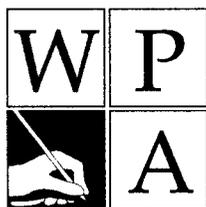
The background features a 2x2 grid of squares. The top-left square contains a large, light gray letter 'W'. The top-right square contains a large, light gray letter 'P'. The bottom-left square contains a light gray illustration of a hand holding a pen, writing on a surface. The bottom-right square contains a large, light gray letter 'A'.

Writing Program Administration
Journal of the
Council of Writing Program Administrators

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Authors' Guide

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 three copies of manuscripts, with the author identified only on a separate cover letter. Include a self-addressed stamped envelope if you would like a copy returned. Submissions are anonymously reviewed by the Editorial Board. The editors will respond within three months after the receipt of the submission.

Authors whose work is accepted for publication will be asked to submit final versions in both print and electronic form. Please double-check all citations. Electronic versions of articles should be submitted as MS Word files (preferred) or as rich text format (.rtf) files. Tables should be saved in the program in which they were produced; authors should indicate program type in their correspondence with the editors. Illustrations should be submitted as print-ready copy in electronic format. Authors are responsible for seeking and securing permissions to use images that they did not create on their own. Authors will also be asked to submit a 100-word biography for inclusion in the "Contributors" section of the journal.

REVIEWS

WPA publishes reviews of books related to writing programs and their administration. Publishers are invited to send appropriate professional

books to Jeanne Rose, Pennsylvania State University-Berks, or Lori Salem, Temple University, who assign reviews.

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND CALLS

Relevant announcements and calls for papers will be published as space permits. Announcements should not exceed 500 words, and calls for proposals/participation should not exceed 1,000 words. Please include contact information and/or links for further information. Submission deadlines in calls should be no sooner than January 1 for the fall/winter issue and June 1 for the spring issue. Please e-mail your calls and announcements to Bill Macauley (wmacauley@wooster.edu) and include the text in both the body of the message and as an MS Word attachment.

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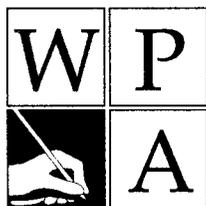
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NEW *WPA* EDITORIAL TEAM FOR 2007-09

With this issue, a new editorial team is taking over the editing and production of *WPA: Writing Program Administration*. The new Managing Editors are Deirdre Pettipiece, University of the Sciences in Philadelphia (d.pettipiece@usp.edu); William J. Macauley, Jr., College of Wooster (wmacauley@wooster.edu); and Timothy Ray, West Chester University of Pennsylvania (tray@wcupa.edu).





Writing Program Administration

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Letter from the Editors

Stepping into the shoes of Greg Glau, Barry Maid, Duane Roen, and, indeed, all the great editorial teams who have served this scholarly venture is a daunting task for us as new editors. However, we are determined to do our best to continue to uphold the high standards of editing this journal as established by our predecessors, and we hope that, as editors, we are able to live up to the confidence expressed in us by the executive leadership of the Council of Writing Program Administrators in supporting our editorship.

We feel that our roles in writing program administration in various types of small- to mid-sized institutions—Deirdre at University of the Sciences in Philadelphia, Bill at College of Wooster in Ohio, and Tim at West Chester University of Pennsylvania—will bring diverse perspectives to our role as editors, and we look forward to the contributions to the ongoing conversation from other WPAs and scholars in all types of settings and all types of institutions.

With this, our first issue, we believe we have a collection of wonderful and important articles which continue the high caliber scholarship *WPA* has historically published. These articles address many important areas which demonstrate the variety and complexity of writing program work, from defining effective class size (Horning), to concepts of knowledge transference (Wardle, Bergmann and Zepernick, Leathers-Dively and Nelms), to relationships and positioning (Janetta, Moscovitz and Petit, Marzluf), to issues of identity (Edgington and Taylor, Vanderlei and Fitzgerald, Qualley and Cheseri-Strater), to the relationship between reading and writing (Adler-Kassner and Estrem), to the intellectual heritage of vanguards of WPA work (McBeth). In fact, we're hardpressed to imagine a more thorough, engaging, and timely collection of WPA scholarship.

We are also well at work on future issues, including a special issue exploring the relationship between writing centers and writing program administration as well as a special issue focusing on the need for empirical research in ongoing writing program administration work. As you are reading this, we are beginning production of the special issue on writing centers and writing program administration, and the issue on empirical research in writing program administration has already begun taking shape with several noteworthy inclusions.

We want to publicly thank our publications committee colleagues Carrie Leverenz and David Blakesley for their friendly and helpful support, the editorial board for its wonderful work, and the previous editorial team for the many, many times they have answered questions, re-sent documents, and given great advice. The three of us have learned much from such terrific colleagues. We are also exceedingly grateful to Susan Miller-Cochran, who continues in the role of advertising editor, and to our book review editors, Lori Salem and Jeanne Rose, both willing collaborators in this new endeavor.

This double issue of the journal is the result of many reviewers, old and new, willing to give up their time and dedicate themselves to reading manuscripts with a keen sense of both criticism and mentorship. To underscore that sense of both criticism and mentorship, it is worth noting that while roughly only one-third of the manuscripts submitted to *WPA* are published, all the scholars who submitted articles have received good, sound, collegial advice from those who peer-reviewed their submissions. Reviewing is an invisible yet invaluable contribution to the discipline, to scholarship, and to the journal. For that, we dedicate this issue to the many reviewers who have given so freely. Thank you all.

—*Deirdre Pettipiece, University of the Sciences in Philadelphia*

—*Timothy Ray, West Chester University of Pennsylvania*

—*William J. Macauley, Jr., College of Wooster*



The Definitive Article on Class Size

Alice Horning

If you are a WPA, sooner or later, you are going to have a fight with your administration over class size. In general, the fight will set up this way: you want to decrease class size and the administration wants to increase it. Not long ago, I revisited this issue with my administration. To fight the good fight, I went looking to find information, statistics, reports, research, national statements, anything I could find to prove that lowering class size was a good, urgent, necessary step. What I found was scattered around in various places, and because of time pressure, I know I did not find it all. Most importantly, I did not find, in a single place, a compilation of everything we know about why small writing classes are better, nor did I find a solid empirical study to demonstrate, once and for all, that smaller classes help students become more effective writers in college. However, there is some evidence: there are empirical research studies, albeit not focused specifically on writing, and other kinds of evidence to show that smaller class size in writing courses improves student success, so it is good for students. In addition, research shows that smaller writing class size improves teaching effectiveness, so it is good for faculty. Finally, the evidence indicates that smaller writing class size is cost effective, so it is good for institutions. My goal here is to present, in a single place, a compilation of all the evidence that I could find, providing the resources needed to win the fight on class size; in addition, the absence of detailed, thorough empirical evidence further suggests that the national organizations concerned with the teaching of writing should work together to fund and execute studies to support the need for smaller writing classes.

STUDENT SUCCESS

Intuitively, we know that smaller classes are a good idea to help students succeed. It is easy to say that critical reading and writing skills taught in typical first-year composition courses are essential to success in most courses in college, so if students develop these skills in first-year writing, they are more

likely to succeed in their other courses. Small classes are good for students for other reasons, too. For example, students report that small classes that require extensive writing (i.e. twenty pages or more of final drafts during the term) make a significant difference in their engagement and motivation and improving their writing. Recent studies show that student engagement is essential to success, a finding reported by education researcher Richard Light at Harvard (55-56) and by many other education scholars. Light's survey of 365 undergraduates about the role of writing produces a particularly pertinent finding:

The relationship between the amount of writing for a course and students' level of engagement—whether engagement is measured by time spent on the course, or the intellectual challenge it presents, or students' level of interest in it—is stronger than the relationship between students' engagement and any other course characteristic. (55)

Clearly, extensive writing cannot reasonably be assigned, read and responded to in large sections. To raise students' level of engagement and learning, small classes with extensive writing are essential. Alexander Astin's work on the impact of college on students supports Light's findings with broadly based data gathered over more than thirty years and published in his 1993 report *What Matters in College?* Using a wide range of measures of student success and satisfaction, Astin examined the impact of student-faculty ratio and reported that a low student-faculty ratio has a positive impact on student satisfaction in terms of relationships, quality of teaching and on virtually all other aspects of students' experience. Astin also says that a low student-faculty ratio has a positive impact on whether students finish their degrees (Astin 328-29).

So it is clear that in general smaller class sizes and lower student-faculty ratios are helpful to students' engagement and success. In and of itself, this claim does not support smaller classes specifically in writing courses, since virtually every subject area can and does make the same claim. However, Astin's data show why the need for small classes in writing should have priority over other subject areas' claims. First, examining various aspects of the college experience, such as course content and campus amenities, Astin writes that "the number of writing-skills courses taken has significant positive effects on all areas of self-reported growth except job skills, and on all areas of student satisfaction except Facilities" (377). So more writing courses increase students' levels of satisfaction and their own assessment of their development.

Students see their own growth in writing courses in other ways as well. Astin reports that students respond positively to the higher levels of involvement or engagement resulting from how many writing courses they take, how much feedback they get from teachers, the number of essay exams they take, and their use of word processors (228). These are all features of small writing classes. The student orientation of the faculty (i.e. how concerned about students and committed to teaching are they (47-48)) as reported by Astin has a direct positive effect on students' overall academic development, especially in three areas: writing, critical thinking and problem-solving/analytical skills (342). These are all areas that relate to overall success in college, ones that are the focus of small writing classes. Finally, students report, according to Astin, a direct positive impact on writing skills and abilities if their papers are critiqued by faculty members (384). And while faculty may critique student work in many different kinds of courses, students get the most help with their writing from writing teachers who can only provide the kind of detailed critiques that produce these positive effects in small classes. So, while many subject areas may clamor for small classes, writing has, on all these bases, the strongest claim and should have the highest priority. Ultimately, writing and the critical reading that is one of its essential components underlies virtually all courses in college; success in college is tied to success in writing, taught well in small classes.

Extrapolating from K-12 Findings and Research in Other Areas

But surveys of engagement or other broad data on student satisfaction like Light's and Astin's studies are not enough to win a fight with the dean's office on any campus. There is specific research that examines the impact of class size on student academic achievement. While the most intensive work has been done in studies of K-12 education, it seems fair to extrapolate from such studies to the college level. In a book devoted to the issue of class size, Charles Achilles, professor of Educational Leadership at Eastern Michigan University, and the principal investigator on a major study of class size and student success in public schools in Tennessee (Project Star), makes clear that good research on class size shows that smaller classes have a positive effect on student learning. He reports findings in such areas as levels of student engagement, and development of basic skills (i.e. reading and writing) as well as raising teachers' morale (Achilles 83-103, 159-61).¹ The work in public schools clearly supports the need for smaller classes in writing. And then there is additional work that is at the college-level, but not focused specifically on writing. A study in economics courses (Arias and Walker) and a study on cognitive development both show the positive impact of smaller

classes with evidence of improved student learning and academic performance (Fischer and Grant).² These studies support the claim that smaller classes for college writing are essential for students' success.

Class Size Research on Writing Courses

A brief review of the few studies that look more directly at class size specifically in college writing courses make a consistent case for smaller classes, according to Trish Roberts-Miller at the University of Texas. Roberts-Miller reviewed other available research literature on class size on various types of courses, mostly at the K-12 level, not specifically focused on writing, that use assorted kinds of measures like timed exams. Her study leads her to conclude that "This is an area where good qualitative or quantitative research would be very helpful; unfortunately, it does not exist." More recent discussions of this issue have described the need for focused research as the "holy grail" for making the case to lower class size (*Declining*). But Roberts-Miller draws several useful inferences, despite the absence of specific empirical data to support every writing program administrator's argument for smaller class sizes. She says that, first, good practices in the teaching of writing, such as extensive writing practice and detailed teacher feedback get harder with more students. In addition, if the goal in teaching writing is not to have students memorize grammar rules but to learn through doing and getting feedback; these activities can only be accomplished in small classes where students actually *do* a lot of writing.

Finally, writing courses that emphasize revision through multiple drafts (admittedly, an area of my own research which I naturally support, and which my studies for *Revision Revisited* show is essential to professionals' successful writing) require small class size so that teachers can read and comment on students' work over multiple drafts. Roberts-Miller makes one additional point about assessing the impact of smaller classes in teaching and learning writing: measures involving exams, single timed writing samples or single research reports are too limited to reveal students' true writing ability. Thus, the empirical research is lacking, but there is plenty of indirect evidence, evidence from K-12 research and research in various subject areas to support the need for smaller writing classes. The need for empirical evidence demonstrating the efficacy of smaller classes for college writing is also clear.

The Students' Perspective

If students are asked about the issue of class size, they report clearly that class size makes a difference to them. In *Making the Most of College*, Light

reports on more than sixteen hundred interviews with undergraduates at his institution plus collaboration with colleagues from twenty colleges and universities of different sizes and types over a number of years (Light 106). Among the many interesting and useful findings of these in-depth interviews is the one on class size: “student after student brings up the importance of class size in his or her academic development. Not surprisingly, small-group tutorials, small seminars, and one-to-one supervision are, for many, their capstone experience” (Light 9).

More specifically, students’ satisfaction with their experience is clearly correlated to the number of small classes they have taken; students’ definition of “small” in this context is classes with fifteen or fewer students (Light 45). Light’s findings show that students find small classes have the greatest impact on their learning for two specific reasons: “First, such classes enable a professor to get to know each student reasonably well. Second, a professor can use certain teaching techniques that are hard to implement in large classes” (Light 47). The open discussion of controversial topics is only one of many such teaching possibilities available in small classes (Light 48-50). Glau’s data (see Appendix 1) on retention and success at Arizona State, when writing class size was reduced, support Light’s findings. Writing classes of small size, particularly those that meet students’ definition of small, are thus essential from the students’ perspective in making the most of college and succeeding in their studies.

A different way of looking at this issue comes from studies of strategies that contribute to student success and student engagement. It would probably be fair to say that these are two focal points in current thinking about higher education, as demonstrated by conferences (in April, 2005, for example, the Association of American Colleges and Universities held a conference on “Pedagogies of Engagement”) and books published (Kuh et al.). The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), a national survey of students’ college experiences begun in 2000, is yet another indicator of the interest in this area. Drawing on data from the NSSE reports, Kuh and his colleagues note that students report “prompt feedback and discussing ideas presented in reading or class discussion” (303) and individual research experiences with faculty make a significant positive difference to their undergraduate experience. Clearly, these kinds of contacts are more likely in smaller classes of all kinds, including smaller writing classes, even if they are not taught by senior faculty, because the contact itself is important. Thus, the students themselves specifically report greater success and more learning in smaller classes.

A different study of student engagement, focused specifically on writing classes, is reported by Nancy Sommers, Director of Writing at Harvard and

Director of the Harvard Study of Undergraduate Writing, and Laura Saltz, who worked as a research associate for the study. Their detailed report, which appeared in the flagship journal in college composition, *College Composition and Communication*, in 2004, refers to Richard Light's work and a number of other studies of students' development as writers and their levels of engagement, including one at Pepperdine University (a small private, religious institution in California) and one at City University of New York (a large public institution). Sommers and Saltz confirm Light's findings of students' reports on their levels of engagement in classes that entail extensive writing at a range of different kinds of institutions. They quote a number of individual students, including the following:

You can say that you went to lecture or went to discussion section, but when you hold in your hand sixteen papers that you have written your freshman year, then you feel that you have accomplished something. (127)

The Harvard study, which followed the writing development of more than four hundred students over four years of college, clearly shows the importance of good writing instruction and extensive writing experience to the overall success of students (Sommers and Saltz 126-127). The students themselves report that writing is an essential element by which they get "invited into their education" (127), whether they wrote for smaller or larger classes (129). As a practical matter, though, students get more direct instruction in writing when they are in small classes. Sommers and Saltz go on to point out that the positive impact of writing on undergraduate education must be assessed carefully and may not show up on a one-time measure of student writing. Moreover, because what changes over time is not only students' writing but also their attitudes toward writing and their total college experience as a by-product, the importance and positive effect of writing may not show up until much later if at all (144). The first year is a crucial positive time for this development to begin according to Sommers and Saltz (146-7), so it warrants small classes to get students off to a good start. These studies provide some evidence to support the need for small writing classes but the need for a focused empirical study on the positive impact of smaller writing classes on students remains.

TEACHING EFFECTIVENESS

There are a number of reasons why smaller writing classes are good not only for students, but also for faculty—above and beyond the fact that faculty generally do like to see their students succeed. In terms of teaching effectiveness, it is much harder for faculty members to be effective teachers

for all students in a class of one or two hundred or more if the goal is for students to develop their individual skills in critical thinking and writing, along with key ideas and conceptual content. The students bring an array of backgrounds, levels of preparation, interest and motivation into the classroom. It is difficult to learn students' names, much less understand their learning styles and engage them fully with the material in large groups.

Strategies for enhancing student engagement, even in large classes, such as those described by Light (114-117) effectively create a small-class experience in a large class context. However, detailed, individualized responses to students' writing, in particular, are nearly impossible in large lecture classes, but become more and more possible as class size drops. The exact number of students must derive from various calculations of teachers' time reading and responding to student writing; no specific study says twenty is the very best number, but all agree that smaller is better. Based on the evidence presented here, it should be clear that a well-funded, focused study of the impact of class size in college writing is definitely needed. Despite more alternatives now with course management software (WebCT/Blackboard), the crucial element for student success is one-to-one teacher student interaction on written work, for which smaller classes are essential. There is research, much of it admittedly indirect, to support the need for smaller class size in college writing courses, based on teachers' compensation and time, on the recommendations of national organizations, on studies of institutions' peer groups, and other kinds of teacher-focused studies.

Pay and Hours

The amount of time teachers have to spend with or on individual students has been carefully examined specifically for writing courses in college. In terms of issues like time per student and pay rates for teachers, it is clear that smaller classes are crucial. Richard Haswell of Texas A&M Corpus Christi has calculated a conservative estimate of the time involved in teaching typical first-year writing courses, using forty minutes per paper and allowing for two drafts, comments and grading, as follows:

25 students, four substantial out-of-class essays, one required individual conference, end-of-the-semester portfolio of writings. The total is 231 hours. That is the most conservative estimate, and a more realistic one probably would add at least 20-30 hours.

Notice that an 8-hour day of 15 weeks of 5 working days a week adds up to 600 hours. With two writing courses, and with one third the preparation time allowed for the second

course (30 minutes instead of 90), the total is 402 hours. With three writing courses, the teacher is already working overtime (633 hours). (Haswell n.p.)

Add a fourth class, as do many part-time instructors and teachers in community colleges, and the time factor increases significantly. As Haswell goes on to point out, this is the reason that several national organizations have called for lower class sizes in first-year writing courses.

Moreover, Randall Popken, who is a WPA at Tarleton State University in Texas, writing in *College Composition and Communication* in 2004, showed that class size is a long-standing, serious issue with his historical case study of Edwin Hopkins, a writing teacher at the University of Kansas from 1889 to 1937 (618-41). Hopkins, following the then relatively new composition pedagogy of having students write extensively, reached the point of a breakdown from sheer overwork. As a WPA, he tried repeatedly to get his administration to lower class size, but in a story familiar to us all, was unsuccessful (Popkin 625-29). Popken's report on Hopkins becomes particularly pertinent to this discussion when he describes the argument Hopkins used with his administration, helping to explain why composition class sizes should be treated differently than the class sizes of other subjects, namely that composition entails intensive labor in reading student writing and seeing students for individual conferences. His argument, as Popken reports, falls on deaf ears (627), not a surprising outcome to WPAs.

Pay rates make the same argument more strongly—a point also raised by Hopkins (Popken 621, 634). Using my university, a fairly typical medium-sized state university of 17,000 students, as an example, the following calculation shows why smaller classes would be helpful to teachers. Our current union contract sets beginning first-year writing instructors' salaries at about \$3800 per section taught. Teachers have 22 students per section currently, so the pay is about \$172 per student. If teachers have 20 students, the pay is \$190. If teachers have 18 students, the pay is \$211. Given this calculation, naturally instructors are in favor of smaller classes since lowering class size produces a pay raise.

Moreover, the pay situation creates a disincentive for teachers to give individual students the individual time and attention needed to help them become effective writers. The more time teachers spend grading and conferencing, the less they are getting paid. My institution pays pretty well, better than many places. At an hourly rate, using Haswell's figure of approximately 230 hours per course, and my institution's pay rate of \$3800, the pay works out to \$16.50 an hour. Increase class size and the hourly pay rate goes down. On the whole, then, in terms of pay, small classes are better for faculty.

The National Organizations' Recommendations for Teachers

A number of national organizations that serve writing teachers support the faculty position on the need for smaller classes for first-year writing. The first of these is the Conference on College Composition and Communication, which is a professional organization within the National Council of Teachers of English specifically focused on college writing. It is thus the national umbrella organization for all teachers of college composition. In 1966, the CCCC issued a position statement entitled "Statement of Principles and Standards for the Postsecondary Teaching of Writing," which includes a section specifically on the issue of class size in relation to "teaching conditions necessary for quality education." The specific recommendations from the CCCC statement are these:

- A. No more than 20 students should be permitted in any writing class. Ideally, classes should be limited to 15.
- B. Remedial or developmental sections should be limited to a maximum of 15 students.
- C. English faculty members should teach more than 60 writing students a term. In developmental writing classes, the maximum should be 45. (CCCC n.p.)

The leading national organization on the teaching of college writing, then, clearly states that the maximum class size for writing classes should be twenty or fewer students for regular classes, and recommends an even smaller size for developmental courses, in which students need even more individual attention.

A second national organization to address the class size issue with a policy statement is the Association of Departments of English, which is the national administrators' organization for English department chairs under the auspices of the Modern Language Association. The Modern Language Association is the flagship organization for teachers of English and foreign languages. In its prefatory remarks, before setting forth numerical guidelines consistent with those of the CCCC group, the ADE statement raises the following concern:

Despite an abundance of experienced teachers to provide sound instruction in English, we find that in many institutions, the number of courses taught by each instructor and the number of students in each class, especially in writing courses, has reached unacceptable levels. This problem has become acute in independent and public institutions alike. (ADE n.p.)

This statement, issued originally in 1974 and revised and updated in 1992, goes on to state the following recommendations on class size:

College English teachers should not teach more than three sections of composition per term. The number of students in each section should be fifteen or fewer, with no more than twenty students in any case. Class size should be no more than fifteen in developmental (remedial) courses. No English faculty member should teach more than sixty writing students a term; if students are developmental, the maximum should be forty-five. (ADE, n.p.)

The ADE specifically states that it is supporting policy statements from CCCC, the National Junior College Committee and the American Association of University Professors.

All of these groups offer the same set of recommendations: no teacher should teach more than three sections of composition, and no section should be more than twenty students, preferably fifteen, and no more than fifteen in any developmental level class. Many instructors, and especially part-time faculty, teach four or five sections, often of twenty-five students or more. Such classes are simply too big; class size in writing courses should be reduced in accordance with these guidelines.

The national organization for writing program administrators, the Council of Writing Program Administrators (WPA), sponsors an online listserv where the issue of class size is discussed regularly. Writing program administrators turn to colleagues via the listserv for support in their discussions with administrators over class size. Several WPA members undertook to compile a list of colleges and universities and their class sizes. The list was published by experienced writing program administrator Richard Haswell in the Comppile online database of research in rhetoric and composition in June of 2004. Haswell's compilation lists data from 183 colleges and universities, including community colleges, state institutions, private schools, ivy league schools, a full range. Not every institution provided a class size number for both regular first-year composition and basic writing. The following table shows the overall averages:

Regular first-year composition	N=177	Mean class size=21.49
Basic writing	N=87	Mean class size=17.98

Clearly, most writing programs are well above the recommended class sizes for both regular first-year composition and for developmental or basic writing.

Teacher Support from Peer Institutions

Additional support for an argument on class size can be based on peer institutions' class sizes. The concept of peer institutions is one used by offices of institutional research. Institutional research administrators identify a group of other institutions that are similar to their own on a number of criteria: student enrollment levels, demographics, program offerings, budget, type of institution (in terms of Carnegie categories or other criteria) and related features. The peer group may be used for comparison purposes on any issue. When I checked our peer group on the class size issue, I found that all had classes larger than ours, but all reported much higher attrition rates, effectively lowering class sizes. The peer institution argument can provide a strategy that may help build a case for lowering class size in first-year writing courses, particularly if the administration is concerned about being compared to a peer group.

Other Teacher Research

A fairly comprehensive review of research on the class size issue focused specifically on reading and writing was published in 2000 by University of Texas emeritus professor of English Edmund Farrell and former NCTE President Julie Jensen. They examined fifty years of research, beginning with a report in the 1955 *Illinois English Bulletin* of a doctoral research study on teacher time to evaluate student writing, and including the meta-analyses (studies of studies) done by Glass and Smith, education researchers from the University of Colorado, which is frequently cited in all discussions on this topic. Although, as Farrell and Jensen point out, Glass and Smith's work is often criticized, they showed clearly that

smaller classes by a factor of nearly 9 to 1, would show superior outcomes in student, teacher, and instructional effects, including students' behavior and self concepts, and teachers' morale and professional growth. (315)

Follow-up work to correct some of the flaws in Glass and Smith's original work leads Farrell and Jensen to sum up this research with three broad points of agreement:

(1) class size affects the educational environment (e.g., smaller classes positively influence students' behavior); (2) the relationship between class size and students' achievement is indirect (e.g., smaller classes lead to better communication of expecta-

tions, to more individual attention to students' interests and needs, and to more student-teacher interactions); and (3) students will achieve more in classes of 15 or fewer.... (316)

While this work does not examine writing classes specifically or directly, it does show a clear advantage for smaller classes across a variety of language arts areas. Research on this issue led the International Reading Association to offer its own resolution on class-size reduction in 1999; the resolution recommends that class size be reduced to twenty or fewer students in order to increase reading achievement ("International" 327). From the teachers' perspective in the area of reading and writing courses generally, smaller classes are needed. Looking at more broadly based reviews of research on the class size issue, mostly at the K-12 level, admittedly produces a mixed picture, but again, these studies are not directly focused on college composition classes.³

From the perspective of teachers, then, class size is an issue of critical importance. All teachers want to be effective in the classroom and they really want to help students. College writing teachers are no different; especially the huge army of part-time or adjunct faculty often work long hours for low pay, few benefits if any, little job stability and other poor conditions. The findings of research on teacher expectations regarding time and pay support the goal of smaller classes. The national organizations have recognized this goal in their position statements, across the board. Comparing peer institutions shows this need as does research done in a variety of disciplines on the class size issue. Altogether, while the need for an empirical study to settle this issue remains, the case for smaller class size is strong and clear from the perspective of college writing teachers.

INSTITUTIONAL PERSPECTIVES

Institutions care about class size for a variety of reasons besides the ways in which class size impacts students and faculty. Chiefly, institutions are concerned about cost, but they are also concerned about other issues, such as rankings. More importantly, public institutions, at least, need to be concerned about retention, a huge national problem, and about their overall performance as measured by the number of students who not only return from year to year, but actually complete degrees within a reasonable period of time. In these areas, again, there is evidence to support smaller classes, especially in writing.

Cost Issues

At my institution, one of the key cost issues is the part-time budget. The vast majority of our first-year composition courses are taught by part-time teachers. These faculty members are poorly paid in general and do not receive adequate benefits, but still do cost the institution money. Larger classes mean fewer classes serving more students, a direct cost savings. This is a spurious argument at best. College writing classes are huge money makers for most institutions, especially if graduate students or part-time faculty are the majority of the teachers, as they are at so many institutions. Using the numbers from my institution, the teacher is paid \$3,800 per course, while students pay tuition of \$649 per four credit course. With 22 students per course, our current class size, the income is \$14,278. Subtract the \$3,800 paid to the teacher, and the university makes \$10,478 per class. Of course, that \$10,000 plus is not pure profit, since the university must pay for heat, lights, technology, custodial services and so on. Still, a large composition program like mine makes money for an institution. Lowering class size to twenty changes the income to \$12,980, a difference of less than \$1,300. Little changes to class size, which can make such a difference to students and faculty would make a relatively small dent in the money an institution makes on these courses.

Smaller Class Size and Higher Rankings

What would serve institutions better is being able to offer more of these money-making classes, i.e., strong enrollments. There are a number of ways to increase enrollment in the competitive marketplace for new students. Some of these are through national prominence in athletics, through achievements in particular fields of study, or through high rankings on widely publicized surveys or ratings, such as those done by *US News and World Report*. The *US News* rankings are interesting for a number of reasons, but especially because they get a lot of attention in the media and because colleges then use them to recruit new students. However, the most interesting aspect of the *US News* rankings for this discussion is the fact that one measure used in the rankings is a measure of class size. The more classes an institution has of nineteen students or less, the higher its ranking by *US News*.

The *US News* ranking system warrants a close look because of the way it addresses the class size issue. The class size factor has a weighting of 30% within the area of faculty resources, whether in the category of national universities and liberal arts colleges or the category of master's granting universities or comprehensive colleges (*US News* n.p.). Faculty resources

are weighed 20% in the overall assessment of schools. *US News* considers faculty resources only slightly less important than peer assessment (25%), and equal to institutions' graduation and retention rates, the three most important factors in the overall rating system. Within the category of faculty resources, only faculty compensation (at 35%) is weighted more heavily than class size; student-faculty ratio, a different way to look at class size, is weighted at 5%. Institutions can improve their scores in the *US News* rankings by lowering class size to nineteen or less. Given the large number of first-year composition classes offered at many institutions, such a change would likely have a positive impact on any school's standing in these rankings.

Institutional Data on Class Size and Performance

Some institutions have looked closely at what difference smaller classes might make to overall performance on issues like retention and degree completion. I polled members of the Council of Writing Program Administrators organization through its online listserv, seeking individual studies from institutions across the full spectrum of the Carnegie Foundation's categories of types of institutions. My goal was to be able to present data from the established categories of higher education, using the Carnegie classifications of Doctoral-Extensive, Doctoral-Intensive, Master's I and II, Baccalaureate Liberal Arts, General, and Associate, Associate's, Specialized and Tribal Colleges and Universities (Carnegie n.p.). I did not get data from all categories, but a reasonable sample of several categories supports the need to lower class size in all college writing courses. A well-funded empirical study might gather this kind of data from a broad cross-section of institutions across the country; such a study would almost certainly provide further support for my claims based on just a few institutions.

The University of California system has been studied by the UC System's Committee on Preparatory Education (UCOPE). Most of the institutions in the UC system are in the Doctoral-Extensive Carnegie group. In an April 2005 report, the committee noted that all UC schools except Berkeley and San Diego have class size caps above the nationally recommended levels. In addition, the UC peer group, which includes many Doctoral-Extensive institutions such as Harvard, MIT, Stanford, University of Michigan and University of Virginia all have class sizes at or below the nationally-recommended levels (University Committee 4). These are high prestige institutions; other schools that want to look more prestigious can do so by lowering class size.

Arizona State, also in the Doctoral Extensive category, for example, lowered all its composition class sizes in part to improve its rating in the *US News* survey (Glau). Arizona State's data (see Appendix 1) shows how smaller class sizes in first-year writing have a clear impact on retention rates. ASU lowered class sizes to nineteen students in first year writing and math. As shown in Appendix 1, the data on student performance show clearly that lowering writing class sizes:

- improved pass rates for both ENG 101 and ENG 102. While the percentage gains are less than one percent (.79 in ENG 101 and .36 for ENG 102), the data sets are so large that no one can expect huge gains, percentage-wise. Each one percent gain means roughly more than *500 additional students* are succeeding in these classes than were previously passing.
- improved retention: smaller classes helped to increased the continuation of students from the first to the second required writing course for both of the fall-spring academic years following the implementation of Project 85.
- lowered the number of students who withdrew from or failed these courses (the D, W, E rate).
- improved student evaluations for *all* ranks of faculty teaching ASU's 100-level courses—which means students also appreciate the smaller class sizes. (Glau)

ASU reports similar positive results in mathematics. It seems clear that smaller classes play a key role in student success in early college work, and with that success comes a greater likelihood of persistence and degree completion. Thus it serves institutions' needs for positive performance data to have small classes in which students succeed.

In the Master's I Carnegie 2000 category, Texas State University-San Marcos has found a clear connection between class size and student success as measured by the number of students receiving grades of D or F or withdrawing from their College Writing I course. Sue Beebe, the director of the program, sent me the data that appear in Appendices 2 and 3. In the course of the last ten years, the number of students who were unsuccessful as measured by DFW grades, has declined substantially as the class size has been reduced.

Retention and Class Size

Although students may leave college for a variety of reasons that have nothing to do with classes, class size, teachers or other features of their experience in the institution, overall retention gives some indication of how well

students are doing. Nationally, college retention is pretty poor: fewer than half of the students who enter college manage to complete a degree, across all institutions and all kinds of students according to education researcher Vincent Tinto (1). Based on this fact, it seems clear that colleges and universities need to improve their performance and that doing so can be an institutional advantage.

Tinto explored this issue in depth in his 1993 report, *Leaving College*, in which he resists providing a recipe or formula for helping students stay in college. Instead, he argues that institutions are chiefly responsible for fostering students' intellectual and social development. Everything institutions do should be focused on the goal of creating an environment that supports students' development and when this is the case, retention will follow naturally. If colleges and universities want to keep students, Tinto writes, they must understand

the reciprocal obligation institutions and individuals accept when an individual is admitted to a higher educational community. ...If there is a secret to successful retention, it lies in the willingness of institutions to involve themselves in the social and intellectual development of their students. That involvement and the commitment to students it reflects is the primary source of students' commitment to the institution and of their involvement in their own learning. (Tinto 9)

Tinto's argument centers on this mutual sense of commitment. One way for an institution to demonstrate its commitment to students and their learning is to lower class size, especially in beginning writing classes that are a linchpin in overall academic success.

Tinto speaks specifically about the importance of what goes on in the classroom to the overall situation in higher education. Classrooms, he says, are the main place where students "come to participate in the intellectual life of the institution" (210). Faculty and student interaction in the classroom is the central place where social and intellectual development occur, so engaging students there is most important. Finally, Tinto says

if institutions wish to make substantial progress in educating and retaining more, especially those who have been underrepresented in the higher educational system, their communities must involve all students. They must actively engage students in the life of the classroom and allow them to gain a valued voice in the educative process. To a very real degree, our failure to make significant improvements in learning and retention over the past several decades reflects the regrettable

fact that student experience has not led students to become actively involved in learning. Instead, they have been alienated from education, seeing the task of college completion as a barrier to be overcome, a ritual to endure, rather than an experience to be valued. (210-211)

This description is no less accurate now that it was when it was published in 1993. Greater engagement and involvement is the key to greater retention, and these goals can best be achieved through smaller writing classes. Richard Light's findings from student data, discussed earlier in this article, support this claim as students recognize smaller classes and more direct contact with faculty as essential to their making the most of college.

Sue Beebe makes the further point that retaining students is cost effective for institutions. Recruiting is a very expensive enterprise, whether admissions advisers are sent to high schools or students come to visit and are given talks and meet administrators, or paper advertising or other approaches are used. It is less expensive to keep students already enrolled than to go out and find more. For this reason, retention serves the institution by saving money on recruiting. Beebe writes:

I figured that if our Fall 04 DFW rate in College Writing I had been 15%, 203 students at TX State would have received, Ds, Fs, or Ws. With the DFW rate at 8.7%, 118 students actually received Ds, Fs, or Ws. Thus, 85 more students succeeded than would have succeeded were the DFW rate still 15%—a substantial saving in instructional time and money, as well as a factor in retention and graduation rates. (Personal comm.)

Student engagement data (see Appendix 2) support these statistics and suggest that students see the value in smaller classes. Smaller classes are not just preferred by students; they actually result in a savings to the institution in terms of student retention. A broad study of national trends would surely show the same results more convincingly, demonstrating the need for smaller writing classes.

Other institutions are moving toward lower class size, including a number of large public universities. Sue Beebe has sent me the following additional data on Colorado University in Boulder and Old Dominion University in Virginia Beach:

...[I]ncreasing numbers of large public universities are beginning to take note of the advantages of small writing classes, even using writing class size as part of their institutional branding. For example, at Colorado University-Boulder, where class size has been a priority for some years, FYE [first-year English]

classes are now capped at 18. The July 11, 2005, *Virginian-Pilot* reports that Old Dominion, with 21,000 students, has made a concerted effort to lower class size in its first-semester First-Year English classes for Fall 2005:

Old Dominion University will add five full-time faculty members this fall to keep first-semester freshman-composition classes at fewer than 20 students each.

The writing courses, considered a crucial gateway to success in college, at ODU had averaged 23 students per class, above the nationally recommended level. (Pers. Comm.)

These decisions reflect the view of some institutions that smaller classes are cost effective and can help institutions meet their overall goals more effectively.

Declining by Degrees, a 2005 nationally televised report with an accompanying published book by Hersch and Merrow on problems in higher education, also supports this point about class size and its relationship to retention or student attrition. Hersch and Merrow studied a number of institutions, including both large and small colleges and universities, reporting that overall size of large institutions is a problem for many students for a variety of reasons, but particularly because of large classes. Smaller classes don't necessarily prove that students are actually learning more; such a finding would be the "holy grail" as they say (*Declining*). Clear measures that would establish this relationship specifically in writing courses in college are certainly needed in educational research. However, again as noted earlier in Richard Light's work, students report that they spend more time on smaller classes that require extensive writing and are more fully engaged by those classes. It seems reasonable to think that greater investments of time and fuller engagement are likely to produce more learning, both by-products of smaller classes, particularly in writing. Thus, if institutions wish to improve their overall performance and want to enhance students' engagement and learning, they should lower class size, particularly in those courses that entail the highest levels of writing, engagement and faculty interaction—composition courses.

It should be clear that class size is important from a number of different perspectives in college writing courses. For students, smaller classes can make a difference in how much attention they get from teachers, how deeply they engage with their coursework and how well they can develop their writing skills. Ultimately, these differences make a difference in their performance and persistence to degree completion. For teachers, there are

issues of time and pay as well as the morale-lowering problem of working in situations where the number of students they teach far exceeds the numbers called for by national organizations. Research focusing on the impact of class size on teachers makes the case for smaller classes from their perspective as well. Institutions and administrators can also benefit from smaller class sizes in writing courses. While cost is important to institutions, it must be viewed from a big picture point of view. From this vantage point, smaller classes can help students become strong writers, a key to success in college that, again, can contribute to retention and degree completion. Smaller classes can also increase an institution's attractiveness to students, boosting enrollment. Across the various Carnegie categories, many institutions have data showing the benefit of smaller classes particularly in college writing; a detailed study focused on this point could draw all this data together and prove the advantage of smaller classes. Meanwhile, for all these reasons, class size must come down.

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NOTES

¹ Achilles' work at the K-12 level suggests that lower class size not only improves students' academic performance, but also supports student learning because of its positive effect on other aspects of students' lives, including their level of engagement, an area of recent focused study by Kuh et al.

² One careful study of class size done at the college level examines economics courses, showing a statistically significant positive effect of smaller class size (Arias and Walker 311-29). Although this study does not look at writing courses, it does look at the issue of class size and controls for a number of variables, providing a valuable finding that class size really can

help students learn more effectively; this research also suggests a methodology that might be useful to national organizations in studying this question with respect to composition courses. There is also specific empirical research on cognitive development and critical thinking in college classes, examining the impact of class size on student development in these areas (Fischer and Grant).

³ In a review of the literature published in 2002, education scholars Fleming, Toutant and Raptis report that the research is “contradictory and filled with problems” including trouble with methodology and statistical validity (26). However, they note that associations of English teachers have consistently argued for smaller classes because of the additional work required to evaluate student writing. So, the research on class size does not present a completely clear picture, but the point about workload in this research review is consistent with Haswell’s calculations discussed previously. Lower class size certainly makes it possible for teachers to spend more time on student papers and provide more direct instruction to students on writing.

A final more comprehensive meta-analysis report appeared in 2002, done by Toth and Montagna of the Psychology Department at California University of Pennsylvania, looking at eight studies of various kinds of research on the effect of class size at the college level published between 1990 and 2000 (Toth and Montagna). The findings of this report are again mixed, noting that confounding variables such as methodological flaws, grade inflation, learning styles, teaching styles and so on may play a role in student performance. Final course grades, used as the measure of student achievement in most studies, may not tell the whole story about the impact of class size on student learning. Some of the studies examined in this meta-analysis do show a positive effect for smaller classes, especially if the course entails critical thinking, problem solving and other analytical skills (256-57).

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APPENDIX 1: ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY RETENTION DATA

Arizona State University Data

Pass rates:

Academic year comparison:

ENG 101:

Previous 5 academic years (AY 1999-00 -- AY 2003-04)

registered 24707
 passed 22249
 percentage **90.05%**
 DWE * 2437
 percentage **9.86%**

After Project 85:

AY 2004-2005 Change:
 5295
 4810
90.84% (higher is better)
 423
7.99% (-1.87% (lower is better))

ENG 102:

Previous 5 academic years (AY 1999-00 -- AY 2003-04)

registered 25140
 passed 22241
 percentage **88.47%**
 DWE * 2775
 percentage **11.04%**

After Project 85:

AY 2004-2005 Change:
 5946
 5282
88.83% (higher is better)
 655
11.02% (-0.02% (lower is better))

* DWE = Drop, Withdraw, Failure rate

ENG 101 --> ENG 102 Continuation Rate

Of those who passed ENG 101 in the fall, the number who subsequently enrolled for ENG 102 the next spring

last 5 academic years
 ENG 101 in fall 2004 --> ENG 102 in spring 2005
 ENG 101 in fall 2005 --> ENG 102 in spring 2006

Change:

88.86%
89.24% (higher is better)
89.33% (higher is better)

Student Evaluations:

100-level courses only

Professors, Lecturers, Academic Professionals, Instructors
 Teaching Assistants
 Faculty Associates (adjunct faculty)

The three semesters after Project 85:

fall 2004, spring 2005, fall 2005

Change:
 1.45
 1.63
 1.63

Previous 12 semesters before Project 85:
 1.57
 1.49
 1.56

(lower is better)
 (lower is better)
 (lower is better)

At ASU, evaluations are on a 1-5 scale, with 1 being the best.

APPENDIX 2

Department of English
Texas State University-San Marcos
From Sue Beebe, Director, Lower-Division Studies in English,
Texas State San Marcos (Master's I in Carnegie 2000)
Class Size and "DFW" Rates for First-Year Students
Enrolled in English 1310: College Writing I

<u>Fall</u>	<u>Class Size</u>	<u>% DFW</u>
1995	25.29	17
1996	24.95	15
1997	24.12	15
1998	24.06	12
1999	22.09	10
2000	21.76	10
2001	20.14	9
2002	20.53	9
2003	20.58	9
2004	18.47	8.7

Sources:

DFW Rates—IRP Grades in Selected Courses
Class size—English Department Statistical Report

APPENDIX 3

Department of English

Texas State University-San Marcos

From Sue Beebe, Director, Lower-Division Studies in English,

Texas State San Marcos (Master's I in Carnegie 2000)

Survey of Student Engagement

In Fall 1999 we conducted a survey of several engagement indicators. Of 1,493 College Writing I students surveyed,

- 96% agreed (with 56% strongly agreeing) that “This course gave me opportunities to interact with the teacher, both in and out of class meetings.”
- 97% agreed (with 62% strongly agreeing) that “This course gave me opportunities to interact with other students in the class.”
- 99% agreed (with 75% strongly agreeing) that “This course gave me opportunities to think, to write, and to participate in discussion rather than to merely memorize information.”
- 97% agreed (with 66% strongly agreeing) that “I received frequent comments on my writing from the teacher and/or from other students in the class.”
- 92% agreed (with 48% strongly agreeing) that “Success in this course required me to spend substantial time on assignments both in and out of class.”
- 96% agreed (with 55% strongly agreeing) that “The teacher communicated high expectations and required me to perform to high standards.”
- 94% agreed (with 75% strongly agreeing) that “This course provided opportunities to learn in a variety of ways, such as writing, reading, listening, speaking, and working in groups.”
- 96% agreed (with 75% strongly agreeing) that “The small size of this class helped me to learn.”



Reading Practices in the Writing Classroom

Linda Adler-Kassner and Heidi Estrem

“How can I work with readings without pushing students toward a literary analysis? I started thinking about that with this week’s readings—I realized that I am. Really, I’m beginning to change my attitude toward thinking analytically about texts. I see now that we’re not pushing for literary analysis, or at least the kind of analysis that I’m used to doing as an English major.

—graduate teaching assistant, Fall 2005

As WPAs, we’ve seen the pedagogical tensions that often result when first-year students’ and writing instructors’ various assumptions about reading collide in the first-year writing classroom. Why don’t my students read as I want them to?, the instructor wonders. Why doesn’t my teacher just tell me what he wants?, students think. Writing instructors like the one quoted above know that teaching writing is closely intertwined with teaching reading, yet many are stymied by how to engage productively with reading in the classroom. For some, the pull of literary analysis is especially strong. For others, the curricular demands of a course like first-year writing leave little space for actual reading instruction, since so much attention must be paid to a host of writing needs. But carefully considering what we ask students to read, how we ask them to read it, and why, is an essential aspect of writing program administration. As we thought through how various models of what reading is came into contact within the context of our own writing program, we realized that we needed to devote the same attention to identifying components and conventions of reading and reading processes as we did with writing.

Of course, our program (as with any site of learning) inevitably reflects and enacts various sets of values: personal, programmatic, disciplinary, and institutional. These structures for learning are not neutral, as Richard Miller has pointed out; they also are shaped by the exigencies in which we

(teachers, programs, WPAs) exist and, to varying degrees, reflect the values embedded in those larger structures. Thus, in studying the ways we asked students to read, we also were querying the degrees to which we were (and are) perpetuating larger values. Connections between the act of reading and the settings where reading takes place have been explored by others in composition, of course: Mariolina Salvatori has investigated the issues surrounding reading and exigency most extensively and engagingly in articles like “Conversations with Texts” and “Reading Difficulties”; Kathleen McCormick’s *The Culture of Reading and the Teaching of English* also takes up questions related to reading and context in the college English classroom. There is work on the relationship between instructors’ reading of students’ work and context (for example, Richard Straub’s *Twelve Readers Reading*, Brian Huot’s *(Re)Assessing Writing* and Kathleen Blake Yancey’s *Reflection in the Writing Classroom*, as well as studies of teachers’ comments like Smith’s and even Connors and Lunsford’s).

Studies that focus on contexts that *instructors* create for students’ reading, though, are few and far between. Thus, at the same time as instructors ask for more explicit guidance with reading pedagogy, that pedagogy is rarely included in composition research, graduate composition courses, or first-year writing program development materials. In a recent article on the role of reading in composition pedagogy, Patricia Harkin begins by quoting Gary Ettari and Heather C. Easterling, editors of a special issue of *Reader*, who noted that “even though reading is ‘one of the central activities’ of English studies, their graduate preparation has omitted explicit discussion of ‘making sense [...] of what happens when we read’” (410). This omission points to the inattention in composition graduate programs to reading pioneers like Louise Rosenblatt, Wolfgang Iser, or even David Bleich’s reader response work; yet the influence of these theorists’ ideas has surely left a largely unexamined (and sometimes unacknowledged) mark on composition pedagogy. Even a recent collection focused on the composition practicum includes little about helping new instructors develop reading pedagogies for first-year writing (as a lone example, see Guerra and Bawarshi). Ironically, in fact, the majority of work focused on attempting to articulate various strategies for active, engaged reading is found in the prefaces and supporting material within composition readers (a few examples are Blau and Burak, Bartholomae and Petrosky, Trimbur, Carter and Gradin, Ballenger and Payne).¹

READING AND READERS’ ROLES: PARADOXICAL DEFINITIONS

While reading pedagogy within the composition literature is not particularly well-developed, “critical reading” is one of the primary headings of the

WPA Outcomes Statement. In the Outcomes Statement, as in other pedagogical materials that focus on reading, reading as an activity and the roles that readers play within that activity are conflated, perhaps because cleaving the roles that individuals play to achieve an outcome from the outcome itself seems unnecessarily artificial. The act of reading, for instance, is referenced [along with writing] as a tool for “inquiry, learning, thinking, and communicating; the outcome for “Critical Thinking, Reading, and Writing” references the roles that students should play as readers when it notes that “by the end of first year composition,” critical readers should “integrate their own ideas with those of others” (OS).

Within our own program outcomes, too, reading and students’ roles as readers are blended. Our outcomes statement uses the WPA statement as a foundation but also adds to it, noting that successful students should:

- Use writing and discussion to work through and interpret complex ideas from readings and other texts (reading and roles)
- Critically analyze their own and others’ choices regarding language and form (roles)
- Engage in multiple modes of inquiry using text (reading)
- Consider and express the relationship to of their own ideas to the ideas of others (roles)

These outcomes are supported by and reflected in references to reading in our general curriculum guide, which also blends activity and roles. For instance, the guide notes that “every activity [in your class] should help students move toward entering into a dialogue with the reading/s in their writing.... Remind students that in their writing, they need to incorporate reading/s that help readers [of their essays] to understand how they see what they see in the reading—this means *using evidence*, and *explaining what the evidence they have used demonstrates*” (CG, emphasis in original). As in the OS, then, “good reading” is evidenced by a dialogue between the writer’s ideas and those in the text she is using, as well as an understanding, demonstrated through writing, of the conventions of source use—from interpretation to citational practices.

These pedagogical guidelines draw upon conceptions of reading and readers’ roles that are foundational in composition studies, especially the idea that to produce a successful reading, readers must engage in a dialogue between genre conventions and their ideas (see, for instance, Bahktin; Miller; Bazerman; Freedman and Medway; Bawarshi).

In addition to engaging with these forms, though, our programmatic outcomes also involve engaging in reflexive analysis of the reading act and situating it within the ideologies and values of the contexts where that read-

ing is being performed—the specific class; the First-Year Writing Program; our university as an entity; the academy as an institution. These contexts are analogous to the “sponsors of literacy” identified by Deborah Brandt, “agents ... who enable, support, teach, model, as well as recruit, regulate, suppress, or withhold literacy—and gain advantage by it in some way” (166). Just as sponsors shape what is considered to be acceptable and/or appropriate, so classroom contexts reflect particular notions of “good reading.” As James Gee has argued, there is always “a way (or *the* way) of reading a text,” and that way “is *only* acquired ... by one’s being embedded (or apprenticed) as a member of a social practice wherein people not only read texts of this type in this way, but also talk about such texts in certain ways, hold certain attitudes and values about them, and socially interact over them in certain ways” (39-41). Good reading involves at least an awareness that interacting with and interpreting text is not neutral, that it is always “sponsored.” But this definition also suggests that readers must play an active role in “good reading.” Ideally, they will analyze the ideals and values associated with the “sponsoring” situation at the same time as they consider how their own contexts and experiences affect their interpretations of the texts being read. This conception of “good reading” is repeated in some first-year writing materials, as well, where readers are framed as active participants in the reading process (e.g., Bartholomae and Petrosky; Ballenger and Payne; Maasik and Solomon; Chiseri-Strater and Sunstein; Gradin and Carter). Kathleen McCormick also notes that “most researchers ... from a variety of disciplines and perspectives—[regard reading] as a complex, active process” (3).

But at the same time that programs like ours strive to create an active reader and include “activity” in our definitions of a “good reader,” public representations construe writers as almost entirely passive. Concurrently, the concept of the passive reader is pervasive in mainstream culture (e.g., Salvatori, McCormick). Consider, for example, the 2004 NEA report *Reading at Risk*, which contends that book reading has dropped off among American adult readers, literary reading even more quickly. In 1992, according to the report, 53.3 percent of readers between 18 and 24 said they engaged in literary reading; by 2002 42.8 percent of the readers surveyed in that age demographic said that they did (x-xi). According to NEA Chair Dana Gioia, rather than read books, readers are interacting with texts that are removing them from the reading process:

Reading a book requires a degree of active attention and engagement. Indeed, reading itself is a progressive skill that depends on years of education and practice. By contrast, electronic media such as television, recordings, and radio make

fewer demands on their audiences, and indeed require no more than passive participation. Even interactive electronic media, such as video games and the Internet, foster shorter attention spans and accelerated gratification. (7)

Representations like the one in the report, which reflect a dominant conception of readers (and students) that is prevalent among discussions of “what students are like,” perpetuate a longstanding narrative about students that continues to circulate through reports like this one, as well as mainstream media stories about “why Johnny can’t read.” Like all frames, though, they exclude other narratives and interpretations (e.g., students are interacting with alternative texts and new media [see Gee, “Video”; also Yancey]). Even more disturbing for our immediate purposes, though, they invariably reflect and contribute to what Sheridan Blau calls “the culture of interpretive dependence,” the assumption by teachers that their role is to tell students what reading is about—and the concomitant assumption by students that their role is to be *told* what reading is about (20-24).

Perhaps most troubling, these are also the representations of readers that many first-year writing instructors expect students in first-year writing classes to play (perhaps because they themselves have occupied those roles). For example—and despite the careful work that we do with reading in our own composition practicum before the semester begins—we have seen many new graduate instructors fall back into a way of teaching that constructs students as passive readers. One example of many will illustrate: last semester, a very smart and promising instructor asked Linda to observe how involved students were in class discussion because he was worried that they were not particularly engaged. During her visit to the class, it quickly became clear that this was because he was doing the work of the reading for them—asking questions to which he knew the answer, telling students what readings were about, and elaborating on their responses when they did speak. Examples like this, coupled with documents like the NEA report, point to the critical need for composition instructors to carefully define how we want students to be as readers, and *why*, within the framework of reading and writing in our classes, programs, and profession, participating in these ways is important for them as readers and writers. Leaving this work undone, undefined, unstated leaves yet another gap into which others can come and say, “here’s how you should do your work.”

To begin addressing the need for more theorized reading pedagogy in the context of first-year writing programs, we have used our own program to explore three issues that seem critical: how “reading” and “readers’ roles” have been articulated; how reading practices are enacted in particular ways; and how metaphors of “performance” and “genre”—both of which are fre-

quently invoked in references to *writing* practices—can be useful for framing reading practices and processes in the composition class.

READING IN FIRST-YEAR WRITING

We have been concerned about these twin issues of defining (viable) reading pedagogies and contributing to public discussions about readers' roles for several years. To address them we have collected artifacts from our first-year writing program (writing heuristics, research guides, assignment sheets) and conducted teaching observations with an eye towards how reading is enacted in our program. We've continually asked the question: "When we ask students to read, what are we *really* asking them to do?"

It's important to note here that we have not asked *how* students read—that is, we are not asking how students interpret or use readings. Rather, we are interested in how "directions" for reading attempt to shape the roles that students play in reading and what ideological implications accompany those attempts.

When we turned our attention to these questions, we discovered a potential discrepancy that gave us much cause for concern. We did not want readers at our institution to be represented as passive; we did want to articulate a reading pedagogy that was both grounded in best practices in the field and pedagogically defensible within our own institution. However, in hearing about and looking at specific classroom-based materials, it was evident that the larger programmatic goals were not yet reflected in them. Instructors wanted students to read for particular purposes, although they could not always identify those purposes. Reading heuristics—reading questions, prereading prompts, or class activities—often reflected other purposes. Perhaps students didn't always read the texts in the ways instructors expected them to; sometimes this resulted in frustrated students and flummoxed instructors.

At the same time, there were patterns within these pedagogical materials that led us to outline three relatively clear purposes for reading within the program. *Content-based* reading, the kind of reading with which students are most familiar, asks students to summarize and interpret, to consider connections between ideas, and to use reading to develop ideas. *Process-based* reading focuses on the work of the writer/researcher, scrutinizing the text to look at the decisions made by the writer in the process of textual production as a possible model for students' own writing/research work. *Structure-based* reading asks students to focus on the conventions reflected in and used to shape content; the emphasis is on developing genre awareness so that student writers can make conscious decisions about how to use

different genres and conventions, and can make conscious choices about how, when, or whether to use them. (For a more elaborated description of each of these approaches see Adler-Kassner and Estrem, “View”; for more on the connection between these approaches and overall program outcomes see Adler-Kassner and Estrem, “Reaching Out”). Identifying these reading approaches has provided an extraordinarily productive strategy for talking about reading with writing program instructors. Although we (and they) stress that these reading purposes are rarely as discrete as they are when described separately as we have done here, these descriptions allow us to consider (in our own teaching and our work with instructors) what each cultivates (and does not), what is privileged (and not privileged) in each, and how we can use each individually or in concert with another to emphasize different aspects of reading work. However, in taking an additional step back and examining these approaches to reading, we have realized that we also incorporate a fourth approach that we will describe below.

