

Introducing “The CWPA Mentoring Project” and Survey Report

Sheldon Walcher, Joseph Janangelo, and Duane Roen

PREFACE

We begin by thanking everyone who contributed ideas and insights to the CWPA (Council of Writing Program Administrators) Mentoring Survey, CWPA President, Linda Adler-Kassner, for supporting our endeavors, and the WPA journal editors—Alice Horning, Debra Frank Dew, and Glenn Blalock—for inviting us to share this report with the journal’s readers. Our work has a history worth sharing. In 2008, then CWPA President, Joe Janangelo, developed the idea of the organization offering some mentoring activities, services, and resources for colleagues engaged in WPA work in various roles and institutions. After working with Sheldon Walcher to establish a Mississippi affiliate of CWPA, Joe invited Sheldon to collaborate with him on the CWPA Mentoring Project. Sheldon suggested surveying our members, and designed a survey with a bit of input from Joe. Together, they wrote (and rewrote) their report of the survey results to help CWPA officers and board members improve the organization in relation to respondents’ expressed ideas and needs. CWPA Vice-President, Duane Roen, reviewed our final draft and accepted an invitation to join us in our work. To tell the story as we experienced it, we offer an introduction written in three voices that, like our work, flow from *I* to *we* and back again.

IT’S INTENTIONAL: SOME THOUGHTS FROM JOE

I would like to begin by describing what I mean by the title, “The CWPA Mentoring Project.” For me, the key word is *project*, a term that can be used as a noun and verb. As a noun, *project* denotes something intentional and describes work that involves forethought, deliberation, contemplation, and planning. Such work also involves effort and resources (Dictionary.com).

Importantly, project also suggests something that is ongoing and future-oriented. This meaning is expressed in the verb *to project*, which means to send something (ideas, thoughts) forward and to think about oneself and others in the future.

I am drawn to the idea of building something with no designated end point. My hope is that in working with our colleagues at the Two-Year College English Association (TYCA) and the International Writing Centers Association (IWCA), we can design and sustain something that will be of meaningful service to people who pursue (and who are preparing to pursue) WPA work. My guiding belief is that to participate in writing programs means to participate (tacitly, explicitly, eventually, and often iteratively) in their administration. This is often true whether or not one has the title “Writing Program Administrator,” “Coordinator,” “Director” or even faculty of full-time status. A complementary belief is that mentoring others and providing service to colleagues, students, staff, and administrators is the way of life for those of us pursuing WPA work (Dew and Horning). WPAs, with our various titles, are often helping others, learning from them, and advocating for them. It is no surprise that pursuing such work can leave people feeling exploited and depleted (Farris, George). One of the most open secrets of WPA work is that our Rotarian-like work ethic and the institutional expectation of “Service above Self” can have deleterious effects on people’s career satisfaction and productivity. This expectation is especially true at what get called “mid” or “smaller size institutions” where one or two people continually do the lion’s share of the WPA work while trying to lead, develop, and enjoy their own careers.

In conceptualizing “The CWPA Mentoring Project,” our main goal is to learn from our members—to learn about the desires and needs of people who spend their working lives practicing and pursuing WPA work. By asking directed and open-ended survey questions, we hoped to learn in detail about the differences between what I call *the intended* and *the delivered CWPA*. In plainer terms, I wanted to learn when and where the organization’s events, artifacts, activities, and practices are serving our diverse members well and whether and where they need improvement, reconceptualization, and redesign.

The concepts *when* and *where* are important because this mentoring project seeks to make changes that are useful to and needed by our members at situated and specific points in their working lives and careers. In concert with an understanding of WPA work as multifarious and complex, the concept and practice of diversity by design comes into play (see Survey section E). Just as there is no one model, label, or container for WPA work or identity (think of writing centers, writing across the curriculum, adjunct

faculty, and graduate students), there is no universal point of situated or enduring need. Rather, there are many intersecting points such as demographics, access, and rank. This nexus of sometimes conflicting desires and needs (see Survey section B) plays out daily in writing programs as each of us (with our own plans, strengths, and talents) study and work the physically “same” yet sometimes experientially very different space.

