand how writing occurs in the "real world." While service learning in writing programs has many approaches and applications, other approaches can help our students develop through working with the community and learning about real-world writing.

As Elizabeth L. Hollander, John Saltmarsh, and Edward Zlotkowski note, "Campus engagement with local communities can take many forms, emerge from a variety of motivations, and have vastly different roots depending upon institutional culture, history, and geography" (32). We argue that by creating a community-engagement program that requires faculty service in an environment conducive to student-community collaboration, WPAs, faculty, administrators, and students can engage the community effectively and ethically without some of the difficulties (and, admittedly, benefits) of traditional service-learning initiatives, particularly course-based ones.

We have developed a program different from course-based service learning in that it requires the professors to perform the service and allows all participants to experience "community engagement." If we agree with Zlotkowski that "the single most important variable" in any type of service-learning program is "faculty participation" (2), then we ought to consider approaches that include faculty as the volunteers of service in an environment that will help students and community members engage and work and write together. And, as Cushman asserts, "Because service learning includes an outreach component, the knowledge generated together by the area residents, students, and the professor is exoteric (as opposed to esoteric) and is made in interaction (as opposed to isolation)" ("Public" 331). Writing Outreach offers institutions a way of engaging in this communal knowledge construction that is fostered by an ethic of service initiated by faculty but felt by community members and students alike.

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