CHALLENGING PURPOSES

Extending from the three reading purposes above to consider notions of sponsorship surrounding them is also a crucial step in challenging the received ideas about reading that often accompany instructors into the classroom. These ideas range from the role of the teacher (like the expectation that they will be teaching literary analysis, as in the quote that opened this essay) to the roles that readers (students) will play (like the passive reader described in the NEA report). Situating the challenge in the idea of sponsorship is particularly important as well, because it raises composition’s frequently-repeated goal of finding a “third space” that can balance the perpetual tension between “inventing the university”—cultivating students’ acumen with conventions associated with academic genres while incorporating their ideas into them—and the desire to challenge the ideologies that are maintained by those genres at the same time (Bartholomae; also see Spellmeyer; Bizzell; Royster; Barwashi). For this purpose, three conceptions of language running through 19th and 20th century linguistics outlined by William Hanks in his book, *Language and Communicative Practices*, are particularly useful because they contribute to a framework that can help elucidate the connections between these reading approaches and their sponsoring contexts by focusing on the relationships among language, readers, and texts in each approach.²

The first conception of language outlined by Hanks is “irreducibility,” the set of theories that position language as a system, “a [self-contained] structure and evolution [that] cannot be explained by appeals to nonlin-

guistic behavior, to emotion, desire, psychology, rationality, strategy, social structure, or indeed any other phenomenon outside of the linguistic fact itself” (6). Elements of irreducibility are present in content, process, and structure-based reading; however, they are especially strong in structure-based reading because of its strong focus on the analysis of genre conventions. Given the relatively rigid nature of irreducible conceptions of language—there is little room here for the presence of a reader, much less experiences and/or ideologies brought by readers to their work—a writing program that privileges the kind of challenge outlined above would likely be best advised to incorporate reading purposes that reflect this conception of language judiciously.

Hanks next discusses “relationality,” theories that posit that language and meaning are grounded in specific circumstances—“not what could be said under all imaginable conditions but what is said under given ones...” (Hanks 7-8). With their privileging of the listener/reader/interpreter, relational approaches stand in almost diametrical opposition to irreducible approaches to language. Content-based readings that privilege the reader’s interpretation, for example (like reader-response criticism in literary theory), reflect these same conceptualizations of language. Unlike reading approaches that reflect irreducible approaches to language, relational ones provide comfortable accommodations for the reader’s ideas, experiences, and can thus help students find their ways into reading. However, incorporated too liberally, they also may communicate misleading ideas about the degree of flexibility for textual interpretation in the academy. Not *all* readings are tolerated, or even welcomed (see, for example, Miller “Fault Lines”; also Blau). Thus, again, a writing program that wants to help students balance their own ideas and an awareness that *all* communication takes place within genre, and all genres are bounded by conventions (Bawarshi) would be wise to consider how, strategically, to use such approaches.

The final conception of language outlined by Hanks is “practice-based.” This idea acknowledges that language is a system that contains and generates meaning, while at the same time users employ that system based upon their understandings of the contexts where it is used. In this sense, then, “practice” brings together the sense of language *as* a system while at the same time reflecting the user’s circumstances and her understanding of those circumstances as it is filtered through her ideologies and values. A practice based approach to *reading* would occur concurrently with content-, process-, or structure-based reading, and provides an important counter to the caveats to each described above—In essence, then, this process-based reading might provide a third space through which to balance the tension described earlier. In practice-based reading, readers think carefully about

the elements of sponsorship associated with their reading. Where do they read? How do they do it? What captures and does not capture her or his attention? What structures, genres, and/or ideas are privileged here, and why are they privileged? How have the reader's experiences contributed to her or his interaction with these practices? How are these interactions with, and genres of, reading received by outside audiences, and why? This kind of reflexive reading can help readers begin to articulate their own reading processes, become attuned to areas where successful reading practices can be emulated and less successful ones improved, and consider the consequences of engaging in various genres of reading in various contexts. Practice-based reading will also help readers navigate between what Sheridan Blau has identified as two "common and closely related misperceptions" about reading: "the widely held idea that there is only one authoritative and best interpretation for ... texts" implied in the idea of irreducibility, and "the opposite belief, which many students and some respected scholars think to be the logical alternative to the first position ... , that there is no single or authoritative interpretation for a literary text, ... [that] any and all interpretations have equal authority" implied in relationality (60). As Blau argues, both are myths—the boundaries around "acceptable" and "unacceptable" interpretations involve a performance that integrates one's own interpretation and acknowledgement of the dominant interpretation, with a heavy dose of audience awareness thrown in.

RECLAIMING READING: FRAMES FOR READING AND READERS

Practice-based reading requires the reader to take an active role in analyzing both the context for her reading and the activity itself. In the process, practice-based reading also involves readers in reclaiming the act of reading and taking a step toward changing the conception of (student) readers as passive and disengaged. Practice-based reading makes clear that reading, like writing, is what Tom Newkirk has called a performance; like writing, it is shaped by and contributes to a particular kind of self-representation. The first-year course, Newkirk asserts, should be a site "big enough for a diversity" of these forms (107).

But when it comes to reading, as Blau and others have demonstrated, the range of *possible* and *acceptable* roles available for students are generally more circumscribed than the possibilities for writing outlined in Newkirk's work. Thus, it is important to disentangle the complicated layers of reading expectations, cultural definitions of reading, student practices of reading, and the pedagogical imperatives surrounding reading in the writing classroom in order to examine and cultivate kinds of reading that we *want*

students to perform. For some readers, the idea of asserting this much “control” over a role might seem shockingly teacher-directed—after all, don’t we want students to develop their own strategies, cultivate their own roles? Yes, but as the lenses adapted from Hanks’ work demonstrate, such relationally-informed performances have their limits. As with all of the reading approaches described above, this reading must take place within (and with full understanding of) conventions guiding the contexts in which they will interact as readers and writers. Just as “experienced writers understand that writing usually involves an element of role playing” (Clark), when readers develop strategies for inhabiting a variety of active roles, they are more comfortable moving among the various contexts for reading that they encounter.

RETHINKING READING

Articulating the kinds of reading that are enacted in classrooms and the roles that readers are expected to perform within them can open important conversations that enable instructors (and/or programs) to more productively approach reading. At the most basic level, it can help instructors develop their pedagogies for reading in first-year writing. For instance, if an instructor intends to use a reading to discuss possible research processes, it is important for that instructor to develop process-based reading questions, rather than content or genre/structure-based ones, to support that use of reading. Equally important, though, it can also open an ongoing discussion about what kinds of sponsorships classes and/or writing programs represent, what roles they ask students to play, and how those roles reflect (or reject) broader frames around writing and students.

Of course, this approach to thinking about reading is, to some extent, prescriptive—after all, we are outlining distinct ways of reading that impose constraints on the possible range of interpretations that students are permitted. But just as Richard Straub argued that all instructor comments, even “non-directive” ones are really directive (and that it was more honest to not hide behind “suggestions” when those suggestions were invocations) (244-46), we would argue that the same holds true for reading. Reading theorists from Stanley Fish to Sheridan Blau have demonstrated that readers never interpret texts outside of communities (Fish) or cultures (Blau), and that those communities and cultures have vested interests in putting some boundaries around the range of possible interpretations. As Blau has put it, “our practice [of interpretation] is, in fact, governed by established disciplinary procedures that provide standards for distinguishing between valid and invalid interpretive claims” (75).

Of course, the question of what the delineation of reading practices outlined here leaves out remains. For some readers—and for many instructors—reading, like writing, has a sense of mystery and magic. For some readers, something nearly unspeakable can happen during the reading process. The problem comes when instructors are unclear about what that sense of mystery and magic means, when they expect students to achieve it but are unable to identify its elements, when they forget that it comes as much from a synchronicity between a reader's values and her interpretation of a text as from the context where the reading is done. When instructors expect magic, they sometimes take for granted that reading is a complex interaction between reader, text, and context. Student readers, too, sometimes find that the very mysterious nature of what instructors “want” brings them to complete frustration. As Marguerite Helmers reminds us, teaching reading is teaching relationships between readers and texts and also teaching relationships between readers and the space where they encounter texts (23). Through acknowledging that there are, in fact, particular ways that readers approach texts, it might be possible to make these spaces less mysterious.

NOTES:

¹ There is considerably more literature concerning middle and secondary-level reading instruction pedagogy; many theorists (classroom-based teacher-researchers and otherwise) offer a wide variety of specific, useful reading strategies to engage students in comprehension, making inferences, constructing meaning from texts, connecting with literature and non-fiction texts, and so on (see Zirinsky and Rau; Beers; Wilhelm, Baker, and Dube; Burke). Secondary instructors can speak more clearly about the strategies upon which they draw; for instance, some local districts use texts like Keene and Zimmerman's *Mosaic of Thought* to make explicit what is so often hidden about reading instruction.

² Hanks' conceptualizations of language also can be placed alongside ideas about the relationships between readers and texts. Irreducibility, for instance, is paralleled by the idea of a self-defined text, where the reader's job is to understand the text in relation to itself. This relationship is encompassed in approaches where the meaning of the text is believed to be contained in the text, as in new criticism, but it also is reflected in structural or might “spatial” readings where the reader focuses only on “the compositional structure or the architectonics of a work” (Calinescu 27), as in early structuralist approaches literary analysis like those in the work of Roman Jakobson. Relationality is analogous to theories that presume that the reader's interpretation of text is constructed through filters that reflect her “personal circumstances” (ideologies, values, beliefs) at the time of her reading, but which cannot be extended to another time or reader (Hanks 21), as in reader response approaches where readers' interpretations are believed to be filtered through their individual experiences (e.g., Bleich, Fish). The language that is

used to express these interpretations, naturally, is also shaped by and contributes to shaping them. Such a reading is “temporal” – that is, it exists in a specific place in time and cannot be extended beyond that space (Calinescu, 21). Practically, finally, finds parallels in theories where texts are presumed to have stable meanings, but where the meanings are filtered by readers through lenses developed by her “broader values, beliefs, and (sometimes) self-legitimizing attitudes” (Hanks 230). More recent theories of reading and interpretation, like those of Guglielmo Cavallo and Roger Chartier and others studying the history of reading and reception, would fall nearer the “practice” end on both spectrums as they take into account both the circumstances in which reading occurred, and the generic conventions of the texts being read in their considerations of how reading was interpreted (see, for example, Cavallo and Chartier, 1-11). Theories of language and reader-text relationships fall at various points on this diagram, of course, depending on the degree to which they consider language a contained system, a socially structured artifact, or a combination of the two that is influenced by context and ideology; and the ways that they position the construction of ‘meaning’ in a text: as something readers discover within the text, as something constructed by readers through their own experiences, or as something that is formed through a combination of both and filtered through context and ideology.

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Memoranda of Fragile Machinery: A Portrait of Shaughnessy as Intellectual-Bureaucrat

Mark McBeth

This is not an interesting memo—but it's important. In fact, if you don't read it, some part of the fragile machinery that moves us ... will probably break down.

— Mina Shaughnessy, Memorandum, December 17, 1971

By learning to look at the business of writing instruction from the administrator's view, it is possible that, in addition to finding ways both to rewrite the history of the discipline and to redefine the focus of classroom research, we might just uncover ways to materially change the working conditions of those who teach writing. Consider this, then, a thought experiment, an exercise in a different kind of boundary crossing, one that sets out to blur the distinctions between those who teach and those who manage.

— Richard Miller, "Intellectual Wasteland," (25)

Mina Shaughnessy's contributions during the initiation of Open Admissions at the City University of New York have been appraised time and time again, and one would think that the discussion of her legacy had been exhausted (if not exhausting). Perhaps because her field of study—the instruction of literacy—addresses one of the most politically charged issues in education, the richness of her work continues to provide a wide-ranging field of discourse in composition studies. When we remember Shaughnessy, we generally think of the dedicated instructor of Open Admissions students, who painstakingly analyzed their linguistic issues and so eloquently explained the writing problems they faced. Yet part of this recollection remains incomplete. In his biographical essay on Shaughnessy, Robert Lyons writes:

Shaughnessy was an administrator, moreover, as well as a teacher. As an administrator, too, she necessarily mediated between the program she ran, with its educational and social imperatives, and the college that, with some hesitation and discomfort, sponsored her program. (“Mina Shaughnessy” 175)

In discussing Shaughnessy’s role as administrator, Lyon suggests how the activities of writing program supervisors link with the “educational and social imperatives” with which they are faced. Although compositionists have often revisited her legacy, they do not thoroughly acknowledge her role as writing program administrator and, as a result, our representations of her remain historically blurred and biographically unfinished. In addition, an exploration of her role as WPA reshapes the critical positions of those ensuing critics who identified the less positive effects of her particular subjectivity to writing instruction. Ultimately, revisiting her work as a WPA recasts her portrait as a founder of composition studies, and reshapes her historical identity in composition.

Recently, scholars have begun to analyze critically the university role of the WPA. In “Composition as Management Science,” Marc Bousquet accuses that the “pronounced administrative character of rhet-comp” sustains an irresolvable power-laden condition because of the managerial dynamic set up between WPAs and the instructors of writing whose labor they oversee (*Tenured* 3). He regards the interaction between full-time writing administrators and part-time instructors as disreputable and yet, in defining it as so, he overlooks a crucial element of education—namely, programmatic organization. He writes, “[...] *academic managerialism is a relation between the managed and the managers that ensures the unhappiness of both groups* (5). In his managerial equation, Bousquet neglects the structures which allow teachers to teach and students to learn; in fact in his calculations, students don’t factor in at all. Justifiably, he reacts to the exploitation of untenured labor in the university, but offers on the other hand no pragmatic means to get the work between teachers and students in motion. If the pragmatics of programming are ignored, students cannot receive well-conceived teaching, tutoring, and advisement, while instructors cannot lead well-informed classrooms (as well as get paid in a timely fashion). If these supervised systems don’t exist, the writing program in the “managed university” undeniably and completely shuts down.

In contrast to Bousquet’s pessimistic view of the WPA, Richard Miller in *As If Learning Mattered* contends that the work of the compositionist does not begin in the classroom but in its preliminary construction. He writes:

[T]hose truly committed to increasing access to all the academy has to offer must assume a more central role in the bureaucratic management of the academy ... [I]t is at the microbureaucratic level of local praxis that one can begin to exercise a material influence not only on how students are represented or on which books will be a part of the required reading lists but also, and much more important, on which individuals are given a chance to become students and on whether the academy can be made to function as a responsive, hospitable environment for all who work within its confines. (46)

He underscores the importance of programmatic structures and how compositionists must understand them if those “responsive, hospitable environments” are in reality to materialize into successful instructional endeavors. Miller deems certain educational leaders as “intellectual-bureaucrats,” and his description aptly portrays Shaughnessy.

From 1991 to 2001 I too worked at the City College of New York as a writing program administrator and had access to the files and records of the composition program. These documents had accumulated (unattended and virtually forgotten) since the first days of the college’s Open Admissions when Shaughnessy directed. With Miller’s figure of the intellectual bureaucrat as a lens, I use these bureaucratic documents to recreate the portrait of Mina Shaughnessy, exploring how her role as writing program administrator converged with her scholarly and teaching work; she created not only a workable pedagogical scenario for students and teachers in her writing program, but also remains an exemplary figure for the aspiring contemporary WPA. She proved that one not need be solely a paper-pushing administrator, but that, in fact, the knowledge one gains from administrative work can also inform teacherly goals as well as scholarly research.

From her early administrative documents of Open Admissions, we can easily perceive how Shaughnessy intellectualized her bureaucratic position as well as how she smartly performed such administrative duties. In these bureaucratic positions Bousquet prudently warns that WPAs must realize that “having administrative power is to be subject to administrative imperatives—that is, to be individually powerless before a version of necessity originating from some other sources” (“Management Science” 23). Yet, although external forces of critics and university policy often combined to thwart her efforts, Shaughnessy seemed anything but “powerless” in her administrative position. Instead, she remained accountable because she consistently factored in the needs of students and teachers while acting as a buffer for them against the pressures of upper-level university administration. She found ways to make things work. In *The Politics of Remediation*,

Mary Soliday recommends that compositionists should take a more expansive view of curricular and classroom praxis “within the broader context of institutional policies and structural change” (102). Soliday also asserts that “Shaughnessy’s administrative legacy suggests to us now that reform does not consist exclusively of a critique of curriculum but of a struggle to improve the conditions for teaching and learning that shape the everyday experiences of both teachers and students” (104).

One rudimentary example of Shaughnessy’s administrative finesse is exemplified in an undated memo referenced as “Typewriting instruction for Pre-bac students” in which she proposed a summer typing course for students. Most of her students submitted handwritten documents because they had no access to a typewriter. She persuaded her dean that this course not only had functional value but also compositional value for students. She wrote:

Such a course would have a number of advantages: 1. It would provide much-needed exercise in pattern practice with English sentences. We could prepare exercise material that would drill the student in those grammatical constructions that give him trouble. We could also try to get at spelling problems. 2. It would increase the student’s self-editing ability. Students catch many of their own errors when their handwritten themes are returned to them in typewritten form. 3. Typing skill is of great value in all academic courses, and, of course, it is also a marketable skill. (“Typewriting”)

Shaughnessy promotes this un-academic course by promoting its multiple uses for students: grammatical practice, editing exercises, and a marketable skill. Her postscript to the memo offers the most ingenious of suggestions. She writes, “We could also get fifty typewriters (portables) and then give them to the qualifying students at the end of the course. That would solve the storage problem!” (“Typewriting”)¹ Marilyn Maiz, Shaughnessy’s administrative assistant, recalls Shaughnessy’s craftiness stating that, “She would decide that the program needed something, or that someone needed funds to attend a conference, or that something special had to be done for a student. At first, we would tell her she was crazy to think that an exception could be made or that it could be done at all, but then before we knew it, Mina had gotten precisely what she wanted” (Maher 115).

In contrast to Bousquet’s vision of WPAs as “managerial service” (*Tenured* 5), Shaughnessy assumed the role of “middle management” because she knew it would allow teaching and learning to occur even under the duress of administrative mayhem. In fact, in a personal interview, Marilyn Maiz

states that “administration wasn’t the thing she was vitally interested in but she felt it was very important For Mina, it was just a very human thing. It wasn’t like administration was separate from these other things [teaching, scholarship, classrooms]. It was just all part of the package.” The Shaughnessy bureaucratic package exemplifies another more optimistic possibility—providing a platform from which we can strategically view and perceptively assess the role of the writing program administrator.

FINESSING DURESS: SHAUGHNESSY NEGOTIATES A DIFFICULT POLITICAL CLIMATE

Shaughnessy began her administrative career at City College in September 1967 when she became the director of basic writing. She developed her writing initiatives within SEEK (acronym for Search for Education, Elevation and Knowledge), a New York statewide program which introduced racially diverse and financially disadvantaged students into the university system. As an unforeseen pilot project to Open Admissions which would begin three years later, SEEK gave an early barometric reading of the campus-wide attitudes which would pressurize as the population of non-traditional students grew. During Shaughnessy’s administration, some faculty claimed that SEEK reduced the academic standards of the college while, on the other hand, other faculty and staff backed Shaughnessy’s efforts, recognizing them as a form of educational activism. Underlying her initiatives were political issues of race, class, and repression and, consequently, societal unease often hysterically entangled with anxieties about academic excellence and tradition. Shaughnessy devised educational opportunities for this new student body, and ignited fervor on both sides of the debate. She started critical firestorms among resistant faculty while lighting a friendly pedagogical flame under sympathetic advocates.

In *Working Through*, an account of the advent of Open Admissions, Leonard Kriegel wrote:

The SEEK teaching staff was directed by a woman [Shaughnessy] who had joined the department that September [1967]. She was one of the few people I had ever met who had actually thought about the problems involved in teaching essentially noncommunicative students how to write ... She had a single thought in mind: to educate.... Her sense of what was real kept her sane and made her an effective teacher and administrator. While some of the teachers in the program discussed who was and who was not a racist, she moved quietly through

the immediacies of City College. She was able to drive herself with incredible diligence, and she shamed others into making the effort their students required of them. (172)

Kriegel's portrait of Shaughnessy points to her leadership abilities: she focused on measures to enfranchise these "noncommunicative students," while avoiding accusations and stone-throwing which could sidetrack her primary goal—to promote the teaching of writing. In this administrative role, she certainly was not blasé about the political issues associated with her students but, conscientiously concentrated her efforts on improving the pedagogical possibilities in which their language skills could excel—so that in the end they could speak (and write) for themselves more effectively.

Throughout the '90s, Shaughnessy's scholarship came under renewed scrutiny. Critics have argued that Shaughnessy's accommodationist approaches essentialized and depoliticized students' linguistic conflicts; however, these critics ignore the influence of her administrative position upon her pedagogical policy decisions. In a series of articles and a subsequent book, *Representing the "Other,"* Min-Zhan Lu and Bruce Horner reevaluate basic writing tenets and how Shaughnessy's work has been integrated into the teaching of writing. They offer sound critique when they suggest that we avoid considering Shaughnessy's work as the final word instead of relying on it as advice that may be adapted to the needs of particular students in idiosyncratic political contexts. They worry that taken at absolute face value Shaughnessy's work can prevent us from seeing "the social struggle and change involved in the teaching and learning of basic writing in ways that risk perpetuating [basic writers'] marginal position in higher education (xiv).

One point that Lu and Horner seem to overlook however is the specific social and historical contexts in which Shaughnessy was administering her programs. They stress the "historical role of basic writing as the only space in English which seriously investigates the challenges of students whose writing is explicitly marked as 'not belonging' to the academy," yet fail to recognize the historical and social role which writing program administration assumed at this particular moment. It equally did not belong to the academy. Paradoxically, throughout their critical work on Shaughnessy, Lu and Horner address the "silences about the concrete material, political, institutional, social, and historical realities confronting basic writing," yet *they* remain silent about the bureaucratic conditions under which her decisions were being made, thus underestimating the material, political, institutional, social, and historical quandaries confronting Shaughnessy as WPA. In the context of the *realpolitick* of writing administration, if Shaughnessy

was an accommodationist, it was because she was *accommodating* the possibilities of classroom teaching and the potential of student progress.

Ignoring the historical and political context she faced as writing program administrator, they fail to identify how those factors affected Shaughnessy's administrative decision-making. Contextually, she was not making her policy decisions in a political vacuum but making strategic determinations based upon the concerns and, perhaps misperceived values, of the most vocal critics around her. On the very first page of *Errors and Expectations*, Shaughnessy stated succinctly the problem of Open Admission colleges, "For such colleges, this venture into mass education usually began abruptly, amidst the misgivings of administrators, who had to guess in the dark about the sorts of programs they ought to plan for the students they had never met, and the reluctancies of teachers, some of whom had already decided that the new students were ineducable" (1). Strangely instead of foregrounding the contents of the book in her introduction (as most authors would), Shaughnessy used it purposefully to politicize her research. She wrote:

Why some will ask, do English teachers need to be told so much about errors? Isn't their concern with error already a kind of malignancy? Ought we not to dwell instead upon the options writers have rather than the constraints they must work under if they are to be read without prejudice?

There is a short answer to these questions—namely that the proportion of time I spend analyzing errors does not reflect the proportion of time a teacher should spend teaching students how to avoid them. But since teachers' preconceptions about errors are frequently at the center of their misconceptions about BW students, I have no choice but to dwell on errors. (6)

Her rhetorical tactics, although concerned with student writing, were geared more to the teaching problems of faculty—particularly Basic Writing antagonists whose obsessions with error subsumed more important issues of student writing. Shaughnessy did not want "to other" basic writing students, but hoped to reduce error-anxiety among their instructors who could then focus instead on students' critical meaning-making and composing processes.

From the perspective of bureaucratic intellectualism, *Errors and Expectations* is less a how-to manual for writing pedagogy, and more a means of administering public opinion and policy making. In her final paragraphs of the book, she writes:

Colleges must be prepared to make more than a graceless and begrudging accommodation to [students'] unpreparadness, opening their doors with one hand and then leading students into an endless corridor of remedial anterooms with the other. We already begin to see that the remedial model, which isolates the student and the skill from real college contexts, imposes a "fix-it station" tempo and mentality upon both teachers and students. And despite the fine quality of many of the programs that have evolved from this model, it now appears that they have been stretched more tautly than is necessary between the need to make haste and the need to teach the ABC's of writing in adult ways. We cannot know how many students of talent have left our programs not for want of ability but for the sense they had of being done in by short-cuts and misperceptions of educational efficiency. (293)

While never straying too far from the subject of teaching, this statement underscores administrative issues—programmatic systems, curricular approaches, and retention. Shaughnessy warns that approaching writing programming unintellectually may undermine the talents and achievements of students as well as defeat the purpose of university education.

THE CONTINUING RESONANCE OF SHAUGHNESSY'S CHALLENGES

One of the greatest challenges Shaughnessy faced was the huge numbers of incoming freshman as at the advent of Open Admissions. In *The Death of the American University*, L. G. Heller gave a carefully worded but clearly negative critique of Open Admissions. Commenting upon the extraordinary influx of students at City College and the "significant shifts that [took] place in the personnel distribution at City College of New York" (193), he wrote:

There [at City College], one hundred and five sections of remedial English had to be planned for the winter semester of 1971. When the director of the remedial English program failed to appear at one meeting of the Curriculum and Teaching Committee, the dean of the college commented, "Mina's in a state of shock. She just saw the figures on the number of remedial students we'll be getting." (194)

Under the opposition she was receiving about her relatively small body of SEEK students, imagine her administrative conundrum when she faced an increase of seven and a half times more students within one semester: there just plainly were not enough English faculty to teach these novice

scholars. Could she find the warm teaching bodies who would be likewise prepared with an innovative instructional spirit and open-minded patience with these students' challenges? I imagine Shaughnessy sitting at her desk, report in hand, dumbstruck at the daunting task she faced: there were classrooms to be arranged, faculty to be hired and trained, colleagues to be sought for help in faculty development, and new funding to be found and appropriately allocated. Placed as "executor of policies" in this administrative scenario (See Bousquet 5), Shaughnessy *managed* to create an administrative system that could support the roles of teachers and students, and potentially ensure the feeling of reward for both groups.

Shaughnessy provided a simply stated—not simplistically applied—framework for setting up a writing program: (1) be prepared to work harder than you've ever worked, (2) develop a camaraderie among the writing staff, providing enough meeting for discussion and intercollegiality, (3) recruit from senior faculty for their experience, knowledge, and influence, and (4) make it look like you're having fun (Maher 96). Much of the behind-the-scenes work that Shaughnessy did however seemed anything but the common definition of fun. As she set up the early pre-baccalaureate program, she was coordinating registration, supervising placement of students, implementing tutoring, and troubleshooting the major problems of the program. Her memorandum to her Chair Ed Volpe offers an insight to Shaughnessy's acute understanding of classroom minutiae and how those inner workings impact the success of the her staff. She wrote her then Chair, Ed Volpe:

I have the sense that the English part of the Pre-bac program is finally underway. I won't bother you with all the crimps and clanks and near-breakdowns in the machinery of registration. The right students now seem to be meeting the right teachers in the right classrooms, and for that I am grateful—and a bit surprised. (Sept. 22, 1967; Maher 92)

The strategic organization of many of her memoranda and her mechanistic rhetoric alludes to how composition instructors and policy-makers must understand the very nuts and bolts of bureaucratic systems if they are to teach and administer well.

Later in this memorandum, Shaughnessy also addressed the way her program was being poorly supported because the college would not allot it the campus space it required. She protested:

... I must again bring up the subject of office space. Everyone is aware of the space problem; the disgruntlement rises more directly from the fact that every teacher in the regular English program has some kind of office space whereas not

one teacher in the Pre-bac program has any office space. The counseling time that is worked into the teachers' schedules is not an adequate substitute [for students to find their instructors]: no one can reach the teachers by telephone except in the evenings, and the teachers, in turn, run up their telephone bills at home; they have no place to "land" when they get to campus; they cannot meet students requests for appointments; and most important, their contention that they are invisible is seriously reinforcing the failure of anyone to allot them space. Is there nothing we can do and no one we can bother about this? (Sept. 22, 1967)

Shaughnessy's complaints to her chair not only called attention to the inconveniences that her staff and students endured because of the lack of office space, but also what that lack of institutional placement symbolized. Although on the administrative surface this memorandum merely reports the daily "crimps and clanks and near-breakdowns," it also draws attention to Shaughnessy's concern with the logistics of registration, orientation, and office space. These often overlooked details gained symbolic significance to Shaughnessy because she knew that without her insistence to such dotted-Is and crossed-Ts, her Basic Writing program would neither gain the institutional recognition nor respect it deserved. If students were alternatively placed randomly, or colleagues misinformed about the program's activities, or her staff forever forced to be a rogue band of wandering writing instructors, she would not have only near-breakdowns but absolute standstills.

I think it is important to note at this point the rhetorical elegance of her memoranda; Shaughnessy never takes for granted the power of words. In all of her bureaucratic documents, she shapes language into a rhetoric of charisma and charm. Her rhetorical *je-ne-sais-quoi* cannot be underestimated in the time in which she wrote them. Her fashioning of bureaucratic documents offered her colleagues moments of comic relief in beleaguered times; rather than filling mailboxes with the doldrums of administrative tedium, she sent messages that would make people smile—even if they didn't like the message. Yet, her quick wits could also be aserbic. Once a fellow faculty member waved a grammar mistake in her face that she had left (intentionally) in a student essay question and accused her of not knowing correct English. "Why do you do things like this?" he huffed. "To catch pedants like you," she retorted (Personal interview, Marilyn Maiz). If her rhetorical abilities could be used to boost the morale of her supportive staff, it could likewise be used to put the ill-collegial in their place.

TOIL & TROUBLE: ADMINISTRATION AS SCHOLARSHIP

As aforementioned, by the seventies, the context of her program had changed. The takeover of the City College campus by students had taken place, and the college leadership with very little planning or forethought had conceded to enroll any student with a New York City high school diploma. In an October 18, 1971 memo to teachers of Basic Writing, Shaughnessy advised her staff of the ways that they could manage the increasing number of students entering their program. With the overwhelming arrival of so many students, she sought means of maintaining the interpersonal connections with students as well as sustaining the morale of her staff. She wrote:

There was a time when to many of us the SEEK English program seemed to have reached its optimal size when the number of sections grew to 20. We worried about the depersonalizing of the program, about a loss of touch with what was going on in other teachers' classes and what was happening to individual students. There was a time, for example, when teachers met to discuss every one of their students with the rest of the staff because the students were known individually by most teachers. [...] The problem of how, in the face of this vastness, to keep knowing what is going on among us now becomes critical. The planning staff for the Basic Writing program meets every week to consider ways of staying human. The orientation sessions, the "pairing" arrangement with old and new teachers, and our staff meetings are all parts of that struggle.

To sustain her teaching staff's pedagogical vigilance and morale, Shaughnessy devised various methods to draw upon her instructors' insights. During the semester, she distributed a memo to teachers and requested that they fill out a somewhat perfunctory mid-term report about each of their students. She stated this evaluative mid-term report would "enable us to see some things more quickly and accurately" by offering "a sense of who the student is and how you think his experience in your class is affecting him" (October 18, 1971) (See Addendum 1). She also added that at the end of the semester the students be given the same questionnaire as an exercise in self-reflection and feedback. The assessment form rated each student's control of various grammatical tasks as well as their literacy aptitudes with certain reading habits, writing forms, and classroom participation. She then asked each instructor to conclude with a comment on the student's overall performance.

As a means of student evaluation this form is questionable but, remarkably, the administrative form could have become a structural outline for *Errors and Expectations*. Through her administrative actions—whether consciously or not—Shaughnessy was collecting the research data for her book. The type of bureaucratic work she implemented—considered drudgery by most—became an integral resource for her scholarship. She had already started accumulating 4000 student sample tests from which she drew her scholarship, but these administrative documents would complement the thinking that emerged from the pages of those blue test booklets. One year after this memo's distribution, Shaughnessy submitted her book proposal and requested release time but, obviously her bureaucratic toils were already contributing to her scholarly work.

In addition to this mid-term report about students, she also put into practice the teacher-course inventory that compiled information about teachers' approaches to the Basic Writing courses. Along with the help of an "inventory crew," each individual teacher would describe their classroom practice. She asked each teacher to write a brief statement about their course goals, to submit a sample syllabus, and to expect a visit from a crew of observers she had selected who would describe—not evaluate or criticize—their classroom strategies. As a group effort they would record "what their goals were, what topics they were covering, what types of writing and reading assignments they are giving, and what style of teaching they favor" (October 18, 1971). She rationalized to her staff that, "The thought is that once this information has been written down, we can use it as a reference among ourselves and even develop a kind of teacher-course description that would serve as a guide to students so that those who know that they learn best in a certain type of course can be more certain of getting into a section that's congenial them" (October 18, 1971).

Beyond a guide for students, Shaughnessy was also attempting an unimposing method for teachers to become more self-aware about their teaching habits and to create situations in which instructors could share their classroom experiences. Disseminating this type of information would assist those teachers and students to meet in classrooms that could be conducive to all parties. Furthermore, if the mid-term report helped identify the problems and challenges of writing students, the advice, ideas, and conundrums that teachers reported would inform the resolutions to these same student problems. This carefully conceived bureaucratic document offers a glimpse into how her position as intellectual bureaucrat would set in motion the thought-provoking impetus of *Errors & Expectations*.

Perhaps the most useful document about program implementation was the Mid-term Report on the Basic Writing Program that Shaughnessy

composed in the fall 1971. She layed out an extensive administrative outline of the program which included information and program rationale for enrollment, curriculum, testing (placement), staff, training and orientation, evaluation, innovations, and problems. In this administrative document, she formulated and combined the quantitative information and the qualitative descriptions to demonstrate how the writing program was constructed, had grown, and could be improved. She explained how she had scaffolded the course sequence and what each course attempted to resolve with basic writers. She identified the problems that students generally had going into each course, and what goals would allow them to develop into the subsequent course.

She concluded this mid-term report, addressing the problems posed by the increasingly unwieldy Basic Writing program: class loads jumping from 18 to 23 (sometimes 27 and over), inappropriate classroom assignments which did not suit the needs of a writing classrooms, and the lack of appropriate teacher training, especially in the realm of second-language teaching. Her main lament, however, was the need for research into the “fundamental skills we are teaching so that we do not keep insisting that the things students are having difficulty with are ‘simple’ when, in fact, they involve a number of highly complex operations...that can be clearly explained only after they have been clearly understood” (16) She wrote:

We need, and here I speak not simply of English teachers but most teachers at the college, a better sense of what we can expect of ourselves and our students in the remedial situation. The three levels of English, for example, represent three distinct levels of writing that can be found among our freshmen...Once the students begin to move within the sequence, however, the boundaries of the courses get blurred. A student who begins in English 1 and moves after two semesters to English 3, for example, is seldom at the same level of skill as the student initially placed in English 3. The gaps in preparation, in other words, are greater than the time we have to close them. What standard, then, are we to use in evaluating the student who has worked steadily from English 1 to English 3 and has shown significant improvement, who may even at times have produced writing that, in its quality of insight and imagination, is superior to that which more easily meets the traditional “standard.” Can we, in short, penalize the student who has kept his end of the bargain and who has succeeded in terms of his own base line? (Mid-term Report on the Basic Writing Report, 1971, 16)

In this programmatic progress report she questions established standards of university evaluations, especially in the composition classroom where students make uneven spurts of progress that are difficult to measure. Moreover, between the lines of her memorandum, I hear a constant “note-to-self” that Shaughnessy was making to herself about what would later be revealed in *Errors and Expectations*. Following up with a response to her own rhetorical question, she wrote:

The answer to this question, it seems to me, depends on what we expect remediation to do or be. If remediation is a program, rather than a process, then English 3 is the end of the line and the students who cannot deliver a sample of writing that meets the old standard is out. But if remediation is a process that continues far beyond the Basic Writing sequence and beyond the subject of writing and reading, then there is some justification in allowing a student to proceed in the curriculum, knowing that, with sweat, the gap between the absolute standard and his performance will narrow and finally close.
(17)

I continue with the conclusion (a peroration really) of this memorandum because I feel it not only speaks to the students of her Basic Writing program but to many of the urban public college students I have encountered and watched take ownership of their intellectual abilities. She concluded:

This is the way every SEEK student I know has grown—by plugging, by patiently re-making habits, returning again and again to fundamentals but expanding each time the area of mastery, by reaching plateaus that look like standstills and having setbacks that look like failures—but moving, always, in the direction of mastery until, finally, there is a sense of an undergirding and a feeling of control.

So confident am I of the capacity of poorly educated students to make this gain that I would not hesitate to guarantee such results if we could but suspend our institutional neurosis about standards long enough to meet these students in all courses where they are rather than where we think they ought to be and proceed to give them a good education.

Too many people at the College still view this as a collapse of standards. Too many are waiting for someone else to do the “dirty work” of remediation so that they can go on doing what they have always done. The curriculum still reinforces these

prejudices, with the result that too many students are learning the same lesson here that they learned in high school—namely, that bad luck is cumulative.

This remains the long-term problem with Open Admissions, and it is difficult to know what to do about it. (17-18)

Unfortunately, I'm not sure how much these attitudes about underprepared students, standards, and the "dirty work" of writing instruction and administration have changed. Assuredly, what can be recognized in these documents is the early germination of current composition concerns: Writing Across the Curriculum, outcomes assessment, and the methodologies of comp-rhet scholarship. In the primordial ooze of the composition field, Shaughnessy was forecasting a long evolution.

The administrative records and memoranda that were left behind from the Shaughnessy era at City College offer us an alternative view of her bequest to composition studies. They show the intersection between her academic life as a scholar, teacher, and administrator and, additionally, how those roles necessarily coexist and inform one other. When studying the pedagogical and bureaucratic paperwork that Shaughnessy sent into the educational arena as serious primary sources, we begin to see the role of intellectual bureaucrat as a potential site of reflective research. As we teach students, design curricula, administer programs, and create our scholarship, we should consider the Shaughnessy "intellicrat" model and how it could inspire our own institutional positions. Shaughnessy's WPA history demonstrates that one not need be solely the paper-pushing Bartleby the Compositionist, but that, in fact, the knowledge, ingenuity, and charm that one brings to administrative tasks complements our teacherly work as well as substantiates our scholarly endeavors. In other words, the oft-tedious bureaucratic labors we will inevitably face may not deter us from the publish-or-perish work we need to complete, but on the contrary, may lead us to it. Applying our scholarly scrutiny and creativity to the administrative positions we hold may prove to make the WPA's labors both more fruitful and possibly more rewarding (perhaps even pleasurable).

NOTES

¹ Imagine the current-day equivalent of this suggestion: Let's give fifty laptops to students who pass the keyboarding/internet course for free; there would be no worries about securely storing them.

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APPENDIX

Mid-Term Report
 Term Ending Jan. 1972

Instructor _____ Student _____
 Last name, first name, initial

Course: _____
 Number Section

Number of absences as of Nov. _____

Grade at mid-term _____ Course recommended for next term _____

Please indicate student's control of:

(Check One)

	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent
1. subject-verb agreement	_____	_____	_____	_____
2. verb forms	_____	_____	_____	_____
3. intra-sentence punctuation (commas, quotations, apostrophe, etc.)	_____	_____	_____	_____
4. inter-sentence punctuation (fragments, splice, comma faults)	_____	_____	_____	_____
5. pronoun reference & case	_____	_____	_____	_____
6. adjective & adverb forms	_____	_____	_____	_____
7. possessive forms of nouns and pronouns	_____	_____	_____	_____
8. spelling	_____	_____	_____	_____
9. syntax of simple sentence patterns	_____	_____	_____	_____
10. syntax of complex sentence patterns requiring variations in word order and subordinating constructions	_____	_____	_____	_____
11. idiom	_____	_____	_____	_____
12. description and narration	_____	_____	_____	_____
13. short expository essay	_____	_____	_____	_____
14. research & term paper	_____	_____	_____	_____
15. reading (fiction)	_____	_____	_____	_____
16. reading (non-fiction)	_____	_____	_____	_____
17. oral discussion	_____	_____	_____	_____
18. Are assignments up to date?	_____			
19. Is student showing improvement?	_____			
20. Is student keeping conference appointments?	_____			
21. Is student repeating the course?	_____			
22. Have you referred this student to the Writing Center?	_____			
23. If so, has he attended regularly?	_____			



Understanding ‘Transfer’ from FYC: Preliminary Results of a Longitudinal Study

Elizabeth Wardle

In *The End of Composition Studies*, David Smit summarizes what we know as a field about the transfer of writing-related skills from first-year composition (FYC) to other courses and contexts: very little. Smit’s primary criticism is of the dearth of systematic *research attention* paid to transfer from first-year writing courses; he makes a valid point. Although there have been a few theoretical discussions of writing transfer and FYC (Foertsch), writing centers (Hagemann), and advanced writing courses (Kain and Wardle), nearly all research studies of writing-related transfer are confined to the field of professional communication. Composition researchers have conducted only three case studies (McCarthy; Walvoord and McCarthy; Carroll) that discuss FYC writing-related transfer problems—and these were not studies initially or primarily interested in transfer.

While the goals for FYC are debated in our journals, the fact that nearly every student is required to take FYC suggests that administrators, policy makers, parents, and students expect the course to prepare students for the writing they will do later—in the university and even beyond it. Implicit in these expectations is the assumption that FYC should and will provide students with knowledge and skills that can transfer to writing tasks in other courses and contexts. Yet we have no evidence that FYC facilitates such transfer, as a number of composition scholars have pointed out for decades as they have critiqued FYC and even called for the abolition of FYC requirements (Brannon; Goggin; Kitzhaber; Russell; Petraglia). Moreover, if we extrapolate from transfer research in other fields—most notably educational psychology—we should not expect to find much evidence of transfer from FYC. “Overwhelmingly,” Smit concludes, “the evidence [from these other fields] suggests that learners do not necessarily trans-

fer the kinds of knowledge and skills they have learned previously to new tasks” (119).

Despite the lack of evidence for transfer from FYC (or most other educational experiences), numerous critiques of FYC, and a variety of suggested alternatives to FYC based on its supposed shortcomings, the course remains one of the few common general education requirements for nearly all students in all colleges and universities across the country. Because FYC continues to be required, the field of Rhetoric and Composition in general—and those of us working as writing program administrators in particular—would be irresponsible not to engage the issue of transfer¹. Not only must we acquaint ourselves with the rich theoretical discussions and research findings from other fields, we must conduct our own research on writing-related transfer from FYC.

In this paper I address the lack of engagement with the problem of transfer from FYC. I first take up the problem theoretically by defining “transfer” and discussing how we might study it. I then describe a longitudinal pilot study I have been conducting, and describe my initial findings as I followed seven of my former FYC students across their first two years of college. I conclude by identifying the types of learning transfer that the findings of my study suggest may—and may not—result from student participation in FYC.

DEFINING TRANSFER

Though how we define “transfer” will influence what we look for (and find) in any study of it, our field has spent little time defining the term. Most published work on transfer from rhetoric and composition either assumes a shared understanding of the term as the ability to carry and use knowledge from one situation to another (i.e., Foertsch) or implicitly describes transfer relative to other phenomena (such as development or expertise—e.g., Carter). Other disciplines, particularly psychology, have more directly engaged the notion of transfer, hotly debating the concept and whether the term “transfer” should be used at all. Various conceptions of transfer have emerged as a result.

In this section, I review three conceptions of transfer that focus on tasks, individuals, and activity respectively. While each perspective frames transfer differently, they are not mutually exclusive (Tuomi-Gröhn and Engeström 35).

1. *“Task” Conceptions*: These classical cognitive conceptions (e.g., Judd, Thorndike, Thorndike & Woodworth) theorize transfer as the transition of knowledge used in one task to solve another task.

Here, “training of basic mental functions [is] thought to have general effects that [will] transfer to new situations” (Tuomi-Gröhn and Engeström 19) and/or students can grasp general principles that, previously learned in Task A, are now required in Task B (20). The focus is on the task or tasks being performed.

2. *“Individual” Conceptions*: These views focus on the learner’s disposition to “seek out and create situations similar to those initially experienced” by teaching learners to be reflective (Tuomi-Gröhn and Engeström 24). Here, the focus is on an individual’s “disposition;” the goal of schooling, according to this view, is to teach students “learned intelligent behavior” that will help them seek out and/or create situations in which what they have learned will transfer (24). The focus and the responsibility for transfer, then, lie with the learner.
3. *“Context” Conceptions*: Many researchers have criticized cognitively-oriented views that focus on the task or individual learner for separating “cognition from social world ... form [from] content” (Lave 43). As a corrective, Tuomi-Gröhn and Engeström describe three context-focused conceptions of transfer—situated, sociocultural, and activity-based.
 - *Situated*: According to this conception, the basis of transfer is understood not as the redeployment of “knowledge from task to task but [as] patterns of participatory processes across situations” (Tuomi-Gröhn and Engeström 25). Participatory processes are supported by affordances directly perceived by the individual—a chair is seen as sit-on-able, for example (25). Researchers who advance this perspective suggest alternative terms for transfer, such as *productivity* (to refer to the generality of learning) (i.e., Hatano & Greeno) or *participation* (i.e., Lave & Wenger) (26).
 - *Sociocultural*: This perspective shifts the emphasis from individual learners to interactions between people “involved in the construction of tasks” (Tuomi-Gröhn and Engeström 27). Taking this view, King Beach argues that people generalize “across various forms of social organization” and that *generalization* is always in direct relationship to social organizations (Tuomi-Gröhn and Engeström 27). Generalization “is not located within the developing individual nor can it be reduced to changing social activities. Rather, it is located in the changing

relationship between persons and activities” (Tuomi-Gröhn and Engeström 27).

- *Activity-based*: Similar to sociocultural approaches, this perspective focuses more explicitly on interactions between individual learners and contexts but expands the basis of transfer from the actions of individuals to the systematic activity of collective organizations: “...the individual’s learning is understandable only if we understand the learning of the activity system” (30). Proponents of activity-based views discuss “transfer” as “*expansive learning*,” in which questioning existing practices plays a key role (30).

In fact, activity and sociocultural theorists avoid the term “transfer” because of its association with task- and individual-based conceptions. Beach suggests that previous notions of transfer describe “just plain learning,” which is difficult to isolate in studies and thus of little use to researchers even though we know such learning happens constantly, “moment by moment” (40). Instead, Beach calls our ability to use prior knowledge in new ways and in new situations “generalization.” Generalization includes classical interpretations of transfer—carrying and applying knowledge across tasks—but goes beyond them to examine individuals *and* their social organizations, the ways that individuals construct associations among social organizations, associations that can be continuous and constant or distinctive and contradictory (41). Generalization, according to Beach, happens through transition.

David Guile and Michael Young adopt this same language, arguing that we must “reformulate transfer as a process of transition between activity systems” (77). The learning of the activity system and the learning of an individual are intertwined, and the individual’s learning is understandable only if we understand the learning of the activity system (30). It is not the working of a problem by itself that causes people to become motivated to learn; rather, it is the nature of the activity system in which the problems and learners’ interpretations are embedded that makes the difference in whether people can generalize learning. Two key determinants influence these potentialities: first, “learners need to be supported to participate in an activity system that encourages collaboration, discussion, and some form of ‘risk taking.’ Second, learners need to have opportunities to share and be inspired by a common motive for undertaking a specific learning task” (Guile and Young 74).

Conceptualizations of transfer that focus on tasks or individuals and look for learned skills to be applied new settings view individuals as

being *in* situations. By contrast, the sociocultural approach derived from “[a]ctivity theory offers a more dynamic approach both by seeing context as an activity involving both contextualizing and recontextualising [sic] processes and by refusing to separate the individual from the context in the first place” (Guile and Young 73).

STUDYING “TRANSFER”

These various conceptions of transfer illustrate that prior to any study researchers must determine what lens they will use to design studies and analyze results. Given our field’s interest over the past decade in context, community, and activity, I suggest we would be remiss to focus solely on task- or individual-based conceptions of transfer with little regard for situation and activity. However, if we do take context and activity into account, we have a much more difficult study.

When we confine our attention to individuals, we may be tempted to assign some “deficiency” to students or their previous training though in fact the students may fulfill the objectives of their next writing activities satisfactorily without using specific previously-learned writing-related skills (such as revision). In addition, according to the complex understandings of transfer that emerge from activity-based theories, some previously-learned knowledge and skills that are appropriate for and needed in a new context or activity system may be applied differently than in the context or activity system in which they were learned. Therefore, if we look for but do not find direct evidence that students use specific previously-learned skills in new situations, we cannot necessarily assume that students did not learn them, have not used them, or will not use them in the future.

A more expansive study must look to the nature of writing activities, including other contexts in which students subsequently become involved, to understand whether and why students expand or generalize skills learned in FYC. If participation in new activity systems fails to motivate students to use those skills, it is possible that impetus for transfer may not be obvious, or readily available, to them. To return to an earlier metaphor, the chair does not seem (to the student) to be “sit-on-able” in the particular context. Consequently, we should attempt to account for the ways in which knowledge and skills are *transformed* across contexts; otherwise, we risk overlooking manifestations of skills that have been adapted to meet the needs of a new activity system.

Following Beach, I suggest that focusing on a limited search for “skills” is the reason we do not recognize more evidence of “transfer”; we are looking for apples when those apples are now part of an apple pie. Even though

taking a broader view adds to the difficulty of any study, transfer, or the apparent lack of it, is only evident when we examine the activities of schooling broadly. Therefore, I use the terms and concepts derived from activity-based theories of transfer, in particular the notion of generalization, as a lens to account for the crucial relationships between persons and situations over time.

A PILOT STUDY OF TRANSFER

Given the more complex understanding of transfer suggested by socio-cultural theories, what might a study of generalization—Beach's alternative to transfer—look like? Taking context, purpose, and student perception of writing both in and beyond FYC into account, I designed a qualitative, longitudinal pilot study following seven students from my Fall 2004 FYC course as they wrote across the university to answer four research questions:

1. What do students feel they learned and did in FYC?
2. What kinds of writing are students doing elsewhere?
3. How do students perceive that writing and what strategies do they use to complete it?
4. Do students perceive FYC as helping them with later writing assignments across the university?

In Fall 2004 I taught one section of honors FYC, Intro to Writing Studies, as a pilot course at the University of Dayton, a private, Catholic, liberal arts school of 10,000 students in Dayton, Ohio. The course included many of the same activities as other FYC courses: researching, reading, and writing arguments; planning, revising, peer editing, and reflecting on writing. However, the course content focused explicitly on reading and writing and the students explored questions including: How does writing work? How do people use writing? What are problems related to writing and reading and how can they be solved? Students read writing research, conducted reading and writing auto-ethnographies, identified writing-related problems that interest them, wrote reviews of literature on their chosen problems, and conducted their own primary research that they reported both orally to the class and in writing. The course design, borrowed from Doug Downs (see Downs and Wardle), seeks to rectify what we view as some of the more common problems with many FYC courses (i.e., separating content from context) and to infuse the course with strategies shown to encourage transfer, most obviously meta-awareness about writing and its uses in

society. The goals of the course include helping students reflect on how writing is used in society and across disciplines as well as the ways that academic arguments take shape through primary and secondary research.

Participants and Methods

Seven students from the class agreed to participate in my study: Stephanie, Bobby, Kerry, Brian, Liz, Teresa, and Matt. All were traditional first-year students in their late teens and all had been placed in the honors section of first-year writing as a result of combined ACT verbal and quantitative scores equal to or greater than 27. At the time they joined my study, Stephanie, Kerry, and Teresa were biology majors; Liz was a chemistry major; Bobby and Matt were political science majors; and Brian was an undeclared business major. All were required during their first two years to take general education courses intended to provide a traditional liberal arts education; in their first year the students took religion, history, philosophy, and composition courses. In general, the students met the goals of the FYC course.

Each semester since the FYC course ended, I have met with the students either individually or as a group and have collected copies of all their academic writing assignments. I plan to continue to meet with the students and collect their work until they graduate. In Winter 2005 I met with the students twice—once as a focus group midway through their second semester and then individually at the end of their second semester. At the end of their third semester (Fall 2006), I again met with the students as a group at which time each student filled out a survey and participated in a focus group. At the end of their sophomore year (Winter 2006), I met with each student for an individual interview.

As the project progressed I continually analyzed both student writing and interview/focus group transcripts. I coded the transcripts for themes stemming from my research questions, categorized the student writing according to genre and purpose, and compared student comments about the writing to the writing itself.

Study Limitations and Benefits

My pilot study is limited in several ways. First, as a teacher-researcher, I followed my own students to investigate what they generalized from my class. The strengths of this positioning include that I knew the students well; we had a relationship and rapport before the study began; and I knew what the students had focused on in FYC. The weaknesses include the possibility that students might feel they needed to please me in their interviews and focus groups or that they might try to give me responses they thought

I wanted to hear. While these are very real dangers in teacher-research, the students in my study were often brutally honest with their answers in ways that were clearly not intended to please the teacher, as the results demonstrate.

Another limitation of my study is the small and homogenous student sample. The students in my study do not represent the wide range of students enrolled in FYC courses. All were white, middle- and upper-middle class honors students enrolled at a private liberal arts university—students one would expect to be savvy, educationally successful, and able to “transfer” knowledge and abilities more easily and often than less well prepared students.

Though a study of seven students is insufficient for generalization, examining the work and experiences of small numbers of students in detail over several years allows us to look deeply at patterns and raise questions that can later be pursued in larger studies. In that respect, my approach reflects a long and fruitful tradition of such case research (e.g., Beaufort; Carroll; McCarthy; Sternglass; Winsor), though, clearly, further studies with other groups of students at different types of schools are needed to paint a broader and more accurate picture of how students generalize writing knowledge and skills in college.

Finally, my study design depended upon student self-reports and student writing. I did not observe students in their other classrooms or interview their other teachers, though these additional methods of data-collection would be invaluable additions to future studies. This pilot study relies on student accounts to begin to search out specific areas for further study—and for a sound theoretical reason. From the socio-cultural perspective of activity-based approaches, the *students’* understanding of tasks and activity systems is central to our ability to identify “transfer” or any apparent lack of it. If we do not know how students understand and respond to tasks and contexts, we have no basis for identifying and interpreting generalizing behaviors that might be considered forms of “transfer.”

FINDINGS FROM THE FIRST TWO YEARS OF THE PILOT STUDY

Even after the class was long over, students in my study claim they learned in FYC. According to the students, they learned about new textual features (including new ways of organizing material), how to manage large research writing projects (including use of peer review and planning), how to read and analyze academic research articles; and how to conduct serious, in-depth academic research.

Most importantly, students were able to engage in meta-discourse about university writing in general and their own writing in particular. The language students used in interviews suggests they gained some meta-awareness about language use, most commonly about similarities and differences in writing across disciplines. Nearly all the students consistently discussed differences in disciplinary writing—a perspective they could not articulate when they came into FYC. However, in their first two years of college, students rarely reported the need for writing-related knowledge and behaviors learned and used in FYC. When generalization occurred, context-specific supports were necessary for engagement and success. In the next sections, I discuss each of these findings in more detail.

Students Rarely Generalized from FYC

Despite students' assertions that they had, in fact, learned useful lessons in FYC, they also maintained that they rarely needed those lessons elsewhere. In general, students wrote very little their sophomore year and found the writing they did first and second year to be fairly easy. Many writing assignments required simple summary or regurgitation and could be completed successfully (earning an A or possibly a B) without research and at the last minute.

For the most part, the students did not need the writing-related behaviors they used in FYC (i.e., careful preparation, careful research, deep revision, peer review) to achieve good grades on writing assignments in other courses—which was, to them, the measure for identifying what was worth doing. Thus, students reported writing at the last minute, doing little revising, and generally not being engaged with their writing—but receiving grades that satisfied them. This result, as Christine Casanave points out, mirrors Leki's study of undergraduate student Jan, who used "wily and even illegal" strategies to survive writing assignments he viewed as "senseless" (41). While my students did not use any illegal strategies (as far as I know), they did only what was necessary to earn good grades on assignments they thought to be easy and un-engaging. For example, Kerry told me that her writing assignments in other courses did not usually require advanced preparation or revision:

For psychology, we had ... short, two-page papers ... and ... I could pretty much sit down and write that out from my notes. Some of the questions we had to answers were like, take these little quizzes and then respond based on like how you answered the questions. I don't think I really need to pre-write for that. And, I guess the demands of the teacher were a lot

less, too. So, the quality of my work may not have been as good, in the fact that I [didn't] s[i]t down and ... organize it. I guess I was ... meeting her expectations, and I didn't feel like I had to go beyond that.