We are committed to enacting diversity by design. Along with our other founding partners Tim Dougherty (a graduate student at Syracuse University), Michael Day (a Writing Program Director at Northern Illinois University), and Michele Eodice (IWCA immediate Past President and Director of the Writing Center and Writing Across the Curriculum at the University of Oklahoma), we are devoted to making certain that this mentoring project pays serious and ongoing attention to the ideas, voices, and needs of pre-service WPAs, in-service WPAs, and to seasoned and experienced colleagues. That means un-thinking some of the tacit assumptions of academic work in higher education. It also means working collaboratively to learn from, rather than speak for, members of our community. Some of those members include

- graduate students who are the current and future generations of scholars;
- colleagues in writing centers, writing-across-the-curriculum programs, and assessment experts (to name a few) who have shared and vested interests in student success and literacy instruction;
- colleagues who do WPA work at two-year colleges from whom we have much to learn, but to whom the terms *Writing Program Administrator* or even *Writing Program* may appear remote, pretentious, or inapplicable;
- colleagues at “mid-” and “smaller-size” institutions for whom the old Research I model of institutional practices or career paths does not respectfully (much less fully) apply;
- and seasoned (mid- or later-career) colleagues who may wish to provide and receive mentoring.

In seeking, describing, and valuing these streams of input, I hope that sharing the survey report will help serve, build, and change the community. I hope and suspect that respondents’ ideas and responses will serve as important provocations for CWPA to become even more responsive to members’ suggestions, frustrations, and evolving needs. The idea that the project, the survey, and the report would uncover some degree of member dissatisfaction and even unhappiness was no surprise.

The idea of offering CWPA a rigorous challenge and critique was a design goal, one that returns me to the term *project*. To project means, among other things according to dictionary.com, “to present (an idea, program, etc.) for consideration or action.” It also means “to throw or cause to fall upon a surface or into space, as a ray of light or a shadow.” In seeking members’ candid and critical feedback, I was neither hoping for nor expecting to hear only words of cheer and celebration. It is important to see the “shadows” of discord (e.g., the survey reveals and discusses members’ problems, concerns, differences, and perceptions of estrangement and divide) as fuel for organizational intake, reflection, assessment, development, and change. Expressions of dissatisfaction and even unhappiness with WPA work and on occasion with CWPA serve as opportunities for challenging and vital conversations. Welcoming such conversations without overstaging them, or inveighing traditional ideas or models about what they “mean” necessitated a commitment to listening and to dialogical methods of inscription. Listening carefully to our members’ ideas, suggestions, critiques, and admonitions would become a learning experience for which Sheldon and I are very grateful. Perhaps not surprisingly, presenting our members’ comments, and reflecting on them in ways we hope are fair and accurate, offered both of us stimulating ethical and rhetorical invitations and challenges. Sheldon discusses these things in the next section; Duane follows with some ideas for using the survey at your institutions. Most of all, we are eager to hear what does—and does not—speak to you about the survey and our narration of the results. What are your situated and perhaps evolving ideas, problems, issues, needs, talents, inspirations, and resources? Please share your ideas for inclusion, improvement, and reciprocity in mentoring—and in the mentoring project—with us. We welcome your input, especially in the new “Comment and Response” section of the journal.

BACKGROUND AND GOALS OF THE MENTORING SURVEY: SHELDON’S STORY

I was excited when Joe Janangelo first asked me to work with him to develop a series of mentoring panels for the 2009 Council of Writing Program Administrators Conference in Minneapolis. As an assistant professor and director of composition at a research university in the deep south, I understood that mentoring had already become an important issue to me. Like so many untenured WPAs in our organization—and countless others I have since met who engage in WPA work without acknowledgement or recognition—I have found opportunities for professional development,

networking, and collaboration few and far between. Indeed, despite the wealth of resources and leadership provided by the Council of Writing Program Administrators on a national level, the day-to-day reality for many writing program administrators is a sense of deep isolation, particularly for those of us at institutions where the work of rhetoric and composition has been historically marginalized and continues to be undervalued. In my own case, this sense of disconnectedness and alienation was exacerbated by the lack of any formal mentoring program within my department, the absence of any center for teaching and learning excellence on my campus, and no real network or local association of writing teachers. (Among other things, the results from the Mentoring Survey suggest that stories like this are far from unique; in the words of the old song, none of us is ever really, “alone in being alone.”)

So the invitation to become involved in the Mentoring Project was intriguing not only because I knew it would provide new opportunities to meet and network with WPAs from across the country, but I felt that as one of an increasingly large group of untenured WPAs hired directly out of graduate school to do administrative work (some still refer to us pejoratively as “Junior” WPAs), I might bring to the project a perspective and a set of concerns not always evident in the ways CWPA has conducted itself in the past. Indeed, I would argue (and this too is echoed in aspects of the survey data reported below) that the Council of Writing Program Administrators is in the midst of a generational shift. Jonikka Charlton and Shirley Rose have reported in their own survey work significant changes in both the demographics and preparation of WPAs over the last decade, with an increasing number of program administrators not only holding untenured and non-tenure track positions, but also receiving more extensive training in graduate school in both the theory and practice of program administration.