Teacher expectations—described as generally “low” by almost all students for the first two years—were integral to student effort and preparation (or lack thereof). Students reported that many of the writing tasks were “high school like” and students did not feel the need to change their high school writing behavior to complete them (a finding in keeping with the results of Lee Ann Carroll’s longitudinal study). The students reported being able to write better than they actually did in other courses but not doing so because they were not required to in order to earn an A or B. Teresa questioned whether her physics TA even read her lab reports. Bobby told me he was earning As and Bs on writing assignments despite the fact that he was “not using any strategies from my [writing] toolbox right now ... I’m not sure if [my writing habits] have changed much at all [since high school]. At least aside from a couple of times, I haven’t actually been forced to change them.”

While from the perspective of a writing instructor this finding is discouraging, it underscores the usefulness of conducting activity-based research about “transfer”—without interviewing students regarding their perceptions of assigned tasks, I might have incorrectly assumed that no generalizing was taking place and that FYC had no impact on students. In interviews and focus groups, the students repeatedly mentioned skills, lessons, and abilities they felt they had gained in FYC, but students perceived that those were almost never required to successfully complete writing assignments in other courses.

At times students avoided challenging assignments altogether—not because they felt unable to complete the assignments, but because they were unwilling to put forth the effort required to generalize previous writing experiences, knowledge, and abilities. This seemed to happen when the effort exceeded what they determined to be the reward. Matt, for example, dropped his fourth semester National Security Policy class—a class he admittedly enjoyed—because the final paper on Donald Rumsfeld would have taken more effort than he was willing to expend for the grade he felt he could earn:

I didn't want to spend like 48 hours trying to do research.... I just didn't want to do that paper, because I know I would have spent all this time on it and would have been lucky to walk away with a B, just because I can't give him what he wants....

I chose Donald Rumsfeld, because I thought there was a lot on him. There wasn't, and that was discouraging right off the bat.

Matt did not doubt his own ability to research or write the paper; he had conducted an extremely complex research project in FYC and written about it masterfully. In National Security Policy, however, he was not motivated to bring his abilities and experiences to bear in order to complete the writing assignment.

Matt admitted that his National Security Policy instructor was requiring the type of work that all instructors should require. Since other instructors were not demanding, however, Matt was not willing to expend effort to generalize his writing skills for the one teacher who was:

[If all teachers had the same expectations as the National Security Policy instructor] ... that would suck, because then you would have to do the amount of work that you're supposed to. You're supposed to go to class for 15 hours, 45 hours outside, and if they were all like that, it would almost be like a 9 to 5 job, where you just sit down, you go to one class and then you start writing for another, stop, do writing for another, do research for another thing, but that would be such a drastic change. Because, literally—I'm in a slump, if you want to call it—my day is I roll out of bed ten minutes before class, I go to my two classes, come back, and lay on the couch, maybe take a shower. And then if I have a meeting or something. I don't know. I have nothing to do. Maybe because my schedule is pretty easy ... nothing is encouraging me to do [the work] anymore and because I don't have to I don't.

Matt clearly could have completed the paper—he had the time, relevant prior research and writing experience, and a teacher and class he liked. He did not, however, have the motivation, and the general education system allowed him to drop the class rather than be forced to motivation. In this respect, the larger activity system of schooling was not structured such that Matt needed to draw on his previous experiences and abilities to advance his own educational goal—to get a degree and be admitted to law school.

Other students demonstrated similar behaviors for other reasons but justified their behaviors as related to time rather than being in a "slump." Students had to prioritize. If a non-major class required a lot of work for an A, students would not necessarily use their skills and strategies to achieve that A due to lack of time. Liz, for example, found herself in a History of Aviation class, which satisfied a general education requirement but did not

interest her in a personal way or relate to her Chemistry major. She found the history papers difficult and her grades were lower than she would have liked. Yet she told me she did not change any of her writing-related behaviors to try to improve her writing and grades. Even after receiving Cs (a grade all these honor students considered unacceptable), she continued to write the course papers in 20 minutes and never asked the teacher for feedback: “I should have [changed my process] but I didn’t.... It was kind of a last priority because it wasn’t a major class and I knew I could do ok without putting that much effort into it.” Liz earned her lowest grade on her midterm in Aviation History. She freely admitted to me that she did not understand the reading and thus did not write about it well—but this is not to say she could not have done better: “...[I]t was something I needed to spend a lot more time reading about and trying to figure out before I wrote, which wasn’t practical at the time.” Thus, her lack of generalization from FYC was not due to lack of ability, learning, or knowledge about how to improve, but rather to the nature of the educational activity system, time constraints, and the student’s priorities—in this case the weight and importance placed on major versus non-major courses.

On those occasions when students *wanted* to use some FYC writing strategies and really engage with their assignments, they found that assignment structures rarely encouraged them to do so. For example, at the end of his second semester (before he hit his “slump”), Matt reported the he liked to draft in advance and return to revise the draft later, but he was not always able to do so: “...[in] the classical Greek philosophy [class] ... [the instructor] doesn’t give us the questions on the syllabus, he gives us the questions like a week before it’s due. So we didn’t have [time to revise].”

My findings thus far, then, suggest that the students did not often generalize from FYC—but not because they are unable to or because they did not learn anything in FYC. Rather, students did not *perceive a need* to adopt or adapt most of the writing behaviors they used in FYC for other courses. As a result, some students tended not to use the strategies even when they knew they could have benefited from doing so. The activities of schooling (at least for these students at this one school during their first two years) did not routinely encourage or require students to generalize the writing skills and knowledge gained in FYC. In other words, neither the writing tasks in other courses nor the structures of the larger activity system of the university provided the necessary affordances for generalization.

The only ability students seemed to consistently generalize from one writing task to another within the various activities of schooling was meta-awareness about writing: the ability to analyze assignments, see similarities and differences across assignments, discern what was being required

of them, and determine exactly what they needed to do in response to earn the grade they wanted. For example, Bobby reported that for a philosophy course he was asked to compare "Socrates and Plato in regards to what they think about the Humanities Base themes." At first, he said, he "got kind of freaked out" but after thinking about past writing he realized "Oh, I do know how to do this." The most important skill for him was the ability to rhetorically reflect on and analyze current and past writing assignments. This should not be surprising; meta-awareness is one of the most transfer-encouraging behaviors, according to psychologists David Perkins and Gavriel Salomon². In FYC we practiced reflecting on writing and writing processes, activities that students had not often done previously. However, meta-awareness of the rhetorical situation is a skill that these successful honors students had been honing throughout their years of schooling.

How Can the Next Activity System Support Generalization?

While we can certainly work to incorporate meta-awareness of language and discourse communities into our FYC courses, the results of my study pushed me to ask what needs to happen in the next writing task to encourage students to generalize their learning about writing. Did the students in my study ever generalize and, if so, under what circumstances? When, if ever, did teachers succeed in engaging students and encouraging them to generalize, push them to put in extra effort and see that effort as worthwhile?

The students indicated they would not use all of their writing-related knowledge and abilities unless an assignment "engaged" them. They had very specific ideas about what constitutes an engaging writing assignment. During a focus group the second semester of their first year, the students talked at length about the kinds of writing assignments that engaged them. At the end of that focus group, the students had created a fairly explicit list defining their definitions of an engaging writing assignment:

- The assignment does not have one "right" answer but is a truly engaging rhetorical problem; the assignment "seems authentic" to the student (Joseph Petraglia calls this an "ill structured problem").
- The prompt for the writing assignment is thought-provoking so students think about the assignment outside of class and when not writing.

- The assignment is open to student ownership; students have some autonomy/freedom while being given the necessary structure to help them succeed.
- The assignment is not simple regurgitation or summary of facts, which feels like “busy work.”
- The assignment relates in some way to students’ interests/future; writing is easier and more meaningful when students have read deeply about the topic and are engaged in the conversation about it. This is easier when the course is in students’ majors; when the assignment is in a general education course, the teacher who engages students helps involve them in a conversation so they know something about what is being said about the topic.
- The assignment is challenging, not easily within students’ reach, and teachers maintain high expectations for the results.
- The assignment clearly relates to the rest of the course content.
- The assignment is intended to achieve a clear purpose, is “goal-oriented.”
- The assignment is clear; students understand what is being asked of them and why.

As the students in my study recounted, these types of assignments were rare during their first two years of school. Students claimed that most writing assignments were summary. On those rare occasions when the criteria for engaging writing assignments were met (and when they, unlike Matt, remained in the class to complete those assignments), students in my study did report some generalization of knowledge from FYC—though at times they did not recognize the generalization until our conversations later. Writing assignments considered engaging included a paper Brian wrote advising potential Google investors about the viability of the stock, and a paper Matt wrote analyzing his physical security risks at home, school, and work. Stephanie’s History of Europe class involved a number of writing assignments she found engaging and challenging:

[The] first [history paper] we had to write was retroactive history, where you go back at some point and say, okay, well if this had happened, then all of this other stuff would be different, and this would be this way and all this other stuff. And, I was like, “wow”! That was really hard. It was fun. I didn’t do all that well on it, but it was fun.

Engagement, then, often means difficult; as a result, students do not always earn the highest grades on engaging assignments. At other times,

though, an assignment can be engaging without being difficult. Engaging but not challenging assignments might help students achieve the goals of the course but achieving those goals does not necessarily require any generalization of new skills. For example, Stephanie and Kerry both completed an assignment for Genetics that asked them to creatively imagine what it would be like to take a gene from one species and mix it with another. Both students asserted that the assignment was “cool,” but neither found it especially challenging. Liz completed papers in philosophy she described as “engaging but not challenging . . . because it was stuff we had done over and over again in class.” Liz specifically told me that every time she wrote one of the philosophy papers she learned a lot; she did not, however, need to draw on and generalize any writing skills, behavior, and knowledge from FYC to do that learning. In these cases, the goals of the activity system appeared to be satisfactorily achieved without generalization of FYC writing skills and behaviors.

When students completed engaging *and* challenging writing assignments, they did at times achieve generalization from FYC—but rarely consciously. For example, in her biology lab, Kerry wrote a lab report very similar to the research paper she had written in FYC, reviewing literature on the problem and reporting her own research. During our interview she indicated she thought FYC had helped her with this assignment despite the fact that she had not consciously considered the similarities until later:

I didn't really even think about it until you had e-mailed me and . . . I realized . . . this was really similar to the format [of the FYC paper]. . . . When I was doing it I don't think [I saw the similarities]. Later, I clearly saw it. . . . I think [FYC] did help me . . . because I had done so much work on the library web page and finding sources and going through them for [FYC]. So, I think finding research I was familiar with, how that process was done, [helped me]. . . . I think if I hadn't done [the FYC paper], [the lab report] would have been a lot more difficult in that respect and finding support and knowing how to integrate this report into my ideas and using it to support the conclusion that I was drawing. . . . I do think that having previous experiences doing something kind of similar helps a lot.

However, simply having had previous experiences similar to the new and engaging writing task was not enough to ensure generalization. Even if a new writing task mirrored earlier writing tasks in some way, students needed context-specific support to successfully complete the tasks in new

contexts. The support students needed mirrored Lucille McCarthy's findings in many ways. Students indicated that teacher feedback, peer interaction, and previous experience reading and writing in the same field were important to their writing successes when faced with new challenges.

These context-specific supports are so important to generalization that they merit some detailed discussion. *Teacher feedback* was extremely important to students early on in college, but seemed to decrease as the first two years of college progressed. Students claimed to understand and use the feedback they received. For example, Matt reported that his sociology teacher put checks or minuses next to paragraphs or wrote short comments such as "that was a good paragraph" and then a few sentences of commentary at the end. Matt used these comments to complete the next assignment. He said, "I ... go back to an old paper and take a 'good' paragraph and then copy paste it onto a new paper and change a few sentences around.... He likes it so I'm going to use it again."

Students also reported wanting more opportunities for feedback. By the end of the second year, teachers seemed to give very little feedback unless students asked for it. Most teachers offered out of class feedback, but not all students felt they needed it to achieve the grade they wanted. Brian, for example, told me that his Business Ethics teacher offered to review drafts and provide feedback, but no one in the class took advantage of this offer. Yet having the *opportunity* to receive feedback—whether that opportunity is seized or not—seems to be what is important. If students felt they needed feedback and did not receive it, they complained they could not perform at their best. Kerry, for example, noted that her biology professor would not help her: "...[in biology] lab, I even e-mailed the professor ... and asked if he could provide any more advice on how I should approach [the lab report] differently, and it took him two weeks to get back and then it was ... two sentences." She was also not pleased with the feedback from the biology TA on the very assignment she suggested mirrored the FYC assignment. Though the TA gave her grading rubrics and she used those to her advantage, she was still unhappy about lack of written feedback, arguing that comments "would have been good to have when completing the second [lab report]."

Students who received assistance outside of class found it useful. In an earlier class, Brian approached his business teacher out of class for help with documentation style, and approached the research librarian for research assistance. He received help from both and credited them with at least some of the success of his research report for potential Google investors.

Reading or writing in the field was a related context-specific support to generalization. In fact, teacher feedback seemed to decrease in direct pro-

portion to this element—as students took more classes in the same area, teacher feedback lessened. Early on, only Matt had taken enough courses in one field (sociology) to find this support useful: “[I learn to write for the discipline] ... through the teacher and a little bit of trial and error. Reading a lot of the case studies ... I think I drew on the other sociology class I had. I mean all the writing [in sociology] is really interrelated.” By the end of second year, most students indicated that reading or writing various texts from the same field or discipline was becoming important to them in completing new writing tasks. The more courses a student had taken in the field, the less they complained about lack of teacher feedback. For example, when Brian completed his first major paper for a business course, he talked extensively with the teacher. By the end of his second year, he did not request—and did not receive—any teacher feedback at all, though he felt he did not need it. By the end of her second year, Teresa said she found that all lab report formats were fairly similar, so she rarely had questions about how to write them. When she did, she pulled out class readings and lecture notes to assist her.

Students also indicated that *talk with peers* about writing assignments was a support they drew on frequently, though usually informally. By the end of the second year, most of the “drafting” and “planning” students recounted had to do with peer discussion. Partially this was because a number of the assignments were collaborative; for example, Brian wrote his Business Ethics paper with a partner and thus he and his partner exchanged ideas. But when collaboration was not required, all the students still talked over their more challenging papers with peers. Stephanie told me she often brainstormed with her best friend about paper ideas, while Teresa said she always asked her roommates to read her papers; when pressed, even Matt grudgingly conceded he talked about a paper with his friend, Mike. Students who had meta-awareness about language use and were able to analyze peer feedback seemed to make better use of this element of support than students who blindly followed peer advice—again suggesting that one of FYC’s most important contributions may be rhetorical awareness. Bobby told me, “...even if the feedback usually doesn’t really help me—like they pick out stuff I know about—it’s just another call for my attention. I will go back and fix it.”

LESSONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Based on the tentative findings I have discussed here, what can we conclude about the possibility of generalization from FYC and how can we encourage it? Perhaps the most important finding so far is the importance of context

and activity to generalization—in particular, the importance of the purpose, expectations, and support for writing tasks in encouraging generalization. While students in my study claimed they learned valuable lessons in FYC, they did not generally feel the lessons and behaviors of FYC were needed in other courses during the first year. Rather, students were ordinarily able to complete their work in other classes to their own satisfaction without the lessons and strategies of FYC. They indicated they could and did generalize from their FYC experiences if required to do so by the expectations of the teacher and the engaging and difficult nature of the next writing assignment. However, previous experiences alone were not enough to ensure student success on new and difficult writing tasks. Rather, students needed context-specific support from their teachers and peers to successfully complete new writing tasks.

While all of the context-specific supports to generalization might be seen as making FYC unnecessary, I suggest that FYC continues to have a role to play. Transfer research from other fields, and well as the findings of this study, suggest that *meta-awareness about writing, language, and rhetorical strategies* in FYC may be the most important ability our courses can cultivate. We cannot prepare students for every genre, nor can we know every assignment they will be given or the genre conventions appropriate to those assignments across the disciplines. That knowledge—and the supports for learning it—must be gained in discipline-specific classrooms. What FYC can do, however, is help student think about writing in the university, the varied conventions of different disciplines, and their own writing strategies in light of various assignments and expectations. Assigning students to write rhetorical analyses of various types of texts across the university, as well as to complete auto-ethnographies of their own reading and writing habits, are two means for cultivating such meta-awareness.

Beyond meta-awareness about language, the burden for encouraging generalization seems to rest on assignments given in classes beyond FYC. Those writing assignments must be engaging and challenging, explicitly designed to help students use all the tools in their writing toolboxes—as necessary for achieving the learning goals of the specific classroom activity system. Consequently, while I began this research project looking solely at the problem of knowledge transfer, I end by arguing that as a discipline we must continue to make efforts to share our work with those outside of our field. Unless we continue to expand WAC and WID programs and discuss writing and writing assignments across disciplinary boundaries, our work in FYC is likely to have little practical impact on our students beyond the first year. Toward this end, program directors might develop collaborative research projects with faculty from across their universities to better under-

stand what goals they do and do not share for assignments and outcomes and to closely examine how students interpret assignments from various courses.

NOTES

¹I recognize that some compositionists would argue that instilling transferable writing-related knowledge is not the goal of their FYC courses; my point is that our stakeholders expect transferable knowledge and skills to be the goal and if it is not, then we must find other grounds for requiring the course of all first-year students. Until then, we must take the Spellings Commission Report and other calls for public accountability to heart and discern what, in fact, our courses do provide to students that is of long-term value.

²It is possible that students don't need as much prep time for their assignments because they learned to conduct research and read scholarly articles in FYC. I can't be certain, though; I need more data to explore this possibility.

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Insiders and Outsiders: Redrawing the Boundaries of the Writing Program

Cary Moskovitz and Michael Petit

In the last decade, a number of high-profile institutions have extended the Writing in the Disciplines (WID) concept by redesigning their first-year writing programs as interdisciplinary endeavors.¹ Even though WID was pioneered by compositionists, the hiring of scholars from various disciplines to teach writing has created considerable tension since writing courses are the bread and butter of many English/composition programs and an important training ground for future compositionists. There is a long history of institutions outsourcing first-year writing to barely-qualified and/or under-compensated adjuncts and to under-trained graduate students. To some compositionists, this extension of WID is yet another battleground in the effort to professionalize the field. Newly-minted Ph.D.s may be especially troubled by this development. We have heard young scholars at both regional and national conferences express the sentiment, “If anyone can teach writing, what good is a Ph.D. in Comp?”

While interdisciplinary first-year writing programs are a recent development, the essential positions underlying this tension were articulated as early as 1988 by Louise Smith and Catherine Pastor Blair. In her article “Why English Departments Should House Writing Across the Curriculum” (*College English* 50.4), Smith contended that English departments should house writing programs since English scholars have “relatively expert knowledge of such matters as reader-response theory, error analysis, writing-to-learn, and collaborative composition pedagogies” (394). In the same issue of *College English*, Blair, in her article “Only One of the Voices: Dialogic Writing across the Curriculum,” disagreed: “[I]f we wish . . . to provide the most liberal and liberalizing education for our students, we cannot privilege a single disciplinary context with a single language. . . . We need a writing program that concerns itself equitably with many ways of making meaning” (384).

The unresolved issues raised in this debate have only been complicated by the extension of WID into first-year writing.

“INSIDERS” AND “OUTSIDERS”

Throughout much of the twentieth century a Ph.D. in English was *the* factor that most distinguished so-called “insiders” from “outsiders.”² Charles Kneupper, an experienced writing teacher, could rhetorically position himself as an outsider in 1981 only because, at that time, literature scholars still held ascendancy as what he terms “the best available” writing teachers:

When I say I am an *outsider*, I do not mean that I have not taught composition, because I have. Nor do I mean that I do not follow developments in composition theory and research, because I do. What I mean is that my training in rhetoric and my competence as a teacher of composition do not derive from studies in a department of English. Rather, my training in rhetorical studies comes from a department of speech and was heavily oriented to the study of rhetorical theory. (304)

In the passage following this citation, Kneupper uses his outsider position to argue for the substitution of one privileged specialty, literary criticism, for another, rhetorical theory. But attempting to identify qualified writing teachers categorically by scholarly discipline inevitably reifies an unproductive insider/outsider binary. That the Smith and Blair exchange involved English scholars working within English departments publishing in *College English* also speaks to the issue of insider vs. outsider. Discussions of who should be “in” or “out” of the pool of potential writing teachers often take place in situations that limit participation of voices from other fields.³

In this essay we offer the shared perspectives of a former “outsider” with a Ph.D. in aerospace engineering who has come “inside” the world of teaching writing, and a former “insider”—a Ph.D. in English—who has stepped “outside” of an English department to teach in a stand-alone writing program. The wide methodological and epistemological differences between our disciplines highlight what it can mean to be (or to become) an insider in a writing program that challenges traditional distinctions between insiders and outsiders.⁴ Based on our experiences as writing teachers within various “insider” and “outsider” contexts, we challenge what we see as a primary source of the tension described above: framing the question of who should teach writing as an either/or choice—one where writing programs should be staffed only by compositionists (or perhaps, in another version, English and rhetoric scholars as well) *or* one in which the knowledge and experience of these “traditional” writing teachers is undervalued in the drive to

increase interdisciplinarity. Instead, we argue that writing programs have much to gain from genuine collaboration between those who have been traditionally located on the inside and outside of this work.⁵

Moskovitz:

In the realm of writing, my undergraduate and graduate training was typical for engineers: I took no formal writing courses after my freshman year, and while I wrote plenty of lab reports as an undergraduate, I wrote nothing resembling an essay after completing required core courses in my sophomore year. The only extended prose I wrote as a graduate student was for my thesis, my dissertation, and related technical articles for publication. (Of course I did a lot of “writing,” but this was mainly in the form of mathematics and computer programming.) In addition, I spent four years acquiring a Master’s of Architecture degree; that training emphasized the acquisition of visual and design knowledge, primarily through making and studying drawings and models. Response to my written work by my professors was similar in the engineering and architecture programs, where rhetorical and disciplinary conventions were rarely explicitly discussed. Unsurprisingly, my graduate training did little to shake up my notion that the writing of such fields was by and large a technocratic affair.

The breadth of my studies did, however, spark an interest in interdisciplinary learning and in pedagogy more generally. In trying to understand ancient Greek notions of rhythm and proportion in façade design or Frank Lloyd Wright’s ideas about motifs, for example, I found myself drawing on—and wanting to build on—my knowledge of mathematics and music. I became interested in how knowledge in one area can help (or hinder) learning in another.

In 1994 I joined the faculty of a small liberal arts college. In addition to courses in math, physics and architecture, my load included a writing-intensive, upper-level core course called “Science, Technology and Society.” My initial attempts to have students in this course write extended prose were disastrous for the typical reasons: my assignments were vague, my responses, though extensive, were not pedagogically sound, and I had no interaction with my students’ work between handing out the prompt and receiving the end product. I recognized that many of my students were weak writers, but also that I was inadequately prepared to help them. I solicited advice from the college’s resident experts, who gladly shared information and resources on some fundamentals of contemporary writing pedagogy.

Petit:

I come to the teaching of writing like many literature scholars: with on-the-job training during my first semester as an English graduate student. Holding an undergraduate degree in English, I was deemed well enough prepared to step into a first-year writing classroom and was selected on the basis of a writing sample to attend an intensive two-week training seminar before the semester began. The stand-alone writing program was directed by two full professors who themselves were specialists in literature rather than composition and rhetoric (though they had intellectual interests and experience in writing pedagogy). Given that I shared the directors' sensibilities and approaches as a fellow literary critic, I was *de facto* an insider, even though I was only beginning work that would lead to an M.A. in creative writing and a Ph.D. in eighteenth-century British literature. Though I had no prior teaching experience, the program gave me and the other selected graduate students the challenge of designing a first-year critical-thinking-through-critical-writing course. I don't know who was more apprehensive on the first day of class, me or my students. Despite my initial apprehension, I later realized that learning how to be an effective critical writing teacher over the next years was the single best intellectual training I received during graduate studies; I know it helped me become a much better writer. This took place in isolation from formal studies in composition and rhetoric, as the English department did not offer graduate course work in writing pedagogy, theory, or history.

I want to contrast this insider experience with the experience of my first post-doctoral position: adjunct instructor in literature and composition at a large R-1 public university. That institution's writing program was administered by faculty with advanced degrees in composition and rhetoric. Almost all sections of the required first-year course were taught by English graduate students who first completed a gateway course in writing pedagogy. Although by this time I had a great deal of experience in teaching writing, I lacked the specialized course work emphasized at that institution, and, like many who study literature, I knew little of the history of writing programs and remained unfamiliar with work by key compositionists. I was an outsider within this context. My institutional status as an adjunct also exacerbated my sense of being an outsider: I could teach, but I did not have any benefits; I could teach, but I did not have any input on course design, goals, or faculty governance; I could teach, but I did not have any opportunities for research funding or teaching awards. But just as important was the nature of the course itself, which required a unit on writing for the humanities, a unit on the social sciences, and a unit on the natural sciences. While

the idea of exposing students to the conventions of different discourse communities made sense, my training in the humanities did not prepare me to teach students to read and write in the social or natural sciences in any complex or nuanced way. I taught them like an English teacher. Though I designed assignments with a survey component to gather empirical evidence and asked students to do ethnography by observing dorm culture, I did so with the sinking feeling that I really didn't "get" the social science discourse conventions I was teaching. And while I had my students build elaborate structures to protect eggs dropped from a window in the English building and then write up the results—as suggested in the program's staff manual for the natural sciences unit—the assignment did not accord with my sense that students' critical thinking skills are better served by writing analytical and argumentative papers instead of what I perceived as merely descriptive lab reports. I expressed, then, outsider status in three ways—an outsider to composition, an outsider to regular faculty, and an outsider to much of the course work itself.

Moskovitz:

I came to the Duke writing program in 2001—its second year of operation and its first year of full staffing. The program had an exceptionally strong commitment to interdisciplinarity, and the faculty who joined the program that year had a wide range of backgrounds. Nevertheless, the culture of the fledgling program had been shaped primarily by its administrators who had backgrounds in English and rhet/comp, and secondarily by faculty who joined the program the prior year, most of whom had similar backgrounds. Even though I came to Duke with a few years of experience teaching writing-intensive classes, I was unfamiliar with writing program culture. With a Ph.D. in aerospace engineering, I felt very much the outsider. Claims and assumptions about academic writing and how to teach it floated about, and these did not always align with my experiences or disciplinary sensibilities. And even some of the terms central to the work of the program were unfamiliar or used in unfamiliar ways. I was immersed in a world of *workshopping*, *close reading*, *problematizing*, *complicating*, and *contextualizing*; of *textuality*, *intertextuality*, and *citatoriality*—terms that some who work in the field of composition may not even think of as being disciplinarily situated.

Because I sensed that what I was doing in my writing courses—what I knew how to do—was significantly different from what the insiders were doing, I felt the need to explain the way I was teaching writing to my colleagues, most of whom were unfamiliar with intellectual or discursive

practices in the sciences. For example, many of my colleagues centered the work of their courses on books, whereas I had no sense of how to teach writing from them. But I had a strong sense about how to teach with articles, since I had built many semesters of writing-intensive courses around such texts. (I should emphasize that even in my first term at Duke I was an experienced enough teacher *not* to assume that my particular scholarly specialty—experimental aerodynamics—would be an appropriate area of work for first-year writing students; I drew on my knowledge of other areas of science for topics that would be more accessible and have more resonance with my students. The need to make this distinction seemed to have been more obvious to me as a “way outsider” than to some younger faculty closer to the inside.)

My self-identification as outsider diminished as I adapted to the program and learned more about composition—its history, theory, and practices—from both the literature of the field and from many formal and informal conversations with insightful and intelligent colleagues. I rethought and revised my teaching. But my sense of being an outsider also changed because the program’s culture became gradually less “English.” Scholars from across the academic spectrum added to or replaced instructors closer to the inside as they moved on to positions elsewhere, and the administration encouraged these outsiders to help shape the program. The attitude of the program’s administrators toward the way I approached my work was critical to this shift in my self-perception as well. While they were generous in sharing their knowledge and experience, I never felt pressured to teach like an English scholar—in fact, I had been explicitly encouraged *not* to. Instead, I knew from the beginning that what the program administrators wanted from me was to do a good job teaching academic writing in the way that someone with my background might do it.

After a couple of years teaching in the Duke program, I no longer had the sense that I ought to be using books as objects of study in my writing courses. (I had learned from colleagues that book-length texts pose their own challenges in a first-year writing course.) And I came to understand that the kind of careful, scrutinizing, and skeptical reading I wanted my students to do with a five-page research article or a half-page letter to the editor from a science journal was as appropriate and as intellectually rigorous as the work that my colleagues in literature or comp demanded of their students.

Ceasing to be an outsider in the world of teaching writing involved not only matters of pedagogy, but acculturation as well. I learned which terms—*authentic*, *remedial*, *skill*, for example—are loaded in this community, and I gained a sense of the reasons and history that made them

so. And as my self-identification as insider strengthened, I felt it appropriate to interrogate disciplinarily-situated ideas and terms that didn't seem to account for the ways of knowing and writing on the science side of the academy: I wanted to *surface* unstated assumptions about "academic writing," to *complicate* "close reading," and to *problematize* "problematize." My insider colleagues encouraged me to challenge them in these ways, and they deserve credit for being receptive to ideas from the outside. But credit must also go to the program itself: such conversations require both a wide spectrum of experiences and the right culture, and this is one of the real strengths of a program that brings together an intentionally diverse group of scholars to the common work of teaching writing.

Petit:

Joining the faculty of Duke's writing program was both a home coming and a new experience. Duke's first-year writing course, similar in structure to the program in which I first taught, concentrates on critical reading and critical writing. I did not struggle with new vocabulary, and the initial training seminar was a welcome return to the kinds of English graduate seminars that were part of my Ph.D. program. But while I saw myself as an insider, I was concerned about my outsider, non-humanities colleagues. Were they teaching students to analyze a text, to call its unstated ideological assumptions into question, or were they teaching students to read only for content? Were they teaching students to write in an analytic-argumentative mode or to write lab reports? That some of my new colleagues were unfamiliar with what seemed to me to be fundamental, inescapable concepts such as close reading raised my suspicions. Were they *really* teaching writing classes, or were they teaching content classes in which writing was only an ancillary component? The suspicious nature of my questions points to the problem of assuming an insider framework: I didn't start from a position of collaboration; I wasn't yet asking what I might still learn about the teaching of writing from my new non-humanities colleagues.

Over time and through conversation, however, I understood that we had complimentary understandings and approaches to the teaching of writing. We were all trying to help students read below the surface of texts and interrogate the ways in which they construct knowledge. But while those of us in English may do this work by asking students to recognize the ways texts reinforce or call into question hegemonic ideas about class and gender, my colleagues in the sciences might do so by asking students to recognize the strengths and limits of the empirical evidence presented in scientific research literature. I also learned that those in the sciences do

not generally ask their writing students to write “research reports”; rather, like “us,” they have students write in a variety of popular and disciplinary genres and formats that require them to formulate and support claims with critical analysis. I no longer doubt that my colleagues are teaching critical writing classes. For although what counts as evidence differs in our various disciplines, each discipline requires its strategic deployment and thus the teaching of the various writerly moves and strategies necessary for effective argumentation. As I gained experience with and through Duke’s writing program, I came to see all of us as insiders—even though such an “inside” is a hybrid entity structured not by disciplinary boundaries but by the shared work of teaching academic writing.

THE TEACHING OF ACADEMIC WRITING

Regardless of specific institutional contexts, virtually all writing programs have the teaching of first-year writing as a principal component of their mission. While instruction in the craft of writing—including such matters as structure and style—is typically a priority in these courses, we identify crucial distinctions among contemporary approaches. Many institutions structure courses around the writing of a distinct set of textual types or formats: students write the personal reflective essay, the ad analysis paper, the explication of a poem or short story, the compare-and-contrast paper, and so on. Other institutions ask students to examine works traditionally defined as “literature”—poetry, drama, and creative fiction—regardless of the type of writing they are asked to do. In contrast, academic writing is typically defined less in terms of its texts—what students write or read—and more by the focus on writing as a means of knowledge production. In an academic writing course, as David Bartholomae has observed in his landmark essay “Inventing the University,” students learn about the academy’s knowledge-making practices by engaging in its conversations and conventions. Students are asked to consider thoughtfully the implications of the chosen topic through close and skeptical reading, to arrive at their own critical interpretations through the process of writing and revising, and to take part in broader intellectual discussions on the topic by arguing their rationales and hard-won conclusions to readers. Along with most contemporary compositionists, we find that academic writing is the more compelling approach in a liberal arts setting, where the intent is to expose students to various knowledge systems and how meaning is made.

Academic writing courses have typically had one of two disciplinary orientations: the multi-disciplinary model described by Petit above (the humanities paper, the social science paper, the natural sciences paper);

or the (putatively) generic model, employing, for example, *Ways of Reading*, where scholarly approaches from the humanities are (silently) deemed general features of academic writing. The multi-discipline model has the advantage of having students sample a range of disciplines and can, ideally, look at those practices comparatively. However, students necessarily acquire only a cursory view of each field, and it is difficult to staff such courses with instructors who have sufficient expertise in all relevant domains. And while students can surely learn much of value in a humanities-oriented course, we believe that the field of composition is ready to move beyond the humanities-centric view of academic work that such a course represents.

The evolution of WID has produced a third model we term the “diverse disciplines model”: different sections of the course take up different disciplinary approaches according to the scholarly interest and expertise of the individual instructor. While we recognize that students in the diverse disciplines model will not get to examine disciplinary differences as thoroughly as with the multi-discipline model, we prefer it for a number of reasons. First, it allows students to gain a greater sense of what it means to engage in the intellectual work of a discipline, since they have more time to become familiar with some of its intellectual tools and conventions. If such a course is topic-focused, students can also benefit from what Anne Beaufort describes as “serious, sustained engagement with a specific subject matter” (195); this allows students to develop more expertise on the subjects they take up, which is valuable, if not sufficient, for promoting the sense of authority that empowers academic writers.⁶ Second, the diversity of courses offers students the broadest possible array of topics and approaches, making it more likely that they will find a subject of personal interest and so be more committed to the work of the course. Third, the diverse disciplines model better represents the range of intellectual work of the institution; since courses from many different disciplines are offered at one time, students see that writing is not just the province of English.⁷

The diverse disciplines model takes us back to the question of what it means to be qualified to teach academic writing. Smith and Blair, writing in 1988 (*College English* 50.4), take this up as a question of whether English scholars are inherently more qualified teachers of writing than others. Given the rise of composition as its own discipline, however, the matter of relative qualifications is more complicated. An up-to-date comparison involves something more like this: (1) compositionists; (2) the constellation of scholars Charles Bazerman has described as being “trained in the arts of language”—scholars of English, rhetoric, and so on (“Living” 64); or (3) scholars of other disciplines who seek to teach writing. Since there is no established name for the collection of disciplines in (2) or (3), we will refer

to the former as “STALs”—Scholars Trained in the Arts of Language—and the latter as “non-STALs.”

Blair maintained that scholars from all disciplines come equally prepared to teach writing. We reject this notion. We expect compositionists to be particularly knowledgeable about and dedicated to the teaching of writing, to know the history and theory of the field. Similarly, STALs have a focused relationship with textual practices and often bring some of the same skills and experience to the teaching of writing that compositionists do.

Although it would be easy for administrators to staff their writing programs entirely with traditional insiders, compositionists and STALs cannot, by themselves, effectively teach the ways of knowing and writing across the academy, an integral part of the academic writing mission. For example, as Susan Peck MacDonald has shown (*College English* 49.3), scholars of literature often model their writing classes after their own scholarly practices, devoting a substantial part of their courses to helping students learn how to problematize texts; but scholars in other fields don't set up their intellectual work in the same way. Those in the sciences often take up problems that have already been articulated by others. An important part of the work of all disciplines is to articulate meaningful questions, but, as Lee Odell writes, “the nature of those questions may vary so widely that a question that is important in dealing with, say, a particular topic in philosophy may be less important in dealing with topics in chemical engineering or even with other subjects in philosophy” (89). As Blair's argument suggests, approaching the teaching of academic writing only through the lens of English *or* rhetoric *or* composition is parochial: scholars in these disciplines are experts in examining texts within their social, cultural and political context, including how they are inflected by race, class, gender, sexuality and other ideological factors. But they tend not, for example, to receive much training in the way of the empiricism, quantification, or other aspects of epistemology central to the intellectual work of large segments of the academy. In other words, they cannot have a working knowledge of each discipline's sense of “what counts as a relevant contribution, what counts as a question, what counts as having a good argument for that answer or a good criticism of it” (Richard Rorty, quoted in Bruffee 643). Unless a writing program can accurately represent the broad work of the academy, it will tend to fall into the trap of hegemonic thinking that results when certain disciplines believe they “own” writing.

The effects of STAL-centric assumptions have not been limited to how writing is taught within writing programs, as the Writing across the Curriculum literature shows:

We are beginning to learn a great deal more than we previously knew about the social processes and textual practices of a wide range of academic communities. A good deal of that research, however, has not been . . . used in teacher training and faculty development workshops. In actual fact, the literature on WAC curriculum and pedagogy continues to be dominated by writing-to-learn and expressive writing techniques, including the keeping of journals, the emphasis on personal perspectives on generic conventions, and the inclusion of language-intensive approaches, even in those disciplines where natural languages are not the primary means of academic communication. (Jones and Comprone 62)

A telling example is found in *Teaching Writing in All Disciplines* (one installment in the *New Directions for Teaching and Learning* series), where we find, among essays by WAC stalwarts McLeod, Thaiss, Fulwiler and Walvoord, an article on WAC in mathematics by writing program administrator Barbara King. King encourages instructors of math classes to have their students write “reports” on topics such as “the life of a famous mathematician, research on math anxiety . . . and careers in mathematics” (41-42), rather than identifying pedagogies that are appropriate for the ways of knowing and writing in mathematics. Writing biographies *about* mathematicians has little to do with the intellectual work *of* mathematics, but that hasn’t kept the idea from circulating as a viable pedagogy for math courses. Although the King article dates from 1982, these kinds of practices are still actively promoted. (See, for example, the chapter on mathematics in Segal and Smart, 2005.) Such practices contribute to the tensions and distrust that can arise between writing teachers and faculty in other departments who, correctly or not, see themselves as being on the receiving end of a naturalized conversion process (see Fulwiler).

Given the limitations of a writing program staffed only by compositionists and STALs, it is difficult to even imagine one staffed only by engineers or other non-STALs. Although scholars in the hard sciences need to be competent writers themselves, the production and consumption of texts is not a standard subject of disciplinary attention. Writing in those fields is often perceived by practitioners as a neutral conduit for conveying information. Yet while mathematicians and chemists, say, tend to be less often what Bazerman has called “rhetorically self-conscious practitioners” of their disciplines (“Second Stage” 211), this does not mean that none are, or that the others cannot learn to be. As Bazerman notes elsewhere,

[Practitioners of all disciplines] are taught to think reflectively about the tools and methods of their fields. Once they become aware that language is one of their most fundamental, and most

sensitive, tools of knowledge construction, they cannot escape the conclusion that rhetorical studies are an inevitable part of methodological training, as much as education in statistics, analytical techniques, or laboratory experimentation. All professionals must have some knowledge of field appropriate methods of knowledge construction and their implications, and some specialize in understanding various techniques. If certain sociologists, economists, and educational researchers specialize in field-appropriate statistics, why should there not be scholars of field-appropriate rhetoric? (“Living” 68)⁸

We should expect, then, to find non-STALs who are interested in and highly capable of understanding the uses of language necessary to teach academic writing. As outsiders, these scholars will not likely have the same level of formal training as compositionists or STALs, but they *will* possess an internalized sense of the epistemological and rhetorical conventions of their disciplines. This knowledge is crucial for academic writing programs.⁹

REDRAWING THE BOUNDARIES: THE DIVERSE DISCIPLINES MODEL

In their *College English* essays Smith and Blair disagree about who should be teaching writing. Smith argues, in effect, for keeping the teaching of writing in the hands of insiders, since they are the ones best qualified to understand textual practices and then to teach those practices to students in the writing classroom (Figure 1a). Blair advocates for outsiders: since scholars from all disciplines are equally capable, they must *be equal* when it comes to being part of a writing program (Figure 1b). Smith and Blair do, however, agree that writing programs need to learn from other disciplines, and so prefer “dialogic” boundaries (as represented by dotted lines). We assume readers today tend to agree.

In Figure 2 we expand the boundary of 1(a) to include scholars from across the academy as represented in 1(b). This avoids the hegemony of traditional insiders while recognizing the importance of compositionists, STALs and non-STALs. But for this (as represented in Figure 2) to work, such an expansion must include more than a token number of representatives from other disciplines—and from the sciences in particular. In spite of the additional effort needed to hire and train them, only a critical mass of such scholars can pose the needed challenge to the tendency of a humanities-centric program to slip into humanities-based assumptions and practices.

While administering such a program inevitably involves real challenges, the model represented in Figure 2 offers a number of advantages. First, the presence of disciplinary representatives *inside* the program enhances the

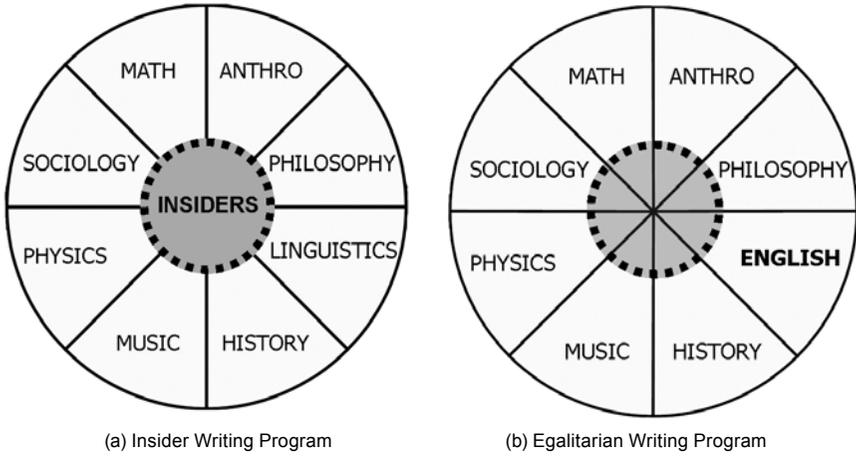


Figure 1. Our schematic depictions of writing program boundaries a la Smith and Blair

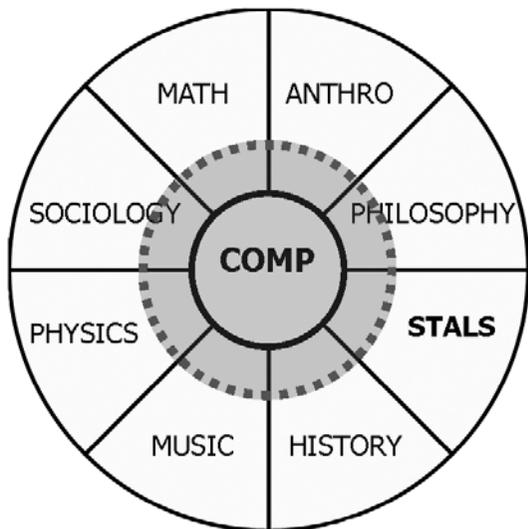


Figure 2. The Diverse Disciplines Model

flow of information and ideas between the writing program and those outside of its formal structure. These representatives can both bring knowledge of their home disciplines to the writing program and spread best practices to those on the outside in ways that traditional insiders cannot. Such a diverse program may also encourage trust among other faculty in their perception of how the writing program is serving the institution as a whole. Second, bringing STALs and non-STALs together within the writing program creates opportunities for pedagogical developments that draw on hard-won knowledge in composition studies without forcing the de facto practices of STALs onto other disciplines. While we have expressed reservations about model 1(b) because it dismisses what traditional insiders have to offer, we agree with Blair about the environment of multidisciplinary writing programs: “Much of the excitement of such a program seems to arise from the fact that the disciplines participate as *equals*,” and that such an arrangement “gives them the freedom to create new approaches rather than wait for the lead of the department that ‘owns’ writing” (388; emphasis added). Third, a faculty composed of scholars from a wide range of disciplines will challenge conventional responses to important questions: What types of writing and reading should students undertake in first-year writing classes? What kinds of questions, problems, genres and formats are appropriate for student projects? What constitutes good academic writing? How will students’ success be measured? And so on.

Additionally, while many contemporary compositionists value “reform” pedagogies, they tend to do so without considering what non-STALs can contribute. For example, much current composition literature promotes collaborative practices. Yet as Kenneth Bruffee has noted, “[T]he graduate training most [English teachers] have enjoyed—or endured—has taught us, in fact, that collaboration and community activity is inappropriate and foreign to work in humanistic disciplines such as English. Humanistic study, we have been led to believe, is a solitary life, and the vitality of the humanities lies in the talents and endeavors of each of us as individuals” (645). Many non-STALs can bring experience in this area (contra Smith’s claim above): collaborative research and authorship in the sciences and engineering is the norm, as a brief perusal of the table of contents of any science or engineering journal will show. Drawing on their experience with collaboration in their own work, many non-STALs employ collaborative pedagogies in their classrooms—and have done so for decades. For example, since collaborative work and revision are integral to the practice of engineering, design courses routinely structure student work to include and promote such practices. But while practitioners of such fields have expertise in collaborative authorship and project work, they tend to have a less-developed

sense of collaborative *writing* pedagogy, which illustrates the value of bringing insiders and outsiders together.

But perhaps the most important value of this approach to teaching academic writing is that it requires programmatic conversations about the nature of disciplinarity in ways that other models do not. Collaboration is central to the work of a cohesive diverse disciplines program. Since such a program brings together instructors with very different sensibilities about academic writing, program administrators and instructors must work together to distinguish what is common to academic work from what is disciplinarily situated. Citing sources, supporting claims, or even identifying intellectual problems are discipline-specific practices; the *need* to do those things is trans-disciplinary. While students need practical discipline-specific knowledge, they also need to understand the extent to which the particular practices they are learning *are* disciplinary. While the multi-disciplinary model does not preclude such conversations, they will likely take place among traditional insiders with their shared disciplinary sensibilities speaking on the behalf of others. In a diverse disciplines program there will always be someone to say, “Wait a second, that’s not how it works in my field.”

NOTES

¹ As of 2007, the list of institutions staffing their first-year writing courses with Ph.D.s from a range of disciplines includes (but is not limited to) Duke, Harvard, George Washington, Princeton, Stanford, and Syracuse. Of these, only GW has a permanent faculty, as opposed to post-doctoral fellows. Many other schools draw on graduate students from a broad range of fields. For an argument in favor of a related but different model—exchanging first-year writing for the first-year seminar—see Runciman.

² The dominant model of English departments housing writing is primarily historical rather than foundational. That philosophy, say, didn’t become the principal discipline through which undergraduate writing has been taught for the last hundred years is less a matter of disciplinary incompatibility than one of institutional and disciplinary politics and circumstances (see Russell).

³ Kuriloff provides another example of work that limits what should be a curriculum-wide discussion to scholars of English and composition only.

⁴ The term “outsider” has been employed in various contexts in relation to the teaching of writing, including pedagogical theory, the status of composition within English departments, working conditions, ESL instruction, and identity politics. For A.M. Tibbetts, “The theologian [linguist] is usually an outsider who wishes the insider (the composition teacher) to adopt the theologian’s views”

(94). For Susan Miller, the preferential status of literature scholars within English departments comes at the expense of compositionists—the “outsiders who make the insiders insiders” (54). For Mary Cayton, adjunct writing faculty are outsiders “in relation to ‘regular’ faculty and to the institution itself” (2). For Vivian Zamel, those whose “primary work is with ESL students, are perceived as ‘outsiders’” (108). And for Gesa Kirsh and Joy Ritche, “our own devalued identities can be powerful resources for knowing because the tension that arises from assuming the perspective of ‘outsiders within’ allows us to see what privileged insiders can not” (23).

⁵ Although our stories converge at Duke University’s Writing Program, we argue, ultimately, not for an approach identical to Duke’s, but one that shares some of its tenants. The program at Duke is independent of any department and reports directly to the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences. It is staffed primarily by post-doctoral fellows from a range of disciplines across the humanities and the social and natural sciences. Specializations in the last few years have included cultural anthropology, history, psychology, philosophy, political science, sociology, engineering, architecture, biology, performance studies, epidemiology, forestry, and linguistics—as well as literature and composition/rhetoric. The program is not operated under the assumption that insiders are (or will necessarily become) strong writing teachers. Candidates from fields less conventionally trained in or exposed to writing pedagogy are judged less on the basis of what they already know about writing pedagogy than by hiring committees’ sense of each candidate’s dedication to undergraduate education and promise to grow into strong writing teachers. For a detailed description of Duke’s Program, see Hilliard and Harris.

⁶ See Penrose and Geisler for a discussion of other factors affecting students’ sense of authority in academic writing.

⁷ For a discussion of the value of having a writing program represent the academy’s work as broadly as possible, see Moskovitz and Kellogg (320-321).

⁸ While Bazerman’s description of disciplinary training may be idealized, so may it be for STAL scholars. See “What Does it Mean to be a Writing Teacher?” in Smit, *The End of Composition Studies*.

⁹ David Chapman has argued against “replacing freshman composition with freshman seminars taught by faculty from departments across campus.” He reasons (from his own experience) that such courses will inevitably be taught by those “who have, perhaps, given a day or so to thinking seriously about how to teach writing to others” (59). We share his concern, but we hope it is clear that this is not the approach we have in mind. We can look at Duke University’s writing program for one example of how such scholars from other fields might be trained. Duke has made a commitment to taking the teaching of writing out of the hands of graduate students (except for a few special cases)—where, as at many institutions, these inexperienced teachers and novice scholars formerly did this work. In place

of graduate students, Duke's writing courses are taught by Ph.D.s with multi-year contracts, many of whom have come to Duke with significant college teaching experience. A number have held regular-rank faculty positions, and many have previously taught writing or writing-intensive classes. Duke Fellows are given training and attention that exceeds the norms for either graduate students or new faculty in many English departments: beginning with a three-week seminar on the teaching of academic writing prior to their first year in the program, fellows are expected to continue to develop as writing teachers and the program provides continual opportunities to support this development. Activities include faculty-led seminars on writing pedagogy, teaching collectives, Reflective Practitioner Groups centered on specific pedagogical issues, and visits to other instructors' writing classes. Program administrators formally visit classes, review a teaching portfolio produced by faculty in their second year, and give them feedback on their development as writing teachers. By the end of the first year, Duke's fellows probably have spent more time reflecting on their work as teachers than the majority of writing instructors in the country, particularly those at the graduate student level still completing course work, research and dissertations.

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Taking Stock: Surveying the Relationship of the Writing Center and TA Training

Melissa Ianetta, Michael McCamley, and Catherine Quick

[C]an one make a case for expanding the role of writing center tutoring in the training of classroom teachers on the basis of this study. . . ? The answer is both “no” and “yes.” No, because one should not presume to apply the results of a qualitative study beyond the study’s specific context. And yes, because, if not scientifically, then intuitively, one must assent that few activities provide as firm a ground for the transition of teachers to the classroom.

—Jane Cogie (83)

The relationship of the writing center and the composition program is an issue of general interest for writing program administrators (WPAs) in both settings (Balester and McDonald, Burnham and Jackson, Waldo).¹ As suggested by Cogie in the epigraph to this essay, for example, the role of the writing center in teacher development is of particular interest for WPAs at institutions that use graduate students as composition teachers. Alongside Cogie, such scholars as Muriel Harris and Peggy F. Broder have persuasively argued that tutoring provides valuable experience in talking about writing and broadens TAs’ understanding of writers and writing processes. However, while there has been a fair amount written on the benefits of tutoring experience for future and present teachers of writing, previous research in this area has taken the shape of firsthand testimonials in which authors provide local commentary to explain the relationship between tutoring and teaching as they have experienced it firsthand (King et al., Leeson, Rotenberg) or as they have seen it develop among TAs in their own centers (Anderson et al., Harris). Other scholars draw upon common tenets of one-to-one writing pedagogy to speculate what writing centers can, generally speaking, offer to teacher development (Broder, Clark). Even case studies, which use a more evidence-based approach, still argue from a scant handful

of tutor experiences to suggest possible relationships between tutoring and teaching (Child, Cogie). While the level of agreement in these individual testimonies suggest areas in which tutoring experience may facilitate the development of future teachers of writing, the heavy reliance in these studies upon the authors' personal perceptions and experiences make it difficult either to apply their results beyond the authors context or, when disagreement exists, to assess contradictory assertions of firsthand observation.

The current study therefore attempts to broaden the evidence base concerning the relationship between tutoring and teaching beyond individual observation. With the assistance of a grant from the Council of Writing Program Administrators,² we surveyed WPAs in writing programs and writing centers in order to describe the extant roles of writing centers in TA development programs and to determine whether prior claims based in individual perceptions would be supported by the experiences of other WPAs—not only those in institutions that use the writing center in TA training, but also in those programs that do not include such a requirement and where working in the writing center was an optional experience for graduate students. Finally, we wanted to examine what, if any, negative elements might be attributed to writing center involvement in TA preparation. This essay, then, first reviews previous scholarship to establish an inventory of claims concerning the writing center's role in TA training and then describes the results of a nationwide survey. It concludes with a discussion of the opportunities and challenges survey respondents associated with this sort of TA preparation and reflection upon the possible implications of our results. By expanding the scholarly gaze beyond the local scene and then investigating that tensions that emerge between writing centers and writing programs, this essay attempts to improve our understanding of the relationship between tutoring and teaching and to complicate our understanding of the potential costs and benefits of such programs.

TEACHING AND TUTORING: SURVEYING THE CLAIMS

Although claims about the role of the writing center in teacher preparation have been based in individual experience, in many areas these personal reflections demonstrate a readily-recognizable degree of consensus. That is, despite the authors' differences in institutional locale and intended audiences, with two notable exceptions, there is little contradiction among the assertions. Whether writing specifically for a writing center audience (King et al., Child, Jackson, Manguson, Leeson, Rottenberg), a more broadly-conceived audience of writing program administrators (Broder, Cogie), or to the general audience of writing specialists that comprises the field of

composition studies (Clark, Collins), researchers in this area not only argue for the value of writing center experience for teachers of writing, they also make these arguments along remarkably similar lines. When reviewing the range of scholarship, then, distinct trends emerge. The oft-repeated claims that form these trends these can be grouped into three categories: comprehension of subject matter; communication of subject matter; and assessment of student needs.

Comprehension of Subject Matter

An enduring claim is that tutoring experience offers TAs an improved understanding of the writing process. Over twenty years ago Lee Ann Leeson claimed in *The Writing Center Journal* that working in the center helped broaden her understanding of the writing process by leading her to realize the extent to which, prior to gaining tutoring experience, her “ideas of effective writing techniques were influenced by the methods [she] used,” in her own writing (19). Working in the center, Leeson suggests, exposes the would-be teacher to a variety of writing processes. In a similar vein, Muriel Harris recently argued that writing center practice enriches one’s theoretical understanding of process:

Reading about writing processes provides a background for understanding how we write, but that knowledge is one step removed from observing writers at work and seeing the messiness and reality of actual composing. . . . As tutors, however, they sit with writers at work and gain a close understanding of when and how to intervene and what classroom activities help develop students’ understanding of their own writing processes. (197-8)

Such assertions about the process-based relationship between tutoring and teaching are foundational to scholarship in this area. In terms similar to those used by Leeson and Harris, Broder (37), Cogie (90) and Clark (347) have claimed that writing center work helps TAs better understand writing processes. Tutoring may facilitate more than comprehension of the writing process, however; Broder argues that “after a term or two, tutors are more confident of their understanding of grammar” (41) as well. From abstract rhetorical principles to specific mechanical knowledge, then, WPAs have advocated tutoring as a way to understand the broad range of knowledge that comprises the material taught in the writing classroom.

Communication of Subject Matter

Just as scholars have argued that writing center work helps TAs better understand the subject(s) of writing, so too have they claimed that tutoring improves one's ability to impart this knowledge to students. Clark, for example, states that "working closely with students in the Writing Center increases new instructors' awareness of students' needs and concerns, enabling them to view their classes as groups of individuals" (349). Broder (37), Cogie (80) and Harris (198) all concur with Clark's assertions: not only does such experience enhance TAs' general understanding of the importance of "responding to each writer with care" (Cogie 80), but it is also thought to facilitate TAs' specific response strategies, for one of the most popular claims in the literature is that tutor-teachers offer more useful feedback to their students. As Broder describes:

[T]he writing center . . . provides valuable experience in dealing with the challenging, delicate task of making suggestions for revision. . . . Tutors learn that reading the whole paper before criticizing it makes it easier to see its strengths and to see it as a draft to be improved rather than a finished product to be proofread. (40)

In other words, tutors not only understand better what feedback to give but also how to give it; as Harris explains, tutors do more than "learn to prioritize in terms of what to work on first" (198); they further discover to "look beyond the page for clues as to how to help the writer, and they also learn how to respond to the writer in ways other than giving back comments, such as those written on the margins of student papers" (Harris 198). In sum, then, the argument that tutors better understand how to communicate abstract rhetorical principles effectively emerges as a clear trend.

Assessment of Student Needs

Related to arguments about tutors' communicative skills are claims about their abilities to assess student needs. Some assertions in this area are based in tutor experience with students' texts; for example, it has been claimed repeatedly that teachers with writing center experience are exposed to a broad range of student writing from across the disciplines. Because of this exposure, tutors are not only more able to assess accurately the strengths and weaknesses of student texts (Broder 39, Clark 348) but also construct more effective writing prompts (Broder 40, Clark 349, Harris 199-200, Lesson 20, Rottenberg 12). Representative of this line of argument is Lynnea Chapman King's assertion that her experiences with "innumerable assignments . . . and the students who seek help with them have caused [her] to

. . . restructure not only [her] assignments, but also [her] courses” (King et al. 4). Given tutors’ exposure to a wide range of assignment prompts—and students who are confused by them—it is unsurprising that tutors and administrators frequently cite the impact of such experiences on the assignments they later construct as teachers.

It is also claimed that tutors come to assess student learning through a pedagogical emphasis on listening (Broder 38-9, Child 175-7, Cogie 80, Harris 201). Writing center work requires careful listening, and as Broder notes, such experience encourages tutor-teachers to bring active listening into the classroom:

A tutor comes to realize that the two voices in the dialogue of the conference ought by no means to be heard equally. The tutor’s role is not to tell the student what to do with his paper but to help him to discover what it is that he himself wishes to do. The ability to *listen* to the student, to attend with respect to what he has to say, is one of a writing teacher’s most valuable assets. (Broder 38-9)

The range of writers encountered in the writing center, then, requires tutors to engage in student-centered learning. By working with a diversity of writers on a range of writing tasks, tutors learn to engage in student-centered pedagogies. And, as the spectrum of pertinent scholarship agrees, such pedagogies carry over into their teaching.

The Areas of Dissensus: Establishing Agendas and Assigning Grades

Although there are areas of strong agreement among scholars concerning the kinds of influence of writing center exerts over the formation of teacher pedagogy, there are also topics of pointed disagreement. Possibly the most contested issue is the relationship of tutoring experience to the ability to manage time efficiently. It has been argued that writing center experience both offers TAs an improved ability to manage time (Broder 40, Harris 200-1) and has a negative impact on this same skill (Child 175-8). On the one hand, as Harris argues, because tutors’ and clients’ “time together is limited, tutors learn how to become efficient users of time” (200). On the other hand, Child’s study documents tutor-teachers’ frustration with classroom time constraints (172-5). As Child cynically observes, these tensions might arise from the differing concepts of time that define the tutorial and classroom:

In general, agendas for tutorials are highly personalized and situation specific; they are seldom if ever written out. Agendas for the classroom, on the other hand, tend to be rather generic and are often little more than filing cabinet objects. (172)

As suggested by the contrast between Harris and Child's positions, although scholars agree that writing center work influences tutors' management of time, there are contradictory opinions on how this ability translates into the classroom.

In addition to the dissensus on time management, there has also been disagreement over the impact of writing center experience on individuals' ability and comfort with grading. Child, for example, describes former tutors' discomfort with evaluation (177-8). Cogie's results, however, appear to refute those of Child. That is, as Cogie claims, her "findings . . . differed sharply from Child's. Unlike Child's first-time teachers [with tutoring experience] those in my study did not express frustration or anxiety at the differences [to tutoring] posed by graded, large group work" (80). While the differing data from Child and Cogie's examinations of similar populations might suggest a new avenue for investigation, an even more notable contrast exists between Child's critical perspective of the tutoring-grading relationship and Broder's assertions that prior tutoring experience, in fact, facilitates grading expertise. Broder argues that

[T]he writing center can help to prepare tutors for the future necessity of assigning grades to students' work. . . . [T]he experience of having worked with so many students does help the tutor when later, the chores of grading must be confronted. A tutor's writing center work has enabled her to see scores of student papers that represent a wide range of ability: before the tutor faces her own classroom she has acquired a soundly-based knowledge of what she can expect these students to be able to do. (42)

Child and Cogie agree that tutoring impacts time management ability yet disagree diametrically on the positive or negative nature of that impact, so too there is a high level of agreement that working in the writing center also influences one's grading-related ability and attitude, yet assessments of this impact range from the clearly positive (Broder) to the highly negative (Child).

Criticism of the Writing Center as "Training Wheels"

Even as a review of the scholarship reveals trends among individual testimony concerning the value of tutoring in teacher preparation, so does such a survey indicate a similarity among critiques of such practice. Melissa Nicolas' recent polemic against such programs in the pages of *Praxis* represents well those individuals who advocate against mandatory writing center experience for TAs:

I know from talking with some of these graduate students that the message they get from this set-up is that tutoring must be easy and not necessarily all that important. After all, their thinking goes, they have no particular training, expertise, or even interest in the matter, and, yet, they are given that job to do. In addition, since graduate students in this model must tutor in the writing center before they enter the classroom, the writing center is positioned as a place for novices, the not-ready-for-the-classroom place, not necessarily a place for people with skills and training. (Nicolas par. 7)

In other words, just as writing centers resist a narrow identification as the place for bad writers, so too should they refuse to serve as the place for untrained graduate instructors. Concurring with Nicolas' critiques, the practice at such well-known and well-regarded writing centers as those of New York University, Ohio State and Purdue has been to hire graduate students tutors with previous teaching experience. Along these lines, Mary Wisoki, a former director of the NYU writing center observes:

From its beginnings in 1980, the New York University Writing Center required that TAs receive training as teachers before they could tutor. In 1980, Lil Brannon argued convincingly ... that tutoring requires more people skills and a broader knowledge of composition than FY comp courses.... I also think that the Center is a very public face for the writing program—a bad tutor can do damage to lots of students as well as to the Center's reputation. Finally, some TAs discover they really aren't interested in working one-on-one—or that working in the Center isn't "easier" than teaching, like they first assume. I wanted TAs to figure this out prior to any appointment in the Center. (Wisocki n.p.)

While many WPAs may attribute a range of values to writing center experience for TAs, then, there are also signs that other WPAs find such programs less than desirable. Accordingly, in addition to investigating the influence of tutoring on teaching, the survey provided respondents a forum to comment upon the appropriateness of using new TAs in the writing center.

METHOD: SURVEYING THE FIELD

As suggested in this review of the literature, there is a level of consensus concerning the areas of impact of writing center experience on teacher pedagogy. Each of the extant studies, however, is largely based in the author's

experience and, to a lesser extent, reflection upon previous relevant scholarship. By contrast, the goal of the present study was to broaden the experiential base that comprises the evidence for the relationship of tutoring and teaching to move the investigation beyond first person accounts towards a broader investigation of trends in administrative attitudes and practices. The researchers thus developed a survey instrument which was distributed over WCENTER and WPA-L.

When creating the survey instrument, we drew upon the three areas of consensus we had identified in the literature (comprehension of subject matter, communication of subject matter, and assessment of student needs) and the two areas of dissensus (time management and grading) to create an attitudes inventory. In addition to those items based in the scholarship, one statement—"TAs with tutoring experience more quickly grasp postmodern composition theory"—was not drawn from the previous research. Rather, it was included to assess any "halo effect"; that is, to determine if respondents were inclined to attribute all positive statements to writing center experience.

Survey data was gathered in two parts. In the first, participants were asked to respond to items in an attitudes inventory (see Table 1) using a five point scale in which 1 = "Strongly Agree" and 5 = "Strongly Disagree." In addition, the instrument solicited information about programs' policies and procedures. Participants were also encouraged to include any discursive commentary that would help the researchers understand their responses. A copy of the survey instrument is appended to this essay.

Table 1. Items Included in Administrator Attitudes Inventory

In comparison to first-year TAs without such experience, I believe TAs with tutoring experience are:

- better prepared to teach
- more prepared to discuss writing
- more able to assess accurately student learning
- more comfortable establishing daily lesson plans and adhering to them
- more comfortable establishing semester-long agendas in their syllabi and then adhering to them
- better prepared to grade student essays
- able to more accurately assess the strengths and weaknesses of student texts

In comparison to first-year TAs without such experience, I believe TAs with tutoring experience:

- better appreciate diversity in students' home cultures
- offer more useful feedback to student writers
- better understand grammatical and mechanical principles

- construct more effective assignment prompts
- have a better understanding of the writing process
- more quickly grasp postmodern composition theory
- more effectively incorporate listening into their pedagogy

DATA: SURVEYING THE RESPONSES

The responses received represented a range of administrators at a variety of institutions: Among the 28 usable responses were 12 from writing center directors, 10 from composition program directors, 4 from respondents who both administered the writing center and the composition program, and 2 from individuals who administered other types of writing programs. Thus, the administrative perspective of both the writing center and the composition program are represented in these results.

Just as a range of administrative perspectives is represented in these findings, so too, these data represent a range of TA preparation programs. 15 of these respondents worked in programs where writing center work was always or sometimes required of TAs as part of the teacher preparation programs. By contrast, 13 respondents were from programs with no such requirement; these individuals described programs in which writing center experience was in addition to, not an integral part of, TA training. The synthesis of attitudes described in this survey, then, represents a broader range of WPAs than merely those of individuals who already participate in such programs and so expands the perspectival base beyond that represented in the previous scholarship.

The last item on the demographic section of the survey focused on those issues of money and prestige that coalesce around TAs in the writing center. That is, as Nicolas argues, writing center administrators may be cautious about the center's role in teacher preparation due to fears that such participation can make tutoring look like a "lesser" position: a less difficult, less prestigious job that deserves less pay. Looking at the data, however, suggests that the majority of respondents work at schools where assignments to the center and the classroom are seen, at least, as fiscally equivalent:

Table 2. TA Compensation

If all other determining factors are equal (ex: M.A. or Ph.D. candidate, progress towards completion) what effect does a TA's assignment have on their stipend:

- | | |
|----------------------|----|
| • Teachers earn more | 5 |
| • Tutors earn more | 1 |
| • They earn the same | 22 |

The information generated by the second portion of the survey, which focused on administrators' attitudes towards TAs' writing center experience, yielded a less consistent data pool than did the demographical portion of the instrument. That is, in total we received 28 responses, but many of those were incomplete or contained answers that were not usable (such as lengthy discursive responses in lieu of using the form's five point scale). The annotations at the bottom of Table 3 explain how many responses we were able to use for each item.

**Table 3. WPA Attitude Inventory
 Response Means and Standard Deviations**

1= Strongly Agree 5=Strongly Disagree
 mean (standard deviation)

Item (#)	WC requirement ¹	No WC req ²	WC WPAs ³	Comp WPAs ⁴	Total ⁵
better prepared to teach. (1)	1.45 (0.93)	2.61 (1.44)	1.91 (1.44)	2.23 (1.05)	2.10 (1.35)
more prepared to discuss writing (2)	1.45 (0.93)	2.39 (1.64)	1.82 (1.60)	2.15 (1.10)	1.98 (1.43)
more able to assess accurately student learning (3)	2.00 (1.00)	2.53 (1.28)	2.36 (1.36)	2.35 (0.94)	2.30 (1.17)
more comfortable establishing daily lesson plans and adhering to them (4)	3.00 (0.89)	2.53 (1.15)	2.91 (1.04)	2.85 (1.00)	2.73 (1.05)
more comfortable establishing semester-long agendas in their syllabi and then adhering to them (5)	2.90 (0.94)	2.53 (1.15)	2.82 (0.98)	2.85 (1.10)	2.72 (1.06)
better prepared to grade student essays (6)	1.63 (0.67)	2.64 (1.60)	2.00 (1.54)	2.30 (0.94)	2.20 (1.35)
able to more accurately assess the strengths and weaknesses of student texts (7)	1.36 (0.50)	2.39 (1.52)	1.82 (1.60)	2.15 (0.81)	1.94 (1.27)
better appreciate diversity in students' home cultures (8)	2.80 (1.39)	2.23 (1.16)	2.70 (1.57)	2.67 (0.86)	2.48 (1.27)
offer more useful feedback to student writers (9)	1.72 (0.64)	2.25 (1.22)	1.81 (1.17)	2.35 (0.57)	2.02 (1.02)
better understand grammatical and mechanical principles (10)	1.91 (0.54)	2.50 (1.05)	2.00 (0.90)	2.40 (0.84)	2.08 (0.86)
construct more effective assignment prompts (11)	2.09 (0.83)	2.50 (1.09)	1.91 (0.83)	2.90 (0.87)	2.32 (0.98)
have a better understanding of the writing process (12)	1.82 (0.87)	2.14 (1.09)	2.00 (1.26)	2.10 (0.73)	2.00 (1.00)
more quickly grasp postmodern composition theory (13)	3.54 (1.36)	2.66 (1.15)	3.20 (1.03)	3.33 (1.33)	3.08 (1.01)

more effectively incorporate listening into their pedagogy (14)	2.09 (0.94)	2.14 (1.10)	2.09 (1.04)	2.20 (0.91)	2.12 (1.01)
-----------------------------------------------------------------	-------------	-------------	-------------	-------------	-------------

¹ programs requiring writing center work as a part of TA training; n = 11

² programs not requiring writing center work as a part of TA training; n = 13

³ writing center WPAs; n = 10-11

⁴ composition program WPAs; n = 10

⁵ total responses = 25

Several predictable trends emerge in Table 3: WPAs in programs with a writing center, for example, generally exhibit a more positive attitude towards integrating the writing center in TA preparation than do WPAs in programs with no such requirement. Notably, however, the majority of the exceptions to this trend are found in items 4 and 5, which relate to time management and represent dissensus in the scholarship, and item 13, related to postmodern composition theory. In reference to time management, the average of responses to assertions that tutors were “more comfortable establishing daily lesson plans and adhering to them” (item 4) and “more comfortable establishing semester-long agendas in their syllabi and adhering to them” (item 5) were 2.73 (SD 1.05) and 2.72 (SD 1.06), respectively. When considering these data in light of the survey’s 5-point scale (1 = Strongly Agree; 5 = Strongly Disagree), these numbers seem to reflect the ambiguity of the previous scholarship; both scores are notably near the uncertainty of a 3.00 score. More specifically, the averaged attitudes of WPAs who work in programs where writing center work is required of TAs is, in fact, a perfectly ambiguous 3.00 (SD 0.89) on item 4 and a nearly perfect 2.90 (0.94) on item 5, thus reflecting the contradiction of the published scholarship to a remarkable degree.

In response to the other item related to dissensus in the scholarship—TAs with tutoring experience are “better prepared to grade”—WPAs seem to have a more optimistic view than that expressed in Child’s study. The overall mean response to this item (2.20; SD 1.35) and, more specifically the response from WPAs in programs with a writing center requirement (1.63; SD 0.67) suggests that respondents believe tutoring improves a new writing instructors’ ability to grade. These data align the responding group’s attitude with Broder’s assertion that “the writing center can help to prepare tutors for the future necessity of assigning grades to student work” (42).

Given the high correlation of these data with the published scholarship, the results of this study suggest that the positive opinions that dominate the research express views beyond those held by the individual authors; rather, these assertions are supported by experiences of a national pool of WPAs, a group that includes individuals in writing centers and in composition programs. Such opinions seem more reliable when considered in light of item 13 (TAs with tutoring experience “better understand postmodern com-

position theory”). Across all demographic categories, this is the item with which respondents most strongly disagree. Such reactions suggest that the WPAs positive attitudes towards other items on the inventory can be read as indicative of their views and not the result of a generalized “halo effect.” In light of these data, the overall suggestion that respondents agree that writing center experience is a useful component of TA preparation seems highly persuasive.

IT’S LIKE COMPARING ORANGES AND FIRST-YEAR WRITERS: RESPONDENTS’ COMMENTS

Not all the information by the survey supported the use of new TAs in the writing center, however. While the attitudes inventory indicates that the writing center provides a site of enrichment for TA preparation programs, respondents’ discursive comments suggested potential conflicts. Of the eight individuals who commented on the effect of integrating writing center experience in TA training, three spoke of such experience positively, yet four spoke of it in mixed terms, and one respondent was highly negative about such a requirement. Among the positive reasons cited for writing center experience were that such TAs were “better prepared for all aspects of teaching writing,” and “TAs who tutor [in the respondent’s writing center] enter with a much broader sense of how writing is taught and practiced across the curriculum.” One respondent aptly summarized the many benefits that have been attributed to tutoring experience:

I strongly believe that tutoring experience provides a strong background for new TA’s. Sitting next to the tutee and looking into her face as she struggles with an assignment increases awareness of the importance of clear and purposeful assignments, as well as positive, encouraging, constructively critical feedback. Tutoring experience provides the teacher with a deeper understanding of the writing process and its connection to thinking; it also helps teachers to see the complex relationship between the writer’s literacy history (i.e., family, language, and education backgrounds) and his or her writing.

Given these many benefits, it is unsurprising that one respondent simply wrote, “We don’t have any mandatory writing center service for new TAs, but I wish we did.”

While such comments echo the praise for such initiatives that dominates the pertinent scholarship, other comments were more mixed. Two respondents argued that pedagogical implications of writing center work were not inherent to tutoring experience but resulted from the pedagogy

and practice of a specific center or were even the inborn qualities of the tutors themselves. As one WPA notes:

Many of your questions assume that consultant training is responsible for the improvement of certain skills, when I think that the selection process facilitates the process as much as the training. For instance, I'm inclined to say that as much as possible, I take people who show signs of thoughtfulness and reflection: they tend to be better listeners from the get-go.

By drawing attention to the pedagogical differences that individualize writing centers, this respondent questions any implicit value attributed to the act of tutoring by arguments that address the intrinsic value of working in a "typical writing center" (Broder 38) or that reason "intuitively" (Cogie 83) for the generic value of such experience. In a similar vein, another survey participant responded:

I think the degree to which people with WC experience are more accustomed / not accustomed (and better at) the things listed [in the attitudes inventory] depends on where they've worked... W/ people coming from the really good WC, they feel very prepared to respond to student writing, but they're not very comfortable with actually grading it.

Even while echoing ambivalence towards the relationship between tutoring experience and grading, this response also draws attention to the varieties of tutoring experiences and calls into question any essentialist statements about the absolute value of such experiences.

In addition to the positive and mixed comments were two respondents who questioned the value of such programs from the writing center's point of view. In this vein, one participant stated:

I'm pretty neutral about whether and how tutoring prepares TAs for teaching. Our graduate tutors are required to have at least a year's composition teaching experience before they can apply for WC positions. I think this requirement makes for excellent tutoring. In turn, I firmly believe that tutoring has a very positive impact on their subsequent teaching, particularly on their construction of assignments, their comments on student work, and their ability to discuss writing with their students.

Here, then, is another challenge to TA preparation programs that include a writing center component: if tutoring can serve as preparation for teaching is the reverse true: is it appropriate to use teaching as mandatory preparation for tutoring? And, if so, what are the implications for the writing center when it serves as a site of TA preparation? That is, while the attitudes survey suggests

that WPAs are in agreement that there are potential benefits from TA preparation programs that include a writing center component, there is less consensus about what benefits such programs might offer the writing center. One respondent, in particular, summed up this perspective in a vivid metaphor:

[A]lthough tutoring often enriches students' experiences and helps them become considerably better TAs (and this seems almost uniformly true—they are better in so many ways), I would not make tutoring a prerequisite—and certainly would not if all grad students expect to receive wc/TA appts. This is unfair to the students they might tutor. Just as with TA selection, the first consideration ought to be for students—will this person offer top-notch teaching or tutoring? If not, they shouldn't be taken on any more than a floundering med student ought to get better by missing my vein 19 times ... keep practicing on oranges!

In sum, then, while the attitudes inventory strongly suggests a general belief in the value of tutoring experience for teachers of writing, the discursive comments raise some specific critiques of such initiatives from the perspective of the writing center.

IMPLICATIONS: SURVEYING THE POSSIBILITIES

While many WPAs in both the writing center and the writing program will no doubt sympathize with the respondent who would prefer we find practice “oranges” for our future teachers of composition, the generally positive opinions documented by this study suggest that such programs will continue to exist. Indeed, given the many benefits of tutoring experience for future teachers of writing, such programs seem not merely inevitable, but highly desirable for future teachers of writing if not necessarily for the writing centers in which they work. The results of this study, however, also suggest considerations for WPAs in charge of these programs:

Center-Based TA Training Programs Must Account for the Relationship between Writing Center and Writing Program Pedagogies and Goals

Such advice may seem self-evident to many WPAs; after all, it was over ten years ago that Mark Waldo argued convincingly that writing centers and composition programs should share “pedagogical philosophies” and “complementary goals” (74). And yet, there remain intrinsic, material differences between the classroom and one-to-one teaching environments. As Valerie Balester and James McDonald observed in the pages of this journal, however, such differences—and the tensions they beget—are too frequently glossed over:

WPAs seemed to define their territories [the writing center and the writing program] in ways that discouraged them from becoming involved in the policies and practices in each other's domain. . . . Respondents almost never described coming to an agreement about philosophies and goals as a result of their collaboration. And when two WPAs had a fundamental disagreement over goals and philosophies (for example, over whether the writing center should focus on grammatical errors), the writing center might have an uneasy, even marginal position in the composition curriculum. (77)

Although such a “marginal position” for writing centers would seem counter to any potential benefits of center-based TA preparation, those programs that relegate new TAs to the center with little classroom discussion of the relationship of teaching and tutoring seem to enact the role Balester and McDonald describe. Teacher preparation programs that do not explicitly address those unique pedagogies of one-to-one writing instruction that have emerged in writing center scholarship lose the opportunity to expose TAs to an entire body of teaching knowledge. Also, through their very silence on the pedagogical differences between the center and the classroom, such programs continue to marginalize the writing center experience that they ostensibly value; writing center work becomes pre-theoretical, pre-professional practice that precedes, for example, the “real” expert knowledge gained through the composition pedagogy course and the “real” work of teaching in a classroom environment.

By contrast, acknowledging both the harmony and dissonance between classroom- and center-based writing instruction deepens TAs' understanding of both scenes of instruction and the pedagogies there enacted. For example, exposing TAs to current areas of inquiry in writing center studies, such as definitions of the writing center as site or a method (Boquet), the abstract implications of one-to-one tutoring (Black), and the critical implications of the postmodern writing center (Grimm), not only impacts future teachers' career-long understanding of the theoretical tensions and practical complexities that coalesce around the writing center, but also elaborates and improves the critical apparatus that TAs will take into their first classrooms.

Evaluations of Both the Writing Center and the Composition Program Should Assess the Impact of Center-Based TA Preparation on the Writing Center

Clearly emerging in this study, as in previous research, is an argument for the value of writing center experience in TA preparation. What is less clear, however, is the impact of such programs on the writing center. At first glance such programs may appear a win-win situation: the TAs get experience talk-

ing about writing, and the center gets graduate student tutors. Upon closer examination, however, the potential effects of such programs on the writing center may be less than utopic: while first-year writing might gain more expert teachers from a TA preparation program that includes the writing center, for example, the center itself may accrue an increased turnover rate through such programs, for once they are trained to competency, TAs are taken out of the center and put into the classroom. Centers that rely on TA training programs for their writing center staffs can therefore lack continuity. Likewise, mandating writing center work as part of TA preparation disempowers the writing center by removing its ability to select tutors on the basis of ability and interest. Thus, rather than giving an unproblematic “gift” of tutors to the center, such programs are actually asking the center to take on the increased challenge of perennial tutor training and need to be viewed as such. In their assessments, then, WPAs in both the writing center and the composition program need to carefully attend to the impact of TA training on the ongoing success of the writing center and to recognize the center resources such programs consume.

Ultimately, while the results of this study suggest that writing center tutoring is an extremely valuable experience for TAs in writing programs, the results of such programs for the writing center are less clear. If we agree that the writing classroom and the writing center are instructional scenes we equally value, our arguments concerning training TAs in the writing center must take into account more than the effects of such programs on the TAs but on the writing center. Only by considering the impact of TA training on both educational scenes will the programs yield the full pedagogical benefits of such initiatives, not just for the TAs but for the programs as well.

NOTES

¹ For purposes of this study, “composition program” designates curriculum-based writing programs, such as first-year writing, and writing program administrator (WPA) refers to individuals who lead composition programs and/or writing centers; “tutoring” refers to ungraded one-to-one writing instruction that takes place in a writing center and “teaching” refers to graded, curriculum-based writing instruction that takes place in a writing classroom.

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**Appendix:
Survey of TA Training Programs**

The goal of this survey is to gather information from writing programs which employ graduate student TAs who also have the opportunity to work in the writing center. If you have any questions, please contact Melissa Ianetta at ianetta@okstate.edu. Thank you for your participation!

Part I: About You and Your Program:

1. What do you administer?
____ Writing Center
____ Writing Program
____ Both
____ Other: _____

2. What is the approximate enrollment for your institution? _____

3. What graduate degrees does your department offer (check all that apply):
____ MA in English
____ PhD in English
____ MFA in English
____ Other: _____

4. Are the teaching assistants (TAs) in your program ever **required** to work in the writing center at any time during their assistantship?
____ Yes
____ No
____ Sometimes (Please describe in comments section at the end of the survey)

If no, please skip to question 8 of the survey

5. Approximately how long has writing center tutoring been part of the professional development of your TAs? _____ years

6. Generally speaking, how many semesters are TAs required to work in the writing center **prior** to teaching?
____ One
____ Two
____ More than two: please specify _____
____ None; TAs teach and tutor simultaneously or teach prior to tutoring

7. How many hours a week are TAs with a full time appointment required to tutor?
____ 1-5
____ 6-10
____ 10-15
____ 15-20
____ More than 20

8. Do TAs with a full time appointment who tutor have other responsibilities as part of their TA position?
____ No
____ Yes, they teach _____ sections of writing
____ Yes, they observe experienced teachers of writing ____ hours a week

-
- _____ Yes, they are required to take part in other activities (Please explain at the end)
9. If all other determining factors are equal (ex: MA or PhD candidate, progress towards completion) what effect does a TA's assignment have on their stipend:
- _____ TAs teaching earn more
_____ TAs in the writing center earn more
_____ These assignments carry equal stipends
10. What kind(s) of professional development are TAs provided in the writing center? (Check all that apply)
- _____ Pre-semester orientation of approximately _____ hours
_____ Required course in tutoring methods
_____ Assigned readings on tutoring methods outside of required courses
_____ On-going mentoring by experienced tutors
_____ Workshops conducted throughout the semester
_____ Observation of tutorials conducted by experienced tutors
_____ Evaluation by writing center director
_____ Other (Please describe in the comment section at the end of the survey)
11. If there is a tutoring course, does it carry credit(s)? yes no
12. If there is a credit bearing tutoring course, is it graduate or undergraduate credit(s)? Graduate Undergraduate
13. TAs in your program begin teaching their own classes:
- _____ First semester of graduate school
_____ Second semester of graduate school
_____ Second year of graduate school
_____ Depends on TA's previous teaching experience
_____ Other (Please describe in the comment section at the end of the survey)
14. What professional development activities are offered to TAs teaching in your program? (check all that apply)
- _____ Pre-semester orientation of approximately _____ hours
_____ Required graduate course in composition pedagogy
_____ Participation in a peer mentoring program
_____ Observation of experienced teachers' classes
_____ Required ongoing workshops during the semester
_____ Optional ongoing workshops during the semester
_____ Available files or website of teaching ideas
_____ Evaluative observations by composition program personnel
_____ Other (Please describe in the comment section at the end of the survey)

Part II: Perceived Effects of Tutoring on Teaching

Please respond to the following statements by **bolding** the number that best represents your response.

1= Strongly Agree

5= Strongly Disagree

In comparison to first-year TAs without such experience, I believe TAs with tutoring experience are:

better prepared to teach.

1

2

3

4

5

more prepared to discuss writing

1 2 3 4 5

more able to assess accurately student learning

1 2 3 4 5

more comfortable establishing daily lesson plans and adhering to them

1 2 3 4 5

more comfortable establishing semester-long agendas in their syllabi and then adhering to them

1 2 3 4 5

better prepared to grade student essays

1 2 3 4 5

able to more accurately assess the strengths and weaknesses of student texts

1 2 3 4 5

In comparison to first-year TAs without such experience, I believe TAs with tutoring experience:

better appreciate diversity in students' home cultures

1 2 3 4 5

offer more useful feedback to student writers

1 2 3 4 5

better understand grammatical and mechanical principles

1 2 3 4 5

construct more effective assignment prompts

1 2 3 4 5

have a better understanding of the writing process

1 2 3 4 5

more quickly grasp postmodern composition theory

1 2 3 4 5

more effectively incorporate listening into their pedagogy

1 2 3 4 5

Part III: Comments

Please use this section to follow up on your answers elsewhere in this survey and/or to offer any other information you think might help us to better understand your responses. **Thank you for your participation!**



Disciplinary and Transfer: Students' Perceptions of Learning to Write¹

Linda S. Bergmann and Janet Zepernick

INTRODUCTION

As writing teachers and Writing Center/Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) director at the small Midwestern technological university at which this research was conducted, we repeatedly observed a tendency among students to actively reject the idea that what they learned about writing in high school or in first year composition (FYC) courses could be applied to the writing they were asked to do in courses in other disciplines. This rejection is particularly problematic because the writing requirements at many institutions, ours included, stem from the belief that writing is a skill that can, in part, be taught in a writing class dissociated from other disciplinary content, and the corollary belief that what students learn in their FYC courses can serve as the groundwork for further writing instruction in more discipline-specific contexts. As our university's requirement that students take either four "Writing Emphasized" (WE) courses or two "Writing Intensive" (WI) courses after FYC suggests, faculty and administrators shared the view that learning to write occurs in three roughly sequential stages: first, students enrolled in the FYC course learn generalizable techniques and expectations of academic argument and expository prose; next, students enrolled in WE and WI courses start to learn both the domain knowledge and the discipline-specific genres and conventions that characterize the discourse communities into which their education seeks to induct them; and finally, students engaged in senior design projects or student-faculty research become apprentice members of a community of practice defined in part by its writing goals and techniques. This characterization of learning to write was widely accepted by faculty across the disciplines teaching WI courses and senior capstones, and it did help overcome the idea that writing could be learned in one or two composition courses.²

But however well this conceptualization overcame the "inoculation" approach to teaching writing, it was nonetheless called into question as we

fielded informal (and by and large friendly) complaints from our engineering colleagues about the quality of student writing, in mechanics (failure to spell-check and to punctuate successfully), in usage, and in what we consider rhetorical skills, such as using effective organization for a particular purpose and appropriately addressing particular audiences. In informal conversation in the Writing Center and elsewhere, some students readily admitted that they thought they could be much more indifferent about such aspects of writing with technologically-oriented faculty, based on the common misconception that employers and faculty outside the English Department are concerned only with ideas and verifiable “facts,” and therefore do not notice or object to rhetorical flaws or mechanical carelessness (at least until these faculty lowered their grades for ineffective writing). Moreover, the terms students used to characterize the kind of writing they did in FYC and other courses in the English Department included “fluff,” “b.s.,” and “flowery,” whereas in talking about the writing they did in other classes, students used descriptors such as “concise,” “to the point,” and “not a lot of flowery adjectives.” Hence, we suspected that students grouped everything they were being taught about academic writing in FYC under the heading of “How to b.s. your way through an English paper with a lot of flowery adjectives and other fluff,” and therefore failed to perceive the transferability of most of what these courses purported to teach them about writing.

We decided to take these comments from faculty and students seriously, as indicating that students may not be transferring to their upper level writing experiences the knowledge that we hoped they had acquired in the earlier stages of the process. This did not seem an instance of the phenomenon, described by Joseph Williams and Gregory Colomb, of students tending to backtrack in language and organizational skills when facing a new and more sophisticated set of expectations for their writing—particularly when we heard students actively reject the possibility that what they learned in high school English classes or FYC could be applied to writing in their disciplines.³ Our project, then, was undertaken to discern how students perceived their own process of learning to write and to understand this attitude among students who are otherwise relatively high achievers and well prepared for college in terms of academic background and socio-economic indicators.⁴

Longitudinal studies of how students acquire discipline-specific writing skills, such as those by Winsor, Chiseri-Strater, Herrington and Curtis, and Blakeslee, as well as the new abolitionists in Petraglia’s *Reconceiving Writing, Rethinking Writing Instruction*, make a strong case that the orderly progression implied by a FYC-to-writing-in-the-disciplines model is little more

than an optimistic fiction. These findings accorded with what we were hearing from students and faculty and suggested that although this “optimistic fiction” had been very useful in engaging faculty in this university’s WAC program, it was based on ideas about a kind and degree of transfer that did not seem to be taking place among our students. However, taken together, several of those studies also suggest that students’ experiences of learning to write in their disciplines tend to follow fairly predictable patterns accompanied by somewhat predictable realizations on the part of students. The similarity of these patterns among students from different kinds of courses and schools suggests that students’ conceptions of learning to write are composed of some combination of individual experience and peer culture. Thus, we sought snapshots of students in various departments and years of study at our own institution, in order to examine more closely the beliefs and understandings about developing as writers they take with them as they move from FYC to writing in other disciplines and prepare for writing in workplace settings.⁵ In order to expose at least some aspects of peer group influences and interactions, we chose to use focus groups that would allow us to “overhear” and document how students talk together about the process of learning to write and how they draw on each others’ stories to flesh out and elaborate their own understanding of themselves as writers.

In framing our research as group discussions, we tried to avoid blaming either students or teachers for what seems to be a troublesome failure to connect. We do not take these students’ stories as necessarily accurate representations of their actual processes of literacy acquisition. Instead, we read them as representations of students’ own perceptions of how and where they learned to write and, most of all, what students believe themselves to be learning--what knowledge or skills they understood themselves to have acquired as thinkers and writers. Although such group discussions do not provide the depth of description possible in a case study or longitudinal study, they do raise some new issues that will need to be further explored in subsequent research.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Between July 2000 and May 2001, after a receiving IRB approval for the project and conducting a pilot session to test the questions and procedures, we conducted an initial series of four focus groups of 1 ½ hours each, drawing on students from the College of Arts and Sciences, the School of Engineering, and the School of Mines and Metallurgy, at the University of Missouri-Rolla.⁶ Each of the first three focus groups drew students from a single division of the University, and the fourth session combined

first-year students from all three divisions.⁷ There were 7-10 participants in each group. Participants from the College of Arts and Sciences were recruited through invitations proffered in upper-level courses; participants from the School of Engineering and the School of Mines and Metallurgy were recruited from honor societies; and first year students were primarily drawn from the selective “Chancellor’s Leadership Class.” We would have preferred a less academically gifted (i.e., more generally representative) population; however our efforts to recruit a more widely representative sample through advertisements in the student newspaper and numerous classroom visits to administer a writing skills survey yielded too few respondents to make the study workable.⁸

The focus group sessions were audio-taped, and at least one investigator and one student assistant took notes during the sessions, using a double-entry system with adjoining spaces for summarizing the discussion and recording the investigators’ immediate responses and ideas about it. Immediately following each session, the research team met to fill in notes and discuss their initial responses to the focus group. The tapes were later transcribed by a student research assistant.

The first four focus groups were asked the same set of questions (Appendix A), and follow-up questions were modified in order to allow the researchers to pursue issues as they arose in each group (Appendix B). We tried as much as possible to avoid using specialist or discipline-specific terminology that might encourage students to respond in terms of what they thought writing teachers would want to hear, and so the questions reflect the language students frequently used in classes and in the Writing Center to describe writing and learning. In particular, the terms “rules” and “secrets” were intended to draw on students’ own language concerning the conventions they have learned and the expectations they think their teachers have about writing.

The two follow-up groups were recruited from participants in the first four sessions. In the two follow-up focus groups, the questions (Appendix B) were designed to address and clarify responses given in the first four groups. These follow-up questions do not pursue the question of differences students perceive about how writing is taught in various disciplines, since by this time it was clear that, even though learning disciplinary discourse was important to these students, specific disciplinary differences were not particularly relevant to students’ understanding of their process of learning to write. Instead we designed questions to clarify students’ perceptions of the relevance of what they learn in writing classes to the writing they do in other coursework and during internships, and to determine what students actually think helps them learn to write. In these final two focus groups,

we allowed considerable time for exploring responses to our rather pointed questions about students' responses to written comments and other advice from faculty in different disciplines.

The students in our focus groups were generally articulate and forthcoming. Because most students in each group were already acquainted with each other and had numerous interactions outside of our research setting, we were aware of the possibility that some form of peer pressure might reduce the range and variability of attitudes in order to conform to the views of the most influential students in each group. During each focus group, both of the researchers and the student assistant observed participants carefully for vocal and non-vocal clues to their reactions, using techniques that are used during class discussions to identify potential discomfort in non-participating students, and that are taught to writing center tutors to recognize negative reactions in students who are too polite or too intimidated by the one-on-one setting to openly voice disagreement. In particular, we tried to notice and neutralize the effects of who made eye contact with whom, patterns of interruption, and participation in/withdrawal from student-to-student interactions. The moderator made a concerted effort to invite views from all students, through the wording of follow-up probes, through eye-contact, and through addressing questions directly to specific students. The emergence of strong, and in one or two cases rather heated disagreements (for instance about whether a student who preferred creative, expressive writing to writing research-based reports belonged in an engineering major) suggests that we succeeded in creating an environment that allowed dissent, which implies as well that the strong agreement expressed on some points within and across focus groups can be taken as indicating that students really did share those views.⁹

SUMMARY OF RESPONSES

We were particularly impressed by the students' perceptions of themselves as agents of their own learning, rather than as recipients of an imposed curriculum. Taken as students' personal reflections on what happened to them as they learned to write, these stories are remarkable in their consistency across different student populations, particularly concerning attitudes toward writing and learning to write, beliefs about the function of writing in English classes and in other disciplines, and interpretations of teachers' responses to student writing. The strong similarity of responses from students of different majors, from different high schools, and with a wide range of prior experience in high school and college writing courses suggests that before students arrive in college writing classrooms, they already

share certain preconceptions about writing and what it means to learn to write; and that those preconceptions limit students' ability to recognize, understand, or, finally, make use of most of the skills that composition teachers are trying to teach. Although the students' stories were consistent across disciplines, and although we introduced the concept of disciplinarity in only the most limited and rudimentary way (by asking students to tell us about learning to write in different kinds of courses), disciplinarity nevertheless emerged as one of the most important factors in shaping students' understanding of writing, learning to write, and the work they do as writers.

Three distinct themes emerged from our respondents' reminiscences, anecdotes, and opinions about learning to write in different disciplines:

1. Students tend to think of writing in English classes as personal and expressive rather than academic or professional, and therefore think that teachers' comments and suggestions represent an unwarranted "intrusion" into students' own personal and intellectual territory. However, they consider writing in other classes as part of their socialization into the disciplines those courses represent.
2. Students think of this personal writing (that is, the writing they do in English classes) as a "natural" act--like engaging in conversation--for which there are only a very few simple, concrete, and universal rules, beyond which everything else is a matter of personal preference and opinion, rather than informed judgment. However, in talking about writing in other kinds of courses, students also revealed a very strong acceptance of the authority of disciplinary standards, conventions, and expectations to dictate rules for writing within the boundaries of a specific discipline.
3. Students do think of writing skills as "portable" from one discipline or context to another; several participants reported having gained much of their current writing ability (the writing skills they use regularly in a variety of settings) in courses such as history, chemistry, or metallurgy. Their failure to credit English classes with having taught them to write was not, therefore, grounded in students' belief that what they learned about writing in one setting could not be applied in others, but rather in their perception that the writing done for English classes was inherently not "disciplinary" or "professional"¹⁰ and therefore offered few features that could be transferred.

STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS ABOUT ENGLISH: FYC AND LITERATURE COURSES ARE INDISTINGUISHABLE

It became clear very early in our project that students perceived writing in all English classes to be very different in *kind* from the writing they did in other courses, even in other courses in the humanities. This view that FYC is dissociated from all other writing situations is similar to the views expressed by the FYC students interviewed by Doug Hunt and the cross-disciplinary student attitudes reported by Lucille McCarthy. In stark contrast to students' views of writing in other courses, students saw the writing they did in English classes as personal rather than disciplinary. That is, they did not see it as engaging with the intellectual work of any particular field of study; instead they saw it as inviting them to share their own convictions, opinions, and experiences in a way that is primarily expressive, subjective, and creative.¹¹ In contrast to McCarthy's student, who felt excluded from the kind of thinking and writing done and expected by his literature professor, our respondents perceived little disciplinary expertise in either literature or composition.

Our university's composition courses were primarily taught by the full-time, tenured or tenure-track literature faculty (only a few of whom showed evidence of significant professional interest in composition pedagogy) and a small number of adjuncts. The sections were consistent only in adherence to a very general set of principles (such as the number of pages of finished draft required). Some sections focused primarily on writing about literature, often embedded in current-traditional pedagogy; some were based primarily on students' own writing and followed expressivist principles; some emphasized argument theory; some emphasized academic discourse and the research paper; and some were based on applications of rhetorical theory. This disparity between sections of FYC was quite evident to the students, standing in obvious contrast to other required multi-section courses such as physics and math, which were highly standardized from section to section. It is not surprising that students could suppose that the institution as a whole did not place a high value on the content of the FYC course (compared to writing in the disciplines), particularly since so many students met the FYC requirement through SAT or other test scores or dual-credit high school programs. This supposition would further support students' widely-shared perception that composition courses are fundamentally different from courses in other departments.

In our study, students did not distinguish between literature and composition courses or the writing assigned in them. We had hoped to find that contrasting required composition courses with the discipline of liter-

ary studies would reveal a difference in students' perceptions that mirrored their perceptions of learning to write in other disciplines. In teaching literature, English faculty at this institution drew explicitly on their disciplinary expertise and were very conscious of their literature courses as opportunities to introduce students to the methods of professional discourse in literary studies. We anticipated, then, that in literature courses students would recognize a set of disciplinary expectations (like the disciplinary expectations they recognized in courses in other departments) that would disabuse them of the perceived "naturalness" of the writing act. We found, however, that instead of literature courses establishing disciplinary credibility for what English teachers say about writing about literature, the general lack of credibility students attribute to statements of English teachers about writing in FYC applies in literature classes as well, with the result that teachers' comments on papers written about literature elicited some of the strongest criticism from our study participants. Typically, participants' objections to teachers' comments on writing about literature were grounded in the assumption, stated explicitly by one student, that "English is subjective." As another student put it:

When you're talking about a literature class, it's more interpretive, you know? It's more your personal ideas about how things are. When you're talking about chemistry or another technical class, you're writing about facts. So when a professor says, 'you've got your facts wrong,' or 'this is not what's happening; it's really this,' it's hardcore facts. You can accept that. But if you're talking about poetry or something like that, and you thought it was a flower, but it's really meaning a bumblebee or something like that, it could be anything, really. It's just your word against theirs, and so it's kind of, it's your personal ideas of how it was.

Because they saw the writing they are asked to do in English classes as personal, subjective, creative, and primarily intended "not to bore the reader," they failed to see any connection between what they have learned about writing in English classes and what they see as the objective, fact-based, information-telling writing demanded elsewhere in their academic and professional lives. When not under attack for attempting to intervene in students' personal interpretations of works of literature, English teachers were seen by our study participants as primarily concerned with "formats" and "styles" that were not rooted in any particular disciplinary framework. However, teachers in other fields, as disparate as history and electrical engineering, were perceived as caring more about content, hard facts,

or “what really happened.” In writing for English courses, an engineering student said, “You entertain. You look for flow and variety. In tech writing, though, what you want is to get ideas across.” There was considerable agreement across all focus groups that the purpose of writing in any English class is to entertain, or to give pleasure to a reader, or to allow the writer to explore his or her own mental spaces. Students in a group from Mines and Metallurgy described the writing done in all English classes as “creative” (by which they appeared to mean personal and expressive), and resented any meddling by English teachers with issues of content, argumentation, or development of ideas (a position strongly supported by students in the follow-up groups).

While perfectly willing to subordinate themselves as writers to the very specific professional discourse demands of ROTC or an internship and to the disciplinary requirements of courses both in and out of their majors, participants did not see English—either literary studies or rhetoric and composition—as a legitimate discipline or as having anything useful to contribute to their development of disciplinary or work-related writing skills. One student in a follow-up group said, “Even in history, your argument is based on facts, but in English it’s yours alone.” And both because they feel this ownership and because they perceive no discipline behind English teachers’ directions and comments, they take writing teachers’ suggestions as meddling rather than teaching or coaching. For example, during a discussion of the types of teacher comments students found helpful or unhelpful, students reported very different reactions to teacher comments about the effectiveness of supporting evidence in two different types of classes. Referring to a history teacher’s comments, one student said, “[the teacher would] say ‘You didn’t back this up. It’s really weak here. Your thesis was written really well, but you didn’t write on it at all’. . . That was really beneficial, much more than just a couple of commas circled, you know. It was a lot more helpful.” However, in discussing an English teacher’s comments, another student in the same focus group listed almost exactly the same categories of comments as examples of unreasonable teacher interference in student writing, saying “[my teacher] would say, ‘Well you needed more details here. You didn’t talk about this nearly enough. And here you talk about it way too much’ . . . Well she would want me to write it another way . . . when I actually thought that mine was quite a bit better.”

Students’ attitudes toward grammar, punctuation, and other mechanicals skills were ambiguous. On the one hand, students freely admitted to mechanical carelessness in writing for faculty outside the English Department on the grounds that teachers in other content areas only care about facts and ideas, not the surface qualities of writing. On the other hand, in

spite of the conception that teachers outside of English do not know or care much about English usage, our respondents' highest praise and appreciation seemed to go to teachers in all departments who held them to extremely high standards of mechanical correctness, except when mechanical correctness was enforced by TAs and, occasionally, when it was enforced by English teachers. English teachers who demanded a high degree of mechanical correctness were sometimes stigmatized as only concerned about "where you put the commas" and not caring about ideas. At the same time, several students argued that FYC does not do enough to teach and enforce grammatical correctness and editing skills, skills that they believed to be of primary importance in the workplace, and the only skills our respondents seemed willing to allow English faculty to teach them. All of the many other concepts and skills that form the basis for composition pedagogy were perceived by our respondents as either inapplicable to their professional development (and therefore worthless) or as meddling with their self-expression or creative thinking (and therefore out of line). Moreover, for all the work of compositionists over the past two decades to distinguish their work from literary studies, the students overwhelmingly failed to see that distinction.

HOW STUDENTS PERCEIVED THEMSELVES AS WRITERS

Almost all of our respondents expressed a moderate to high degree of confidence in themselves as writers.¹² However, they admitted to taking away from composition classes only some knowledge of mechanics, some guilt about not mastering MLA citations, and a very general and not very accurate understanding of a writing process they did not actually use. When asked what they saw as the secrets of good writing, students listed primarily "life strategies" or "moral shoulds": leave plenty of time, have someone else read it, don't get stressed, organize, stay focused, have a glass of whiskey before you start. On the other hand, when students named the rules for good writing that they had learned over the years, they focused on citation systems and conflicting stylistic rules, such as do write in the third person, don't use passive voice, do say "this was done" instead of "I did this," do use "I" when writing e-mail.

The students' conception of writing for an audience was what one would expect: like the participants in McCarthy's and Richardson's studies, all of the participants in our study seemed to have internalized a strong sense of the real rhetorical situation of the classroom. In almost every response to every question, study participants showed their conviction that the purpose of school writing is to get a grade, that the audience is the teacher, and that

a successful paper must take into account both stated constraints (length requirement, number of sources, and sometimes even sentence types that must be included) and unstated (a teacher's known preference for papers that exceed the length requirement, or a teacher's obsession with what students typically see as meaningless details). While these responses indicate a potentially powerful—though often inchoate—rhetorical awareness, these students' ways of talking about their approach to writing assignments suggest that they consistently limit its application to figuring out “what the teacher wants,” what they have to do to get the desired grade, and, in the most general sense, what the discipline expects. Students seemed to be completely unaware that the purpose of FYC might be to help them turn their rhetorical “street smarts” into conscious methods of analysis—of situation-specific audiences, discourse communities, rhetorical situations, and relevant textual models—that they could then apply to writing situations in other contexts. Students' failure to see the connections between what they had presumably learned from writing instruction in English courses and what they drew from their practical rhetorical savvy based on widely-shared peer-group lore (this teacher is an easy grader, that one takes points off for using the wrong format for figure captions) suggests that the students in our study failed to take from their writing classes even a novice version of the skills most likely to be transferable to other writing situations.

Although the students in our study admitted to resisting and rejecting much of what their teachers may have hoped they would learn in composition classes, they nonetheless clearly perceived themselves as writers and saw writing as part of their professional work. Like the engineering students in Dorothy Winsor's longitudinal study, our subjects saw learning to write as part of their socialization into the world of the practicing professional and conceived of writing as part of a larger range of professional tools. The students in our focus groups, regardless of major, explicitly included “writer” and “communicator” among their self-identified roles.

Our students' self-perception as writers may be an artifact of our recruiting strategy for this study: possibly the students who felt that they had something to share with us about how students feel about learning to write were also students who thought of themselves as “writers.” It may also be that the university-wide emphasis placed on writing as a part of the everyday work of all professionals (and reinforced by faculty through writing assignments and by the administration through support for a well-funded Writing Across the Curriculum program) had made writing a substantial part of the institutional culture for students.¹³ The students at this institution, then, may have been primed to think of themselves as writers, even though they did not associate this identity with their work in composition

courses—and even though the faculty in their majors did not see their writing as particularly effective.

HOW STUDENTS TALKED ABOUT ACTUALLY LEARNING TO WRITE

When asked how they actually learned to write, as opposed to what they learned in writing classes, students described a process of, on the one hand, learning to respond appropriately to the apparently idiosyncratic demands of particular teachers and, on the other hand, imitating models of successful papers. In some instances, the two processes were one and the same, as in the case of the student who recycled his older brother's high school history papers as the basis for his own papers in the same class. All participants perceived the writing they did in their major courses—and indeed in all courses other than English courses—to be disciplinary writing, in the sense that they saw it as engaging with the intellectual work of a particular field of study (even when that field was not their major). As our study participants describe it, disciplinary writing is expository rather than expressive, authoritative rather than creative, and objective rather than subjective. Moreover, disciplinary writing, as they portray it, is formulaic and therefore subject to rules that are inherent in the discipline itself and that are known, to varying degrees, by the disciplinary experts who are their teachers. One student said that the secret to good writing in his discipline was to “get a lot of perspectives so that you can see the formula behind it.” But despite their perception that disciplinary writing is formulaic, the one piece of advice that was posed as both a “rule” and a “secret”—and that came up in many other guises as well—is that the key to good writing is to know and consider your audience. As the students frequently observed, knowing your audience means figuring out what the teacher wants—and the students were brutally frank about their perception that the first paper in any course should always be treated as a “range-finder” for discovering what the teacher is looking for. According to one student, the first paper in any course is “always a crap shoot.” Another said that “those first couple of lab reports of each semester are kind of up in the air as to what you're going to get. And, like, you'll put extra time into it because it's a new semester and you're going to get straight A's, and it won't be what they wanted.” About whether any prior writing experience carries over into future classes in the same discipline, one student said “every time you get a new professor it starts over.”

Yet despite their agreement that every new professor is an unknown quantity when it comes to grading papers, study participants also showed a strong conviction that disciplinary writing is governed by non-arbitrary

rules to which their professors and workplace supervisors have access. So although students acknowledged the *appearance* of variation in teacher expectations across courses in a single discipline, they explained the apparent variability in the following terms:

1. their own lack of experience in a discipline (“its just because they know so much more about what’s going on than you do. It’s just a lack of experience and knowledge”);
2. different levels of rigor (“the guy who graded my first lab report was a really hard grader; he, like, knew a lot. . . whereas now the guy [a different teacher in a different course] is, like, a little bit easier”);
3. or, complete irrationality on the part of the professor (“you also get fruitcake teachers that if they like your font better than the other person’s, you get an A”).

As a group, the participants in our study prided themselves on their ability to figure out what teachers want, on both personal and disciplinary levels, and then do it. Students who had had jobs or internships that involved writing spoke in similar terms about understanding and addressing the workplace audience—about the need to know who will be reading a memo or set of procedures, and for what purpose—but even more obviously about the need to find out what your supervisor wants and to produce it. As one student put it “he who controls the paycheck controls the world.” In an interesting perspective on the role of status in creating the appearance of expert knowledge, we found that engineering and mining undergraduates generally held extremely low opinions of their TAs as disciplinary experts and typically rejected TA comments on their writing as completely without merit.

Although students showed exposure to a process-oriented approach to writing in high school as well as college, they were nonetheless highly product-oriented, believing that the final product of any piece of writing in school is the grade it received, and that the final product of a piece of writing at work is the extent of its acceptance or approval by their supervisor. Our study participants used the language of process to talk about writing and learning to write (which suggests that they may have picked up some of the vocabulary for talking about writing in composition classes), but their most frequent references to a writing process described only procedures that they felt they should follow, or had been required to follow at some point, but that they consciously rejected. For example, they commonly mentioned revision as one of the “secrets” of good writing, although they talked pri-

marily about avoiding it. One student said: "I do find myself at times restructuring my sentences. I personally hate to admit that I did something wrong. But once in a while I will look at something I've written and say 'well, that's extra and that's extra and I can take it out,' and I will modify it, so I guess I didn't get it quite right at first." This student still believes that "getting it right at first" is better than "doing something wrong" and revising it, when it comes to writing. Another student said, "I've been told many, many times that the secret to good writing is rewriting. I agree that that's a good secret, but I'm not patient enough for it to help me, and I just don't like it." Although students generally identified revision as an important tool for competent writers, in actual practice revision contributed little to their own writing competence. Other stages of the writing process elicited even more overt resistance. With respect to pre-writing, students were especially resistant to the requirements designed to help them benefit from a mandated process approach to writing research papers. One student, for example, described a high school research project in which he created not only his "rough" draft, but also a hundred note cards, *after* producing his final draft. Most study participants revealed a similar discrepancy between their own one-draft-and-it's-done method and their teachers' attempts to encourage or force them to engage in prewriting or other invention strategies or to seriously undertake revision through multiple drafts.

SOME IMPLICATIONS OF THESE STUDENTS' RESPONSES

The responses of the students in our focus groups suggest that, overall, these students seemed to connect with writing pedagogy only at a narrowly mechanical level and at a broad, moral level—taking away a series of behavioral "shoulds" that they remember and apparently accept, but don't necessarily follow: you *should* give yourself plenty of time to revise; you *should* ask two or three people to read it before you turn it in; you *should* approach writing with a detailed plan for what you're going to say. As writing teachers, our sense is that both moral imperatives and stylistic directives—in other words almost all of the things our respondents reported learning about writing in their English classes—are very much on the periphery of the "real" work of composition pedagogy. Hence, the astonishing blankness of the space between morality and the style sheet, as the students represented it, is one of the most significant findings of our study. At a strictly mechanical level, our respondents generally agreed that they are happy to be told when they're doing something wrong so they can fix it, but their sense of what constitutes a genuine "error"—and therefore falls within an English teacher's realm of authority—is limited to issues of grammatical

correctness and proper use of citation systems. Moreover, as our initial observations indicated, they did not always feel that these mechanical skills were of much concern to technological faculty or employers, at least until they faced the rigors of an internship or a “rough” professor in their field. This ambivalence about the role of English courses suggests that students recognize that their success in the “real world” will depend on their ability to communicate effectively, particularly in writing, but that they do not draw sufficient rhetorical expertise from their FYC courses to understand that “effective communication” is a product of more than mechanical correctness.¹⁴

The general agreement among students across the disciplines about the purposes and effectiveness of English classes, both composition and literature, suggests that these students’ perceptions of learning to write may be part of a peer culture that the typical writing class does not touch and rarely recognizes. For these students, first year composition seems to be merely an irrelevant distraction from the important work of professional socialization that occurs in their “content-area” courses during the first year or two, and more particularly from socialization into their peer culture. Their non-engagement with writing may be exacerbated by the minimal contact first and second year students have with actual communities of practice in their disciplines. First and second year students are typically enrolled in large lecture classes in their majors, and their labs and recitation sections tend to be taught by TAs rather than full-time faculty, with the result that these students have relatively little individual contact with experienced members of their disciplines. Composition courses, because they are smaller, can potentially give students greater contact with experienced practitioners. However, students’ perception of English as having less disciplinary clarity and rigor than their intended majors prevents them from engaging with the composition course, except on their own terms: that is, as a course in creative, expressive writing, designed to teach them mechanical skills and the MLA citation system, and in which their highest priority should be to achieve the required page length without boring the reader too much. These terms severely limit their ability to recognize, understand, or internalize most of the skills that composition teachers are trying to teach.

It may be that this socialization process is particularly strong in engineering schools, which tend to have a tradition of “toughness,” passed along by both faculty and peers. At this kind of institution, numbers and the representation of ideas through numbers are frequently regarded as scientific, rigorous, masculine, and “hard,” while the expression of ideas in language (and, by extension, English courses) may be perceived as fluffy, unscientific, feminine, and “soft” (Meinholdt, Murray, and Bergmann). Follow-up stud-

ies with other student populations are clearly necessary to explore whether our findings can be generalized to a broader range of students.

However, initial support for our findings is provided by Delli Carpini's study of high school students, first presented at the 2004 WPA Conference and more fully at the 2005 CCCC Conference. In response to a very different set of questions (about their assumptions about what college writing would be like, their expectations for how the writing required in college courses would differ from the writing they had done in high school, and their level of confidence that they were well-prepared for college writing), Delli Carpini's respondents expressed many of the same convictions expressed in our focus groups: that writing consists solely of content (sharply divided into content dictated by the teacher, the class, or the assignment; and content generated by the writer's own experience, emotional state, or artistic inspiration) and of rules of correct grammar, punctuation, usage, and source citation. Rules, for these students, seemed objective and inevitable—rather like the laws of gravity and the speed of light—but also arbitrary and meaningless, in the sense that writers follow them only because they are there, and not because the rules contribute in some way to effective communication of ideas or pleasurable use of language. Like our respondents, Delli Carpini's respondents appear familiar with the idea of a writing process, but for them "writing process" refers to some external—and again arbitrary—procedure dictated by the teacher, often including either note cards or an outline, and which the students see at best as a waste of time and at worst, as "bondage."

APPLICATIONS TO THE STUDY OF THE TRANSFER OF WRITING KNOWLEDGE ACROSS DISCIPLINES

We believe that our research casts some light on whether and how much students transfer to later situations writing skills that are taught in first year composition courses. The attitudes expressed by our respondents suggest that the primary obstacle to such transfer is not that students are *unable* to recognize situations outside FYC in which those skills can be used, but that students *do not look for* such situations because they believe that skills learned in FYC have no value in any other setting. While our participants' responses are consistent with the basic contentions of activity theory as outlined by Russell ("Rethinking")¹⁵, they particularly demonstrate the influence of students' limited understanding of English study (whether of literature or composition) as a discipline. In part, this view seems to arise from students' quite correct understanding of the rhetorical situation of "school writing," which is, as students learn in college, substantially dif-

ferent from any other rhetorical situation they are ever likely to encounter. But it also seems to arise from students' inability to recognize the possibility that English classes, like math and physics classes, might be capable of teaching problem-solving skills whose real-world applications are many and varied. Because they believe that the writing done in English classes is personal, expressive, and creative, our students neither recognized the transferable rhetorical problem-solving skills FYC offers nor thought they benefited from the coaching in style, organization, and argument strategies offered in their FYC courses.

We often considered our respondents' points of view to be distorted, mistaken, or disturbing, but we were impressed both by their willingness to discuss their experiences openly and freely and by the consistency of their perceptions across different student populations. And yet, in some ways, this very rejection of FYC and everything it offers shows that students do have a strong rhetorical sense. It is this sense, after all, that teaches them to understand the rhetorical situation of school writing and that makes them aware of its limited scope. Moreover, students seem to have an established grasp of the concept of disciplinarity and at least a rudimentary notion of discourse community. Likewise, they seem to be very much aware that writing is situated and context-driven and that definitions of "good" writing are specific to communities and contexts. Finally, and most impressively, the students in our study seemed entirely alive to the fact that successful writers learn the rules for a particular type of writing task in a particular community by analyzing models. Although the students in our study typically used this knowledge in uncritical ways (for example, analyzing other students' papers in order to improve their grades on assignments for a particular professor), these practices may offer room to develop the understanding of genre and genre-based conventions that allows workplace writers to use models of unfamiliar genres to learn to write new types of documents (Beaufort). Like those experienced writers, the students in our study used models successfully because they were aware, at some level, that any given text is a product of both situation-specific content and genre-based conventions that are both context-sensitive and transferable from one situation to another.

IMPLICATIONS FOR WRITING PROGRAM ADMINISTRATORS

The results of our study suggest that students approach learning to write with a number of preconceptions that strongly influence how much they are able to learn and also with strong, if intuitive, rhetorical skills that if tapped appropriately might serve as the basis for very effective writing instruction.

The students in our study rejected what they saw as the unwarranted intrusions of English teachers in their creative processes, but welcomed writing instruction when they saw it as having disciplinary legitimacy (that is, when it occurred in the context of being socialized into some other discipline). The fact that the students in our study frequently identified specific courses in which they had learned the writing skills they use on a daily basis indicates that students *do* transfer some writing skills. The fact that none of the courses they identified as crucial to their development of writers were English courses supports the claims of Petraglia, Russell, and others that such transferable skills are not successfully taught in a general skills writing course.

One obvious outcome of this study is additional empirical support for proponents of writing in the disciplines, *taught by experts in that discipline*. Clearly the students in our study were much more open to learning to write like historians, chemists, or electrical engineers in the context of studying chemistry, history, or electrical engineering than they were to learning to write like students in the context of a writing class. But although students may be willing to learn to write in discipline-specific courses, few faculty in those courses are comfortable taking on the role of writing teacher. Historically, the goal of the FYC course has been to remediate the inadequate writing skills of incoming college freshmen in order to prepare students for the real work of their disciplines, or in other words, to save faculty in other disciplines including literature the trouble of teaching students how to write (see, for example, Berlin). And even at the university where our research was done (an institution that prides itself on its commitment to writing instruction at all levels and in all disciplines), the majority of faculty outside the English Department are at best hesitant to teach writing, both because of the additional workload involved and because they feel unqualified to do so. Equally important to administrators is the question of cost. Faculty members in engineering and the sciences are dramatically more expensive per student credit hour than typical writing instructors, which means that an institution that adopts an exclusively WID approach to teaching writing is adopting a much more expensive model. Whether it is a more effective model may not be the most important consideration for schools already facing budgetary constraints in other areas.

In addition, although students do learn transferable writing skills in their classes in other disciplines, they often learn those skills by trial and error, sacrificing at least the first paper and often several papers to the “crapshoot” of writing in each new course. A solution to both problems could be provided by a FYC course that introduced students explicitly to the concept of disciplinary and focused less on teaching students how to

write than on teaching students *how to learn to write*. Russell's argument that writing, like the skills necessary to play any specific game involving a ball, is not transferable from one context to another, suggests a solution to the very dilemma it raises.¹⁶ Specific skills athletes learn in one sport (such as how to dribble a basketball) may not be directly transferable to another sport (such as soccer), but what athletes are able to transfer from one sport to another is what they know about how to learn a new sport. Everything about getting one's head into the game is transferable, as are training habits, on-field attitudes, and a generally competitive outlook on the whole procedure. We might use this metaphor, then, as an incentive for investigating what kind of course could increase students' understanding of the process of learning to write.¹⁷

Such instruction would need to tap into students' extensive, if not fully conscious, rhetorical knowledge by explicitly teaching the concepts of disciplinary and the cross-disciplinary transfer of such rhetorical skills as the ability to think consciously about a particular reader's needs and expectations in a particular communication. Students can be taught to recognize how different disciplines use common features of writing like literature reviews, experimental research, and personal observations in particular ways. Such instruction might also focus on the place of research in the university—how faculty members use different kinds of research, how and where research is done, and by whom. This is not simply a matter of teaching particular disciplinary conventions, but rather involves teaching students where and how to see conventions and practices at work in a particular piece of discourse—including their own. For example, the practices writers commonly use to incorporate sources into texts—practices such as summary and synthesis and indicating agreement or disagreement—are also sites where differences among disciplines can be identified. Helping students discover how communication practices vary may invite students not only to use conventions but also to critique them. The point is to teach students to recognize where differences tend to occur, and how to adapt their practices accordingly (or to choose to violate them for a specific reason), building upon their intuitive rhetorical awareness and the writing lore they share with their peers. Such an approach to teaching students how to learn to write would help students recognize that they are making choices, and how to make those choices consciously, based on knowledge about the discourse community and rhetorical situation in which they are working.

NOTES

¹ This project was funded by a Council of Writing Programs Research Grant (2000) and by contributions from the Dr. Beverley Moeller Writing Studio at the University of Missouri-Rolla.

² The extent to which we believed this characterization was eroded both by the problems we saw with students' writing even in the senior capstone courses, and by our ongoing reading in writing in the disciplines.

³ The efficacy of "general writing skills instruction" has been ably challenged by Joseph Petraglia and David Russell, among others, but although the new abolitionist arguments against "general writing skills instruction" are convincing to many researchers with experience in Writing Across or in the Disciplines, they have yet to have noticeable impact on most first year writing programs. Moreover, in the ten years since the publication of Petraglia's ground-breaking collection, *Reconceiving Writing, Rethinking Writing Instruction*, the most recent "back to basics" movement has gained substantial momentum. As a result, even though the field of composition studies is beginning to look very closely at the implications of activity theory for writing instruction, administrators and legislative bodies are demanding ever more narrowly defined skills-based instruction producing writing that can be easily measured through standardized testing.

⁴ The University of Missouri-Rolla, with about 4800 students, is the science and engineering campus of its statewide university system. UMR students are bright and ambitious; the average composite ACT score in 2000-2001 was 27.3, and while UMR students tend to achieve higher scores in the math section than in the verbal section, their verbal scores are better than those of students at many other institutions.

⁵ Typically, only about 40% of students who graduate from this institution actually enroll in FYC. Most students arrive with FYC credit from a community college or dual credit high school course or test out of FYC using AP or SAT scores. Because this study was not meant to measure the success or failure of this university's FYC program, but rather to solicit students' thoughts on how they learned to write, it does not distinguish between students who had taken FYC at University of Missouri-Rolla and students who had not.

⁶ Students were paid for participating and food was provided. The focus group questions were reviewed and approved by the Human Subjects Review Board. Janet Zepernick asked the questions and led the discussion, and Linda Bergmann took notes.

⁷ The three divisions represented here accounted for the entire student body at this institution at the time the study was done. Subsequent organizational changes have resulted in the addition of the School of Management and Information Systems and the renaming of the School of Mines and Metallurgy to the School of Materials, Energy, and Earth Resources, and the renaming of the university as a whole.

⁸ Initially we feared that the selective nature of our student sample might make our results too idiosyncratic to use as the basis for widely generalizable conclusions about student attitudes toward writing, since the qualities that make students more academically successful than their peers (qualities such as superior insight into school as a unique rhetorical situation, greater willingness to adopt a subordinate role and to acknowledge the classroom authority of teachers, a stronger drive for socially-recognized success, and a greater tendency to be motivated by extrinsic rewards) might also make students more insightful about the nature of school writing. Having completed our study, however, we would argue that our results are more widely representative than we initially expected them to be, given our sample population. The students in all our focus groups expressed very similar views about the goals of writing in various disciplines, about their roles as writers in different settings, and about the goals and intended outcomes of various types of classes and writing assignments. These views did not vary with age, prior experience with college writing, or academic discipline; and they were consistent with the failure to transfer skills from FYC and other writing classes that we had observed across the student body more generally. The high-achieving students in our study might have been more articulate in describing student attitudes or more willing to share their experiences of learning to write than some of their peers, but less effective and less articulate students would presumably be as much or even more affected by these same views. In other respects, however, our subjects seem to be representative of the student body at this university: average to above average students who are well-socialized to school and who strive to achieve academic success by understanding how school works and taking the path of least resistance to the best possible grade. Clearly they believed their own experiences with writing to be typical of students in their majors.

⁹ Students were sufficiently impressed by the experience of being *asked* about how they learn and why, that they talked about our study across the campus, as we heard from faculty in other disciplines who supported our efforts.

¹⁰ Similar lack of understanding of the disciplinary roots of First Year Composition are evident in Hunt's and Richardson's studies, in which students are seen to struggle with their instructors' expectations and to ignore or reject their comments.

¹¹ Because English, both as a high school subject and as part of a general education requirement in college, has tended to assume responsibility for teaching critical thinking and encouraging intellectual curiosity, this tendency to privilege evidence of independent thought over socialization into the discipline of literary studies or the acquisition of extra-academic writing skills is pedagogically understandable. However, this focus on individual thought has the disadvantage of producing students who, not unnaturally, don't recognize the difference between writing to learn and learning to write. Bawarshi offers a cogent analysis of this effect, arguing that "the writer's subjectivity [has become] and . . . largely continues to be the subject of writing instruction" (152) and that "the composition course

as we know it today exists first and foremost not to introduce students to the ways of academic discourse . . . but to develop and articulate the writing self” (153).

¹² Because students in our FYC courses have a tendency to describe themselves as “math” people and not as writers, we had assumed that this perception was characteristic of the student body as a whole. However, as a relatively large proportion of students place out of FYC with dual enrollment credit for high school courses or through the Advanced Placement Language and Literature or Language and Composition tests, these focus groups indicated that our view of the student body from the perspective of students we encounter in the FYC is not entirely representative.

¹³ In this they resembled the professional writers Beaufort studied, who were highly conscious of learning to write successfully (“success” being seen as getting what they asked for in their writing).

¹⁴ In this respect, the students in our study were not noticeably less insightful or informed than any of the many college faculty and administrators whose response to poor student writing is to call for more instruction in mechanical skills. Linda Bergmann’s experience in working with faculty in a variety of disciplines has shown that faculty who are unhappy with the quality of students’ writing seldom explicitly identify any problems other than grammatical and mechanical errors. Yet when students improve the quality of argument (by using thesis statements, topic sentences, and clear organizational patterns) faculty satisfaction with their writing increases even if the overall level of mechanical correctness is basically unchanged. In the case of the 2005 SAT Writing Exam, this focus on lower-level skills has been encouraged by the injunction to scorers to ignore factual accuracy when judging writing. Such estrangement of writing from conveying information only exacerbates the perceived non-disciplinary of English in general and writing in particular.

¹⁵ While rejecting the idea of general writing skills, Russell observes that we all engage in more than one activity system, and that general education courses in particular admit students only to the periphery of a variety of these fields. Thus, “The process of ‘learning to write’ can be analyzed by tracing students’ and teachers’ mutual appropriation of new discursive tools with and among genre systems and the activity systems they mediate” (“Rethinking Genre” 19).

¹⁶ Russell compares “General Writing Skills Instruction” with trying to teach students “general ball” rather than specific games (“Activity Theory”).

¹⁷ This might take the form suggested by David Russell of “a course *about* writing” (Activity Theory 73), although more investigation into “how to teach students how to learn to write” might suggest other possibilities.

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APPENDIX A

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF WRITING ACROSS THE CURRICULUM at a Technological University

First set of focus group questions (sessions 1-4)

Ice Breaker Question: To start off with, I'd like to just go around the room and have you each introduce yourselves and tell us what kind of writing you most like to do. I'm Janet Zepernick, and the writing I enjoy most is posting to discussions on the listservs I belong to and writing letters to my friends.

Transition: Think about when you sit down to write. What are some of the rules you carry around in your head about good writing?

Probe: Which of those rules do you actually try to follow?

Probe: Where did you learn them? From a class? or a book? or trial and error?

Q1: Think about the kinds of writing you do in the classes you've taken at UMR. What kind of writing is most difficult for you?

Q1 Probe: What is it that makes it so difficult?

Q2: Think back to writing classes you've taken. What kinds of activities took place in class? Lecture? Class discussions? Revision workshops? In-class writing?

Q2 Probe: Which of those activities did you find most useful?

Q2 Probe: What are some differences between the way writing is taught in English classes and the way it's taught in other classes you've taken?

Q3: Think about some of the comments faculty have made about your writing. What were some of those comments?

Q3 Follow up: The common wisdom among writing teachers right now is that all comments on papers should be positive--telling writers what's working in the paper. According to this view, negative comments are too discouraging and do more harm than good. But in our first focus group, some people commented that they'd learned the most from comments telling them what didn't work. How do you feel about this?

Q3 Probe: Which of those comments have helped you improve your writing?

Q3 Probe: What kinds of comments do you find most useful?

Q4: Now I'm going to ask you to think about the kinds of grades you've gotten on papers you've written for school. How closely does your own opinion of the papers you've written match the grades you've been given on them?

Q4 Follow up: What do teachers look for when they're grading writing? That is, what do they base their grades on?

Q4 Probe: Is this the same in every class?

Q4 Probe: When you're in a new class, how do you figure out what the professor is going to be looking for?

Q5: Teachers in math and the sciences see what they call the "box under the bed" syndrome when they ask students to recall in one class information they've learned in a different class. They find that students metaphorically put what they've learned each semester in a box under the bed instead of trying to make connections and see how things learned in previous classes apply in other situations. We're trying to find out if students ever have "box under the bed" syndrome with skills or knowledge gained in writing classes.

How easy is it for you to use what you've learned in a writing class in another class or another writing situation?

Q5 Probe: What makes it easy or hard for you to do that?

Q5 Follow up: Think back to a time when you used something you learned in a writing class in another situation. What was it that you used?

Q5 Probe: Why was it useful?

Closing: If someone were going to ask you for the secrets of good writing, what would you tell them?

APPENDIX B

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF WRITING ACROSS THE CURRICULUM AT A TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY

Focus Group Follow-up Questions (Sessions 5 & 6)

1. The groups we met with in the first round generally seemed to feel that teacher expectations about writing for one class are irrelevant to other

classes, so that there's really no point in trying to use things learned in one class in other classes. Do you think that's a pretty accurate reflection of your experience?

Probe: What kinds of things that you've been taught in one class have you seen as most specific to that class, in other words, as least transferable to other writing situations?

2. In the first round we asked about teacher comments both in English classes and on writing done in other classes. One of the things we saw most often in response to that question was that students resented it when English teachers commented on the content of their essays or criticized their arguments. But they did not object when teachers in other courses such as history or chemistry make similar comments. We interpreted that as meaning that participants felt that the writing they did for English classes was more personal and "private" than writing for other courses. Would you agree with this interpretation?

Probe (if yes): What makes it more personal or private?

Probe (if no): Why do students react negatively when English teachers make comments on content?

3. When you're trying to achieve a professional tone, what do you have in mind as a gauge for what makes writing sound professional?

Probe: Tell us about your audience and why it is that your audience thinks these things sound professional.

4. In a writing class, how much do you feel as though you are personally in charge of how much you learn about writing?

Probe: What kinds of things can students in writing classes do to learn more?

Probe: Do you do them? Why or why not?

Normally when writing teachers design a course, they have in mind certain goals for what the students will learn and a certain means through which those goals will be achieved. What would you say would be appropriate goals for a writing course, and how could those goals be achieved?



Invisible Administrators: The Possibilities and Perils of Graduate Student Administration

Anthony Edgington and Stacy Hartlage Taylor

Candidates entering the job market with Ph.D.s in Composition and Rhetoric quickly discover that they, more than other new instructors, must assume administrative responsibilities early in their careers.

—Trudel Thomas, p. 41

To put the matter simply, the vast majority of [graduate composition and rhetoric] programs actively conceal the “tale too terrible to tell”: the generally unstated, untaught, yet tacitly acknowledged fact that composition specialists ... will be expected to take on significant administrative duties as part of their regular assignments.

—Michael Pemberton, p. 156

For many readers, these statements will not prove to be eye-opening—it is a commonly held assumption that scholars and teachers in rhetoric and composition are expected to serve in administrative positions at some point during their academic careers (and maybe throughout their careers). Not coincidentally, more graduate programs in composition and rhetoric are asking graduate students to work in administrative positions as part of their assistantships. For example, both of us worked in various administrative positions throughout our graduate studies. Since administrative work appears to be a foregone conclusion, one would believe that these graduate administrative positions would be beneficial, offering preparation for future roles as administrators.

Yet, little is known about the experiences of graduate student administrators (GSAs) and this lack of knowledge leaves open several questions. What do they learn from these experiences? What problems do they face? Do these positions prepare them for future administration, and what type

of preparation do they receive? Why are they being asked to serve in these positions, and what are the benefits and consequences? These questions, along with the quotes above, weighed heavily on our minds as we prepared to finish our doctoral studies and move into our first full-time teaching and administrative positions. However, as we read through the literature and research dealing with GSAs, we realized that there wasn't significant evidence to answer these questions. Most discussion on the topic was based on personal anecdotes or the experiences within an individual program. While these narratives offer valuable information, there are two aspects missing. First, there is a lack of large-scale empirical information on GSA experiences, including information on the tasks GSAs are asked to perform, the problems they encounter, and how, if at all, GSAs are prepared for future administrative work. The second is the voice of the GSA; most of the narratives are written by writing program administrators (WPAs) and/or by former GSAs who offer personal experience but little beyond that.

With this in mind, we prepared a survey to be distributed to both WPAs and GSAs in order to collect their reactions to the work GSAs do. Our study was rooted in both personal and professional contexts. Personally, both of us had served as graduate student administrators while completing our doctoral work. Anthony served for two years as an Assistant Director in both the WR program (which served the university's writing-across-the-curriculum population) and the Composition Program. In addition, he held the position of Coordinator of Placement for the Composition Program for three years (monitoring, reading, and entering the scores of incoming freshman and transfer students placement portfolios). Stacy served for two years as an Assistant Director in the Composition Program, one year each as an Assistant Director in the Writing Center and the Computer Assisted Instruction program, and as an editorial assistant for the *Henry James Review*. Currently, as junior faculty, we both continue to serve in administrative roles: Anthony as the Associate Director of both a composition program and writing center and Stacy as the Director of a writing center. Each of us brought numerous experiences, perspectives, and beliefs into this project from our own experiences as administrators.

Recent interest on this topic in journals and on listservs led to our belief that an empirical study was necessary. Most recently, articles from Marc Bousquet, including the thought-provoking "Composition as Management Science," have argued that the position of the WPA should be investigated and perhaps eliminated. In 2002, *Rhetoric Review* devoted a special section to the topic of graduate students and administrative work. Entitled "Future Perfect: Administrative Work and the Professionalization of Graduate Students," the articles discuss benefits and drawbacks for GSAs. Finally, the

International Writing Centers Association published the “IWCA Position Statement on Graduate Students Writing Center Administration” because of their “concerns about the disparity between the prevalence of graduate student administrators in writing centers and their absence in writing center discussions, conferences, and publications” (“Why the Graduate”). The statement addresses issues such as what positions graduate students should be allowed to fill, time commitments, duties and responsibilities, compensation, and research/publication opportunities.

In this article, we focus on the benefits and criticisms concerning the work of GSAs that have been mentioned recently in composition literature. We compare these discussions with the findings of our surveys, juxtaposing the two conversations to see how the arguments in our journals, books, and listserv posts compare to the comments of current and past GSAs. Finally, we offer suggestions to help writing programs better consider the role of the GSA.

THE STUDY

As we studied the previous research that had been conducted on this topic, we realized that most of these narratives and studies rely largely on personal experiences (i.e. WPAs discussing their experiences as graduate student administrators) and/or small-scale research, usually conducted by an administrator in his or her local environment. What is rare in the research is any large-scale data that maintains a strong focus on the work graduate students do while in administrative positions. Thus, as we designed our study, we kept in mind the following criteria, believing that the study had:

- to be large scale in nature, bringing in many responses from different parts of the composition community;
- to address issues related solely to graduate students working in administrative positions;
- to include a significant number of graduate student voices (again, something that is often missing in previous narratives and studies).

Led by these criteria and intrigued by our own administrative experiences, we constructed two online surveys, one of writing program administrators and the other for graduate student administrators (see Appendix A and B for copies of each survey). We believed that using online surveys was the most efficient means for contacting a large number of administrators for their feedback while also receiving diverse responses from different regions and institutions. In addition, since we were most interested in getting a general sense of feelings and experiences, we asked that surveys not

include personal or demographic information in the hopes of ensuring anonymity (although responders were offered the opportunity to include their name and email address if they wished to be interviewed at a later date). After piloting the surveys on local listservs, we sent two calls to participate (the first in early summer and a follow-up early in the fall) to two national listservs, one dealing with issues related to writing program administration (WPA-L) and one dealing with issues related to writing centers (WCENTER). We believed that a significant percentage of composition administrators (both WPA and GSA) were members of these two listservs, offering us the best opportunity of receiving back useful responses.

THE RESPONSE

We received 16 responses from writing program administrators and 63 responses from graduate student administrators. While the low number of replies from WPAs discouraged us, we did feel that the replies from GSAs were more than sufficient to gain a valuable perspective on their experiences. For data collection and analysis, we each took one set of surveys and read through them, noting any significant trends or issues. We then switched the surveys and looked again for trends and issues. After reading through all the surveys, we met on a few occasions to talk about our findings, noting what we saw as most significant. Our talks became moments for us to not only wrestle over what we were hearing from our respondents, but also to compare their thoughts with our experiences and what we read in the scholarship. These discussions led to a conference presentation, more discussion after speaking with others at the conference, and then to the current article. We turn now to general thoughts about the surveys and discussion of specific trends in the composition literature and in our survey results.

GENERAL TRENDS

According to the surveys, the average number of graduate student administrators per program was six, with one WPA reporting a high number of thirteen while two reported only one GSA. The length of appointments ranged from one to two years, and over 70% of the responses mentioned that appointments were usually competitively selected and often renewable, with decisions concerning renewal coming from the WPA or a group of graduate faculty. A few GSAs noted that these positions at their colleges/universities contained no set time limits and students could hold the positions throughout their graduate education.

Compensation for GSA work varied, with most receiving either a one-course release per semester or reassigned time (such as time devoted to writing center tutoring or additional time for research). A few respondents mentioned that GSAs in their program received either a complete release from teaching responsibilities, additional pay, or first chance at summer teaching. Other benefits noted were increased travel funds, increased access to administration and/or technology, tuition waivers, independent study credit, better resources (including office space), and the opportunity to teach advanced courses. One writing program director argued, “the compensation is experience ... it’s the chance to put administrative work on one’s resume/vitae” and did not note any other compensation for the work done by GSAs.

Finally, the type of positions offered usually fall into three areas; GSAs serve either as assistants to the Composition Program, assistants to the Writing Center, or assistants in a Writing-Across-the-Curriculum/Disciplines program. A few responses mentioned positions working in technology, editorial, and/or creative writing programs. GSAs are expected to take over some of the duties of program directors in each area, including preparing and mentoring future instructors or tutors, handling course or tutor scheduling, managing grade complaints, organizing and running writing-specific workshops, and, in a few cases, working with the director on budget issues. It could be argued that GSAs are being asked to take over most of the low-level or “dirty” work of the WPA, while others will contend that these duties are common to all program administrators and offer strong administrative experience to graduate students. These issues will reemerge later during discussions of GSA exploitation and the level of behind-the-scenes work they receive.

THE ARGUMENTS

We turn now to five arguments that are prevalent in the literature on graduate student administrative work. With each argument, we recount some of the research and narratives from composition studies and then discuss our own findings on these issues, bringing in the voices of the WPAs and GSAs to help contextualize whether these arguments still influence GSA work or if these have become myths perpetuated throughout composition studies.

1. Administrative work during graduate studies offers students on-the-job experience that will be useful to them in current and future positions

Advocates for offering graduate students administrative experience often cite the on-the-job training students acquire and how this prepares them

for future administrative positions, including offering knowledge in supervision, scheduling, grade disputes, mentoring, teacher preparation, and other administrative tasks. Trudell Thomas argues that we need to create more administrative positions, opportunities, and experiences for graduate students since this “allows students to test their wings and to acquire skills” while also discovering whether or not they are “unsuited to administration” (50). She suggests offering graduate students coursework in program administration, along with opportunities for mentoring, serving on committees, and the chance to present and network at conferences. Margaret Willard-Traub agrees; while GSAs may find themselves in uncomfortable and problematic situations, she believes “that administrative experience readily makes visible the very immediate ways in which all institutional work ... is political in nature, shaping and being shaped by larger institutional forces” (68). This can be highly beneficial and can provide

crucial information to them [graduate students] in their professionalization ... as well to their growth as scholars because of the ways in which it can make visible the powerful influence of institutional forces on the shaping of the forms and even outcomes of intellectual work. (69)

Thomas Miller supports graduate students working in administrative, publication, and civic positions with appropriate course release, suggesting that “these opportunities enable our graduate students to play leadership roles in general education and document their expertise in professional publications” (54). A related benefit is an increased level of marketability that will allegedly make GSAs more attractive on the job market. Chris Anson and Carol Rutz surveyed twelve former GSAs from their program and found that, for the most part, they all discussed their graduate administration experience positively. As one justification, the authors state

Many former administrative TAs reported that their experience ... set them apart from other [job] candidates, getting them interviews and eventually jobs. In most cases, teaching is at least as important as administrative experience, but the combination seems to be particularly attractive to hiring committees. (111-2)

The survey responses agree with most of these arguments. Almost every survey response (WPA and GSA) included some discussion of how the experience would be useful to the graduate student in the future. Most WPAs remarked that these administrative positions provided good “training” or “experience,” and many of the current GSAs stated that they hoped their graduate position would provide this preparation. One wrote that

there were “so many positives: learning how institutions work, how to document ‘service’ to the institution, learning how to apply knowledge of rhetoric/composition.” Others remarked that they learned about both the “mundane” and the “unseen” aspects of the job, feeling that their experience prepared them for not only administrative work, but also for faculty life.

In addition to the long-term benefits, many respondents pointed to what the position offered in relation to the job market. While only a few of the WPAs argued that recent graduates with administrative experience could add a few lines to the CV, several GSAs felt that their time in administration gave them “an advantage on the job market” when applying and interviewing for jobs. Some justified this by listing the number of interviews they had or were scheduled to have in the future; others talked about their ability to interview well because they relied on their administrative backgrounds. One GSA wrote that the experience was “a huge CV booster. At all of my interviews . . . I have been asked about my experience as an Assistant WPA and I feel certain the position and experience made me more marketable.” There was, however, some tension here between the WPA and GSA surveys. While WPAs argued that recent graduates should not consider another administrative position before gaining tenure (regardless of their graduate administrative experience), the GSAs felt, on the whole, that they could and would move right into administration while on tenure-track. A few GSAs even spoke glowingly of the ability to move straight from graduate student administrator to program administrator and seemed to see no problem with this upward move. Thus, WPAs may need to spend more time explaining not only the visible and invisible aspects of administrative work, but also discussing the differences between what the GSA is expected to accomplish in comparison to what the WPA may encounter. Laura Micciche argues that “WPAs daily find themselves immersed in anger, frustration, and disappointment” (434). She goes further asserting that it is the WPA’s duty to share this with graduate students and GSAs: “Given that a great number of recent job openings in composition studies require WPA work, faculty have an ethical responsibility to make visible the pleasures and rewards as well as the frustrations and disappointments that such work entails” (454).

Finally, on more than a few occasions, the respondents felt that their administrative experience prepared them to become stronger researchers and scholars. Many respondents pointed to the publication opportunities that emerged from their administrative work (including articles, book chapters, conference presentations, and contacts with publishers) as well as learning more about being a faculty member because of closer and more fre-

quent communication with other faculty. A significant focus was on how administration helped GSAs strengthen their pedagogy. Many remarked that having the opportunity to mentor and observe other teachers and/or co-teach graduate courses in writing pedagogy expanded their teaching experiences. One respondent felt the administrative experience helped her “think a lot about pedagogy in complex ways” and led to more “confidence in discussing writing instruction practices” while another respondent argued that “teaching, research and scholarship, and administration triangulate productively in my mind, and I believe it’s important to help build, shape, and structure the environments in which teaching and research take place.” This final comment appears to point to one of the great advantages of graduate student administrative work: besides helping to prepare the student for future faculty life and making him/her more marketable, administrative work led many to a greater sense of what the field of composition and rhetoric truly encompasses and provided a fuller picture of the life they had chosen to lead.

2. Administrative work offers the possibility for more collaborative work within the department, across the university, and with outside scholars

The collaborative experience is often cited as a benefit to graduate administrative work. Anson and Rutz found that time spent as a graduate student administrator led to “improved communication” and “a broader sense of disciplinary community” (114). Suellynn Duffy and her co-authors argue “collaboration can foster critical self-reflection ... and establish a community of teachers with their own professional identities” (80). While Duffy and her co-writers (many who served as graduate peer mentors) acknowledge that collaboration can be difficult due to misplaced authority and complex relationships, they found that the experience was most often beneficial to all involved.

Conflicts with other graduate students who may resist taking advice or orders from a GSA can be an area of concern. Fontaine suggests that graduate students may be “unwilling to respect supervision by their peers” (85). Others cite problems GSAs face when getting involved in faculty disputes. Willard-Traub, while promoting the graduate student administrator experience, concedes that GSAs will often witness first hand the communication problems and subjectivities that occur between tenured, untenured, and graduate student faculty. Roxanne Mountford suggests that negative feelings among graduate students may actually be a result of an overall distrust of administration, seeing the GSA as “one of them.” Mark Long, Jennifer Holberg, and Marcy Taylor suggest that the problem goes beyond

just GSAs. They believe that defining graduate students as teaching “assistants” or “apprentices” leads to a hierarchical system that produces “TAs,” not colleagues and future administrators. Because of this hierarchy, “graduate students themselves play only a passive part in their own professional development” (67). They argue for a more collegial, non-hierarchical model that offers graduate students experience not only inside the classroom, but also in departmental, curricular, and administrative environments while encouraging feedback and responses from everyone in the system (a perspective that Fontaine also shares). If this change occurs, composition administrators will discover that “the best professional development programs ... demonstrate a more dynamic and equitable form of administrative collaboration between peers” (76).

Feelings of both belonging and isolation come through in the survey responses. For example, the respondents often cited positive relationships with faculty, peers, and fellow administrators. Many valued these relationships because of the opportunity to work “with people in a relationship different from student/teacher,” stating that these relationships were both “invigorating ... [and] exasperating.” As one GSA explained, “The ‘ivory tower attitude’ tends to be so much less” when working with other composition administrators, signaling perhaps a growing confidence in the GSA along with a rising level of equality. Others felt these relationships increased one’s knowledge about the professional field, providing opportunities to learn “how to get work done in a setting with many different personalities, as well as how to communicate with administrators in other departments” while also offering “long-standing connections with colleagues at other schools.” Other positive attributes were enhancing one’s campus involvement and visibility; greater chances of networking with current and future employers; mentoring relationships with both the WPA and other graduate students; and the chance to collaborate on conference presentations and publications. As one GSA observed:

Administrative work (the environment, the people, the communities you become a part of) help to structure everything else: what you talk about with peers, which surprising resources they recommend, how they cope with their teaching dilemmas. Like everything else, administrative work offers a community.

According to Micciche, though, this is a community characterized by “disappointment” because of working “with a lack of support staff, in departments that fail to acknowledge the intellectual work required to develop curricula, syllabi, and teacher-training courses, and in universities

that generally neglect to count these materials as fulfilling requirements for tenure” (434). Belonging to the new community of administrators also may take the GSA out of communities in which they previously belonged; chief among these is a loss of community with other graduate students, who may “pass judgment” or display “jealousy,” especially if they were not chosen for the administrative position. When asked to communicate with other graduate students, GSAs reported problems related to authority and acceptance from these peers—“for better or for worse, they saw me differently ... many grad students saw me as ‘one of them’ (i.e. ‘one of the administrators’) which can sometimes take on negative implications.” Some believed that this view carried over into personal relationships as well: “you’re not really ‘one of the gang’ among the grad teaching assistants ... once you get the [administrative] role, people are more distant—less inclined to ‘hang out.’” In addition, more than a few spoke to problems with the different roles they were asked to fulfill—administrator, teacher, student, peer, mentor, supervisor—and how these various roles led to problems in peer relationships.

Another, perhaps more disturbing, issue related to loss of community/relationship is the difficulty that GSAs may experience working with other faculty members or administrators. In general, GSA work was not highly valued—“there were several times that, although I was performing real faculty duties, my work and my credibility were questioned because I was ONLY a graduate student.” Other professors outwardly shunned or resisted working with GSAs, feeling that these students had “died or tainted themselves so that they’re not ‘serious scholars’ anymore and therefore no longer merit being treated as such.” A question that remains is whether it is the student or the work that is undervalued; from the responses, it appears that it is not only the student administrator, but also writing program administration (in its different forms) that receives little validation from those outside of the program. Micciche asserts that “most faculty beyond composition studies—and, indeed, some within it—assume that WPAs are managers of sorts, administrators who simply *manage* writing programs as one would any other institutional site” (440). So long as WPA work is devalued as simply management or management science without consideration for the intellectual work WPAs do, then the role of the GSA, or the WPA-in-training, will be discounted.

3. Using graduate students in administrative positions provide benefits to the program, chief among them cheaper labor and more time available for the writing program director to focus on more important or desirable duties

Another apparent benefit to the composition program or English department is that GSAs provide a cheap source of labor—since they often

complete much of the work at a significantly lower cost than an assistant professor in an administrative position—while freeing up time for the writing program administrator, who (it is argued) can focus more on other inequities and problems within the program. Sally Ebest writes about her experience as a GSA, stressing that “this experience was invaluable to my understanding of writing program administration ... [and] ... it was also a means of cheap labor for the university. In this era of dwindling resources and tight job market, developing these internships benefits all involved” (81). Bradley Peters remarks that a position like assistant or associate director of composition (a position that is sometimes occupied by a graduate student) becomes “a catch-all for duties [to] which the director could not attend...an *ad hoc* directorship” (127, author’s italics). Mixed reactions were apparent in the literature, as writers and researchers debated over this sensitive issue.

What is immediately interesting about the survey responses is that among the GSAs, there was virtually no mention of themselves as a form of cheap labor. While many did remark that they felt overworked and misused at times, most also appeared to believe that they were filling these positions because of their ability to do so or because the department was interested in offering them a chance for “professional development.” It did not seem to occur to them that a major reason for their inclusion was to save money nor was there any real discussion of their time being used to complete less valued tasks, such as scheduling, observing, and reporting.

However, among the WPAs, there was a strong connection between the use of graduate student administrators and the apparent benefits to the department. Some mentioned outright that GSAs were cheaper, providing programs with some economic “relief” during times of decreasing budgets. Others mentioned the lack of individuals in the department to fill the positions; one respondent argued “we need them! They’re valuable simply for their labor” since, apparently, there were few faculty who could fill these administrative voids or, as another respondent pointed out, few who were willing to “free up” their time to do the work. Nonetheless, there was also a feeling among the WPA responses that graduate students were necessary because they could accomplish tasks that most faculty could not. Many remarked that graduate students were a better choice for mentoring new teachers; as peer mentors/mediators, “they keep communication between (graduate) instructors and faculty administrators flowing, bring fresh ideas into administration and curriculum development, help TAs learn to balance schoolwork and teaching work, help us work collaboratively rather than by simply dictating policy.” There was also the need for GSAs to help in areas of technology; more than one WPA remarked that the faculty at his

or her program were inadequately equipped to deal with technology issues (i.e. maintaining websites, using curriculum software packages and online communication tools, and conducting online research) and that GSAs were invaluable for providing this service. Of course, relying on GSAs for technological support, as opposed to intellectual work, may lead to exploitation, since it appears the graduate students provide this technical support at a cheaper rate than an IT administrator (it may also be problematic that graduate students are asked to provide this technical support instead of working in areas directly related to their composition studies). This leads us into the issue of graduate student exploitation.

4. Using graduate students in administrative positions can lead to exploitation

Some writers suggest that the use of GSAs can lead to exploitation and a possible transfer of obligations from WPA to GSA. Possible ways of being exploited include being offered less pay, asked to complete more menial tasks, and receiving fewer benefits than other administrators. In addition, Shirley Fontaine argues that shifting obligations from faculty to graduate students leads to a shifting of values within the program. She points out that having graduate students responsible for administrative work could lead to a devaluing of the WPA; she writes, “when a task that was once completed by a full-time faculty member is reassigned to a graduate student, the importance of the task has diminished in the minds of those who make the assignment” (84). Thus, the work of writing program administration comes to be seen more as a job rather than as a skill or as intellectual work, causing a devaluing in the eyes of upper administration and undergraduates, who may wonder why a graduate student is handling their grade grievance or transfer credit, wondering why their “complaints are considered to be less important than they once were” (Fontaine 85). Outside of composition, GSAs are often deemed less important and those deemed “less than” are the most likely to be exploited.

As mentioned earlier, WPAs did note the use of graduate students as a cheaper form of labor, although we are unsure if the directors see this as exploitation or simply a way of benefiting the program. However, GSAs were less clear about whether they felt they were being exploited in their administrative positions. When exploitation was discussed or hinted at, it often came in one of three areas. First, graduate students discussed how time-consuming the administrative position became for them. These respondents often used phrases such as “overtime” and “monopolize” when defining their administrative work. One response noted that “graduate stu-

dents in these positions are often exploited and must be adamant in sticking to whatever time commitment they agreed to.” These responses were often linked to what was neglected due to these time constraints, including teaching and research. The area that seemed most affected was the dissertation, as many lamented the fact that their research and writing time was severely limited. The following statement is indicative: “It [the administrative position] seriously sucks up time that I need if I’m ever going to finish my dissertation. Honestly, at this point I’m not sure if I really will finish it.”

Second, and related to the previous point, some GSAs commented that their administrative duties were greater than what they would do for a typical class and questioned if one course release was enough. Many of these respondents argued that administrative positions carried a “heavy workload” and could be “burdensome.” Questioning how the position was described, one GSA wrote

Although the position(s) was/were advertised as 10 hours per week, I put in many more than that on a weekly basis. As an administrator, you learn that you must work until the work is finished. As a student (supposedly first) I felt torn at times meeting all the deadlines required and fell behind with some of my own work as a student.

A few responses pointed out that since administrative work consisted of different duties and responsibilities, it was much more difficult and time-consuming than teaching a course; these respondents outright questioned why only one course release was offered. The number of hours one put into the position fluctuated (often falling between 15-20 hours per week), but there were a few GSAs who mentioned devoting 40+ hours per week to their position(s).

Third, a few GSAs argued that they were doing the work “of an administrator and faculty member—as a graduate student,” but receiving less pay and fewer perks for it. One respondent understood that his role in the university hierarchy was to allow “the university [to] neglect to hire tenured faculty lines for these positions.” One WPA also acknowledged this issue, stating that his/her department placed graduate students into administrative positions because it was “primarily ... a way to supervise undergraduate peer tutors without having to free up a full time faculty slot.” One GSA strongly believed that:

There is no question that graduate assistants are exploited. In my program, the three assistant directors of the programs did ALL the work in terms of creating materials and most of the direct training of new [GSAs]. At that time, we had no health or other benefits.

In fact, there were three occasions when the GSAs equated their administrative work to a form of slave labor. As one student put it, “the work was DEMANDING—in terms of time and expertise—and worth well more than the one course release I was given. Basically, I was slave labor” (GSA emphasis).

So, if exploitation does seem to occur to varying degrees, why didn't more survey respondents address these problems? It's tough to know exactly, but the responses do offer some suggestions. For one, it seemed that although some graduate students recognized the heavy workload, they believed simply that this was “part of the job” or part of the “learning experience.” A few even took pleasure in the fact they were completing faculty and upper administrator related tasks, seeing their increased workload as a badge of honor and solidifying, for them, their ability to be future administrators. More troubling, perhaps, is the GSAs acknowledgement that administrative work is “inevitable”; the feeling is that sooner or later one will have to do administrative work as a composition faculty member, so why not gain practice and expertise while in graduate school? The insinuation here appeared to be that “yes, we are exploited, but all composition administration is exploited, so we are no different than the rest.” Thus, graduate students seemed to be accepting the inevitable and attempting to gain productive experience as a way of preparing them for their future administrative lives.

5. Graduate student administrators only see “part” of the job, being offered rare glimpses of the dirty, behind-the-scenes work of writing program administration

Finally, there are those in composition studies who suggest that there is little “behind-the-scenes” experiences for GSAs, since WPAs and programs do not allow graduate administrators to become involved in the dirty details of administrative work (such as budgets, political clashes, internal and external conflicts, hiring/firing, etc). Ebest writes that preparation for administrative work while in graduate school is often a “matter of chance” (67). Mountford argues that her experience as a GSA “was wonderful training for the intellectual work of directing a writing program. But it had not prepared me for the political realities of being the WPA” (49). A survey conducted by Scott Miller and his co-authors found that graduate students were satisfied with their coursework, program flexibility, and mentors, but were very nervous and unsatisfied concerning how they were prepared for the future, including preparation for administrative work. As the authors write, “there clearly have not been many concerted efforts to foster under-

standing about rhetoric and composition as a profession, as an institutional structure situated within other institutional structures” (398).

A lack of coursework in program administration is also regularly cited as a concern. Thomas Miller writes that offering WPA seminars helps graduate students “understand that writing program administration is a profession and not an avocation” (42). Michael Pemberton believes “graduate programs rarely engage administrative issues or matters of university policy; neither do they place much emphasis on the ‘engineering’ of composition scholarship, of moving theoretical principles to the embodiment of those principles in well-defined program structures” (159). Pemberton suggests that WPA-related courses (which are often neglected for practical, ideological, and political reasons) are necessary because these courses would “provide [graduate students] with an important new arena for discovering new information and synthesizing it with the knowledge they have garnered from other courses” (165). Ideally, these writers believe that administrative courses would offer experience and background to all graduate students—including those who do not or cannot do administrative work while in graduate school yet will still be expected to serve as administrators at future universities—while also offering a theoretical stance on administrative work that could help WPAs make stronger arguments during tenure decisions.

Responses were mixed among the graduate students in regards to the level of exposure they received while serving as administrators. Some argued that they learned more from their GSA experience than they would through simple “textbook learning” while also receiving the opportunity to understand the larger university structure. One wrote that his/her time offered the opportunity to “learn what happens behind the scenes—the politics, the negotiations that have to occur before decisions that seem simple can be made.” A few recent graduates, who were now in tenure-track positions, argued that their time as a GSA allowed them another perspective on administrative work that they could compare to their current position; as one respondent wrote, “I understand that not all writing programs work the same; this helps me to question some of my assumptions and pay attention to the exigencies presented in other contexts.”

Others questioned whether they really received enough perspective on WPA work, having to “ask for and at times insist on” gaining these behind-the-scenes perspectives. Others began to second-guess if they really wanted access to this side of their work:

In all of these [GSA] positions, I saw the challenges I was up against, whether it be teachers who don't care about their students (or more likely don't have the time between two or three

classes and a family), or faculty members who don't understand what composition is about, or the marketing side of publishing.

Only two of the surveys mentioned a specific WPA-related graduate course as preparation; a few others spoke of being prepared through "their coursework" but did not specify which courses were most beneficial. Other forms of preparation included workshops prior to the semester; shadowing and being mentored by other GSAs; relying upon previous teaching or work-related experiences; and the most oft mentioned: trial and error or learning on the job. The following response is indicative of many of these comments:

I prepared myself for the most part—learning on the fly and writing/reflecting about my experiences with my WPA and presenting my work at conferences like 4Cs. There simply were no formal mechanisms in place to teach us how to do this kind of work. It was true on the job training.

Micciche asserts that WPAs must learn more "about the way work is organized in the university and ... provide administrative mentoring and professional development to graduate students and junior faculty" (453). More formal opportunities to learn how the institution of higher learning works and how to negotiate administration within it would be useful.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

As the research above shows, the use of graduate students in administrative positions will continue to be a visible part of composition programs, and, with the increase in graduate programs offering doctoral degrees in rhetoric and composition, it is possible that the number of GSA positions will also rise. Likewise, it is apparent that as universities and colleges continue to face budget crises and see greater need for streamlining university faculty and staff, more faculty will be asked to take on administrative positions. Since composition researchers and teachers are already deeply engrossed in administrative work, one can surmise that more and more composition teachers and scholars will be adding administrative positions to their workloads and CVs. All of this may occur in environments fraught with job exploitation and instability. With this in mind, we offer the following suggestions for both WPAs and GSAs based upon the research findings:

First, there need to be more support networks created to help the graduate student administrator. As the responses show, it is far too often that GSAs learn the intricacies of their position through trial and error because of the lack of professional development and mentoring prior to taking over

the position. We suggest that composition programs put into place more extensive and rewarding preparation programs for GSAs, including chances to observe and/or shadow previous GSAs, the creation of GSA handbooks, and coursework in administration. In addition, more opportunities for mentoring during the assistantship need to be provided; this mentoring can come from either faculty in the composition program or graduate students who previously held administration positions. Finally, GSAs should be more visible in the program and department, sitting in on committee and faculty meetings so that they will be more noticeable to all faculty and be able to gain a deeper perspective on the work of an administrator.

Second, GSAs should have the opportunity to receive more behind-the-scenes work during their tenure in the position. Some of this work can be discussed through previously mentioned graduate courses on writing program administration. But, GSAs should also be invited to participate in hiring and firing decisions, allowed to work with the WPA on budgetary issues, and made aware of the political and social forces that define their work. The opportunity to work with faculty outside of composition on committees and in ad hoc groups can provide further experience that will prove valuable once the GSA moves into their future positions. In addition, as seen in the responses to our inquiry, many GSAs have difficulty understanding how their work differs from what the WPA is often required to do, with many respondents arguing that they are already prepared for WPA work based upon their GSA experiences. WPAs would be wise to devote a portion of their time with the GSA to discussing the ethical dilemmas program administrators face on a daily basis along with an extensive discussion of the differences between what a WPA is asked to do in relation to the work of the GSA.

Third, WPAs should take more time to prepare GSAs for the job market. Stories of graduate students taking on a first job with overwhelming administrative responsibilities abound in our literature and at our major conferences. Better preparation and more dialogue on the job search can help alleviate these problems. Along with the aforementioned frank discussions about the work of the WPA, this preparation can include helping the GSA read job ads (including assistance in understanding what level of administration is being asked for in the ad and what are going to be the hidden responsibilities), learn how to discuss administrative work on a curriculum vitae, and prepare for interviewing, with a nod to how GSAs can use their administration experience productively during job interviews, possibly through the use of mock interviews and creating relationships between former and current GSAs. Part of this preparation can include

dialogues about the potential problems underlying taking on too much (or any) administrative work prior to receiving tenure.

Fourth, it is the responsibility of the program to continually assess GSA positions. Not only will this assessment validate the work of the GSA, but it also ensures that GSAs are not being exploited in terms of time, benefits, and money. As a field, we have spent considerable energy toward alleviating the problems faced on a daily basis by contingent faculty (Schell). However, the possible exploitation GSAs face also needs to be addressed. If graduate students are finding it difficult to complete coursework and/or dissertations because of the constraints placed upon them due to administrative work, there is a problem. If GSAs are not receiving benefits from the university even though they are completing work that is often completed by faculty members, there is a problem. Programs would be wise to continually monitor GSA positions for these problems. Possible assessment can include continual dialogue, exit interviews, and surveys with past graduate administrators. Programs should also consider developing more formal job descriptions to ensure that graduate students are aware of what they are being asked to do prior to accepting the position and as a way of guiding what students are required to accomplish during the time they hold the position.

Finally, our field needs to spend more time making the work of writing program administration more valued and recognizable. Of course, this is not a new concern for those reading this article. For years, researchers and writers, along with organizations like WPA, have made arguments and developed guidelines as a way of persuading others to understand not only the level of work needed to be a WPA, but also to illustrate the intellectual and scholarly work of WPAs. However, what these responses suggest is that the often negative view of writing program administration leads to a trickle-down effect; it is not just WPAs who are damaged by these views, but also our graduate students—especially graduate student administrators. As a field and profession, we owe it to future administrators to continually push those in other disciplines and in upper administration to see the value in the work of the WPA and to create environments where this work can be done as productively, intellectually, and humanely as possible.

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APPENDIX A

Survey for Writing Program Administrators

1. On average, how many graduate students hold administrative positions in your department? What is the average length of these positions? If applicable, what type of compensation do graduate students receive as part of these positions (i.e. release time, higher pay, etc)?
2. What administrative positions do graduate students hold in your department? Check all that apply:
 - a. Assistant in the Composition program or similar position:
 - b. Assistant in the Writing Center or similar position:
 - c. Assistant in Writing Across the Curriculum or similar position:
 - d. Assistant in Technology or similar position:
 - e. Assistant in Creative Writing Program or similar position:
 - f. Editorial positions (i.e. journals):
 - g. Other position(s) not listed above:
3. Do graduate student administrators in your program typically move on to administrative positions at other universities? On average how many? What type(s) of positions do they move into?
4. In your specific department, what have been and/or are the reasons for involving graduate students in administrative positions?
5. Did you hold any administrative positions during your graduate school experience? If so, did this (or these) experience(s) prepare you for the administrative work you do today? Why or why not?

APPENDIX B

Survey for Graduate Student Administrators

1. What graduate student administrative positions do you currently hold or have you held in the past ten years?
 - a. Assistant in the Composition program or similar position:
 - b. Assistant in the Writing Center or similar position:
 - c. Assistant in Writing Across the Curriculum or similar position:
 - d. Assistant in Technology or similar position:
 - e. Assistant in Creative Writing Program or similar position:

f. Editorial positions (i.e. journals):

g. Other position(s) not listed above:

How long are these positions (i.e. term limits)? If applicable, what type of benefits did you receive from accepting this positions (release time, higher pay rate, etc)?

2. Briefly, what are or were your duties/roles in these administrative positions? Were you prepared to carry out these duties/roles? Why or why not?
3. Looking back upon these current and past administrative experiences, what are the positive aspects to graduate students serving in administrative positions? What are the negative aspects?
4. Do you want to or plan on serving in administrative positions in higher education after graduate school? Why or why not?
5. Did your (or does your) administrative work affect other areas of your graduate work (such as scholarship/publications, teaching, involvement with on-campus organizations, volunteer work, etc)? How so?



Split at the Root: The Vulnerable Writing Program Administrator

Donna Qualley and Elizabeth Chiseri-Strater

Our methodology, defined by the oxymoron “participant observation,” is split at the root: act as a participant, but don’t forget to keep your eyes open.

—Ruth Behar, “The Vulnerable Observer”

Throughout our long, shared history as scholars and collaborators, we have maintained that non-hierarchical forms of collaboration offer some of the most powerful means for encouraging a conversational and reflexive process of learning. We began examining the role of collaboration for learning in the late eighties when we were graduate students at the University of New Hampshire by reading such texts as *Women’s Ways of Knowing*, researching our classrooms, and developing collaborative writing assignments. The result of our partnership was a book-length ethnographic study conducted in Donna’s classroom as her students wrote together (*Academic Literacies*, 1991) and a collaboratively written essay on collaboration (“Collaboration as Reflexive Dialogue: A Knowing Deeper Than Reason,” 1994). In this essay, we excitedly proclaimed that “because we see collaboration as simultaneously dialogic and reflexive, we have been able to move beyond limited and limiting either/or conceptions of collaboration that pit the needs of the individual against the needs of the group” (111). However, as we moved from being graduate students to becoming faculty members in administrative positions, we began to realize that our earlier claims of easily escaping either/or conceptions were a bit overzealous. When we attempted to replicate our classroom pedagogical philosophy with our graduate teaching instructors, we discovered that our commitment to “dialogic and reflexive” collaboration as teachers did not always keep us out of the binary as writing program administrators. We repeatedly find ourselves caught between the needs of our programs outweighing the needs of individual teachers and the needs of individual teachers sometimes eclipsing our responsibilities to the

program and, sometimes, to the students themselves. As much as we try to avoid the dichotomy between knowing and doing in our writing programs by striving to show our graduate instructors that thinkers and workers can reside together in the same bodies, we are not always successful.

Like the Adrienne Rich metaphor that Ruth Behar evokes for conducting fieldwork as a participant observer, we often feel “split at the root” as we attempt to participate in the teaching communities we are both building and monitoring while observing and reflecting on our decisions at the same time. We have come to realize, however, that this ongoing conflict between our most tightly-held theories and our practical realities may be a positive thing. The vulnerability that often leaves us feeling unsure and off-balance as administrators and teachers is also what keeps us positioned as learners continually having to renegotiate our positions. It may be in these moments of vulnerability, these moments when our understanding seems tenuous, our knowledge and theories suspect, and our intentions questionable that we eventually find or invent a new rhetorical approach that will allow us to continue to do this work ethically and effectively in conjunction with differing others.

We begin this essay with two “scenarios” from our respective writing programs that illustrate familiar kinds of situations that can leave WPAs feeling vulnerable and uncertain as they attempt to transport theory from one location and enact it in another.

ELIZABETH

Danielle was a first year TA getting her Ph.D. in rhetoric and composition. She had previously taught in a community college for several years. Near the end of her first semester at the University of North Carolina, Greensboro, she showed up in Elizabeth's office with two plagiarism cases on her hands. She had followed the protocol: She had clearly stated the plagiarism policy on her syllabus, she had notified each student of their situation, and she was following through by alerting Elizabeth. As she told her story about finding parts of both students' papers online, she was clearly torn between whether to fail the students for the whole course or just for that paper. When she outlined her research essay assignment and the extent to which her students had actually plagiarized, it became clear that Danielle was partially culpable for her students' deception. Rather than encouraging students to do fieldwork, archival research, or inquiry on a topic of personal interest, the program's general advice for introducing research skills, she had designed a generic assignment where students could easily find ready-made material on the web. In addition to the loosely constructed assignment, she had not conferenced with students on their drafts; in fact, she had not

even seen their drafts. Instead, she had students work in peer groups and provide response to each other before handing in their papers.

Both students had indeed plagiarized, but each situation was different. One student had downloaded a paper entirely from the web, and the other student had patched together a quilt of sources threaded with her own writing. Not unexpectedly, the student who had plagiarized the entire paper had a poor attendance record and was barely passing the course, whereas the other student had a high B in the course to date. Both students refused to admit that they had plagiarized. Realizing her own complicity in the matter, Danielle discussed her options and the procedures she needed to follow with Elizabeth so that her students would understand the university policy and the overall seriousness of their actions. Elizabeth offered to meet with the students, but Danielle, like many TAs not wanting to have their own authority usurped, preferred to handle the actual meeting with her students herself. The UNCG program allows TAs this option, as long as they alert the Director of Composition about their actions. While Elizabeth was interested in what Danielle planned to do, and, in fact, was obligated to follow through in these kinds of cases, she saw this situation as an important teaching moment for critical self-reflection. She also wanted to know what Danielle was learning about designing good assignments, providing appropriate feedback for students, and understanding her overall pedagogical role in the classroom. In this situation, the opportunity for learning seemed to outweigh the policy issues, even though Elizabeth knew it was her job to monitor these plagiarism cases closely.

Danielle decided to fail both students. The school's academic integrity policy supported Danielle's decision, although Elizabeth hoped Danielle could have seen each of these cases differently and considered each student's situation individually.

From the other side of the country and from a different administrative perspective, Donna could not understand how Elizabeth could allow Danielle to make this decision, and she could not understand how Danielle could have gotten herself into this situation to begin with. But then Donna had her own dilemmas.

DONNA

When Donna resumed her position as WPA at Western Washington University after having stepped down for a year, she returned to a group of TAs who had been trained by another administrator and were wary of making pedagogical changes in their second and final year in the program. Donna attempted to build connections between the theories and practices of the previous and cur-

rent programs, emphasizing, however, that teaching writing was not an either/or situation, but a both/and context for learning and trying out new ideas. She found herself repeatedly challenged by a small, but vocal minority of TAs who felt too comfortable with what they were already doing, who seemed unwilling to consider the theoretical assumptions under girding different practices, and who saw Donna's curriculum as too hard for students and too much work for them. They projected their resistance and resentment onto the program administrator. As one TA told Donna, "I already did my pedagogy last year." Donna and Star, her Assistant Director who had worked with these TAs the previous year, decided to initiate an email conversation about the role of peer response in an effort to model reflective teaching and invite a more careful discussion of different approaches. Donna asked Star to begin the dialogue. After a few rounds where Star and a couple of TAs shared their peer response practices, Donna entered the electronic conversation, identifying and making visible some of the assumptions informing these various approaches to peer response. Donna posed the question: "What is our goal in assigning peer response, and what role does commentary from teacher and peer play in helping students become better writers?" She then offered a hypothesis. She suggested one way that peer response practices differ from teacher commentary is in their capacity to offer instruction. She posited that when writing assignments are routine and do not require new kinds of learning, peer response might be able to replace teacher commentary. In other words, when the purpose of peer response is to help students "smooth" out what is already on the page, student commentary may be able to stand in for teacher feedback. However when writing tasks are less focused on the communicative features of a text and are more concerned with complicating students' thinking and "messing up" their neat and tidy, ready-made assumptions, then perhaps student response alone is not sufficient.

At the time, Donna assumed that, as a member of the teaching community, she was engaging in a collaborative inquiry and simply pushing the conversation deeper. Both Donna and Star were surprised—Donna especially—when the listserv received three emails in staccato succession from TAs admonishing Donna for being judgmental and closing down the lines of communication. One email began "I'd like to do a little reflection here and start a conversation about our conversation" and then went on to suggest that Donna was telling them their ideas were wrong and deficient. Another TA echoed the first, suggesting Donna's email was too critical and belittled their teaching experience from the year before. A third email suggested that Donna should praise everyone's ideas and not put them side by side. Although Star had also discussed the different ideas inherent in TA's different approaches, her emails were not critiqued.

Elizabeth was mystified as to why Donna would allow herself to get so involved in a TA conversation that she had asked her Assistant Director to mediate. Elizabeth felt this kind of indirect and underhanded criticism of the Director would not occur in her own program.

RHETORICAL SPACES/DIFFERING CONTEXTS

Our different locations have contributed to our different readings of the above experiences. Elizabeth, as the WPA of a writing program staffed mainly by Ph.D. and MFA students with some teaching experience, was more likely to emphasize the individual agency of teachers to make their own choices. Donna, on the other hand, is the WPA of a writing program at a regional university staffed exclusively by MA students with little, prior teaching experience. She realized she was more apt to focus on helping instructors understand programmatic goals and practices so as to increase the likelihood of their being able to construct meaningful classroom experiences for all their students. Whereas Elizabeth had given Danielle total freedom in designing the assignment and in deciding how to deal with the implications of having done so, Donna would have constructed firmer programmatic boundaries around TA choice, making it unlikely for this kind of situation to happen. In the second scenario, Donna thought that by openly trying to make sense of the different ideas about peer response, she was demonstrating how a teacher theorizes her practice. In other words, she was showing how theory (knowing) and practice (doing) are connected. Because Elizabeth was used to giving her TAs a great deal of autonomy and seldom entered into the TA listserv conversations, except to post the occasional announcement, she saw Donna's joining of the TA online discussions as unnecessarily "getting into their soup." Both Elizabeth's "hands-off" and Donna's "hands on" responses to their own and each other's situations have enabled us to see the difficulty in trying to actualize what we thought was a desired, collaborative model of writing program administration.

We find Lorraine Code's concept of "rhetorical spaces" useful in helping us to better understand how people who once shared a common philosophy come to enact different rhetorical approaches to administrative practices. Code conceptualizes rhetorical spaces as "fictive, but not fanciful or fixed locations whose (tacit, rarely spoken) territorial imperatives structure and limit the kinds of utterances that can be voiced within them with a reasonable expectation of uptake and 'choral support': an expectation of being heard, understood, taken seriously" (ix-x). A writing program, which is always in the process of construction by those who interact within and

upon it, can be thought of as a dynamic rhetorical space within the specific culture of a department and/or university. These spaces determine what can be said, how it can be said, and who can say it, but change as the circumstances and individuals change. Most importantly, the knowledge of “what kinds of utterances can be voiced” is tacit; rarely, it would seem, are the rules of engagement spelled out and made explicit to everyone—including the people charged with administering and facilitating this space—beforehand. It is only after conflicts arise, like the ones we have just described, that we begin to articulate our “territorial imperatives.” Finally, there is the notion of mutuality and assent, the likelihood that what is spoken will not only be both heard and understood by others who occupy that space, but also the extent to which what is spoken will be taken seriously and earn everyone’s support.

The rhetorical spaces in which we each work are different. Elizabeth teaches at a Ph.D. granting institution where TAs have a 1/2 teaching load, except for their first year when one of their courses is substituted for time spent in the writing center. They take two or three graduate courses while they are teaching, and most TAs earn their doctorates in five years. TAs in rhetoric and composition as well as in literature eagerly seek opportunities to collaborate with the Director of the Composition and one another on projects they clearly see as helping them with future jobs. In addition to the opportunity to serve as assistant to the WPA, TAs may ask to co-teach the required pedagogy seminar, help plan and run staff meetings, help write curriculum for English 102 courses, design and manage the composition website, develop and edit the student handbook, *Writing Matters*, and serve as a liaison between composition and other university programs. In this graduate program where rhetoric and composition students have had real success in acquiring good jobs in the field, many of them as WPAs themselves, TAs greet most of the opportunities for professional development with enthusiasm.

During Elizabeth’s last tenure as WPA, she expanded the program’s focus on building community. She accomplished this goal by increasing the length of the summer orientation to a week and instituting bi-monthly staff meetings where TAs selected the topics and ran the meetings, even when the Director of Composition was not available. Almost all TAs had their course websites connected to the composition website, which enabled them to share and borrow materials and ideas about teaching. Elizabeth’s office was located across from the space where first year TA’s work so that she could be available to them, particularly during their first semester in the program. New TAs dropped by frequently to discuss their students, their assignments, and the challenges they were facing in the classroom.

On the other side of the country, Donna directs a writing program at a regional, comprehensive university. The single, required, first-year, computer-assisted writing course is taught almost exclusively by MA students in literature or creative writing, many of whom have little opportunity (or occasionally desire) to study the subject they are teaching beyond their required composition theory and pedagogy course. After an eight-day summer orientation, TAs begin teaching and continue to teach one course and take two graduate seminars each quarter for five or six quarters. Donna often feels the challenge of trying to maintain a quality program while working with such a transient and shifting faculty. Except for the times when she is teaching, she tries to be available to TAs all day, every day of the week.

In her time as the Director of Composition, Donna also emphasized the importance of community by working to create the material space and conditions that invite and encourage informal and ongoing conversation between TAs. TAs share large offices next to their “workroom,” which houses a library of composition textbooks, the department’s copies of *College English* and *CCC*, and a two file cabinets filled with syllabi and class sets of student essays and portfolios. This room also houses eight computers. The computer has become one of the most used methods of “collaboration” because each instructor’s teaching files on the server are accessible by every other instructor. TAs browse, borrow, steal, reformulate and give their ideas and exercises freely. In addition to opportunities for informal conversation, instructors attend weekly staff meetings and gather for a day at the end of each quarter to read and discuss student portfolios.

Despite much success in creating a vibrant and supportive teaching community among the graduate instructors, the program has remained firmly under the direction of a single WPA (or perhaps it is more accurate to say that the single WPA has remained in complete service to the program). However, the institutional scene is changing. With the appointment of an Assistant Director of Composition and the hiring of more tenure-track faculty in rhetoric and composition to bring the total up to four, new administrative and curricular structures are beginning to evolve. Both programs, then emphasize the importance of developing a shared teaching community; yet the circumstances for creating rhetorical agency among the participants of each program are radically different.

RHETORICAL AGENCY

Carmen Werder defines rhetorical agency as “the potential for effecting change based on the extent to which the collective resources, titles, and

expertise of a particular situation are made available for the individual and common good” (14). She sees rhetorical agency as the most ethical and expansive approach we can take when working with others because it doesn't rely on a form of individual control that is based solely on one's resources or property (power), one's position or title (authority), or one's expertise and knowledge (influence). Instead these things are made available for everyone to use as they attempt to collectively analyze the situation together and figure out what they need to do. Rhetorical agency is never quickly, fully or finally achieved; it must continually be re-negotiated. As Werder notes, such work requires many ongoing conversations about what we do and why because it takes time for individuals to learn to talk with each other, trust each other, and hear each other. Only when individuals in a community have rhetorical agency can they work together to examine and mediate their practices and create changes that make equity a reality for all participants.

Werder has developed this notion of rhetorical agency in the context of her work with faculty from across the university, people who are already credentialed knowers in their own fields. She is operating in a different rhetorical space than we do as writing program administrators working exclusively with TAs who are not yet, but desire to be certified as teachers and scholars in their own right. Elizabeth works with graduate students in multiple and overlapping spaces—pedagogical, scholarly, and administrative—for five or more years. Her program would seem to be able to support the “co-mentoring” opportunities described by Lynn Meeks and Christine Hult, where responsibilities are shared and everyone contributes differently, but “equally.” Meeks and Hult suggest that the constant “back-and-forthness of the [co-mentoring] relationship avoids the more hierarchical mentoring relationship in which one person imparts knowledge and wisdom to the other” (10). Such a model assumes, of course, that members have the rhetorical agency needed to contribute equally. Donna feels more restricted. She generally works with graduate students in a single pedagogical space for two years or less. Given the limited space and short period of time she and her TAs have to work together, she finds it extremely challenging (though not impossible) to cultivate this kind of back-and-forth, co-mentoring relationship. Anyone who has ever taught on the quarter system knows the frustration of seeing their students' epiphanies begin to emerge in week nine, one week before the end of the quarter. In the same way, just when the teaching community really begins to gel and work well together, half of her TAs graduate, and the work of creating a new community begins all over again.

Even without the time constraints, the development of a mutual rhetorical agency requires more than the good will and intentions of the participants in a community. We have come to understand how the development of mutual rhetorical agency through co-mentoring and community building is dependent upon both the institutional context and participants occupying that space. While contextual differences alone do not account for different administrative responses, awareness of context and an ability to shift with changing circumstances may be features or hallmarks of successful administrators.

**RESPONSE, RESPONSIBILITY, RESPONSE-ABILITY:
TENSIONS AND VULNERABILITY**

In the earlier scenario, Elizabeth's tension as a WPA lay in her reluctance to suggest a course of action for Danielle. If she did, how would Danielle develop her own agency as a teacher? Rather than tell Danielle what she should do, Elizabeth operated more as a collaborative sounding board in the hopes that Danielle would identify her options and see her situation more fully. After all, this strategy had always worked in her classroom with her students and in her collaborations with her colleagues. But it didn't seem to be working with Danielle. In analyzing this situation with Donna, Elizabeth began to realize that simply investing Danielle with the power and authority to make her own decision would not necessarily have turned this situation into "a teaching moment." By allowing Danielle to determine her own course of action, she had tried to invest Danielle with an agency that Danielle had not yet had time to develop. Nor did it achieve Elizabeth's desired aim of getting Danielle to look at each individual case differently. At the same time, Elizabeth understands that if she is going to encourage TAs to make their own decisions, then she is vulnerable to feeling disappointed (at least some of the time) when TAs choose to act in ways she would not. Nonetheless, this situation has helped Elizabeth see the need for articulating clearer guidelines and policies for those situations where TAs might be better served by having to follow standardized procedures. Perhaps decisions about certain university policies, such as plagiarism, should not always be left to the individual—even after consultation with the Director.

Lorraine Code, in discussing the ways that epistemology, ethics, and politics are linked in particular situations, has observed that the "issue is as much about response as it is responsibility—response-ability" (13.) Our responses to complex questions and situations are determined both by our "responsibility," our ethical obligations, and our "response-ability," our ability to respond and act in each situation. If we assume that some individuals, in some situations, by virtue of their knowledge and experience, have a

greater ability to respond (response-ability), then what is their responsibility for doing so? Here, then lies the tension for Donna as a WPA. If she has knowledge that could help, why would she not share that knowledge? Elizabeth attempted to create a rhetorical space so that Danielle could analyze and theorize her own situation. She had given Danielle the “responsibility” for dealing with her students’ plagiarism and only later realizes that Danielle may not have had enough “response-ability” to make that decision. Danielle already feels vulnerable about her own complicity regarding her students’ plagiarism. The difference between a TA’s vulnerability and the WPA’s vulnerability is agency. As a first year TA, Danielle lacked the agency in this rhetorical space to be able to see any choice other than the one she made. In this situation, then, it may have been more effective for Elizabeth to do more than discuss her greater understanding of university protocol with Danielle. However, Donna’s situation with her TAs is another matter. Perhaps sharing her knowledge and understanding was not the most helpful way to respond.

In the case of her email conversation with her TAs, Donna had just assumed that she was participating with other members of the same community in the same conversation about peer response. In talking with Elizabeth, she began to understand how her attempt to engage in dialogic inquiry as the WPA could be interpreted as a hierarchical move of critical rebuke by some TAs. As she continued to think about the situation, Donna realized she had been acting on the basis of some unexamined beliefs about power. She had believed the WPA was ethically obligated to do the same work and engage in the same activities that she asked others to do. By showing her commitment to the work and by modeling the idea that “know-ers” and “do-ers” can and should reside in the same bodies, Donna thought she was actually working against the construction of power hierarchies. She had assumed that inequity and oppression are more likely to occur in those situations where some members of the community are acknowledged as people-who-know (the ideas) and others are identified as people-who-do (the work). In her mind, what prevented the WPA from becoming a “Boss Compositionist” (Harris) was her proximity to the ongoing, day-to-day labor and conversation. We don’t see Donna’s reasoning here as the problem. The problem is that she had been so focused on the rightness of her own intentions that she failed to ask what difference her knowledge and actions might have in this particular space. Seeing her situation through Elizabeth’s eyes made her realize that she hadn’t really acted pragmatically.

According to Hephzibah Roskelly and Kate Ronald, pragmatism serves a mediating function between opposing ideas and involves inquiring into the underlying principles—which is what Donna tried to do—on her own.

However, pragmatic inquiry is a “communal and contingent process. . . and its method is necessarily collaborative, with action tested by many in a variety of circumstances” (84). Even though Donna thought she was acting ethically and collaboratively, she hadn’t paid enough attention to the situation. The rhetorical space that Donna and her TAs occupied at that moment made it unlikely that each of their ideas “could be heard and debated openly, responsively” (Code x). In this instance, the rightness or wrongness of Donna’s theories were irrelevant. It did not matter that her approach had worked fairly successfully for the previous six years. The point was that it wasn’t working now. These TAs felt like they were being criticized. Instead of responding to their situation, she assumed her audience had simply misread her intentions. She sent a second email to the group, explaining that her aim had been to identify the different premises underlying each kind of peer response practice; putting two different perspectives side-by-side was simply her way of trying to see their differences more clearly—not to show the superiority of one perspective over the other. Here might be a situation where response-ability—simply having the knowledge and ability to respond by virtue of one’s position and experience—was not the pragmatic thing to do because it did not allow for the development of mutual responsibility and rhetorical agency among all the participants who occupied the current rhetorical space.

In Elizabeth’s program, TAs are encouraged to participate in the professional community by signing up for one of the many opportunities to “collaborate with the Director.” However, TAs have some autonomy and freedom to decide how this work will be accomplished, just as they have relative independence in deciding on what and how to teach their classes. What is different here? There is a sharing of responsibility, but the long-standing core values of academic freedom and sovereignty remain intact. Individuals are still making their own decisions, and individuals are still reaping the gain as this work gets translated into lines on their individual vitas for their own future job searches. Simply distributing responsibility for the writing program work has larger programmatic implications as well.

Each year, two or three TAs in Elizabeth’s program take responsibility for selecting, compiling and producing “Writing Matters,” an undergraduate guide to the first year writing program that all freshmen are required to purchase. Recently a colleague informed Elizabeth that the latest edition of “Writing Matters” (which Elizabeth had not yet seen) had categorized some of the student essays according to the rhetorical modes of narration, description, and argument, an arrangement that did not reflect—indeed it contradicted—the way TAs learned to teach in the program. As she had done with Danielle, Elizabeth had allowed TAs the autonomy to make their own

decisions about the handbook. However, in this situation, Elizabeth realized she had removed herself completely from the conversation, and as a result, TAs represented some aspects of the program inaccurately. In the context of Elizabeth's program, where these experienced TAs were already invested with some agency for making many of their own decisions, it seems unlikely that Elizabeth's presence in the conversation would have met with any of the resistance that Donna's contributions to the email conversation provoked. Elizabeth's more active participation in the construction of the guide might simply have provided the occasion for TAs to examine *their* choices more carefully and critically. Elizabeth realized by not talking with TAs and reviewing the manuscript for "Writing Matters" before it went to press, she may have actually missed a valuable collaborative learning opportunity.

The situation with "Writing Matters" speaks to Donna's earlier fears about what can happen when know-ers get separated from do-ers. Redistributing power across more bodies is not a sufficient alternative to traditional models of administration. Redistributing power does not necessarily insure mutual rhetorical agency or equity. Our desire for equity is what led us to embrace more dialogic forms of collaboration in the first place because it seemed to us that when individuals worked together on the same projects they created the kind of rhetorical space from which a more just and equitable vision of reality could emerge. Of course we knew that this kind of collaborative work can be impractical for busy WPAs on many, many counts. And our intentions and efforts to be collaborative sometimes go awry so that we end up enabling the very behaviors we are trying to rectify. However, we still believe it is in these moments of disconnect when we may feel most vulnerable that we are most likely to examine our theories and our practices and search for the mediating principles between them. It is in these moments when the WPA feels "split at the root" that she is apt to pose the pragmatic question that disturbs her habitual way of seeing or knowing and helps her discover a different angle of vision, or to put it in Adrienne Rich's terms, helps her to "re-vision."

Amy Goodburn and Carrie Leverenz experienced such a disconnect when they were advanced graduate students working collaboratively with the Director of the Writing Program to re-envision curriculum and TA education. Although committed to the idea of shared leadership, Goodburn and Leverenz were surprised at the extent to which their efforts at collaborating were complicated and frustrated by both their desire for and deference to power. "[W]e expected and even desired the very kind of administrative structure we were seeking to transform" (279). Goodburn and Leverenz wanted to prove themselves, establish their authority, and have ownership over their own labor. In short, as they note, they wanted the kind of free-

dom and autonomy academics have always had to prove their worth and do their work. Sharing leadership threatened them and diluted them of the little power they felt they had as graduate students; yet, they had thought they were committed to the idea of dialogic collaboration.

While we might suggest that part of the reason for Goodburn and Leverenz's dissatisfaction was due to their status as graduate students, Goodburn and Leverenz conclude that structural changes to a program do not, by themselves, make for a more dialogic or feminist model of administration. For them, the critical element is the necessity of ongoing, self-reflection by all members of the community.

Changing the administrative structure is not sufficient if the members of the community are not involved in reflecting on the implications of those changes. As we have tried to suggest, however, not everyone in the community will be at a place to be able to "foreground conflict" and accept the invitation to be self-reflective. Goodburn and Leverenz may seem to have both responsibility and response-ability, but the fact that they did not yet occupy positions of real power afforded tenured professors suggests that, while they were able to recognize the disconnect between theory and practice, they were less able to act upon it. Elizabeth invited Danielle to reflect on her student's plagiarism and her own teaching, but Danielle does not seem to have the knowledge or rhetorical agency at this point to be able to examine the actions that make her feel vulnerable. She protects herself by following the rules to the letter. Shari Stenberg and Amy Lee describe the challenges that new TAs have when invited by the WPA to see themselves as learners while they are still in the process of learning. They suggest that TAs have a difficult time seeing the gaps—or disconnects—in their teaching practices not as "flaws" but as "possibilit[ies] for revision" (332). Lee's TAs were worried about being observed by others before they had had a chance to establish their agency as teachers. In Donna's program, a small group of TAs felt like they had already established themselves as teachers and saw no need to adopt the self-reflective, learner's stance. As tenured professors and writing program administrators, we realize it is easier for us to reveal our uncertainties and show ourselves to be learners committed to our own continuing inquiry and development as teachers. How our efforts are heard and understood by the other members who enter the rhetorical spaces of our writing programs is another matter. Donna's TAs saw her willingness to reflexively engage her own assumptions as being critical of them.

While we still hold on to the belief that knowers and doers should reside in the same bodies and that Behar's "vulnerable observer" should strive to be a vulnerable *participant*-observer, achieving this goal can be difficult. As we have shown, some WPAs are likely to experience conflict no matter if they

do or if they don't attempt to participate in the communities they are building and guiding. We think, however, that this tension is both necessary and productive. We do not want readers to hear us saying that administrators should no longer attempt to construct rhetorical spaces that invite opportunities for reflexivity and ongoing self-reflection, for indeed those habits of mind do remain our goals. We simply want to suggest that shared leadership and self-reflection are insufficient if all members of the community do not have enough knowledge and rhetorical agency to be able or willing to experience and act upon the feelings of vulnerability we describe here. And in most writing programs, especially those who employ graduate instructors, it is unlikely that all members will have developed the knowledge and agency to productively use their feelings of vulnerability to examine and (re-)negotiate their positions. Therefore, writing program administrators, who seek to develop the rhetorical agency of all the participants must work to create the kinds of rhetorical spaces that will best enable this goal—even if that leaves us feeling momentarily de-centered, off-balance and “split at the root.”

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What in God's Name? Administering the Conflicts of Religious Belief in Writing Programs¹

Elizabeth Vander Lei and Lauren Fitzgerald

Writing program administrators face increasingly complex social issues—from local and national economics to the identity politics of race, class, gender, and sexuality. We want to suggest that WPAs consider another important influence on students, instructors, and programs: religious belief. We have two reasons for making this suggestion: First, it's hard not to notice that religious belief has made a comeback in American public discourse, a resurgence that scholars in the sociology of religion characterize as persistent, pervasive, and increasingly multi-religious (see Eck 3-5). Even in the secular stronghold of American academia, Stanley Fish predicts that religion will “succeed high theory and the triumvirate of race, gender, and class as the center of intellectual energy in the academy” (C3). It seems likely that religious belief will not only continue to operate in students' writing and in civic discourse but also increasingly influence the scholarly thought that inevitably shapes our programs.

Second, in discussions of religion in composition studies, the work of writing program administrators—directors of writing programs, writing centers, or WAC programs—is strikingly absent. (Brad Peters and Mark Montesano and Duane Roen present notable exceptions.) Instead, most scholars rely on a description of an uncomfortable encounter between a religious student and a secular instructor to define the conceptual boundaries of the conflicts involved. For example, in a foundational contribution to the growing body of literature on this topic, Chris Anderson focuses exclusively on the student and teacher, leaving unexamined the question of how the writing program could have helped both—even though he writes from the position of a WPA.

We believe that WPAs, as campus leaders with a vested interest in writing and public discourse, have a responsibility to work with students, instructors, and administrators to develop practices that address religious belief ethically and effectively. At the end of this article, we provide sug-

gestions for beginning this work. However, because we believe that most WPAs—like we do—find talking about religion difficult, most of what we have to say here focuses on what might well prevent WPAs from even considering this work. As Anne Gere notes: “Because discussions of religion have been essentially off-limits in higher education, we have failed to develop sophisticated and nuanced theoretical discourses to articulate spirituality” (Brandt, et al, 46). Beyond issues of language, we believe that three powerful tenets—what we might call secular ideologies of religion—both play out in stories of secular instructors and religious students and help to account for why WPAs might hesitate to address the conflicts that emerge from these scenarios: 1) the idea that the Constitution, specifically the First Amendment, regulates what can and cannot be said about religion in the academy; 2) the assumption that religious faith and intellectual pursuits are at odds with one another; and 3) the more respectful (but still limited) notion that religion is a private matter, not appropriate for public disclosure. We believe that examining these assumptions can help WPAs better engage religious beliefs—our own or those of others—that shape our administrative and intellectual work.

THE RIGHT TO SPEAK/THE RIGHT TO SILENCE

We begin with our own story of an uncomfortable encounter between a religious student and secular teacher. As a young and inexperienced GTA, Lauren advised an international student not to write about her religious conversion in the public setting of an academic institution. The outcome was to effectively silence a student whose family had immigrated during the dissolution of the Soviet Union probably in part because the United States famously guarantees freedom of expression. Had the student written about any other aspect of her identity—her race, ethnicity, class, sexuality, and/or disability—Lauren would have applauded her for using her new-found freedom. But in a shockingly familiar scene of identity politics, this student found instead that she had to “keep that identity closeted,” as Shari Stenberg puts it (279). Why do we respond to religion in such troubling ways? Perhaps because of how most of us interpret the First Amendment of the Constitution.

The First Amendment contains two clauses that appear to be at odds with one other. The first of these is the Establishment Clause, “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion,” which serves as the basis of the “wall of separation” metaphor for the relationship of church and state. Believing that we are safeguarding a neutral public space, instructors, tutors, and even WPAs might silence religious talk in academic

contexts. In so doing, however, we may violate the protection offered by the other side of the wall. While many Americans presume that the Establishment Clause exclusively safeguards the state from the church, Constitutional historians and legal scholars note that the wall also safeguards the church from the state: indeed “the metaphorical separation of church and state originated in an effort to protect religion from the state, not the state from religion” (Carter 105). The wall, then, protects both state and church from domination by the other. If we would protect public discourse by segregating religious talk, we ought to do so with care, acknowledging the parallel protection offered to religion.

Furthermore, in our attempts to locate religious talk we may over apply the Establishment Clause. While legal scholars agree that this clause regulates religious and governmental institutions, no agreement exists about whether it applies to individuals, believers or not. Yale law professor Stephen Carter, for one, argues that the Constitution does not restrict individuals: The Establishment clause “does not mean ... that people whose motivations are religious are banned from trying to influence government, nor that the government is banned from listening to them” (106). Troublingly, when we misinterpret the Establishment Clause, we enforce a silence of submission, as Cheryl Glenn describes: “When silence is ... not our choice, but someone else’s for us, it can be insidious, particularly when someone else’s choice for us comes in the shape of institutional structure” (263-264). To enable a silence of submission is to eliminate the opportunity for people to use silence—or the talk that would break silence—rhetorically, as “empowered action, both resistant and creative” (283).

The second clause of the First Amendment—the Free Exercise Clause that guarantees “the free exercise” of religious belief—undergirds the central claim of much of the scholarship on religious faith in writing programs, namely, that students should be at least allowed if not encouraged to bring their religious belief to their writing. WPAs might well worry about the programmatic implications of this claim for two reasons. First, because this clause has been misused by those who claim that “free exercise” provides universal protection for any religious sentiment expressed publicly, WPAs and instructors might worry that once allowed into their programs and classrooms religious discourse will overrun the discussion. Second, if instructors overzealously apply the Free Exercise Clause, students may find themselves compelled to write about their faith when they would rather not. Both of these over-applications of the Free Exercise clause eliminate the opportunity for students, instructors, and WPAs to discuss restraint as a foundational rhetorical concept to the “rhetorical art” of silence/speech

(Glenn) and to the necessary balance between the right to speak and the right to remain silent (Gere).

Overly-broad attempts to enact the First Amendment—either attempts to quarantine religious talk from public discourse or attempts to compel religious talk in public ultimately contradict the purpose of the First Amendment. Regarding the First Amendment, WPAs ought to wonder how our writing programs might prepare instructors and students to discuss the rhetorical potential of religious discourse to shape civic life for ill and for good. History provides examples of religiously rooted arguments not only wreaking havoc on the environment and people's lives but also protecting the land and freeing many. Because religious principles can exist largely independent of political principles and can operate largely free of political expedience, they can serve as effective external pressure on public discourse and civic action, as the religiously motivated resistance to racial segregation in the United States and religiously based reconciliation in South Africa demonstrate. Thus, regarding the First Amendment, the pressing question for WPAs is not if we should attend to arguments rooted in religious belief. Rather, it is how our writing programs prepare instructors and students to recognize and, perhaps, craft arguments that make rhetorical use of religious discourse. For WPAs, the Constitutional conundrum becomes a remarkably practical problem: writing programs that do not acknowledge religious belief as a powerful force in people's lives compromise good teaching and good learning.

THE FALSE SEPARATION OF INTELLECT AND BELIEF

Discussions of religion in writing instruction are commonly shaped by a second assumption: religious belief is inherently opposed to scholarly inquiry. As Shari Stenberg argues, "after all, in academic culture, religious ideologies are often considered hindrances to—not vehicles for—critical thought" (271). Given our allegiance to critical thought, most of us can identify with the frustration that results from students (and instructors) who hobble scholarly inquiry with unexamined belief. Sometimes that frustration boils over in ways that embarrass us. Doug Downs quotes his disproportionate response to a student who had allowed his religious beliefs to taint his research process: "Congratulations! You've just written the most indoctrinated, close-minded, uncritical, simplistically reasoned paper I've ever read" (39). Shocked at the venom of his comment and realizing that this student's unexamined allegiances were no worse than any others, Downs turns to James Paul Gee's work to examine the ways in which students' religious belief can challenge their willingness to commit to the criti-

cal inquiry valued by the academy. Downs's story raises a useful question: Is it possible that the opposition of religious belief to academic inquiry is potentially false, one we perpetuate at the expense of all stakeholders in our work? Some scholars suggest that religious contexts can foster the critical inquiry we value in the academy. Priscilla Perkins suggests that we draw on the hermeneutical savvy of religious students. Likewise, Stenberg maintains that "Rather than dismissing religious inquiry or even testimony as inappropriate for intellectual work, we might consider what possibilities are opened by beginning with students' religious literacies, by assuming that they are not only deserving of study and reflection, but may in fact also serve as a resource for critical projects" (282).

If WPAs build programs that complicate the opposition between scholarly inquiry and religious belief, they may tap into what motivates some students, instructors, and fellow WPAs to engage in academic and civic discourse. For instance, exploring the relationship between her religious faith and her work, Virginia Chappell suggests, "without certainty, but with conviction, my faith gives me the energy and the courage to do my work in the academy" (52). Chappell describes this work as preparing students for "active citizenship" by "equipping [them] to engage in this discourse, beginning with the effort ... to help them articulate their commitments" (49). It is not the place of universities, according to Chappell, "to prescribe the particularity of those commitments" (49). In the end, according to Chappell, "individual students will make their own decisions about how to use their education, how to fulfill their personal promise, and in what measure they will do so through leadership and service" (49). To administer writing programs without acknowledging the rhetorical force of religious belief is to ignore the personal commitments that compel some students and instructors to engage in scholarly inquiry.

Finally, breaking the intellect/belief binary can help WPAs critique the allegiances that shape our own intellectual work. When WPAs craft writing programs that do not acknowledge the rhetorical force of religious belief, we not only reinforce our own, secular sources of rhetorical power; we also hobble those who would use their rhetorical skills (skills perhaps fostered in religious belief) to challenge that power. To maintain the intellectual/religious belief binary is to risk creating writing programs that are destructively certain of the nature of academic inquiry and the means to best foster that inquiry into that binary.

THE FALSE SEPARATION OF PUBLIC AND PRIVATE

The third assumption that informs the conflicts of religious belief in writing programs comes from a well-intentioned respect for religion as a private

aspect of a person's life. In fact, much of the scholarship on religious belief in composition studies extends research on cultural and social identity, an extension that can make talking about religion seem like trespassing. When WPAs treat religion as a private property, off-limits to public discussion, we risk at least two things. First, we may reinforce student resistance to the goals of our writing programs—of making school—and writing—matter. When students develop analytical skills without finding opportunity to apply those intellectual tools to the supposedly private aspects of their lives, we risk producing the educational result that students fear: “estrangement from one's past, an uncertainty about one's place in the world, a resigned sense that what one must give up during the educational process can never be recovered” (Richard Miller 22). Furthermore, when our writing programs do not press students to consider how religious belief—their own or that of others—shapes public discourse, we reinforce a widely held assumption that writing programs ought to teach “writing skills” sanitized of their rhetorical power, skills that “should not disturb one's place in the world” (22). Ironically, when WPAs ignore the rhetorical force of religious belief, they may unintentionally impose upon their program limitations that they would otherwise resent.

Second, when WPAs exclude religion, they miss an opportunity to create writing programs that prepare students for critiquing public, rhetorical uses of any supposedly private matter. Considering private matters in general, Barbara Couture cites “amusing and some pathetic examples of the tendency of some individuals to make their private lives the subject of ubiquitous public expression,” to establish her claim that “private identity accepted as public without debate poses a threat to an open society” (3, 7). Couture's remedy easily applies to issues of religious belief: “For public expression to function as public rhetoric requires a reconciliation of private identity with the ethical demand of relating to others. This movement cannot occur if we hold that our identity is defined and preserved through excluding rather than acknowledging others” (6). Giving people opportunity to make their own choices to speak or to be silent about religious issues, writing programs can helpfully complicate the notion of religious belief as an exclusively private matter, and they can open rhetorical use of religious belief to critical analysis.

Such an expansive understanding of religious belief is appropriate according to scholars of the sociology of religion because while “the temptation is to treat the distinction between public and private as fixed” ... “religion is located at the crossroads of public and private” (Cochran 16). Indeed, Eldon J. Eisenach points out that for most Americans, religious belief is not solely private—it includes not only “an ethnic-church-family-

oriented religion that points to personal and even private identity that no one should meddle in without our permission," but also "a moral-political-national-oriented religion that points to a public and civic identity that becomes an open invitation for meddling by others and a warrant for our meddling with others" (15). This second type of religion is a civic force, and, consequently, a site for rhetorical analysis.

SUGGESTIONS FOR ACTION

WPAs willing to take on the challenge of administering the conflicts of religious belief in their programs might well wonder where to begin. We outline three starting points. First, WPAs may find it helpful to work with students, tutors, and instructors to establish some boundaries for the function of religious belief in writing programs, and they might want to turn to legal precedent for guidance. Although under attack from conservative forces, the "Lemon Test" (referring to the 1971 Supreme Court case *Lemon v. Kurtzman*) still provides precedent for legal decisions regarding the relationship of the United States government and organized religions. As Stephen Carter summarizes it, the Lemon Test requires three things: "First the statute must have a secular legislative purpose; second, its principal or primary effect must be one that neither advances nor inhibits religion; finally, the statute must not foster 'an excessive entanglement with religion'" (110). WPAs could adapt the Lemon Test to the function of religious belief in our writing programs along the following lines: 1) Texts produced within the writing program must serve an academic purpose. Writing programs and instructors should be prepared to describe the outcomes for writing assignments; students should be prepared to explain how their texts meet those outcomes. 2) Students (and instructors) should not write in an effort to convert readers; instructors (and students) should not teach in an effort to denigrate religious belief. 3) Students and instructors should be allowed to be silent on matters of personal religious belief.

The project of articulating policies such as these naturally fosters an enriched language for discussing the function of religious belief in academic contexts. A WPA could nurture this articulation through staff development. Several scholars provide excellent case studies that could provide relatively safe springboards for program-wide discussions among faculty or tutors (see Vander Lei and Kyburz). WPAs might also suggest curricular models to faculty who would like to make religion explicit, rather than secretly or accidentally, a part of their writing classes. Keith Miller and Jennifer Santos, Priscilla Perkins, and Kristine Hansen, for example, offer curricular models that consider religious belief as a public or civic force

and successfully engage public issues of religion while allowing students to remain silent about their own religious commitments.

Or instructors could root curricula in recent research in composition theory. For example, Sid Dobrin's work focuses on an ecological model of discourse that attends to the physical environments that nourish discourse, "environments that are dependent upon, created by, those same discourses" (223), environments that are sometimes religious. Beverly Moss's study of African American churches as sites of literacy (*A Community Text*) and Beth Daniell's study of the function of literacy in an Al-Anon group (*A Communion of Friendship*) can serve as productive models of this kind of research. Alternatively, instructors could explore the rhetorical effects of religious identity. How, for example, does religious belief foster radical public action as it does for Paulo Freire, whose work "results as much from his Catholicism as it does from his Marxism" (Daniell "Narratives" 402)? Likewise, Azizah al-Hibri describes how Muslim American women use their membership in the Islamic community to argue for human rights. Students might see clearly how enacting their commitments—religious or otherwise—can help them rhetorically.

Addressing religious belief in our writing programs is complex business, made all the more complex by the false binaries—church and state, intellect and belief, public and private—that limit our thinking. As WPAs, we need to develop scholarly language and writing programs that foster talk about issues that have, for too long, seemed out of bounds. In doing so, we affirm our scholarly belief that "human beings can influence one another with words," and that rhetoric influences by harnessing "the most basic unit of power—being able to modify the beliefs of another human being," (Daniell "Pedagogy" 183). Further, we acknowledge that myriad forces—intellectual, social, ideological—influence how and why we want to modify those beliefs, and we help students learn "how to work within and against discursive constraints simultaneously," (Richard Miller 27). And we find opportunity to critique arguments that are based on religious belief, asking questions such as these: What function does religious belief serve in the author's argument? Has the author used religious belief ethically? To what extent is the author's religious belief held by a community of believers and to what extent is it idiosyncratic? How does the author proceed logically from religious first principles to her conclusions? Such robust critique would challenge those who lob religion-based argumentative grenades into public discussion and then retreat behind an imagined "wall of separation." Finally, when we engage the conflicts that come with addressing religious belief in writing programs, we develop new perspectives that may help us evaluate our own rhetorical uses of this issue.

NOTES

¹ We want to acknowledge the critical insights Jeanne Gunner offered on an earlier version of this article.

² This work includes discussions of the ways in which religious faith shapes the writing of African American students (Moss, Jackson and Richardson), (presumably white) Christian fundamentalist students (Rand, Perkins), Muslim students (Williams), and Jewish students (Fitzgerald). See also the two edited collections of essays on religious belief and academic writing (Buley-Meissner, Thompson, and Tan; Vander Lei and kyburz).

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Mainstreaming Diversity Writing

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According to The North Central Association of Colleges and Schools (NCA), Kansas State University (K-State) has a “diversity problem.” In its 2001-2002 accreditation visit, NCA not only identifies the lack of racial and ethnic diversity among students and faculty as a weakness but also critiques the meager “qualitative diversity experience” possible for all students at K-State (Higher Learning Commission 6). Though acknowledging the constraints the university faces because of the relatively ethnic and racial homogenous makeup of its regional constituency, the NCA site visit report argues that these constraints make it even more imperative for K-State to enhance the diversity awareness of students (6). Yet, despite a flurry of multicultural workshops and presentations, problems continue to offset the university’s attempts to transform its homogenous image. In the spring of 2004, K-State received unwelcomed national attention when the faculty advisor for the student newspaper, *The Collegian*, was reassigned because of the newspaper’s failure to publicize diversity and multicultural events on campus (Hoover). K-State’s minority student enrollment has also been flat. From 1997 to 2003, though the numbers of African American and Hispanic students have slightly risen, the percentage of these students in terms of overall undergraduates has decreased, from 3.2% to 2.9% for African Americans and from 2.3% to 2.2% for Hispanic Americans.¹ The numbers of Native American and Asian American students have also decreased (Office of Planning). Additionally, some 45 minutes away, Topeka can possibly “lay claim to being the homophobia capital of the U.S.” (Roston), largely in part because of the efforts of extreme right-wing evangelist Fred Phelps, who condemns homosexuals and much of the rest of world to death on his www.godhatesfags.com website. In response to the constitutional ban on same-sex marriage passed in the spring of 2005, more liberally-minded Kansans began sporting bumper stickers that read, “Kansas: As Bigoted as You Think,” mocking the state slogan (Weslander).

For readers outside of Kansas, Thomas Franks’s popular *What’s the Matter with Kansas?* warns that Kansas—the most average, “anti-exotic,”

and forgettable of places in the United States (29)—serves as the country's common denominator: if it happens in Kansas, it most certainly will happen in your own community. Though a great deal of scholarship connecting diversity education and composition studies assumes a positive and deeper commitment towards difference, Franks's polemic uncovers a powerful and angry anti-intellectual backlash that mocks "liberalism" with a force similar to anti-Semitic discourse and that hungers for a nostalgia of American authenticity, common sense, meritocracy, and individualism. It is a backlash mentality that could applaud diversity, but only a diversity narrowly defined as the equity of ideas, as opinions that all receive equal treatment in a free marketplace of ideas. This is the diversity logic followed by anti-abortionist extremists, who compare themselves to African American Civil Rights leaders (Franks 184); this is the diversity logic practiced by "intelligent design" proponents in Topeka; in this case, it is the elitist scientists who appear not to embrace the diversity of open inquiry, remaining instead close-minded and overly dogmatic about their evolutionary "theory" (Franks 211).

Though Franks's main claim is not addressed here, that religious neo-conservative Kansans have been tragically duped by their false consciousness, this present research shows how the writing program at K-State has confronted this backlash mentality and developed, implemented, and evaluated an introductory diversity-based writing course that, by the Fall 2007 semester, will replace the existing curriculum and represent the "mainstream" writing course for first-year students. This study presents data from 14 pilot sections of the diversity writing course, in which 244 students participated. It is the hope of this author that this study will contribute a more systematic description of first-year students' preconceptions and attitudes about diversity and writing, providing a quantitative and qualitative background that may assist teachers and administrators attempting to develop and mainstream their own diversity writing courses, an especially controversial endeavor in predominantly white, conservative, and rural institutions. Finally, this study suggests that it is difficult, if not impossible, to make generalizations about students who resist the diversity-based curriculum and, in particular, to account for the motivations behind their resistance. Instead of labeling these students as conservative, hopelessly parochial, or worse, this study suggests it is more profitable to listen to these students and strategize ways to further engage them.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A great deal of the research of how composition intersects with diversity education has focused on a set of important inquiries. To name a few, schol-

arship has examined how the majority of white students resist inquiries of race, gender, and class; how notions of “standardized” academic English and academic discourse communities contradict our desires for inclusive classrooms; how computer-mediated classrooms can both promote opportunities for women and historically marginalized social groups, yet at the same time exacerbate the differences in literacy among these groups and problematically erase all notions of difference; and, how instructors can productively invite both majority and minority students to engage issues of human difference. David Holmes, for instance, asks students to unpack the racial and rhetorical constructions in Zora Neale Hurston’s “How It Feels to be Colored Me” (8-10); Margaret Thomas employs Spike Lee’s *School Daze*, allowing her students to identify the social contexts and meanings of African American code switching; Jennifer Beech, moreover, asks students to disrupt whiteness by examining the raced and classed constructions of the “redneck” (177-78). All these examples represent excellent learning models, which enable students to take on active identities as diversity researchers in comfortable, low-risk communicative situations. Yet, as Shirley Wilson Logan, Jennifer Trainor, Amy Winans, and Megan Boler and Michalinos Zembylas demonstrate, these attempts to make the writing class a site of social justice and to recruit students as allies are often fraught with angry rejections, passive resistance, and the reliance upon clichés, platitudes, and the powerful narratives of individualism, meritocracy, and colorblindness.

For composition practitioners and administrators, however, who hope to build diversity-based writing classes for their local institutions, the research has several limitations. First, action research in isolated classes has been privileged, largely consisting of exploratory discourse analyses, observations, and student case studies. Though it is a paradigm excellent for identifying patterns and issues, it is not as useful for program-wide evaluations or for the development of student and teacher-training curricula. Second, the research has largely investigated writing classes that respond to literary texts—especially memoirs and personal transformation narratives from popular writers of color (e.g., Curtis and Herrington; see Vandenberg for a critique of diversity-based readers used in writing classes); there have been few attempts to investigate writing classes that focus on non-fiction diversity texts in the popular media. Finally, despite the excellent attempts to problematize how students respond to inquiries of diversity, much of the research repeats a similar narrative: teachers, as protagonists of diversity, encourage students to become protagonists themselves—allies for social justice—or, failing this, justify why their students refuse to take on this new identity. These well-intentioned, oftentimes heroically-plotted narratives, though, do not help teachers and administrators begin to envision

how a diversity-based writing curriculum will work in their own institutions and how students may negotiate the materials, texts, and issues of diversity. In other words, diversity writing research needs to examine the intersections of writing and diversity more closely and begin to find data for tentative questions such as

- How do first-year writers characterize themselves as novice researchers of diversity?
- How do students navigate the composition and diversity goals of the course? (That is, how does the content affect their writing, or vice versa?)
- What are the expectations, concerns, attitudes, and strategies of students in the course?
- In what ways is composition problematic for teaching diversity awareness?
- How does a diversity-based curriculum impact training of novice instructors?
- How does the demographic makeup of the class and the university itself influence curricular decisions?

METHODOLOGY

During the 2004-2005 fall and spring semesters, 244 students in 14 sections agreed to participate in a pilot study of a diversity-based writing course (ENGL 100 "Diversity Writing"). This experimental class replaces the first of two required composition courses, the second of which focuses upon argumentation. Participants were selected on the basis of their enrollment in the specified sections of diversity writing.² Though they may not necessarily represent a random sample of students at K-State, they share, as a group, comparable GPAs and ACT scores. Four experienced instructors taught the course, including one graduate teaching assistant.

Early on in both semesters, students were asked to write and analyze a personal narrative that arose from readings and discussions of important constructs of human difference as class, gender, and race/ethnicity (cf. Berlin 116; McKinney 128). From two alternative perspectives, students also responded to editorials questioning the attention being paid to diversity training on U.S. college campuses. Additionally, students wrote an informed research report to a local stakeholder regarding a diversity issue and, finally, analyzed advertisements for how they represented difference, exploited stereotypes, and reproduced constructions of class, gender, race,

and other factors. The course objectives asked for students to become “novice experts” of diversity, capable of

- Identifying how culture and society influenced the ways human beings are represented.
- Making connections between themselves as individuals and as members of particular cultural groups.
- Researching diversity issues that impact them as college students and citizens (e.g., “hate speech,” “white privilege,” “racism”).
- Analyzing non-literary “texts” (e.g., images, movies, speeches, websites, informative essays, diaries, and business memos) and evaluating how authors and designers represent difference and reproduce stereotypes.
- Conducting research, evaluating appropriate resources, and properly integrating and citing sources.
- Demonstrating competence in academic literacy activities (e.g., active note-taking, summarizing, identifying and producing theses, supporting main points, and editing).

These course objectives preserve the majority of the composition and research goals of the mainstream expository writing course and reflect the student multicultural competencies devised earlier by a university-sponsored diversity research group (Tilford).

Several qualitative and quantitative empirical methods were conducted to evaluate the experimental diversity writing course. First, students completed four questionnaires for each major unit. The questionnaires consisted of both Likert-scale and short response items and asked students to

- rank specific readings and writing assignments
- evaluate how well they accomplished unit objectives
- describe aspects of the class they liked/disliked
- make recommendations for future revisions of the course and student materials
- describe what they learned from a specific unit
- respond to a diversity scenario
- predict their grade for each unit and comment about the fairness of the grade
- rank themselves upon their perceptions of their political orientation, the political orientation of their class, and their comfort level (these questions were added in the spring semester)

These responses, which were correlated with course grade, student GPA, ACT score, gender, and ethnicity, served several pedagogical, administrative, and research purposes. They allowed instructors and curriculum developers to make significant revisions from the fall to the spring semester, based upon students' reactions to specific units and readings; they showed administrators how students self-reported their ability to fulfill unit objectives; and, they provided valuable glimpses of students' attitudes towards the course.

The short responses were read by the principal investigator and two trained independent readers in order to identify patterns of student attitudes. The independent readers then categorized students on the basis of the short responses, according to whether they demonstrated a dramatic positive change in attitude towards the course, endorsed the class in some way, divulged little about their attitude, did not endorse the class, or significantly resisted the class. Unfortunately, the inter-rater reliability between the two independent raters, though statistically significant, was weak ($r=.48$). These categories are only helpful, therefore, to make tentative claims about the differences between the two semesters and to identify specific students with highly marked positive or negative attitudes.

As a way to expand upon the evaluation of the course, two students were interviewed three times over the course of the spring semester. Both students identified themselves as an "other" in the classroom: Aaron, because he was "not just an 'average Caucasian person'" and because he grew up in an ethnically diverse family in a rural central Kansas community that did not easily accept those outside of the dominant Germanic Mennonite culture; Laurie, because she was a non-traditional student and because she already filled the roles of a healthcare professional and a mother. In the interviews, Aaron and Laurie were asked how they perceived themselves in the diversity writing class, how they dealt with the assignments, and how they connected the course to their academic and personal lives.

RESULTS: THREE CORE STUDENT ATTITUDES

Three general patterns of student attitudes emerged from the data: students' perceptions of how the diversity and the writing objectives connected (or did not connect) together; students' attitudes towards diversity in general and, for a small number of students, their various ways of expressing their resistance; and, students' concerns about offending their classmates or about the course suppressing their own beliefs and values. The following three subsections detail these attitudes.

Attitude #1: Diversity Versus Writing.

In the evaluation at the end of the spring semester, although a majority of students (68%) claimed that the diversity and writing components of the course were appropriately balanced, 21% of students indicated that they felt that the class included “Not Enough Writing” or “Too Much Diversity.” Interestingly enough, the results appeared to depend on how students identified themselves politically. Of the students who classified themselves as “conservative” or “somewhat conservative,” 42% responded that the class included too much of a diversity focus; for students who classified themselves as “liberal” or “somewhat liberal,” 14% judged that the class focused too much on diversity whereas another 14% thought the class did not deliver enough diversity content.

The students’ comments about these diversity and writing imbalances are interesting, and they divulge a great deal about attitudes towards diversity as well as expectations about what occurs in a composition class. The following quotation is representative and clearly demarcates the disciplinary terrain of the “English class”:

I realize that the class is “diversity writing,” but I don’t feel like I am getting adequate writing/English skills learned. Maybe it’s too soon to tell, though. I just wish we talked more about writing rather than having class discussions (interesting though they may be) on diversity issues ... it’s English class, not cultural studies.³

In the next two quotations, students take on a teacherly and an administrative perspective, respectively:

This course, to me, does not seem like it could be used universally in Expos. There are some people that are struggling greatly writing a complete unfragmented sentence, let alone analyzing, describing, or narrating a story about their own culture.

[W]e’re not getting enough instruction in the actual writing because we’re taking time out to explore diversity; on the other hand, without adding another required class to the required curriculum, this is probably one of the better classes to tack on diversity.

In the first quotation above, the student sounds similar to many novice graduate teaching assistants in our program, who wonder why we urge them to focus upon “higher order concerns” such as analysis or narration

when “lower order concerns”—especially run-on sentences and punctuation—continue to present their students so many difficulties. The second quotation suggests a remarkably cynical savvy: the student obviously understands the institutional context of the class—that it is a requirement—and even suspects that “diversity” might become an undergraduate curricular requirement as well. This student has simply substituted “tacking on diversity” for our cynical “doing diversity.”

There are many possible explanations for these attitudes, several of which have to do with students’ current-traditional expectations of what should happen in a writing course. For example, a student recommends that the instructor “concentrate more on writing than interpreting,” as if interpretation and analysis were practices anterior to a writing class, which, presumably, should consist of more attention to editing. Articulating what should be taught, another student directly diagnoses the problem of the diversity content:

The teacher doesn’t teach us how to write. We discuss the stories fine. But when it comes to writing, all we know is what we learned in high school. We are learning styles of writing, but not how to write (grammar, punctuation, etc.).

Although it may be tempting to hypothesize that this yearning for current-traditional classrooms is a symptom of students’ discomfort with the diversity curriculum, it is dangerous to quickly dismiss these complaints. These students suggest that more explicit instruction is necessary and hint that the discussions of diversity issues need to be linked more directly to audience, tone, the use of different types of evidence, drafting, and usage. In this regard, Lisa Delpit’s warning is important to remember: students may grow suspicious of composition classes in which factors of writing are not directly talked about, not because they are wary of critical pedagogy and controversial content, but because they feel that instructors are hiding something from them, the explicit “codes or rules for participating in power” (25). Alternatively, students may simply be expressing their suspicions of how diversity relates to their academic development.

On the other hand, the interview data do indicate students’ satisfaction with attempts to connect the diversity content to real-world issues. Laurie and Aaron were able to apply the content of their course to their personal and academic lives: as a nursing administrator, Laurie analyzed issues of non-native English speakers and access to health care; she was also adept at articulating the gender and ethnic barriers that prevented effective communication between patients and health-care workers. Aaron, additionally,

was able to identify the diversity elements of his major classes, especially Urban Forestry Management.

Attitude #2: Resisting Diversity Writing.

Similar to previous case study research (e.g., Boler and Zembylas), the open form short response sections of the unit evaluations expressed various forms of resistance. However, although various correlations were performed, comparing overall course satisfaction with variables such as grades, ACT scores, and demographic data, no reliable or significant statistic emerged from the Likert-scale items to identify what types of students may resist the diversity objectives.

This evaluation response, written at the end of the fall semester, serves as a good example:

I don't think this course is worth taking. Part of the reason that there is racism and prejudice is because there is so much focus on diversity. Also, the majority is always left out of the discussion. I realize that people are different and have different beliefs and values but I don't need a course that tells me to be tolerant of others; that is common sense.

This honest statement, written by a white, female student who performed excellently in the class and who had a 30+ ACT score and a 4.0 GPA, is remarkable, not only because it comes from a high-achieving student but also because it illustrates so succinctly the main tropes against diversity. First, she claims that the “focus on diversity” is what leads to “racism and prejudice,” sounding much like Arthur Schlesinger who, fifteen years earlier, warned American readers that “[t]he cult of ethnicity exaggerates differences, intensifies resentments and antagonisms, drives ever deeper the awful wedges between races and nationalities” (102). Second, she speaks from the transparent position of whiteness, stating that “the majority,” white students much like herself, have nothing at stake in discussions of diversity. Finally, this student's ephemeral resistance appears in another guise: it is obvious that this type of resistance, unlike several of the teacher narratives of confrontational students (e.g., see Lindquist 194), will not erupt in class; she will not demonstrate her dissatisfaction or attempt to challenge the instructor's authority; however, she will also not perform the important work of the committed student, ally, and anti-racist. Articulating an anti-diversity trope well documented in the literature, she suggests that the entire issue of diversity is a thing of the past and that awareness and tolerance of differences are obvious commonplaces. Similarly, another student writes: “We all know diversity is important, we all know we need

to be tolerant, and we all know that no two people are the same: but we couldn't seem to stop having the same conversations.”

Yet, again, it is difficult to generalize why students resist the diversity content. Many readers, especially those who have attended various diversity days and diversity training sessions, may understand these frustrations. Although these two students are possibly overly optimistic about how they depict the tolerance and awareness of their classmates, they are clearly exhibiting symptoms of “diversity fatigue”: diversity, to them, becomes a discourse without any definite ends or purposes; it appears to exclude them or to pass judgments on them, repeating a mantra of tolerance that it pretends these students refuse to hear. Indeed, as their class performance indicates, these students hear the messages, codes, and positions of diversity all too well.

However, despite the many research narratives of emotional student outbursts, prompted perhaps by readings hinting that students' academic and professional successes were illusions of privilege, the data indicate few such highly-charged reactions. The majority of students (65%) were categorized in the middle neutral category, indicating that the two independent readers did not have enough information to make a positive or negative determination. For the two semesters, the readers determined that 18% of students endorsed the class or demonstrated a dramatic attitudinal change and that, conversely, 17% did not endorse the class or demonstrated significant resistance (the latter category included seven students, all from the first semester of the study). From these, the two following quotes are most marked by their combative and sarcastic tone (both are responses from male students):

My ankle be broken from the fall or sometimes my ears be itching? There is no way that Ebonics speech pattern should be included in an English text. Do you know which one follows the correct speech pattern Phillip? Absolutely ridiculous.

To top it off, it's about petty stuff like a guy from Ghana bitching about America. Why are these questions about me and not the unit?

These quotations are especially interesting, in that they have selected the principal investigator of the study as their audience. In the second quotation, the frustrated student moves his criticism of the course and a reading by Anthony Appiah to that of the evaluation questionnaire itself. These moments of significant resistance have a life outside the classroom as well. Aaron, one of the interview participants, revealed that one of his room-

mates, who had taken the class in the previous semester, warned him to drop it because it was focused too much on gender and racial issues. Aaron, who identified himself by a wide array of ethnicities—German, Dutch, Hispanic, and Native American—fortunately did not heed his advice.

Attitude #3: Comfort and Bias.

The final set of attitudes that the responses revealed were students' concerns about feeling comfortable in the class and whether the instructor, class materials, and classmates were biased towards a preconceived viewpoint towards the various issues of diversity. In the spring semester, students were asked to respond to Likert-scale items on how they identify themselves politically, how they perceive the politics of the class, and how comfortable they felt discussing issues of difference without offending classmates or feeling that their own beliefs and values were being suppressed or discounted. The majority of students reported that they considered themselves to be "moderate," the classroom politics to be "moderate," and, finally, that they felt "somewhat comfortable." Below, the table summarizes the responses for students overall, for the 29% of students who classified themselves as "conservative" or "somewhat conservative," and the 27% of students who classified themselves as "somewhat liberal" or "liberal."

Overall Student Political Self-Description

Conservative	13%
Somewhat Conservative	16%
Moderate	31%
Somewhat Liberal	9%
Liberal	18%
Don't Know	13%

Overall Student Perceptions of Class Politics

Conservative	1%
Somewhat Conservative	13%
Moderate	50%
Somewhat Liberal	21%
Liberal	4%
Don't Know	1%

Overall Student Perceptions of Class Comfort

Very Comfortable	30%
Somewhat Comfortable	46%
Somewhat Uncomfortable	16%
Very Uncomfortable	7%
Don't Know	1%

**Conservative/Somewhat Conservative Student Perceptions
of Class Politics & Comfort**

Politically Moderate Class	44%
Somewhat or Too Liberal	35%
Somewhat Conservative	9%
Felt Very or Somewhat Comfortable	83%
Somewhat Uncomfortable	13%

**Liberal/Somewhat Liberal Student Perceptions
of Class Politics & Comfort**

Politically Moderate Class	48%
Somewhat Liberal	24%
Somewhat or Too Conservative	19%
Felt Very or Somewhat Comfortable	59%
Very or Somewhat Uncomfortable	41%

Interestingly enough, although more conservative-minded students claimed that the class did not match their political orientation, 83% still indicated they felt somewhat or very comfortable in the class; liberal students, on the other hand, who felt that the class was more aligned with their political beliefs, indicated they felt less comfortable in the classroom. Although we must be careful making conclusions from these data, especially given the low number of respondents (24 conservative students and 22 liberal students) and the uncertain nature of what students mean by categories such as “liberal” and “conservative,” it is interesting that out of a group of students who feel the class is generally not politically aligned with their own beliefs, not a single one of them indicated they felt “very uncomfortable” (unlike six liberal students who indicated this).

Complicated variables such as “comfort” and “perceptions of bias” are formed over the course of the semester and have a great deal to do with the persona of the instructor and the gradual development of classroom community and trust. In their interviews, Laurie and Aaron suggested that student comfort is not instantaneous. Laurie consistently emphasized the “community” aspects of the class and attributed reasons for its development: the ability of the instructor to keep students focused, students’ willingness to talk openly, the small class size and its racial and ethnic diversity, and students’ willingness to talk openly. For Aaron, discussions at first were “scary,” especially when issues of male privilege came up. During one such discussion, Aaron “went ahead and spoke up”: “[M]y father didn’t have to compete; my fear is that I’m competing against people; there’s another

group [i.e., women]—if I can't get a job ... it's what I'm supposed to do." Aaron remains an ally of the course, even though he voices an agrarian conservative viewpoint of the traditional role of men and women. In this case, Aaron powerfully articulates an anxiety of men who feel that their identity as family breadwinners is being challenged and that they have few roles left.

One final note on perceptions of bias: as various other researchers have noted, a significant problem is the fact that students perceive of the content of diversity as a set of "opinions" (e.g., McKinney 127), and that, in this case, instructors have been authorized to defend and privilege certain opinions at the expense of others. This perception not only challenges one of the more cherished tropes of American rhetoric, that everyone is entitled to their opinion, but disrupts the neutrality of the classroom—that the instructor is not allowed to cast judgments upon the validity of these opinions. One consequence of this is that students do not necessarily mind if the diversity content appears biased, as long as opposing and alternative views are offered. At the end of the semester, one student writes: "Give the students a sense that, although white and male privilege are there and everybody should understand, that every opinion is welcome as long as it isn't [un]necessary. Also perhaps show examples of those who opposed some of the ideas written in essays that you cover." Another student, likewise, comments on the differences between fact and opinion: "Teach the class with the fact in mind that most of what you are teaching is opinion, not fact. It is very frustrating to me for opinions to be correct or incorrect." Again, quite possibly, the force of these comments places composition back in its disciplinary box; these students contend that, in a writing course, instructors should value their opinions—after all, these opinions are personal expressions. On the other hand, these students may be voicing positions similar to Catherine Fox in her critique of critical pedagogy. Fox is suspicious of teachers whose authority comes from a belief that they have "already arrived at the position of being a critical thinker" and, henceforth, only need to wait for students to reject their false assumptions and adopt the correct answers and political stances (203). As the many discussions among the diversity writing instructors attest, there was a tremendous amount of concern during the study about how to configure the space for inquiring about diversity, which allows students to reflect upon their conceptions of gender, race, and class, yet without leading them only towards a set of pre-approved responses.

CONCLUSION: MAINSTREAMING DIVERSITY WRITING

Introductory writing classes serve as one of the key disciplinary sites in which to mainstream diversity, especially at large, public, and predominantly white institutions such as K-State. Additionally, even though “doing diversity” represents yet a double or triple service for composition programs, the intersection of diversity awareness and writing promises tremendous benefits for both areas. Moreover, for composition studies, its role in mainstreaming diversity demonstrates the field’s most prevalent inquiry, that of human difference, identity, language, and power. At K-State, diversity writing reaches a great number of students early on in their academic careers; it allows students to confront these important issues in safe and relatively small classes; it focuses upon the powerful technology of writing; and, in turn, it provides students with a rich source of audiences, keywords, texts, and local, national, and global issues to write about.

That being said, mainstreaming the diversity writing course necessitates yet another role for instructors and writing program administrators—to actively market the course to possibly skeptical students, parents, administrators, and others outside the writing program. As we have implemented and expanded the number of courses, we have reached out to important diversity stakeholders on campus and promoted the course to advisors and other department heads. The justification rests first on the assumption that a focus on content enhances writing because, as George Hillocks argues, it allows for students to pursue discipline-specific inquiry strategies that are oftentimes “responsible for the impulse to write and for the kind of writing” (92). Indeed, we argue that the content of diversity is especially effective content for writing classes, in that it involves issues that are relevant to students and highlights a vast array of social issues that dominate political debate (e.g., the Hurricane Katrina investigation), popular discourse (e.g., the fascination with Danica Patrick, Tiger Woods, and Natalie Holloway), and educational institutions (e.g., affirmative action, in-state tuition for undocumented workers, and biased standardized testing). Moreover, as the class emphasizes audience and, especially, writing for possibly resistant audiences, the diversity curriculum allows excellent opportunities to discuss differences in the values and beliefs of readers and in how they privilege different genres and types of evidence (see also Winans 254).

Instructors and administrators need to make reasonable attempts to address resistance and discomfort yet without mainstreaming diversity to the point in which it becomes a safe narrative of clichés and platitudes.⁴ Writing program administrators, in particular, need to avoid overreacting to students who call for more balance in the curriculum or who complain that

their grade has suffered because of their opposing belief or value systems.⁵ In the various revisions to the diversity writing curriculum, we have confronted such concerns by disclosing our own concerns. In a letter addressed to all students, I quite frankly tell them that they may feel uncomfortable, especially at first, for many different reasons: white students, because they have little experience with talking about issues of difference; students of color, because they are wary of becoming spokespersons or cultural guides for particular ethnic or racial groups. Also, we provide students the same materials and strategies we present in teacher training contexts, such as scenarios about possible teacher-student conflicts, in which students have to identify the basis of the problem and formulate possible solutions.

At the same time, we need to be cautious of dismissing students' resistance to the course and making judgments about their parochial natures, such as the belief that their homogenous backgrounds have made them impossibly close minded. We need to consider alternative explanations to why some students express frustration with the curriculum, an endeavor that asks for a great deal of reflection about the assumptions of social justice pedagogy and diversity education, the authority of novice graduate teaching assistants, and the disciplinary status of both diversity and composition studies. Particularly important is the training of inexperienced instructors and asking them to listen for these moments of resistance and then strategizing ways to negotiate their students' frustrations. This study suggests that some initial ways to confront student resistance is to focus on a set of important keywords, procedures, and lines of inquiries which impact students' professional, personal, and civic lives and which additionally touch upon the sports, film, music, and videogame cultures they consume. Furthermore, it is important to emphasize that sophisticated and engaged writing is always involved with diversity, meaning that issues of difference inform genre, tone, dialect, and register; the identity of writers; the understanding of the values and concerns of audiences; and the use of evidence and support.

Finally, instructors need to be cautious of attempting to overly transform students. A single semester is far too short of a time to expect that students can silence the powerful ideologies of whiteness, color blindness, individuality, and meritocracy and become committed and anti-racist, anti-sexist allies, who have internalized such attributes as flexibility, respect, and empathy (see Tilford). As I have written elsewhere, these overly transformative agendas for instructors may result in exoticizing the writing of students of color and creating dangerous linguistic metaphors of distance, of African-American students, for example, who remain close to their language and life experiences, and white students, on the other hand, who remain

distant and uncommitted. Indeed, we most likely have failed when white students argue that they are distant from inquiries of human difference, even if they code these feelings in terms of racial self-deprecation, such as contending that whites are “generic” and “boring.” We have failed, then, when a white student first reports: “It is hard to write about diversity when you yourself are the average majority. I am worried that my ideas are not diverse because I am white.” This student, who otherwise received an “A” in the course, writes at the end of the semester, reflecting upon the personal ethnography paper, that “[t]his does not have much to do with diversity because most people in the class are white.” We have likely succeeded, though, in cases in which students have begun to realize that whiteness does not excuse them from these conversations. One student, who does represent a “transformation” of sorts, states at the beginning of the course that the racial and ethnic homogeneity of her class (i.e., white and middle class) will prevent her from receiving the “‘totally correct’ view of diversity.” In the final evaluation, however, she comments:

Before taking this course, my attitude was very much like this student’s [a scenario of a white, middle-class student who claimed that diversity was interesting yet unimportant for whites]. I didn’t feel that I could relate to any issues of diversity based on my ethnicity and background. After taking this class, I have learned that my views on diversity were very wrong. This class has taught me about all the different forms of diversity and how broad the actual word diversity is. Diversity is in everything and plays a vital role in one’s own development.

This statement represents a small, yet important vindication of the course.

NOTES

¹ K-State’s creation of a multi-racial category in 1997 may impact how some students of color identify themselves.

² Students were informed two weeks before the start of the semester about the pilot study and the experimental nature of the new curriculum for ENGL 100. Also, at the beginning of the semester, they were asked to sign an informed consent form to allow us to include their responses and demographic data in the study. If students did not wish to participate, their responses were destroyed at the end of the semester. All student responses were anonymous. For the two interview subjects, I chose pseudonyms.

³ For the sake of clarity, I have edited the student responses for minor usage and typographical mistakes.

⁴ Sue Hum is more blunt. Investigating the relationship of multiculturalism and composition studies, she claims the discipline has co-opted diversity and has embraced a superficial, aesthetic appreciation of cultural difference, yet not one that pursues the radical possibilities of diversity, which would, for example, challenge notions of Standard Edited Academic English (572-73).

⁵ In the fall semester, 12% of students indicated that they felt they were graded unfairly. In the spring semester, this number fell dramatically, to only 2% of students.

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Perceived Roadblocks to Transferring Knowledge from First-Year Composition to Writing- Intensive Major Courses: A Pilot Study

Gerald Nelms and Ronda Leathers Dively

Despite continued emphasis over the years on *processes* in our teaching of writing, it seems we continue to privilege summative manifestations of improvement. In other words, our definitions of student success often remain tied to what can be more or less immediately observed. This circumscribed vision of student success may explain, at least in part, why our interest in the nature of knowledge transfer, as well as in strategies for facilitating it, have been so limited. To be sure, knowledge transfer is a complex construct, both to study and to manage pedagogically. It involves not only what goes on in the writing course but also what goes on in target contexts, namely other academic writing situations and the workplace. As such, it implicates not only composition teachers and their students but also writing centers; writing across the curriculum and writing in the disciplines programs; university administrators across colleges, departments, and programs; and employers beyond the academy.

While certain learning objectives, such as motivation and rhetorical understanding, can be localized, any successful approach to enhancing the transfer of composition knowledge must involve changes in composition instruction, as well as a pervasive commitment to writing across the curriculum. Indeed, the manner in which institutions of higher education structure student movement from the narrow confines of the first-year composition course out into the ever-broadening contexts of further higher education and beyond will determine the amount of success students have transferring what they learn in their composition courses. Exploring the contours of that structure at one institution of higher education, Southern Illinois University Carbondale (SIUC), is the purpose of this article wherein we report a pilot study, using survey and focus group methodology, that sought to reveal factors potentially influencing the transfer of composition knowledge.

THE NATURE OF TRANSFER AND ITS RELEVANCE FOR COMPOSITION INSTRUCTION

In clarifying the nature of knowledge transfer, it can be instructive to distinguish it from learning, which has been defined simply as the durability of knowledge—that is, information stored in memory (Georghiades 124-26; Schunk 19). Transfer, on the other hand, involves the application of knowledge acquired in one situation or context to a different situation or context (Georghiades 23; Lauder et al., 480; McKeachie 707; Perkins and Salomon, “Transfer of Learning” ¶1; Schunk 20). Of course, learning is a crucial prerequisite for transfer (National Research Council 53); still, as David Perkins and Gavriel Salomon conclude, “[T]he ends of education are not achieved unless transfer occurs” (¶1).

Because transfer occurs over time and across contextual borders that make it difficult to observe within the traditional academic institutional structure, the application of knowledge from first-year composition course to non-composition course writing contexts remains largely unexplored. The overriding assumption of educators, as Perkins and Salomon note, seems to be that “transfer takes care of itself” (“Teaching for Transfer” 23). But the findings of empirical research, both within our discipline and outside of it, belie this assumption. Consider the following examples:

In 1985, Anne Herrington found that the students in her study failed to make connections between the types of writing they were doing for different courses, even though they were writing within the same discipline. In 1987, Lucille Parkinson McCarthy found that her case study subject Dave, despite similarities among writing assignments in three different courses, interpreted these tasks “as being totally different from each other” and “totally different from anything he’d done before,” and thus, failed to apply strategies gained in his composition course to these writing assignments. And in 1989, Stephen Doheny-Farina had a similar experience with his case study subject Anna, who, when writing in both an academic and a non-academic context, perceived the two discourse communities as different and, thus, interpreted the writing tasks as different, when, in fact, they were very similar.

While these localized studies tend to confirm Perkins and Salomon’s claims about a general failure of transfer, longitudinal studies in Composition (notably those by Marilyn Sternglass, Lee Ann Carroll, Anne Herrington and Marcia Curtis, Nancy Sommers et al., and Jenn Fishman and Andrea Lunsford) suggest that students develop cognitively and rhetorically as writers during their college years, learning methods of inquiry and the importance of translating academic jargon into their own language (skills

important to knowledge transfer), thus implying that transfer may occur more frequently than localized studies have found.¹ Closer examination of these longitudinal studies, however, points to the possibility that the development they chart over time may be a consequence of their own research methods. Each of these longitudinal studies requires its subjects to reflect on what they are doing and on their progress over time. Reflection represents an important mechanism for achieving metacognitive awareness of the potential for transferring learning across contexts. Much of the data generated for each study comes from just such reflection, a reflexivity that the students might not have developed had they not participated in these longitudinal studies. Still, we don't want to ignore other significant implications of this longitudinal research, for it does offer us an important insight for knowledge transfer and the teaching of composition: that, in fact, teaching to transfer is possible.

Although the published empirical research on knowledge transfer may be relatively sparse, a few semesters' experience as a writing program administrator inevitably brings to light the problem of transfer in the form of complaints from non-Composition faculty about students not having been taught adequately in English 101. Often, or so it seems, such complaints are not viewed as problems of transfer but, rather, as failures of these colleagues to look beyond sentence-level errors or to provide ample time and support for students to be able to demonstrate what they have learned. While, certainly, such failures could cause the ills that prompt these complaints, it might also be the case that our students simply are not transferring what they learned in their composition courses.

Crucial to the productive application of learning is "the ability to extend what has been learned in one context to new contexts" (National Research Council 51; see also Schunk 217; Lauder, Reynolds, and Angus 22), but this is not a simple process. Pedro Georghiades, for example, characterizes the transfer process as involving several cognitive operations: a recognition of overlapping similarity between the originating context and the target context; an acknowledgement of the potential of the learned knowledge to be applied to the target situation; a mental, metacognitive testing of applicability (i.e., reflection on the potential for transfer); and the actual application attempt itself (123).

A crucial distinction in understanding knowledge transfer is that between *near transfer* and *far transfer* (Perkins and Salomon, "Transfer" ¶6; Perkins and Salomon, "Teaching" 27; Adkins 4). *Near transfer* involves an overlapping of features between the originating context, where the knowledge or skill was first acquired, and the target context, where it is to be applied. An example would be the use of knowledge learned driving your

car in the context of driving a different car. These contexts are so similar that conscious consideration of differences between them probably only occurs when you find significant points of contrast.

Far transfer, on the other hand, refers to the application of skills and knowledge to a context remote from the originating one. Perkins and Salomon write that if we were to apply a strategic principle of chess, such as “take control of the center,” to investment practices, politics, or military science, then we would be engaged in far transfer (“Transfer” ¶6). It is important to note, however, that *far* and *near* transfer are not dualistic absolutes; rather, they exist along a continuum with transfer often involving both *near* and *far* elements.²

Contesting scholarship on the distinction between the concepts of near and far transfer, some have argued that all knowledge is local—thus, bringing into question the very possibility of far transfer. Drawing on the “activity theory” of Vygotsky, Leont’ev, and Luria, David Russell has argued that writing is a “tool” that mediates the “subject” (the writer or writers) and the “object(ive)” of the activity (the purpose or goal of the writing) (53). Russell argues that “writing does not exist apart from its uses, as it is a tool for accomplishing object(ive)s beyond itself” (57), and he concludes that “from the activity theory perspective . . . , there is no autonomous, generalizable skill or set of skills called ‘writing’ that can be learned and then applied to all genres or activities” (59). The assumptions here are that knowledge is never general and that transfer occurs only through near transfer mechanisms.

Perkins and Salomon (“Are Cognitive Skills Context-Bound”) and Michael Carter, however, based on their reviews of research on transfer, have come to a different conclusion. Rather than separating skills (or tools) from content (knowledge), Perkins and Salomon view writing, along with reading and arithmetic, as “tool domains” of knowledge. They contend that “the very existence of tool domains that enhance thinking and learning in content domains, in itself, constitutes evidence for general cognitive skills of a sort” (“Cognitive” 21), skill knowledge that crosses disciplinary boundaries. In his exploration of expertise, Carter also argues for a synthesis of local *and* general knowledge. While experts tend to rely on a local, domain-specific content knowledge, expertise is not acquired overnight, and Carter advocates for Hubert and Stuart Dreyfus’s five-stage process of expertise development that begins with novice applications of “context-free rules” and moves through the acquisition of more sophisticated, domain-specific competencies. Research has shown that even experts tend to employ generalized strategies when facing unfamiliar tasks to which their domain-specific knowledge is ill-suited (Perkins and Salomon, “Cognitive” 20). Per-

kins and Salomon's research, then, as well as Carter's, suggests that writing involves both near and far transfer, relying on both local and general knowledge. This is the theoretical premise on which our own study rests.

Regarding far transfer in particular, Perkins and Salomon identify two types: *forward reaching transfer*, in which one reflects on possible future contexts where learned material could be applied; and *backward reaching transfer*, in which one recovers from memory learned material in order to apply it to a current situation ("Teaching" 26). Importantly, these manifestations of far transfer (and to a lesser degree manifestations of near transfer) are affected by various cognitive and affective phenomena including, *metacognition*, defined as the "active monitoring of learning one's learning experiences" ("Teaching" 59); *motivation to learn*, which, most notably, affects time spent on task and the amount of attention devoted to the task ("Teaching" 60), as well as the ability to recognize opportunities for transfer; and finally, *representation* ("Teaching" 63), especially at the level of generalization, since for transfer to occur, knowledge must be abstract enough to allow a person to conceive of its application in a situation dissimilar from that in which the knowledge was first acquired (National Research Council 53, 62, and 63; Schunk 218-19). This requirement of generalization, in turn, makes metacognitive reflection, the ability to reflect on one's choices and decisions, especially integral to knowledge transfer.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

While near transfer is necessarily of concern to composition instructors and WPAs, it is the potential for far transfer—transfer beyond the general composition course to writing-intensive courses in students' majors—that we have sought to make more visible through our research. As members of our institution's Communication Across the Curriculum (CAC) task force³ we have been involved in ongoing, interdisciplinary conversations about the disparity between what is purportedly occurring in our university's first-year composition sequence and our undergraduate students' seeming lack of understanding about and/or facility with composition skills and strategies that writing-intensive instructors across campus deem important. In response to these discussions, we sought to learn more about what might be confounding the far transfer of knowledge and skills introduced in our English 101 and 102 courses. Given that empirical research in this area is sparse, the objectives of our research are exploratory, intended primarily to identify and characterize variables that may influence the potential for transferring knowledge between general composition and discipline-specific writing-intensive courses. Specifically, our goals are twofold: to

offer individuals in similar institutions with similar programs some insight into how they might bolster their own CAC/WAC initiatives with an eye toward knowledge transfer and to assist in providing some starting points for researchers, like us, who are interested in systematically building upon our field's understanding of a construct that is so crucial to our students' success in the academy and beyond.

Our study unfolded in two phases, the first consisting of a survey of graduate teaching assistants (GTAs) teaching in our first-year writing sequence, and the second consisting of focus group discussions with writing-intensive instructors from our university's College of Applied Sciences and Arts (CASA). The central research question driving Phase One was this: What specific concepts, strategies, and skills are reportedly being emphasized and practiced in our many sections of English 101 and 102? The central research questions driving Phase Two of this project, then, were these: What concepts, strategies, and skills commonly addressed in English 101 and 102 (as identified in Phase One) seem to transfer to CASA's writing-intensive courses? And, if they appear *not* to be transferring, what might be potential sources of difficulty with regard to transfer?

SURVEY: METHODOLOGY

The answers to the question driving Phase One of this study were fundamental to its purpose since it is impossible to learn more about what may or may not be transferring from writing courses to discipline-specific writing situations without first gaining some sense of what is actually being emphasized in the composition courses. To offer a little background on our first-year composition sequence, English 101 at SIUC seeks to prepare students for writing in a variety of academic and social situations while stressing critical thinking skills. English 102 reviews many of the concepts and strategies addressed in 101 but with an increased emphasis on argumentation and research. Despite these course objectives and despite the rigorous GTA training required by the English department (an eight-day orientation seminar and a required graduate-level, theory-based course in teaching college composition), GTAs teaching 101 and 102 at the time of this study were allowed considerable freedom—within certain parameters—in designing and executing their courses. Therefore, we could not assume that the same writing skills and strategies were being stressed in the various sections of 101 and 102.⁴

To gain a sense of the skills and strategies that various sections reportedly did stress, we decided to query the instructors who were actually teaching the courses in question. Toward this end, we drafted an extensive,

multi-faceted survey and subjected it to a pilot study.⁵ After revising the survey in accordance with findings of the pilot study and receiving approval of our research methodology from SIUC's Human Subjects Review Board, we invited all GTAs teaching in the first-year writing sequence (a population of sixty) to complete the survey. In the end, thirty-five GTAs responded to the call, helping us achieve a relatively high rate of participation (58 percent). Specifically, the survey instrument (Appendix A) included sections asking for the following information: demographic particulars, composing concepts and strategies that GTAs tended to emphasize in their classes and, using a Likert Scale, the level of emphasis; the informal and formal writing assignments employed; and the participants' sense of the collective strengths and weaknesses of their students (both at the beginning and at the end of the course).

SURVEY: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

A tabulation of the number of Likert-Scale points for each concept or strategy on the list of possible issues (a total of fifty-seven labels) broached in 101 and 102 resulted in a substantial grouping of items that were, reportedly, at the time this research was conducted, commonly and regularly addressed in these courses. At least two-thirds of our subject pool noted that they "frequently" interacted with their students regarding the following items constituting the survey list: (1) process writing; (2) written peer response; (3) formulation of main ideas; (4) audience analysis; (5) development of ideas; (6) analysis of assigned texts or issues; (7) structure of argument; (8) supporting claims; (9) organization; (10) incorporating sources; and (11) internal citations.⁶

In contrast to the level of agreement on the concepts, strategies and skills that were "frequently" addressed in 101 and 102, the results for concepts, strategies and skills that were "rarely" or "never"⁷ addressed revealed few points of commonality across sections. Indeed, the only "rarely"/"never" items that achieved at least two-thirds response rate (the rate of agreement for the "frequently" responses) were (1) titles, (2) text imitation, and (3) spelling. At the 50 percent response rate for "rarely"/"never" items, the list expands to include (4) group conferencing; (5) evaluation of model student essays; (6) literary interpretation; (7) formal heuristics; (8) document design; (9) data-based searches; (10) text annotation; (11) sentence types; and (12) vocabulary.⁸

In addition to inquiring about the strategies and skills that our GTAs reportedly emphasized in 101 and 102, we also sought in our survey to determine the types of formal and informal writing assignments that

received the most attention. The survey instrument included a list of thirty possible assignments (see Appendix A) that might have appeared on a syllabus for our 101 or 102 courses. GTAs were instructed to check any and all assignments that they included on their syllabus for the most recent section of 101 or 102 that they were assigned to teach. Ninety percent of the GTAs responding reported that they included the following assignments, listed here in descending order of “hits”: rough drafts, analytical essays, persuasive essays, response journals, research papers. Beyond these five, the level of agreement among syllabi regarding assignment types dropped considerably. The next highest grouping of responses rested between 50 and 70 percent, listed here in descending order of “hits”: informative essays, invention journals, personal experience essays, research proposals, annotated bibliographies, process journals.

We conclude from these survey data that, at the time of this study, most of our 101 and 102 students were being exposed to a process paradigm including the drafting and revising of their papers. Many engaged in journal writing and conducted secondary research. Persuasive and analytical writings were the predominant genres assigned, although most sections of 101 began with personal experience or informative writing assignments. Despite this overall agreement among GTAs, quite a bit of diversity existed across sections of 101 and 102. Such diversity, no doubt, was a result of a writing program philosophy that advocated a good amount of GTA autonomy. In the context of such a program, students were likely to encounter disparate experiences across the many sections of these courses, and, therefore, writing-intensive instructors in other departments could not rest assured that students entering their courses had engaged in similar composing scenarios or had achieved competency with regard to a *standardized* base of composing knowledge.

At the conclusion, then, of Phase One of this project, we possessed a sizeable list of concepts, strategies, skills, and genres that our survey suggested were being emphasized in English 101 and 102. The survey also provided us with a list of infrequently addressed concepts, strategies, skills, and genres. In Phase Two, we sought to get a sense of whether or not professors teaching discipline-specific writing-intensive courses witnessed indications that the concepts, strategies, skills, and genres emphasized in 101 and 102 were being employed by their students. We also wanted to hear their insights into what might be encouraging or discouraging the transfer of composition knowledge from the 101/102 sequence to their writing-intensive courses. To gather this data, we chose to employ focus group methodology, because, with its interplay among participants, this methodology

has been recognized to elicit richer, deeper feedback than might be gleaned through individual interviews or surveys (MacNealy 177).

FOCUS GROUP: METHODOLOGY

In recruiting focus group participants for Phase Two of this study, we gravitated toward professors in the College of Applied Sciences and Arts because, at the time, it had the most highly developed CAC initiatives on campus, led by an associate dean actively committed to the ideals of SIUC's CAC program. This associate dean provided us with a list of ten instructors of writing-intensive courses in his college, whom we invited via email to participate in our focus group.⁹ We were able to recruit five instructors, including three women and two men, representing the Dental Hygiene, Physician's Assistant, X-Ray Technology, Aviation Technology, and Computer Management programs.

In accordance with our participants' preference, we scheduled the focus group discussion for a two-hour period in the late afternoon on a Tuesday during finals week of fall semester, 2004. The discussion was held in a conference room in the university's student center with movable tables and chairs, allowing for easy rearrangement that was conducive to small group exchange. The focus group discussion, which was both video and audio recorded, began with introductions of all participants.¹⁰ During this introductory exchange, we informed the CASA professors of our respective roles (Dively as primary moderator; Nelms as recorder, equipment manager, and secondary moderator), we reassured our subjects of their strict anonymity, and we explained that we wanted the exchange of information to flow naturally as their observations and recollections moved them, with our primary purpose being to keep the discussion generally on track.

The formal conversation, then, began with Professor Dively presenting the focus group with a list of questions prepared specifically for the discussion (see Appendix B). Several of these questions directly referenced the data collected during Phase One of our study. As we anticipated, the conversation quickly assumed a direction of its own, with a spirited give-and-take among participants, all of whom were highly engaged with the topic. Although our questions were not addressed in the order we had planned, we urged members of the focus group to clarify and elaborate on their insights, and we left the discussion with diverse, plentiful, and illuminating data. Finally, in keeping with our exploratory approach, we analyzed these data not with a particular coding scheme in mind but with an ear toward emergent themes that might further our understanding of the challenges

students, teachers, and administrators face with regard to the transfer of composition knowledge.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION: ANALYSIS OF FOCUS GROUP DATA

Theme One: Lack of Transfer and the Compartmentalization of Knowledge

Tapes of the focus group discussion revealed that all participants were genuinely concerned about knowledge transfer. They repeatedly noted the perceived inability of their students to make even the most superficial connections between what they were learning in one course and what they had learned in another. As one professor put it: "They want to compartmentalize everything." Students' seeming inability to make inferences or apply knowledge across different educational contexts was a tremendous source of frustration for our focus group subjects and helped explain many of the weaknesses in students' writing witnessed by non-composition instructors.

Unfortunately, we don't have time to ponder here the question of how we might condition students to view all of their learning experiences as connected. But we suspect that answers to that question could reduce the instances of students approaching us to ask, "Is this what you wanted for this paper?"—an inquiry that suggests that they view all school-sponsored writing experiences as utterly discrete. We suspect that if students are encouraged to search for connections among these experiences, they would be more apt to stop fixating on the differences. Such a disposition could not help but facilitate knowledge transfer. Obviously, teachers will have to model such a disposition, if not explicitly address it, in their own classrooms.

Of additional concern, according to our focus group members, instructors of non-writing-intensive courses in CASA may have been inadvertently undermining transfer by implying a separation of content and writing instruction by not assigning writing in their own courses. Surely, this attitude encourages the compartmentalization of courses focused on content domains and courses focused on tool domains, and it also supports CASA students' reported nonchalance regarding their writing and the widespread belief that writing will be of little value to them as they advance into their technical fields beyond the academy.

Theme Two: Points of Transfer from English 101 and 102

The focus group participants were quite solid in their agreement regarding which composing concepts, skills, and strategies most commonly addressed by our GTAs in 101 and 102 did seem to be transferring. Those capabilities

included an understanding of the relationship between thesis and support; a facility for analyzing various texts; and a familiarity with principles governing source citation. The focus group members also agreed that several items on that list did not regularly manifest themselves in their students' writing. In short, they suggested that a disconnect between what is taught in 101 and 102 and the writing submitted for their courses did exist.

As noted earlier, some would argue that this disconnect is, to some degree, unavoidable, that each writing situation by its very nature has its own objectives in line with different disciplinary values and educational purposes. Nonetheless, research on transfer tells us that knowledge transfer can be one of our course objectives and that transfer can be facilitated by searching out points of overlap or similarity between writing in the composition course and writing in non-composition courses (Foerstsich). Moreover, if Perkins and Salomon and Michael Carter are correct that "tool domains" consist of general knowledge—that is, knowledge that crosses "content domain" boundaries—as well as local knowledge, then we should be able to identify general concepts, skills, and strategies, if not genres, that can be employed in writing situations beyond that of the composition course. In fact, Carter, following the work of Hubert and Stuart Dreyfus in *Mind Over Machine*, suggests that expertise in writing within a discipline takes place over time and that the use of "global" or "general" strategies, quoting psychologist John Anderson (206), can "enable the initial performance and impose a goal structure on the performance so that the knowledge compilation process can operate successfully" (qtd. in Carter 273).

Theme Three: Lack of Time for Addressing Writing in "Content Area" Courses

Even if general composition courses and discipline-specific writing-intensive courses could chart larger patches of philosophical and practical common ground, the opportunity to concentrate on writing instruction in content-oriented major courses—such as those taught by our focus group participants—would remain severely limited. At least, this is the way the five CASA professors involved in our study viewed the situation. Indeed, time and again during our two-hour exchange, they lamented the fact that, because they feel so much pressure to cover what their students will need to know for board exams and other measures of their technical knowledge, they could not find adequate space in their curricula, or time during individual class periods, for direct instruction focused on writing or even for integration of exercises that highlight composing practices that they know are vital to their students' success.

Interestingly, the three practices touted by the focus group participants as vital to successful composing processes—invention, peer-response, and metacognition—are all rooted in reflection, which, as noted earlier, represents a crucial mechanism of knowledge transfer. Kathleen Blake Yancey defines reflection as “the dialectical process by which we develop and achieve, first, specific goals for learning; second, strategies for reaching those goals; and third, means of determining whether or not we have met those goals or other goals” (6). In short, reflection heightens our awareness of our goals and accomplishments so that we may evaluate our progress and assess our products.

Reflection has been implicated in rhetorical invention, in particular, for over two millennia. While scholars of rhetoric have debated whether consciously applied invention heuristics, such as the Aristotelian *topoi*, should be taught to writers (Young), few modern scholars of rhetoric question the important role of conscious reflection in developing content for discourse, even if that reflection is more “organic” than “rule-governed.” As Janice Lauer notes, invention is a conscious process of “examining alternatives” (6-7). Peer responding, too, in its reliance on reflection, requires the peer responder to cast backward to recall what she’s learned about effective writing from various sources and in a diversity of contexts. The writer, then, must reflect on the responder’s commentary in order to assess its relevance. Finally, reflection, of course, is implicated in any manifestation of metacognition—that is, active reviewing of one’s own progress in accomplishing a task in order to determine strategies, resources, and processes needed (Schunk 192; National Research Council 58-59). Linda Flower has shown that writers must be able to consciously verbalize their own thinking processes, mental strategies, blocks, and leaps that combine in virtually every problem-solving task (27-28; 53; 121; 184-88; 223-62). Such conscious verbalization is, by definition, a form of reflective practice.

Ironically, even though each member of our focus group recognized the importance of reflective activities involved in invention, peer response and metacognition, and even though some went so far as to encourage the practice of prewriting exercises and peer response outside of class, not one of these professors claimed to have found a way to orchestrate these or other reflective practices within their scheduled class meetings. Most importantly for considerations of knowledge transfer, metacognition reportedly was neither addressed nor encouraged, despite these professors’ avid appreciation for the notion. This finding that the need for vital reflective activities may continue to be overridden in the face of the perceived need for content coverage in writing-intensive courses suggests that CAC initiatives—from both directions—may not have been as successful as they might have been

in clarifying the notion that content coverage and writing instruction need not necessarily compete with each other for time but, rather, can be mutually supportive.

Theme 4: Students' Lack of Motivation

Members of our focus group also unanimously agreed that their students appear to lack motivation when it comes to writing. They attributed this situation, at least in part, to the fact that writing is not, as noted above, integrated throughout CASA curricula. It is possible, they explained, for students to go for several semesters after completing 101 and 102 without any significant writing being assigned. In such a system, the always challenging and sometimes painful process of writing will become increasingly alien and intimidating.

Our focus group also observed that their students tend to prefer the "hands on" work associated with their respective fields. Aviation technology students would rather be tuning an airplane engine, aspiring dental hygienists sliding floss around inside a patient's mouth, and computer management students configuring and entering programs. Though we have no data to confirm such a conclusion, we find it sensible to think that these students might be tactile or schematic learners, less attuned to writing. Of course, to our way of thinking, this possibility only increases the need for more writing instruction and teaching for transfer of composition knowledge.

In addition, our focus group members reported yet another motivational obstacle for CASA students: a mistaken belief that they do not need to develop higher order writing competencies, such as producing well-organized texts, because most of what they will be doing is recording fragmentary information on charts. Research in workplace communication, of course, has shown that full-text production is not as unusual in the workplace as these students seem to believe (National Commission on Writing 3). Such competencies, too, might well be transferable to other situations demanding higher order organizational ability.

Finally, our focus group members noted the pervading sense of entitlement that many of their students display, the idea that because they (or their parents) are paying for their education, they should be able to dictate what it consists of, as well as the manner in which they receive it.

Whatever the premise on which the lack of motivation rests, this absence is problematic for knowledge transfer, because of the key role that motivation plays in the process of learning. If we are not motivated to learn, we won't learn, and thus, as Georghiades makes clear, we will have nothing to transfer (123).

Theme 5: Disparity in Composition Vocabulary

Even if all of the aforementioned “themes” were effectively addressed, the transfer of composition knowledge would still be constrained by significant vocabulary differences between general composition courses and discipline-specific courses. While it comes as no surprise that different disciplines employ different terminology when referencing similar types of writing assignments, composing strategies, and writing skills, it is interesting to note where the specific points of disparity arise within the context of our study.

Of greatest concern, perhaps, is the confusion regarding aims for writing which compositionists label as “persuasion.” When we asked members of our focus group about the level of emphasis they placed on persuasive writing, all were noticeably hesitant in replying, until one CASA professor asked what we English professors meant by that term. Our discussion revealed that they did indeed assign persuasive writing; they just didn’t conceive or label it as such. More specifically, what we referred to as “persuading,” they referred to as “justifying an opinion” or “explaining your reasoning,” for example.

This use of different terminology, no doubt, must contribute to the failure of knowledge transfer from composition courses. It can cause students to overlook cues that might signal the potential application of concepts, strategies, and skills learned in first-year composition. If the CASA professors do not connect “persuasion” with “justifying an opinion”—or if composition instructors don’t make a point of learning what terms their colleagues in that college use when referring to the concept in question and, then, introduce those terms as well—then how can we expect students to make the connection?

Another point of confusion relevant to this theme that was made evident during our focus group discussion involved the term “research.” As it has typically been employed in 101 and 102, “research” refers to general library skills and the act of effectively integrating external source material into one’s text. However, our focus group participants reported that CASA professors tend to reserve the term for work that adheres to the scientific method.

Finally, relevant to the terminology theme, it became clear during our focus group discussion that CASA professors are not as particular as composition instructors about distinguishing among “types” of composing tasks, preferring instead to assign all exercises—regardless of topic, aim, level of formality, etc.—to the categories of “written assignments,” “weekly writings” or “papers.”

IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Clearly, increased communication between those involved in designing and delivering general composition courses and those involved in designing and delivering writing-intensive courses could help dismantle roadblocks to the transfer of composition knowledge. Such interdisciplinary exchanges need to concentrate on sharing understandings about writing concepts, strategies, skills, and genres as well as course objectives and student attitudes toward writing, all with the intention of creating a general continuity of understanding in composition instruction, both within the first-year sequence and across the disciplines.

Although such conversations typically do not occur naturally, connections can be achieved through CAC initiatives, such as faculty and GTA workshops, campus forums, newsletters, consultations, etc. Obviously, then, CAC and WID directors/coordinators and task force or committee members need to know the scholarship on knowledge transfer and have transfer as a major objective of their programs. The following activities would make a good start toward enhancing programmatic coordination: (1) training in rhetoric and writing processes for administrators and writing-intensive instructors; (2) training in knowledge transfer and the benefits of reflective practices for all faculty members; and (3) a renewed emphasis within the CAC community on addressing the issue of workload and time. (Our focus group members revealed that they did not believe CAC claims that incorporating more writing in their teaching would not, by necessity, add to their workload or infringe on the traditional content of their courses.)

Composition program administrators also need to learn more about and create curricula that teach to the application of composition knowledge beyond the context of the composition course. Such training would entail (1) developing more discipline- and/or workplace-specific assignments for first-year composition in order to lessen the distance between FYC and future writing contexts, rendering learning experiences more like possible future applications; (2) developing ways of motivating students to write generally but also to see applications of these processes beyond the composition course; and (3) including more metacognitive reflection on writing processes, on rhetoric, and on applications of writing strategies. Thus, composition course curricula also need reexamination and revision with an eye toward finding ways of enhancing transfer.

Beyond these larger administrative initiatives, individual instructors also can help facilitate the transfer of composition knowledge. Composition instructors can learn the language that their non-composition colleagues use when talking about writing with students and vice versa. Individual

instructors also can reevaluate their own course goals, course content, and pedagogies, and make transfer an explicit course objective. Most importantly, individual instructors can learn specific strategies for teaching to transfer.

Key to this endeavor are the concepts of “hugging” and “bridging” (Perkins and Salomon, “Transfer” 32-33; Perkins and Salomon, “Teaching” 28-29). “Hugging” is the label given to teaching for low-road or near transfer (that is, the transfer of knowledge between very similar contexts), while “bridging” is the label for teaching for high-road or far transfer (that is, the application of skills and knowledge to a context remote from the originating one).

Perhaps the most effective “hugging” instruction, according to Perkins and Salomon, “directly engage[s] learners in approximations to the performances desired” (“Transfer” ¶32). Hugging instruction helps prepare students to accomplish tasks within the context in which the learning is taking place. “Bridging” instruction, which aims more broadly to prepare students to apply their learning across contextual borders, is more complicated, involving both *forward reaching transfer*, where students generalize from their learning in preparation for future applications of that learning, and *backward reaching transfer*, where students reach back into their past experiences to find matches with their present situation and task (“Teaching” 26). Kathleen Blake Yancey’s reflective exercises, *reviewing* (“a casting backward to see where we have been”) and *projecting* (“a looking forward to goals we might attain”), clearly echo forward reaching and backward reaching transfer respectively (6).

In addition to increasing reflective practices, individual instructors might also employ these active learning strategies: (1) contextualizing assignments so that they exemplify possible future writing tasks; (2) using role-playing as a way of signaling future applications of composition knowledge; (3) demonstrating how tasks might be accomplished; and (4) having students actively engage in practicing those tasks.¹¹

To be sure, the importance of identifying *contextual cues* or signals alerting students to possible applications of what they are learning cannot be overemphasized. For example, instructors could ask students to identify target audiences for their texts and to compare and contrast those audiences with past audiences whom they have addressed in their writing and with possible future audiences to whom they might write. Students might also be asked to research the different writing genres used in a particular field of interest and, then, to identify those which involve persuasion and what strategies learned in the composition course might be applied in those writing situations.

As promising as all this sounds, it is important to reiterate how relatively little we know about the transfer of composition knowledge and, thus, how much research is still needed. Particularly with regard to our study, we are eager to learn if the perceived roadblocks to transfer identified by CASA faculty are the same roadblocks perceived by faculty in other colleges at SIUC. Additionally, we are eager to learn if the *students* enrolled at our university feel that composition knowledge is adequately transferring and, moreover, if they can offer insights as to why it seems to be or not to be transferring. The following are just some of the other research questions raised in the context of this exploratory study that we feel deserve the attention of our profession:

1. Exactly which of the many concepts, skills, strategies, and genres that we teach seem to transfer and which do not? Are certain contexts more favorable than others for the transfer of certain aspects of composition?
2. What specific roles do motivation and reflection play in the transfer of composition knowledge?
3. What role can writing across the curriculum and writing in the disciplines play in knowledge transfer?
4. How should our understanding of knowledge transfer affect writing program structure and administration?

These questions chart broad ground for our continued inquiry into a fundamental learning objective for educators in general and composition teachers in particular. Given the obvious centrality of written communication to the pursuit of competency and/or success in most any field of study or career, thinking about and teaching toward transfer in composition courses is absolutely incumbent upon those who design and execute writing and writing-intensive curricula. While it seems clear that this sense of responsibility is a driving force behind the WAC movement, faculty and administrators are still laboring to determine how their programs might effectively live up to this responsibility. In light of this observation, it seems that research into how better to facilitate the transfer of composition knowledge needs to be made a priority of our discipline.

NOTES

¹ Sternglass' study began in 1989 and followed 53 students, most of them African-American and Latino, for six and a half years. Her findings are based on analyses of interviews, written papers, classroom observations, and copies of

all attempts of her subjects to pass two required writing tests. Carroll followed 20 middle-to-upper class students over four years, relying primarily on students' digital portfolios, which included representative examples of their writings. Herrington and Curtis conducted longitudinal case studies of four students. They do not describe their students as representative, but they do express some conclusions that suggest a generalizing from these students' experiences. Harvard's Expository Writing Program's longitudinal study (Sommers et al.) and the Stanford Study of Writing (Fishman, Lunsford, et al.) are recent studies, whose data analysis is still ongoing. Our conclusions regarding these two studies, then, must be considered tentative. Nevertheless, their methodologies and the findings that have been released so far suggest similar limitations to those of the earlier longitudinal studies with regard to tracking knowledge transfer. See also The Stanford Study of Writing, "Preliminary Findings"; Harvard Expository Writing Program, "Longitudinal Study Highlights Importance of Writing (Fall 1999)"; and Harris, "What Do College Students Think about Writing?" There are other longitudinal studies of knowledge transfer, although most focus on elementary or high school students (e.g., Loban; Britton, et al.; Freedman and Pringle; and Wilkinson, et al.). Hays did an early longitudinal study of just college students in 1983 that is not considered here. Also not included is a study of college students by Wolcott begun in 1989. Wolcott herself acknowledges the limitations of her use of one fifty-minute, timed essay to determine level of development.

² In her dissertation, Julie Lynn Dyke adopts a different taxonomy of transfer: R. M. Gagne's distinction between *lateral* and *vertical* transfer, as described by Nathaniel Teich. Lateral transfer involves the application of knowledge "in a new situation of the same level of complexity as that of the original," while vertical transfer involves the activation of ability "at the next higher level" (Dyke 26). Both dichotomies provide productive ways of thinking about knowledge. We found, however, the near and far distinction more suggestive of a transfer continuum, and thus, it allowed us to conceptualize the gray areas between the two extreme manifestations of transfer.

³ Dr. Nelms, as Interim Director of SIUC's Communication Across the Curriculum Program, chaired this committee from January 2001 to July 2004, when the CAC program was discontinued.

⁴ Since the time this research was completed, the writing program has moved to the use of a common syllabus for English 101, which ensures greater continuity across sections.

⁵ In an attempt to make the list of concepts and strategies as comprehensive as possible, Professor Dively enlisted the help of five experienced GTAs enrolled in her composition research methods course (Lucia Amorelli, Chris Drew, Valerie Dunn, Betsy Herman, and Caroline Liao, who would later be exempt from participating in the study). While involved in a unit on survey construction, these students were asked to begin independently generating lists of concepts and strategies that they typically addressed in their own first-year writing courses or

that they knew their peers typically addressed. Upon completing their individual lists, class members combined them for an even broader list and then workshoped the list, adding items they might have missed and omitting items that might be construed as redundant. At the end of this process, these students had generated a list of fifty-seven items to be included on the Likert-Scale portion of the survey. These students also participated in generating the list of possible formal and informal writing assignments in Part 4 of the survey. In addition to acknowledging the significant contributions of the students who helped develop the survey instrument, we would like to thank those graduate assistants who helped administer the survey (Lucia Amorelli, Casey Deaton, Chris Drew, Valerie Dunn, Evon Hawkins, Betsy Herman, Jen Mueller, Ryan Thornsberry, and Abby Waldron) as well as those who helped tabulate the results (Casey Deaton, Jen Mueller, Jan Presley, and Ryan Thornsberry).

⁶ Given discussions of these concepts, skills and strategies in their orientation seminars and in English 502, we believe that the majority of our GTAs would define them similarly.

⁷ We chose to combine the “rarely” and “never” categories when reporting the results because, separately, they failed to provide a substantial level of agreement on any of the survey items. Together, however, they achieved percentages of agreement approaching those achieved for the “frequently” category. Moreover, the “rarely” and “never” categories together established the contrast we were anticipating to the “frequently” category, thus clarifying the issues and skills that are prioritized and those that are not prioritized. (After all, there is undoubtedly little difference regarding the instructional impact of an issue or skill that is “rarely” addressed and one that is “never” addressed.) Because the agreement for the “frequently” category was impressive in and of itself, we chose not to combine it with the “occasionally” category, which, in retrospect, seems a rather benign designation and one that is rather difficult to ascribe any weight relative to the other designations.

⁸ Non-study-related discussions with GTAs, particularly in English 502 and other courses, revealed to us possible reasons why other concepts and strategies were not as frequently employed by our GTAs. Some GTAs took for granted that their students were already proficient with regard to certain skills (producing titles, spelling, conducting data-base searches). Some believed that the concepts were so elementary that to address them would be insulting to students. Some concepts, skills, and strategies were sidestepped because program objectives discouraged them; undoubtedly, this was the case with regard to literary interpretation. And despite our attempts to troubleshoot the survey instrument, some GTAs indicated a lack of familiarity with a few of the constructs we included on the questionnaire.

⁹ Some of the individuals contacted were already familiar with the study because they had attended a presentation that we prepared at the request of the associate dean in which we reviewed some of the more recently developed CAC

resources and shared the findings of Phase One of our study. At the end of this presentation, attendees were encouraged to think about participating in Phase Two of the study once we were prepared to execute it.

¹⁰ Because we wanted to have a record of participants' facial expressions and body language, we were determined to videotape the session, despite the admitted discomfort that this can cause some individuals. Our subjects, however, did not reveal any resistance to appearing on camera. The audiotape was employed primarily as a backup in case the video recorder stopped working or the tape became damaged.

¹¹ All of these items reflect a more "active learning" approach to composition instruction. Clearly influenced by John Dewey and Jean Piaget, active learning can be defined as any pedagogy that seeks to involve students in their own learning, typically through activities beyond simply listening—that is, through writing, problem solving, engaged discussion, group work, role playing, simulations, case studies, and any learning motivated by activity. Bonwell and Eison argue that "to be actively involved, students must engage in such higher-order thinking tasks as analysis, synthesis, and evaluation" (¶2), and, thus, most active learning pedagogies have reflective components. Problem-based learning involves the use of real-world or real-world-like problems to engage student learning. Project-based learning focuses on learning within the context of accomplishing a task or project. And service learning involves engaging students in meaningful community service. Clearly, all of these active learning teaching methods will overlap in actual practice.

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APPENDIX A

Pedagogical Survey: English 101 and 102

Part 1: General Information

Please respond to the following queries by circling the accurate responses.

- 1) Gender? **Male** **Female**
 2) Program concentration? **Composition/Rhetoric Literature Creative Writing Other**
 3) Number of semesters teaching composition at SIUC? **1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 8+**
 4) Composition courses you have taught at SIUC? **100 101 102 120 290 291**
 5) Regarding Eng. 101 and 102, the course you have taught most recently? **101 102**
 6) Your willingness to participate in a follow-up interview? **Yes No**
 [If answer to 6 is "yes," please offer your name: _____]

Part 2: Concepts and Activities

Below is a list of concepts and activities that teachers *might* employ in English 101 and 102. As you respond to the survey items, please have in mind the course (**either 101 or 102**) that you taught most recently. Regarding that course, indicate the frequency with which you discussed with students and/or required them to practice each listed concept or activity. (**Discuss** = formally talking about the concept or activity with students; **practice** = having them complete exercises relevant to the concept/activity.) Record frequency for discussing and/or practicing each item by marking the box in the column directly below the most accurate frequency label (see first line of the list on each page). If you did not discuss or practice the concept or activity in the focal course, simply mark the box in the "never" column.

		frequently	occasionally	rarely	never
1. process writing	discuss:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	practice:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. drafting workshops	discuss:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	practice:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. teacher conferences	discuss:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	practice:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. group conferences	discuss:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	practice:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. peer response—written	discuss:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	practice:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. peer response—oral	discuss:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	practice:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. evaluating model student essays	discuss:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	practice:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. evaluating published essays	discuss:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	practice:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. interpreting Literature	discuss:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	practice:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. interpreting assignments	discuss:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	practice:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. freewriting/looping	discuss:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	practice:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. brainstorming/clustering	discuss:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	practice:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13. formal heuristics	discuss:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	practice:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Nelms and Dively / Perceived Roadblocks to Transferring Knowledge

14. collaborative invention	discuss:	—	—	—	—
	practice:	—	—	—	—
15. narrowing topics	discuss:	—	—	—	—
	practice:	—	—	—	—
16. formulating main ideas	discuss:	—	—	—	—
	practice:	—	—	—	—
17. analyzing audience	discuss:	—	—	—	—
	practice:	—	—	—	—
18. achieving ethos	discuss:	—	—	—	—
	practice:	—	—	—	—
19. achieving pathos	discuss:	—	—	—	—
	practice:	—	—	—	—
20. achieving logos	discuss:	—	—	—	—
	practice:	—	—	—	—
21. developing ideas	discuss:	—	—	—	—
	practice:	—	—	—	—
22. paraphrasing	discuss:	—	—	—	—
	practice:	—	—	—	—
23. summarizing	discuss:	—	—	—	—
	practice:	—	—	—	—
24. synthesizing	discuss:	—	—	—	—
	practice:	—	—	—	—
25. analyzing	discuss:	—	—	—	—
	practice:	—	—	—	—
26. comparing/contrasting	discuss:	—	—	—	—
	practice:	—	—	—	—
27. defining concepts/term	discuss:	—	—	—	—
	practice:	—	—	—	—
28. structuring arguments	discuss:	—	—	—	—
	practice:	—	—	—	—
29. supporting claims	discuss:	—	—	—	—
	practice:	—	—	—	—
30. paragraphing	discuss:	—	—	—	—
	practice:	—	—	—	—
31. introductions	discuss:	—	—	—	—
	practice:	—	—	—	—
32. conclusions	discuss:	—	—	—	—
	practice:	—	—	—	—
33. document design	discuss:	—	—	—	—
	practice:	—	—	—	—
34. organization	discuss:	—	—	—	—
	practice:	—	—	—	—
35. transitions	discuss:	—	—	—	—
	practice:	—	—	—	—
36. titles	discuss:	—	—	—	—
	practice:	—	—	—	—
37. library skills	discuss:	—	—	—	—
	practice:	—	—	—	—
38. data-base searches	discuss:	—	—	—	—
	practice:	—	—	—	—
39. critical reading strategies	discuss:	—	—	—	—
	practice:	—	—	—	—
40. evaluating library sources	discuss:	—	—	—	—
	practice:	—	—	—	—
41. evaluating on-line sources	discuss:	—	—	—	—
	practice:	—	—	—	—

42. annotating texts	discuss:	—	—	—	—
	practice:	—	—	—	—
43. incorporating sources	discuss:	—	—	—	—
	practice:	—	—	—	—
44. avoiding plagiarism	discuss:	—	—	—	—
	practice:	—	—	—	—
45. internal citations	discuss:	—	—	—	—
	practice:	—	—	—	—
46. works-cited pages	discuss:	—	—	—	—
	practice:	—	—	—	—
47. sentence types	discuss:	—	—	—	—
	practice:	—	—	—	—
48. sentence variety	discuss:	—	—	—	—
	practice:	—	—	—	—
49. sentence combining	discuss:	—	—	—	—
	practice:	—	—	—	—
50. text imitation	discuss:	—	—	—	—
	practice:	—	—	—	—
51. increasing vocabulary	discuss:	—	—	—	—
	practice:	—	—	—	—
52. spelling	discuss:	—	—	—	—
	practice:	—	—	—	—
53. using grammar handbooks	discuss:	—	—	—	—
	practice:	—	—	—	—
54. editing skills	discuss:	—	—	—	—
	practice:	—	—	—	—
55. global revision skills	discuss:	—	—	—	—
	practice:	—	—	—	—
56. grammar rules:	discuss:	—	—	—	—
	practice:	—	—	—	—

* Which grammar rules do you tend to focus on? (please list):

57. punctuation rules	discuss:	—	—	—	—
	practice:	—	—	—	—

*Which punctuation rules do you tend to focus on? (please list):

58. Are there other concepts/activities addressed in your focal course (101 or 102) that do not appear on the survey list? Please list them and indicate the extent to which you practice and discuss each item:

Part 3: Reflections on Student Preparation:

1. In what respects do your writing students seem to be best prepared when entering your courses?
2. In what respects do your writing students seem to be least prepared when entering your courses?
3. In what respects do your writing students seem to be best prepared when leaving your courses?
4. In what respects do your writing students seem to be least prepared when leaving your courses?

Part 4: Major Assignments

Below is a list of writing assignments (not exhaustive or necessarily expected) that teachers might include on an English 101 or 102 syllabus. Please check the box preceding any of the assignments required of your students in the 101 or 102 course upon which you have been reflecting. If certain assignments you have in mind combine two or more of the categories listed, check all that apply.

- | | | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|----------------------|
| — annotated bibliographies | — persuasive essays | — research proposals |
| — invention or idea journals | — comparison/contrast essays | — research papers |
| — response journals | — analytical essays (not on Literature) | — cover letters |
| — process journals | — literary analyses | — resumes |
| — rough drafts | — metacognitive essays | — business memos |
| — reports/summaries | — dialogs | — pamphlets |
| — five paragraph themes | — book reviews | — brochures |
| — informative essays | — film reviews | — website critiques |
| — definition essays | — newspaper/magazine articles | — short fiction |
| — personal experience essays | — letters to editor/opinion papers | — poetry |

Are there other major assignments included in your focal course (101 or 102) that do not appear on the survey list? Please list them.

APPENDIX B

Focus Group Discussion Questions:

[Note: Questions will be drawn from the following list, with the order subject to the natural flow of the conversation and the number addressed depending on the two-hour time limit established prior to the discussion.]

1. What are the most important concepts and skills relevant to composing that your students will need for success in your courses and in their chosen careers?
2. What are the concepts and skills relevant to composing with which students typically enter your courses?
3. What are the concepts and skills relevant to composing that students typically lack upon entering your courses?
* Researcher will stimulate further discussion by providing participants a list of concepts and skills most frequently cited in survey responses by graduate teaching assistants in English as being emphasized in English 101 and 102.
4. How, specifically, do these strengths and weaknesses (cited in response to questions two and three) reveal themselves in your students' writing and/or their conversations about writing?
5. Do your students offer any particular explanations for these strengths and weaknesses?
6. What do you believe are the reasons behind the particular successes they enjoy and the weaknesses with which they struggle?
7. What composing concepts and skills do you highlight in your writing intensive courses?

* Researcher will prompt if need be with strategies relevant to the following aspects of composing: process, invention, purpose, ethos, audience, organization, research, library skills, document design, collaboration, source evaluation, documentation of sources, grammar/spelling/mechanics.

8. What instructional strategies do you employ for doing so?
9. What types of writing assignments do you typically assign?
 - * Researcher will prompt further discussion by providing a list of types of assignments most frequently cited in survey responses by graduate teaching assistants in English as being introduced in English 101 and 102.
10. What can/should be the responsibility of the freshman writing sequence in preparing students to write?
11. What can/should be the responsibility of discipline-specific writing intensive courses in preparing students to write?

Review Essay

Anxieties of Influencers: Composition Pedagogy in the 21st Century

Barr Ebest, Sally. *Changing the Way We Teach: Writing and Resistance in the Training of Teaching Assistants*. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois UP, 2005.

Dobrin, Sidney I., ed. *Don't Call It That: The Composition Practicum*. Urbana, IL: NCTE, 2005.

Vandenberg, Peter; Sue Hum; and Jennifer Clary-Lemon, eds. *Relations, Locations, Positions: Composition Theory for Writing Teachers*. Urbana, IL: NCTE, 2006.

E. Shelley Reid

In my graduate school department, I was once told, a few of the literature faculty who took turns leading the teaching practicum referred to it as the “kill the father” course. For their generosity in helping a dozen or so TAs plan and debrief a year’s worth of composition classes, the story went, they were repaid by caustic critiques of their pedagogical advice (and thus of their own teaching) from rank novices eager to claim their academic birth-right.

Nearly twenty years later, one might quite reasonably assume that we’ve left much of that angst behind us: composition-rhetoric continues to gain ground as a field, and TA education is moving increasingly from ad-hoc late-summer workshops into serious seminars and extended professional mentoring, led by WPAs who know and respect the discipline. The TAs themselves are more likely to identify with, or at least be aware of, composition-rhetoric as a discipline. Yet even in the titles of three recent books related to TA education I hear echoes of anxieties we have not yet escaped. Sidney Dobrin asks us to (re)consider the composition “practicum” through the articles in his collection, but cautions us, *Don't Call it That*, while Sally Barr Ebest investigates *Writing and Resistance* in TA education. Less directly, Peter Vandenberg, Sue Hum, and Jennifer Clary-Lemon convey

their own and their contributors' concerns about the un-place-able aspects of writing instruction as they explore the *Relations, Locations, and Positions* of post-process composition theory that new writing teachers might encounter—a discussion they describe as “fraught with pitfalls” (8). In turning to these books I found much useful advice, plenty of insightful reflection, and some important mappings of the geographies over which composition pedagogy ranges these days. I also found evidence of the ways in which the disciplinary and institutional uncertainties facing composition-rhetoric specialists and WPAs, particularly inescapable in a class that purports to be both an introductory and comprehensive representation of the theory and practice of composition, continue to feed the anxieties of graduate students and teachers alike.

I'm not a neutral—or unconflicted—observer or reviewer. Teaching and mentoring composition teachers constitutes simultaneously the most rewarding and the most frustrating work I've done as a WPA. My views are particularly conditioned by my experiences working primarily with new and continuing teachers who do not see composition as their scholarly field, and sometimes do not see teaching as their ultimate goal. Moreover, I feel the weight of institutional expectations: that the university's newest teachers be prepared for their positions in the most efficient possible manner; that first-year composition (FYC) students be given comparable, consistent education across hundreds of sections each year; and that the vagaries of disciplinary exploration in rhetoric or pedagogy should give way before the demands of large-scale general education in concrete, transferable skills. I have thus come to view the pedagogy course and the concepts behind it as both impossible and crucial to teach—in part because of who and where the students are when they enter our classes, in part because of where we need them or want them to go as teachers and as scholars. Like any introductory class, the composition pedagogy seminar is constrained by fundamental questions we must ask about our graduate students, including several that pervade the volumes I'm reviewing here: what do students *already* know and desire to know, what do they *need* to know (to accomplish personal and/or institutional goals), what *can* they come to know in a single semester, and what *ought* they to know (to enter into the discipline rather than remaining on the threshold)? These are daunting questions. Fortunately, the authors and editors represented in these three new texts don't dodge such questions but reveal (and sometimes revel in) them; in doing so, they help orient us toward viable pathways for composition pedagogy education.

It's not surprising that when some of the university's most committed “guides on the side” start educating future guides (and often doing so with

insufficient time and resources), we get nervous about issues of resistance, wary that we might be angling for conversion rather than conversation. Vandenberg, Hum, and Clary-Lemon worry about conversion and resistance in their critical introduction, as does Dobrin in his, but it's Barr Ebest's book that takes resistance as its theme, reviewing the intellectual and emotional progression of students as they study and practice writing-teaching. Over five years, she collected materials—mostly reflective writing and audio-taped discussions—from 40 graduate students enrolled in composition theory or pedagogy courses she taught. While she describes *resistance* as a condition that provides opportunity for progress as well as frustration, she presents to her readers a not-uncomplicated success-narrative:

Enacting change is no easy task. Merely calling for change or even outlining what is needed ignores the human element—the feelings engendered by the teacher and student alike as they try to adapt ... and deal with the resulting frustrations. The effect, said one student, was “like sending an earthquake through a place that was always home.” Yet, she, like the majority of her peers, eventually overcame such feelings.... By providing graduate students with pedagogical sites for research and reflection, faculty enable them to ... write their way to a new understanding. (21)

After a deft, quickly-paced review of the recent history and current status of graduate teacher education (from Cardinal Newman to Preparing Future Faculty programs),¹ she grounds her particular study in theories of cognitive development, self-efficacy, and active learning—noting, for example, the ways in which writing and teaching may seem to be entirely transparent processes to successful graduate students who “are generally unaware of how they were taught” (43), much less how they were taught or learned *to write*. A late chapter on how female TAs struggle to find their voices in the academy and the classroom reflects Barr Ebest's initial interest in the particular effects that gender has on new TAs' confidence, but the primary study expands beyond that question.

Barr Ebest uses the middle chapters to explore in much-needed depth the psychological, epistemological, gendered, and institutional roots of many new TAs' resistance to constructivist writing pedagogies. (While she focuses wholly on graduate students, the breadth of her analysis supports parallel conclusions about educating other writing faculty, even when their resistances may not be as linked to their inexperience as writing teachers.) I recognize most of the student-responses she reports; her case study approach allows TAs to be heard from at length in this study, a crucial move in ana-

lyzing a course that can often feel more like “us vs. them” than graduate courses in English generally do. The book is valuable for anxious pedagogy instructors if for no other reason than to confirm that these resistances and challenges are real and can be traced in part to complex causes originating outside one’s particular pedagogy classroom. I also appreciate Barr Ebest’s honest and empathetic portrayal of students’ frustrations, her own frustrated responses, and the negotiations that followed as everyone “tri[ed] to adapt” (21). Specifically, she recommends two strategies for helping students move beyond their initial resistances: adopting a writing-focused pedagogy that emphasizes reflective writing and draft-and-revise processes (that is, applying composition pedagogy to TA education); and involving new teachers in action-research in their classrooms. Both approaches serve, she argues, to build students’ confidence as writers and teachers, to reduce some of the fears that lead to resistance, and to allow students to design their own pathways around or through points of resistance.

Neither approach, to be sure, is likely to entirely relieve our own anxieties as pedagogy teachers. Writing, Barr Ebest notes, is as likely to be “the catalyst for resistance” as it is the “cure” (5). Students may come out the other end more confident of their pathways and aware of the values of process-based (writing) pedagogies, but along the way we get to find out more about their resistances than we may want to know. Likewise, action research (in which students pose a question or theory about teaching writing, propose a way to test it in their own classrooms, keep a log and write up the results) may, as in the cases Barr Ebest reports, produce dramatic resistance-reversals or even conversions. Yet the uncertainties new teachers encounter require patience on everyone’s part and individual support from the pedagogy instructor, along with a willingness to allow students to invest significant time in a single issue, when instructional time is already at a premium. Barr Ebest’s astute analysis and candid reflection provide us with a range of strategies and reasons for being tolerant of—and empathetic with—the resistances of new writing teachers. Since she would have us teach *into and through* these resistances, however, and since some of us may suspect we’ll have fewer success stories in our own classes than appear in published descriptions like Barr Ebest’s, we are unlikely to find composition pedagogy a more comfortable course to teach any time soon.

The 27 authors represented in Dobrin’s collection, meanwhile, see resistances along with complex, situated opportunities throughout the enterprise of educating new writing teachers. *Don’t Call it That* provides the broadest survey yet of approaches to teaching composition pedagogy and the only book dedicated to theorizing the place and identity of the course. As Dobrin notes in his introductory essay, pedagogy teachers frequently

struggle to find a place and enough space: space *for* as well as space *within* “the course that appears to have been cast as the graduate version of FYC” (23). We feel our discipline’s growing-pains perhaps nowhere more acutely than in these one-shot attempts to prepare new writing teachers for an ever-more-complicated field, as these essays demonstrate. Even if our graduate students had no resistances or inner conflicts, our own would show through clearly as we find ourselves having to choose whether in Week 12 we should address multimodal composing or multicultural students, Plato or plagiarism, assessment or assignment scaffolding or argument theory. Increasingly, because the course has departmental, institutional, and disciplinary goals to meet, we need it to serve, as Joe Marshall Hardin notes, as at least three courses: local FYC practicum plus composition pedagogy course plus composition theory seminar. Moreover, we find that the course not only serves but constitutes the discipline, as Jeff Rice explains: “The composition canon is created . . . through the practicum, which has become the tool for disseminating knowledge regarding how to teach rhetoric and composition” (269). And Susan K. Miller, Rochelle Rodrigo, Veronica Pantoja and Duane Roen nudge us to go beyond disciplinary knowledge to professional development, suggesting reasonably—if we had world enough and time—that the course should strive to help TAs to adopt some of Ernest Boyer’s guidelines and so “view all of their work in the academy as scholarly” (82). Carrying all that responsibility can’t help but be anxiety-producing, for teachers and teachers-to-be alike.

Contributors to this volume are, like Barr Ebest, sympathetic to and frustrated by new teachers’ resistances, particularly resistances to the theory(ies) that define(s) us as a discipline but which can seem unnecessary and often disorienting to new composition teachers.² In a memorable and revealing turn of phrase, Kelly Ballenger and Sybille Gruber note that new composition teachers seem “unprepared to wallow” in the uncertainties of theoretical discussions (114). David Stacey offers one persuasive explanation of that resistance, noting that the less-theoretical teacher-narratives that our students often find most engaging display very little wallowing, hewing instead to a dominant success-narrative paradigm. Thus, he argues, we should not be surprised at new teachers’ concerns: theory works to complicate practice, and “who wants to complicate success? Especially before one has actually had any!” (250) Or as Lu Ellen Huntley’s students explained to her, participating in a course that seemed to be “always in process” was intensely anxiety-provoking rather than, as she had hoped, reassuring (295).

Students aren’t the only ones feeling a little wallow-y. Ballenger and Gruber discuss, insightfully, the “generative tensions” WPAs may also feel

as we use the pedagogy course both for indoctrination into a particular (often compromise-based) local curriculum, and as an introduction to a more flexible world of composition and pedagogical theories. Or as Anne Trubek asks, in a section sub-titled “Why It Is Impossible To Teach This Course,” how should a pedagogy instructor “teach heuristic methods heuristically” to novices who are quick-marching toward (or already teaching in) the composition classroom? (161). Like the tutors Trubek describes who are “chronically feeling guilty” (167) for, say, providing directive assistance even though that contradicts a key tenet of tutoring, faculty (including the authors in this collection) seem equally likely to feel guilty for including too much “theory” or too little. We may also feel guilty for including theory but lacking surefire ways to “make a compelling case for it” as Ruth Overman Fisher wishes (201), or failing to ensure that students are capable of integrating it into practice and using it “as a means to scrutinize, disrupt, or adapt prior notions,” as Anthony J. Michel hopes (192). And if you aren’t yet feeling guilty about how far your syllabus currently is from integrating technology-pedagogies throughout the semester, having your students write and revise in an authentic workshop process, or overtly modeling professional best practices in each class meeting, perhaps you should be: Rice, Rosemary Winslow, and Miller et al., respectively, make compelling cases for raising the pedagogy-class bar in each of those areas. Like Barr Ebest’s book, the articles in Dobrin’s collection gave me important new ways of seeing and planning for my pedagogy teaching, but (and?) left me newly anxious about how to serve my students, my institution, and my discipline simultaneously through this course.

But wait, there’s more. While the back-cover blurb for *Relations, Locations, Positions: Composition Theory for Writing Teachers* begins by describing it as an “anthology for beginning teachers,” I have difficulty imagining it as a key text in any of the beginning-teacher courses I’ve taken or taught. That’s not to say it’s not a timely, well-thought-out, innovative anthology: it is, and as a post-process, education-transformation reader for (soon-to-be) composition specialists, it fills a niche not yet served by books such as *Cross-Talk in Composition Theory*. Yet in the distance between the editors’ and some of the essayists’ *intent* to reach out to new writing teachers, and my certainty that the new TAs with whom I work would not find much in this book “accessible” or “useful,” I see another clear marker for my discipline-related anxieties.

Relations does stretch toward nonspecialist writing teachers. Its three sections each comprise an introductory essay, 6-7 essays reprinted from publications such as *CCC* and *JAC*, and two or three short, newly-commissioned “Pedagogical Insights” essays. The three introductory essays go beyond

summary of the upcoming selections to become accessible, well-informed reviews of the section's main questions; I found the first one, "Theories of Relation," particularly cogent in its positioning (and complicating) of post-process theories. The "Insights" essays more directly address an audience of new teachers: I was engaged and re-located by Derek Owens' energetic exhortation to teach *in situ*; Karen Koppelson's conscientious revisitation of her decision not to officially come out to her students as a lesbian but to construct a "productively indeterminate teacher identit[y]" (565); and Malea Powell's transformation of the academic-personal-pedagogical essay into a shrewd, funny-serious, on-the-page (and beyond-the-page) enactment of her communally focused pedagogy. At least one of those essays is likely to find its way onto my pedagogy syllabus the next time I teach.

Yet most of my engagement with the texts in *Relations* stems from my *not* being a novice. My experience in reading the main essays for this review mirrors my experience as a second-year professor sitting in on all the lectures in my college's collaboratively-taught Western Civilization course. I discovered through each endeavor an intelligently-organized, often engaging concatenation of ideas that I should probably have learned in the previous decade but hadn't—in part because I wasn't ready to learn them earlier, in part because I hadn't yet been shown such clear patterns and linkages. The progression of essays in the first section of *Relations*, for instance, helped me connect the concepts of *literacy* and *genre* in ways I hadn't considered before, and that will no doubt also percolate into my teaching. But then, 20 years into teaching writing classes, I'm more intrigued by disorientation than I used to be, and that condition may be a prerequisite for reading many of these essays. Indeed, the editors' motto for this collection might be found in their statement that "to be a *subject* means that one is often only *momentarily situated* while moving within discursive spaces" (373), an idea reinforced by articles in the second section on geographic and imagined locations, and by the third section's articles, each of which addresses a non-normative subject position—class, disability, race—to collectively reveal the interplay of ideas among these positions.

Faculty who teach a post-initiation pedagogy or theory course, or who teach students who have or desire a broader background in composition-rhetoric, may find that the imaginatively-integrated conversations in *Relations* help invigorate classroom discussion of how we view the shifting project of writing education. However, while the selected essays often address *teaching writing* as a material and daily practice, they weren't intended for novices; with a few exceptions (notably, the essays previously published in *College English*), they clearly adopt an insider discourse that limits access by new teachers. One needn't go all the way to the language of John Clifford's essay

“The Subject is Discourse”—”Althusser thus uses the Pascalian dialectic ... to conflate and dissolve our traditional notions of how ideology is created” (390)—to locate an example that would seriously challenge a student new to the field.³ Since the new TAs in my most recent class found the chapters in John Bean’s *Engaging Ideas* and Cindy Moore and Peggy O’Neill’s *Practice in Context* about as “theoretical” as they were ready (and possibly needed) to be, this isn’t the collection for them. And that leaves me anxious about my own position as an ambassador of the field’s best new ideas to the uninitiated graduate students who enter my classes and concerned about whether “the field” can or should agree on how much of its expertise needs to be interpolated into introductory pedagogies.

Relations’ distance from my current pedagogy students makes me glad, though, for the work of Barr Ebest and the authors in *Don’t Call It That*, who for the first time are engaging in reflection and study of the composition pedagogy seminar—not just TA education or composition faculty development generally—as a particular institutional and disciplinary place with particular goals and challenges. Barr Ebest and Dobrin have each helped to remedy the “lack of articles and book-length works on composition practica,” surprising “in a field largely defined by its commitment to the teaching of writing,” as Joanne Addison points out (*Don’t Call* 256). While the authors and editors represented in these volumes might agree with Michael Stancliff and Maureen Daly Goggin in their recent *WPA* essay, who “take it as a given that teaching (and naturally then, teaching our teachers) is always a local and situated practice” (11), collectively these books may help us also engage with broader questions about how we each connect our local pedagogy-pedagogies with broader disciplinary expectations. The course itself may not grow any less difficult to teach, but companionship can significantly reduce anxiety. The more we see ourselves as engaged in a shared endeavor, the better we’re likely to feel as pedagogy instructors, and the more progress we will make toward addressing some of the common challenges and meeting some of the common goals of composition pedagogy education.

NOTES

¹ See also similar historiographies recently included in books by Shari Stenberg and Margaret Marshall; taken together, the three texts reveal a range of institutional and cultural roots for both our goals and our anxieties as composition teachers and pedagogy-experts.

² As much as pedagogy specialists like Stephen Brookfield, Ruth Ray, and Jo Sprague and Jody Nyquist assert that teachers must eventually develop abilities to “acknowledge and encourage ambivalence, ambiguity, and multiplicity” (Ray 157), new teachers who are often also new to composition and to graduate studies may have limited tolerances for such exploration.

³ One consequence of the professionalization of composition-rhetoric is that fewer articles or book sections have been published recently that are about important, complex issues facing writing teachers generally *and* are accessible to the non-specialist writing teachers who might most benefit from a better understanding of such issues.

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Review

Geller, Anne Ellen, Michele Eodice, Frankie Condon, Meg Carroll and Elizabeth H. Boquet. *The Everyday Writing Center: A Community of Practice*. Utah State UP: 2007. 114 pages.

Melissa Ianetta

In the first chapter of their groundbreaking text, *The Everyday Writing Center*, the authors position the figure of the trickster as a viable administrative position, asking the reader:

How much room do we leave, in our day-to-day existence, to be surprised, to try out different eyes, as Coyote, a common Trickster, figure does? In one tale, Coyote tosses his eyes up into the trees one too many times; now he can no longer enjoy the long view or retrieve his eyes. His blandishments bring him a mouse eye and a buffalo eye as replacements—but what he sees is definitely not the same. A new worldview, brought on by this uncomfortable fit... (16)

Inspired by this example, this review attempts to bring a new perspective to *The Everyday Writing Center* itself, reading this work not for its import to writing center studies, a case for which Carol Peterson Haviland has recently argued well in *The Writing Center Journal*. Instead, I assess the text's value for the audience of *WPA*, examining not just its importance for a writing center readership, but also its usefulness for those directors of composition, WAC and other writing programs who are looking for new ways to understand, evaluate and react to the everyday events of program administration.

At first glance, it may seem unjust to evaluate this text for an audience beyond that clearly claimed in the volume's title, but *Everyday* seems an apt candidate for such an expansive reading because of the inclusionary nature of the authors' theoretical stance. As might be suggested by the invocation of the trickster figure, this conceptual framework draws from a remarkably broad range of interdisciplinary paradigms, including Michel de Certeau's *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Lewis Hyde's *Trickster Makes This World* and *The Gift*, Donald Schön's *Educating the Reflective Practitioner*, and John Tagg's *The*

Learning Paradigm College. Given the breadth of intellectual grounding this range represents, I was impressed with the level to which the authors engage with all these works in a meaningful and useful manner, revealing interdisciplinary overlap and ferreting out practical administrative implications of seemingly esoteric theory. Rarely have I encountered work with a conceptual frame so wide ranging yet so finely drawn and, ultimately, so practically functional; the authors are, in the best sense, the *bricoleurs* they describe.

Prominent in the intellectual scaffolding of *Everyday* is a focus on Etienne Wenger's notion of "communities of practice," a concept that illuminates all varieties of writing program work particularly well, I think. Wenger claims that, "[w]e all have our own theories and ways of understanding the world, and our communities of practice are places where we develop, negotiate, and share them;" [in such communities there exists no] "dichotomy between the practical and the theoretical, ideals and reality, or talking and doing" (qtd. 6). These sites are further defined by "designing for learning." (qtd. 7) Such design, Wenger explains, "cannot be based on a division of labor between learners and nonlearners, between those who organize learning and those who realize it, or between those who create meaning and those who execute it" (qtd. 7). *Everyday* then applies Wenger's principles in new and provocative ways to such defining issues in writing center studies as tensions surrounding writing centers' marginality/insularity and the fetishization/reification of long-held ideologies and well-worn practices. Even as I saw the aptness of this critique for a writing center audience, I was struck by the applicability of the analytic to all writing programs. Surely WPA-L is a strong example of a Wegnerian community of practice, a place where "people . . . share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly" (Wegner)? So too, his theory resonates strongly with the primary characteristic of writing program research, namely its syntheses of the "practical and theoretical, ideals and reality." Finally, Wenger's emphatic assertion that in communities of practice all participants are learners, applies equally to curricular-based writing programs as to the writing center, for in both spaces we are continually learning from staff and students, as well as our own experiences as teachers and writers. *Everyday's* theoretical grounding, then, seems to embrace all sites of writing instruction.

Like the conceptual framework that unites the text, individual chapter foci lend insight to a variety of writing programs. For instance, "Origami, Anyone? Tutors as Learners," examines the possibilities for creating and sustaining a learning culture, drawing the reader's attention to the ways in which this environment enables creative and ongoing knowledge building for all community members, including administrators, tutors and teachers.

By adapting Martha Conner’s “Learning Culture Audit” for use in a writing center, for example, *Everyday* models concrete strategies for creating an enriched learning environment, strategies that can easily be adapted to writing programs as well as writing centers. Through a list of twenty-two “Pro-Learning Culture/Anti-Learning Culture” trait pairs, the authors suggest ways to assess and improve current writing center practice (52). As seen in the examples below, many are readily identifiable with best practices in the writing program:

Pro-Learning Culture	Anti-Learning Culture
[P]olicy is always discussed/negotiated with staff.	[P]olicy is made by the director and then announced at staff meetings..
Hiring practice and decisions are a shared responsibility.	Director does the hiring.
Annual reports get to the real work of [the program] and are designed to be useful to current and future [teachers].	Annual reports are primarily quantitative in nature and written exclusively for an external audience.
Everyone is comfortable sharing stories of success and failure.	[Teachers] usually keep to themselves if they believe a session has gone badly. The Director only shares success stories among colleagues.
Issues regarding race, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, and/or religion are addressed both personally and in staff meetings in ways that explore values assumptions, beliefs and expectations.	Because issues such as race, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity and/or religion are touchy, they are rarely, if ever, discussed personally or in staff meetings.

Working through this heuristic, I found myself thinking equally of my writing center and writing program as I nodded in agreement, jotted down new ideas and reflected upon viewpoints and goals different from my own. Similarly, in the following chapter “Straighten Up and Fly Right,” the reader is reminded that our tutors are also writers and can renew their tutoring practice through their writing lives. Here again, I was inspired by new ways to help writing instructors reconnect with their own identities as writers.

While WPAs will find most of the material in *Everyday* useful, I predict they will find particularly provocative the chapter “Everyday Racism,” where the authors push the reader to consider the ways in which the writing center and the institution replicate racial stereotypes. I was notably struck by the authors’ analysis of a complaint often shared among WPAs:

[W]e would not be surprised to hear, “I’m so busy talking with faculty, working on curriculum ... and negotiating with administrators. I don’t have time to be an anti-racist too.”

Here's a hard truth: Laments about lack of time are never simply about a lack of time. They are statements about priorities. They are expressions of fear. They mask concerns about exposing inadequacies. (91)

Everyday then goes on to reconcile the material realities of administrative work with the authors' high prioritization of anti-racist work in their own centers. Even as with the chapters on staff development, "Everyday Racism" is marked by an expansive theoretical ground that is manifested in concrete suggestions. The authors' revision of Peggy McIntosh's inventory of white privilege, for example, seems well suited as a tool for inspiring productive discussions in both pedagogy classes and faculty training workshops.

As suggested by its title, the final chapter of the book—"Everyday Administration, or Are We Having Fun Yet?"—lends itself most readily to the varieties of writing program administration. Here, the authors discuss the differences between mere management and true leadership. Borrowing a metaphor from John Tagg, they suggest that leaders need to maintain a conceptual boundary between educational ends and means, for "to suggest the chief mission of a writing center is to deliver tutoring in writing is akin to suggesting that the chief mission of General Motors is to produce assembly lines" (14). Such a distinction serves curricular-based writing programs particularly well; the scale and structure of a first-year writing program, for example, seems even more inclined to Fordist ideals than does the individualized instruction offered in the writing center.

In sum, then, *The Everyday Writing Center* could easily be named *The Everyday Writing Program*, for its insights apply equally well to first-year writing or writing-across-the-curriculum programs. It is both penetrating in its analysis and wide-ranging in practical and productive applications. My only quibble with this text is a minor one: I noticed a few small errors in the References section, including missing references and inaccurate or omitted page numbers. I wished that citation had been attended to a bit more closely at some point in the editorial process. Dwelling overlong on such minor lapses, however, seems unworthy of the generosity of the authors or the inclusionary goals of their text. (Indeed, as a reviewer, I should note that I was the recipient of such inclusions, for I was flattered to see myself included in the acknowledgements, no doubt for my small contribution to the book via a WCENTER listserv posting.) Ultimately, *The Everyday Writing Center* is the most important book in writing center studies in recent years and belongs on the shelves of all WPAs looking to improve their programs and renew their practice in innovative ways.

WORK CITED

Wegner, Etienne. "Communities of Practice." Etienne Wegner Home Page. 13 October 2007. <<http://www.ewenger.com/theory/index.htm>>.

Announcements

The University of Texas at Austin will host the **2008 International Writing Across the Curriculum Conference**. This year's conference, to be held **May 29-31**, will focus on how writing professionals integrate and articulate WAC theories and practices into the curriculum and translate our work to students, academic staff, administration, and those outside the academy. Pre-conference workshops include starting or invigorating a WAC program, research in writing and WAC, faculty development to improve teaching and learning, and starting and maintaining high school WAC-writing centers. Our featured speaker, Ann Beaumont, and an international panel will discuss the preparing students for writing across the curriculum, and the implications of WAC development around the world. WAC 2008 will be held in the Radisson Hotel and Suites on the shores of the Colorado River in downtown Austin. History, nature, scholarship, fine arts, warm weather, the world's largest urban bat colony, and any kind of music you can think of are all within a short walk or bus ride. Longman Publishers has made possible a special Friday night after dinner performance by the famous Austin Lounge Lizards. See <http://www.utexas.edu/cola/progs/wac/conferences/iwacc/index/> for attendance, registration and hotel details.

The **Society for Technical Communication (STC)** has re-launched its **Academic Database**, and we need information on your school's Technical Communication or Professional Writing program. To assist those interested in pursuing a career in technical communication, STC provides a database of academic programs worldwide. Institutions are invited to add their programs to the database. Each institution offering a program of study can list all degree and certificate programs under one institutional record, and users can search these listings by program, location, and/or course delivery. Please take a look at the new database: < <http://stc.org/academic/index.aspx> > and take a few minutes to add your institution to the STC Academic Database. If you have any questions about the database, please contact STC Academic Liaison Committee member Sally Henschel: sally.henschel@mwsu.edu.

The **2008 WPA Workshop, Institutes, and Conference** will be held next July in Denver, CO, and will be hosted by the University of Denver Writing Program. The workshop will be held July 6-9, the Institutes will be held July 10, and the conference will be July 10-13. Conference chair is Joseph Janangelo, Loyola University. Theme for the conference is **“Writing**

Program Administration and/as Learning.” This conference will examine WPAs as learners, as teachers, and as learned contributors to students’ lives, to knowledge, and to higher education. Denver will be the location for working toward a better understanding of WPA work as an intellectual and a pedagogical activity with a rich and complicated history of learning. Participants are invited to think about some of the following topics and questions. This list is meant to be suggestive, not exhaustive. Proposals are welcomed to address any ideas desired, including those not explicitly tied to the conference theme but important to writing program administration. Complete information on the process and parameters for individual and panel submissions will be available soon via the conference website: <http://www.du.edu/writing/WPA2008.htm>--and certainly several months in advance of the deadline. Re-check this site and be assured that the CFP will be posted on WPA-L, other lists, and in *WPA*. The submission deadline will be no earlier than February 2008. Very likely the submission and correspondence process will be via Web and e-mail. For information about the Program, contact Joseph Janangelo: jjanang@luc.edu For information about Local Arrangements, contact Doug Hesse, dhesse@du.edu

The Council of Writing Program Administrators is seeking nominations for its **Best Book Award for 2006-2007**. This award recognizes book authors or editors who have made an outstanding contribution to the field of writing program administration over the past two calendar years.

Award Requirements:

1. The book was published in 2006 or 2007.
2. The book addresses one or more issues of long-term interest to administrators of writing programs in higher education.
3. The book discusses theories, practices, or policies that contribute to a richer understanding of WPA work.
4. The book shows sensitivity toward the situated contexts in which WPAs work.
5. The book makes a significant contribution to the scholarship of writing program administration.
6. The book will serve as a strong representative of the scholarship of and research on writing program administration.

Nominations should include three (3) copies of the book and three (3) copies of a letter of nomination. Letters of nomination should explain how the

book meets the award requirements. Send nominations to Rita Malenczyk, Chair, WPA Book Award Committee, English Department, Eastern Connecticut State University, 83 Windham St., Willimantic, CT 06226. All nominations must be received by **January 10, 2008**. Members of the Best Book Award Committee are: Stephen Wilhoit (University of Dayton); Barbara L'Eplattenier (University of Arkansas-Little Rock); and Rita Malenczyk (Eastern Connecticut State University). Direct questions to Rita Malenczyk (malenczykr@easternct.edu).

The **WPA Executive Board** is soliciting proposals to host the **WPA Summer Conference, Workshops, and Institutes** in 2010 and 2011. As regular WPA attendees know, the WPA Summer Conference, Workshop and Institutes are sponsored by one or more institutions and hosted by local WPAs, members of the Executive Board, and the WPA at large. This is a terrific opportunity to be active in WPA, to build working relationships with WPAs in your area and to showcase your academic institution and home area. Those interested in sponsoring a WPA Summer Conference and Workshop in 2010 and 2011 should submit a proposal to be considered by the WPA Executive Board by **January 15, 2008**. Proposals should include the following:

1. Information about the people on the local arrangements committee. Provide names, contact information, institutional affiliation, (contacts, institution, etc.). Describe the "management structure" of responsibilities (local chair, coordinators for conference registration, web site, Saturday night social, local amenities, liaison with publishers, etc).
2. Information about the site(s) for the Conference, Workshop, and one-day Institute(s). Describe the conference site, indicate the size of the hotel/lodging and the meeting facilities (number, size, location) for a three-day conference (250-300 attendees-one room must be able to hold 300) and the four-day workshop preceding the conference (30 people). One-day institutes are run concurrently and require meeting space plus break and lunch facilities. Provide cost estimates for hotel rooms/lodging, parking (if any), meals, meeting rooms, and AV equipment (including set-up and take-down). List local sightseeing and cultural opportunities for conference attendees. Describe transportation to and from the conference.

3. Information about the institution(s) that will sponsor this event. Note types of sponsorship, including any institutional conference arrangers, and in-kind contributions your institution(s) can provide, including personnel, financial support, web hosting, publishing and photocopying services, etc.

You may request complete guidelines and/or models of successful proposals from Linda Adler-Kassner. Please submit your proposal via email attachment by **January 15, 2008**, to Linda Adler-Kassner (Linda.Adler-Kassner@emich.edu), Chair of the WPA Summer Conference Siting Committee. Questions are welcome. Other committee members include Dominic Delli Carpini and Barb Lutz.

“CTRL/ALT/DEL,” the **2008 NorthEast Writing Centers Association Conference**, will be held April 12-13 at the University of Vermont in Burlington. Proposals are due by **Dec. 31, 2007**. Keynote speakers are Dr. Anne Ellen Geller, Dr. Michele Eodice, Dr. Frankie Condon, Dr. Meg Carroll, and Dr. Elizabeth Boquet, authors of *The Everyday Writing Center: A Community of Practice*. These scholars have each displayed ongoing commitment to writing center scholarship and the wider writing center community, as well as ongoing support of NEWCA. Together, they have written a book that pushes us to think more deeply about the unique situation of the writing center, using the metaphor of the trickster to explore the fluidity of writing centers, the compelling contradictions of the spaces writing centers occupy both figuratively and literally, and the opportunities for using the dynamic nature of writing center work to enhance the possibilities of writing centers as multidisciplinary centers for learning and community. The conference theme, “Ctrl/Alt/Del,” is a combination of computer keystrokes used to restart an operating system. As such, the term “Control-Alt-Delete” evokes not only the influence of technology but also themes of regeneration and persistence—recurring themes for writing center administrators, peer tutors, and student writers. This term speaks to the dynamic nature of writing center work and raises questions about how much the writing center is a controlling force or opens space for alternative discourses, how vulnerable writing centers are to deletion while also flexible enough to accommodate change and the many forms of rebooting/restarting, how technologies inform writing center work with differing amounts of visibility and influence, and how collaborative learning, talking, and writing continue to center and empower writing center work. NEWCA is using “Ctrl/Alt/Del” and its distinct components control, alternative, and delete as rhetorical frames for examining writing center research and practices. Please visit the conference website at <http://www.newca-conference.com>.

com/ for further information on proposal guidelines, proposal submission, Special Interest Groups, and conference outreach.

The organizers of the **19th Annual Conference of the Mid-Atlantic Writing Centers Association** invite proposals that consider writing center work as it relates to **liberty** and **literacy**. High school students, graduate and undergraduate college students, writing center professionals, faculty and instructors are encouraged to submit proposals. Possible topics could include academic freedom and writing center work (how do writing centers promote or constrain academic freedom? Who is “free” to visit the writing center? What role do, or should, writing centers play in determining what students should learn? What is the role of faculty in the writing center?), freedom of expression and writing center work (How does our work in the writing center contribute to freedom of expression? What responsibilities come with freedom of expression? Are students free to express *anything* in their papers, or only “appropriate” things?), democracy and literacy (How does writing center work support democracy? What are the communities and constituencies of the writing center? What rules govern our work?), and liberty and pedagogy (Does writing center pedagogy make writers “free”?) Proposals for individual presentations (15 minutes), panel presentations (45 minutes), roundtable discussions (45 minutes) and poster presentations are welcome. Proposals are due by **Friday, January 4, 2008**. Please visit the conference website for more information: <http://faculty.mc3.edu/hhalbert/MAWCA/2008/index.html>.

Proposals are being sought for an edited collection on *Teaching with Student Texts*. Although there is a rich tradition of using student texts in writing classrooms, there is no collection that takes this practice as its focus. In the editors’ view, two things make the time right for such a collection now. First, new technologies and other innovations make bringing student texts to the table easier and less costly; they also allow for new twists on this well-established practice. Second, a resurgence of interest in the ways teachers can demystify academic writing through making its moves, values, and forms transparent suggests that the practice of bringing student texts to the table may be a particularly powerful means for helping students understand the principles of writing we outline in learning outcomes and scoring guides. The aims of this volume are to help beginning teachers understand what they can do with student texts in the classroom and why, to offer veteran teachers opportunities to reflect on their work and gather to new ideas and methods, and to provide graduate faculty with case studies to use in

mentoring new teachers and in leading teaching practica. Although the collection will include a few theoretical and historical pieces, most chapters will focus on the practice or craft of bringing student texts to the seminar table. We are looking for chapters that explain *what* teachers and students can do with student texts, *how* they do what they do, and *why* they do it that way. We encourage contributors to focus on teaching practice, theorizing only as much as is needed to clarify and reflect upon those practices. Contributions should run no more than 10 to 15 pages, or 3000 to 4500 words. We seek essays describing how teachers can use texts written by the students they are working with to illustrate the moves, strategies, principles, and forms of critical reading and academic writing. We anticipate essays on ways of working with student texts in small groups, seminar discussions, and one-on-one conferences; on ways of using digital media to respond to student work online and in the classroom; and on ways teachers can make student writings visible in first-year and basic writing classrooms, writing centers, supplemental instruction, advanced courses in technical and professional writing, writing-intensive courses in the disciplines, graduate seminars, teacher workshops, and more. *Teaching with Student Texts* will be edited by Joseph Harris (Duke University; joseph.harris@duke.edu), John Miles, and Charles Paine (both of University of New Mexico; jdmiles@unm.edu and cpaine@unm.edu, respectively). Proposals of 200-400 words, along with author's CV, must be emailed to John Miles (jdmiles@unm.edu) by **Jan 31, 2008**. The editors will choose contributors by **March 15, 2008**. First full drafts of essays are due **August 15, 2008**. Please feel free to contact any of the editors if you have questions. For up-to-date information about the collection and the call for proposals, consult "CFP Central" on the WPA Council website: <http://wpacouncil.org/node/974>.

Proposals are being sought for a special section of *DSQ: Disability in the Undergraduate Classroom*. This special section will feature writing about disability by undergraduate students. To put this important writing in context, the issue will also feature two to three scholarly essays by professors on teaching disability in the undergraduate classroom. Expected publication in fall 2008. We invite students to submit papers and projects related to disability—including both traditional papers and multi-modal, online work. A teacher may submit on a student's behalf if appropriate permission has been obtained from the student authors. We welcome student submissions on any disability related topics such as access, pedagogical or professional issues, disability identity and intersections with other identity categories, disability politics, history, culture, language, philosophy. We will also consider fiction or poetry, with disability themes. Any genre of

student work is acceptable, including cultural commentaries; book/film reviews; critical essays; research writing; analysis of disability representations in film, novels, or memoir; personal narratives; or reflective writing. If you are planning to teach a disability related course this summer or fall or winter, consider working this call into your course and/or using your syllabus to invite students to submit their work. For all selected student work, we will ask the teacher(s) to write a brief, accompanying critical reflection of no more than 250 words, which can offer an explanation of the course and/or assignment, as well as some words about the piece itself and the experience of teaching disability to undergraduate students. We also invite longer scholarly essays by teachers on teaching a disability-themed undergraduate class. This special issue is intended to provide opportunities for student writing and articulate the many ways disability informs pedagogy, with particular focus on writing. Deadline for submissions is **March 1, 2008**. If you have questions, please contact the editors of this special section: Amy Vidali: Amy.Vidali@cudenver.edu; Margaret Price: price.spelman@gmail.com; Cynthia Lewiecki-Wilson: lewiecc@muohio.edu.



Contributors to WPA 31.1/2

Linda Adler-Kassner is Director of the First-Year Writing Program at Eastern Michigan University. Her most recent research interests center around developing advocacy strategies for students and writing instructors. Most recently, she is the author of *The Activist Writing Program Administrator: Changing Stories About Writing and Writers* (Utah State UP, March 2008).

Linda S. Bergmann, associate professor of English at Purdue University and Director of the Purdue Writing Lab, has started WAC programs and directed writing centers at three universities. Her teaching experience includes undergraduate courses in composition, literature, pedagogy, and literacy, and graduate seminars in writing program administration. She has published articles in such journals as *Composition Studies*, *Language and Learning Across the Disciplines*, *Feminist Teacher*, *A/B: Auto/Biography Studies*, and *American Studies*; written chapters on teaching writing for various collections; and co-edited *Composition and/or Literature: The End(s) of Education* (NCTE 2006). She is currently writing a textbook on undergraduate research writing for Longman.

Elizabeth Chiseri-Strater directs the Composition Program at UNC-Greensboro where she has taught writing, rhetoric, ethnography and women's and gender studies for the past fifteen years. She is the author of three books, *Academic Literacies* (1991), *Fieldworking with Bonnie Sunstein* (1997, 2002, 2007) and *What Works?* with Bonnie Sunstein (2006). She and Donna Qualley are academic siblings and have researched, written, and presented together in the past twenty five years.

Ronda Leathers Dively is an associate professor and the Director of Writing Studies at Southern Illinois University-Carbondale. Her body of published scholarship centers on students' invention processes in a variety of rhetorical scenarios (including their management of religious expression in academic contexts). She is the author of *Preludes to Insight: Creativity, Incubation and Expository Writing* (Hampton Press, September, 2006).

Anthony Edgington is an assistant professor at the University of Toledo, where he also serves as Associate Director of the Composition Program and the Writing Center. His previous work has been published in *Teaching English in the Two-Year College*, the *Journal of Teaching Writing*, and the *Journal of Writing Assessment*. His current scholarship focus is on the teacher-responder identity and reading patterns among writing center tutors.

Heidi Estrem is an assistant professor of English and Director of the First-Year Writing Program at Boise State University. She previously served as associate director of the First-Year Writing Program and director of the WAC program at Eastern Michigan University. Her research interests focus on writers and learners in transitional spaces, and she is currently involved in projects focusing on writers in dual-enrollment composition courses in high school; new instructors of first-year writing; and writers encountering new research demands in first-year writing courses.

Lauren Fitzgerald is associate professor of English at Yeshiva University where she is Director of the Yeshiva College Writing Center and previously directed the YC Composition Program. Her chapters on teaching writing and administering writing programs at religiously affiliated institutions have appeared or are forthcoming in the edited collections *Negotiating Religious Faith in the Composition Classroom*, *Judaic Perspectives in Rhetoric and Composition Studies*, and (with T. Kenny Fountain) *Pluralizing Plagiarism: Identities, Contexts, Pedagogies*.

Alice Horning is a professor of Rhetoric and Linguistics at Oakland University in Rochester, Michigan, where she teaches courses in reading, writing, psycholinguistics and literacy development. She directs OU's writing program. Her scholarly work, which has appeared recently in *The Reading Matrix* and *Across the Disciplines*, focuses on the psycholinguistics of literacy.

Melissa Ianetta is an assistant professor of English and Director of Writing at the University of Delaware. Her administrative scholarship has appeared in *Composition Studies*, *WPA: Writing Program Administrator* and *The Writing Center Journal*. She is currently working on a feminist history of improvisational rhetoric.

Phillip P. Marzluf directs the expository writing program at Kansas State University. He researches teachers' and students' attitudes towards literacy and social issues of post-secondary education.

Mark McBeth is the Deputy Chair for Writing Programs and Writing Across the Curriculum Coordinator at the John Jay College of Criminal Justice/CUNY. His scholarly interests intersect the history of education, curricular design, and writing program administration as well as sociolinguistics.

Michael McCamley is an assistant professor of English at the University of Delaware. He recently completed his PhD in Composition at Oklahoma State University, where he served as Assistant Director of the First-Year Composition Program.

Cary Moskovitz is Director of Writing in the Disciplines at Duke University. He holds a Ph.D. in Aerospace Engineering and a Masters of

Architecture, and has published in *College Composition and Communication*, *The Journal of Aircraft*, and *FOCUS on Learning Problems in Mathematics*. He has taught undergraduate courses in academic writing, architecture, engineering mechanics, mathematics, physics, and Science, Technology and Society. His current research interests include Writing Across the Curriculum and writing pedagogy.

Gerald Nelms is an associate professor of English at Southern Illinois University-Carbondale. He has held various administrative posts at Southern, most notably, Director of Communication Across the Curriculum and Writing Studies Director. He has published articles in the history of composition studies, writing assessment, writing across the curriculum, and writing in the disciplines. He is currently at work on a book on plagiarismism.

Michael Petit teaches writing and literature at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, and academic writing at Duke University. He holds an MA in creative writing and a PhD in eighteenth-century British literature. His current research interests include writing across the curriculum, writing pedagogy, and the intersections of popular culture and new information technology. He is the co-editor of *Everyday eBay: Culture, Collecting, and Desire* (Routledge, 2006), a collection of essays that examines the cultural, social and political implications of the online auction site. He is also the author of *Peacekeepers at War* (Faber and Faber, 1986), a memoir of his time as a U.S. Marine in Beirut.

Donna Qualley is an associate professor of English and the current Director of Composition at Western Washington University. She teaches classes in composition theory and pedagogy, writing, literacy studies, and young adult literature. Author of *Turns of Thought: Teaching Composition as Reflexive Inquiry* and Co-editor of *Pedagogy in the Age of Politics*, she is currently working on a long-term project about the pedagogical habits of mind of experienced English professors.

Catherine Quick is an assistant professor of English and Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi, where she teaches courses in technical and professional writing and English education. Her current work involves studying the writings of non-traditional students in introductory technical writing courses.

E. Shelley Reid is an assistant professor of English and director of the Composition Program at George Mason University, where she teaches writing as well as courses in composition theory and pedagogy. She has published articles on faculty development in writing programs, on the difficulty of teaching multiculturalism in first-year writing courses, and on approaches to teaching composition pedagogy.

Stacy Hartlage Taylor is the Academic Program Coordinator of the Chapman Writing Center and an Assistant Professor of English at Jefferson Community and Technical College where she teaches first year composition, literature, and humanities courses. Stacy's research interests include writing centers and technology, socio-economic status and students, women in literature and composition, and learning communities/linked courses for first year students.

Elizabeth Vander Lei is associate professor of English at Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan. She teaches first year composition and advanced courses in writing and the teaching of writing. Co-editor of *Negotiating Religious Faith in the Composition Classroom*, Vander Lei was first drawn to this topic by her research into the effects of religious faith on African American rhetoric, particularly that of the modern civil rights movement.

Elizabeth Wardle is an assistant professor at the University of Dayton, where she also directs the writing program. She is interested in how research about writing informs classroom practice, how writing classroom experiences inform the writing students do in other contexts, and how the institutional status of composition studies affects classroom and program practices.

Janet Zepernick is an assistant professor of English at York College of Pennsylvania, where she teaches writing and rhetoric. Her current work is an analysis of the rhetorical dimensions of health care funding in America, entitled *Rhetorical Theory and Contemporary Public-policy Debate: The Intractable Disorders of the Health Care Crisis*.



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.

Membership benefits include the following:

1. • A subscription to *WPA: Writing Program Administration*, a semi-annual refereed journal
2. • Invitations to the annual WPA Summer Workshops and Conferences
3. • Invitations to submit papers for sessions that WPA sponsors at MLA and CCCC
4. • Participation in the WPA Research Grant Program, which distributes several awards, ranging from \$1000 to \$2000
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6. • Information about the WPA Consultant-Evaluator program

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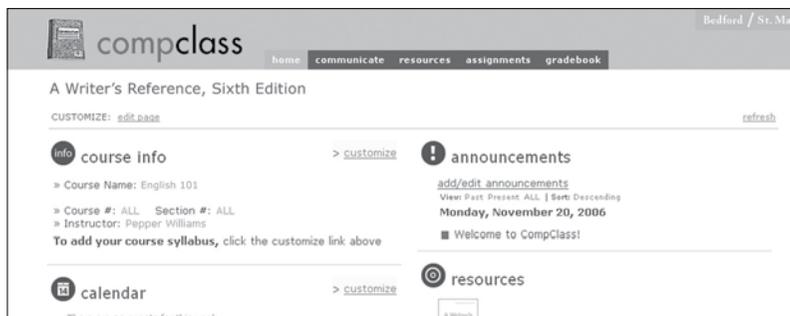
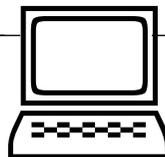
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The screenshot shows the CompClass website interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links for 'home', 'communicate', 'resources', 'assignments', and 'gradebook'. The main heading is 'A Writer's Reference, Sixth Edition'. Below this, there are several sections: 'course info' with details like 'Course Name: English 101' and 'Instructor: Pepper Williams'; 'announcements' with a date 'Monday, November 20, 2006'; 'calendar' with a note 'There are no events for this week.'; and 'resources'. A 'CUSTOMIZE' link is visible in the top right of the course info section.



This screenshot shows the 'CompClass Resources' page. It features a sidebar with a 'Go To' menu listing various topics such as 'The Everyday Writer e-handbook', 'Learning from Common Errors', 'Composing in a Digital Age', 'Focusing on Media and Design', 'Conducting Research', 'Sentence Style', 'Language/Glossary of Usage', 'Punctuation/Mechanics', 'MLA Documentation', 'APA, CSE, and Chicago Documentation', 'Writing in the Disciplines', and 'For Multilingual Writers'. The main content area is titled '20 Writing a Research Project' and lists steps: 'a Refining your writing plans', 'b Organizing, outlining or mapping, and drafting', 'c Incorporating source materials', 'd Reviewing and getting responses to your draft', 'e Revising and editing your draft', 'f Preparing a list of sources', and 'g Preparing and proofreading your final copy'. Below this is a section for 'Conducting Research' with an image of a computer screen and books. A list of numbered links is provided at the bottom: '16: Preparing for a Research Project', 'English 101: research guidelines handout', '17: Doing Research', '18: Evaluating Sources and Taking Notes', '19: Integrating Sources and Avoiding Plagiarism', and '20: Writing a Research Project'.

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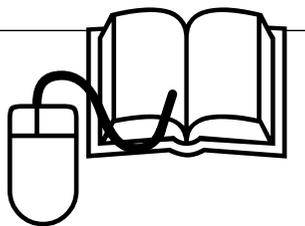
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A Writer's Reference **MLA**
DIANA HACKER SIXTH EDITION
MLA Papers

Harriet Wald [Logout]

Table of Contents

- MLA Papers
- Harriet's Custom Section
- MLA-1: Supporting a thesis
- MLA-2: Citing sources; avoiding plagiarism
- MLA-3: Integrating sources
- MLA-4: Documenting sources
- MLA-5: Manuscript format; sample paper
- Citation at a glance; short work from a Web site (MLA)
- MLA Papers Resources

Most English instructors and some humanities instructors will ask you to document your sources with the Modern Language Association (MLA) system of citations described in MLA-4. When writing an MLA paper that is based on sources, you face three main challenges: (1) supporting a thesis, (2) citing your sources and avoiding plagiarism, and (3) integrating quotations and other source material.

Examples in this section are drawn from research a student conducted on online monitoring of employees' computer use. Anna Orlov's research paper, which argues that electronic surveillance in the workplace threatens employees' privacy and autonomy, appears on pages 408-12.

- Charts
- Directories

Bedford/St. Martin's
The St. Martin's e-Handbook
Andrea A. Lunsford sixth edition
Jimmy Fleming [Logout]

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- Adjectives and Adverbs
- 35a: Distinguishing adjectives from adverbs
- 35b: Adjectives after linking verbs
- 35c: Adverbs
- 35d: Comparatives and superlatives
- 35e: Nouns as modifiers

35c Adverbs

In everyday conversation, you will often hear (and perhaps use) adjectives in place of adverbs. When you write in standard academic English, however, use adverbs to modify verbs, adjectives, and other adverbs.

- You can feel the song's meter if you listen ^{carefully} careful.
- The audience was ^{really} disappointed by the show.

FOR MULTILINGUAL WRITERS: Adjective sequence

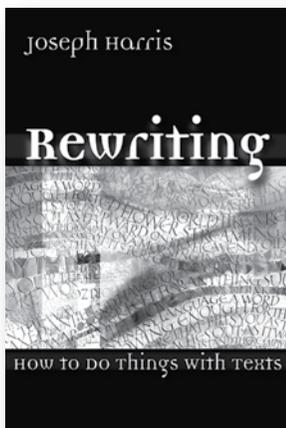
Should you write these beautiful blue kitchen tiles or these blue beautiful kitchen tiles? See 58f for guidelines on adjective sequence.

[Open in supplemental window]

Good and well, bad and badly
The modifiers good, well, bad, and badly cause problems for many writers because the distinctions between good

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