These trends suggest several new realities of the academic job market, and a cursory review of the job-list over the last few years shows the degree to which institutions increasingly seek to hire experienced, well-trained program administrators at the instructor or assistant professor level. The old commonplace that one should *never* consider taking on administrative work before tenure seems not only naive given today’s economic climate, but also dismissive of the long hours of training, experience, and hard-won expertise many within the profession gain as graduate students, adjunct faculty, staff, and instructors. At the same time, many senior colleagues in the field remain rightfully concerned about the political and professional dangers of engaging in administrative work without the security of tenure. These competing pressures—expanded job opportunities for untenured

and non-tenure track WPAs, along with the increased vulnerability (both to individuals and the profession as a whole) this shift ushers in—pose vitally important questions that need to be thoughtfully discussed by everyone concerned with the future of the field.

But the fact remains, a growing number of WPAs not only receive training in rhetoric and composition in graduate school, but also have engaged in various forms of administrative work (from course coordination to programmatic assessment, class scheduling and budgeting, to providing training to new tutors or teachers) long before they are explicitly hired to do such work. And even for those who never actively seek such training or experiences while in graduate school, the very success of organizations such as CCCC and CWPA has transformed how most people understand the work of composition instruction. Where lore and localized practice once predominated, a profession now stands; for those who have come of age within the framework of a field called rhetoric and composition, the world may look quite different from how it appears to those who had a hand in establishing it.

Given this shift in the ways many new WPAs are being prepared for and coming to administrative work, the issue of mentoring becomes both more salient and more complicated. Traditional visions of mentoring in which more experienced, knowledgeable, and established “senior” colleagues advise, guide, and inculcate younger protégés into the values and practices of a profession seem increasingly out of touch as the nature of WPA work and the mission and practices of many academic institutions, and the character of the profession itself appear to be changing. Indeed, one of the greatest strengths of the Mentoring Project as an initiative has been this overarching desire to be radically inclusive, diverse by design, and adaptable. As Joe has already suggested, the choice of the term *project* denotes not only something deliberate and planned, but also future oriented, ongoing, and open to revision and change. This choice in turn begs us to re-imagine mentoring not as hierarchical, unilateral, and conservative (that is, concerned primarily with preserving and reproducing the values, practices, and beliefs of the past), but as co-equal, collaborative, dynamic, and progressive.

Within this expanded view, all mentoring becomes co-mentoring in that regardless of rank, institutional affiliation, training or background, those who come together to exchange ideas leave the experience mutually enriched. WPAs who have been long in the field certainly have much to share with those who are just beginning their careers (e.g., maps for navigating treacherous political waters), but new WPAs have much to give in return, often bringing to the work new theoretical perspectives, technical knowledge and skills, and a host of different research questions. And those

who labor in the often under-recognized spaces of program administration (as well as those who work at the intersection of academia and government, non-profit and for-profit organizations, publishing houses, and a host of other sites often not regarded as “scholarly”) have even more to share. They perceive teaching, writing and administration not simply as we hope they might be, but see the ways this work actually affects students, impacts communities, and engages and reflects trends and practices on regional, national, and even international levels.

RATIONALE FOR A MENTORING SURVEY

In keeping with this vision of expansive, mutually enriching co-mentoring, my own contributions to the Mentoring Project were to develop, administer, and then analyze the results of the 2009 Mentoring Project Survey. My work on this aspect of our larger project was motivated by four inter-related concerns, the first being a desire to achieve some tangible outcome from the conference itself. That is, in keeping with our belief of mentoring is an ongoing “project,” it seemed crucial that in addition to providing opportunities for dialogue and professional exchange within the designated “mentoring panels” at the conference in Minneapolis, we needed to find some way to harness the energy, experience, and collective intelligence of participants in a creative and productive way. In other words, I wanted the Mentoring Project at the conference *to have its own project*, a mechanism for collecting and reporting the widest range of ideas and beliefs in a way that would serve as a catalyst for further action.

Closely related to this plan, we believed from the outset that for the Mentoring Project to be successful in the long term, it should not only recognize and promote excellence in mentoring and professional collaboration, but also foster additional opportunities for critical inquiry and research. That is, we want the Mentoring Project to focus on mentoring not only as a set of practices, but also as a dynamic form of research in itself. So the idea of developing a “mentoring survey” was appealing as a way not only of researching mentoring, but also of mentoring further research. My hope is that the results of this work will not only give us more insight into how mentoring is understood and practiced programmatically and organizationally, but also provide a basis for future inquiry.

Because co-mentoring has been central to our understanding of the work of the Project from the outset, it was also important that the design of the survey encourage the widest range of participants at various levels of interest and engagement in the field to voice their experiences, beliefs, and concerns. This drive for inclusivity and diversity is reflected not only in how

the survey was developed and distributed (i.e., administered both electronically and in print versions, with several laptops devoted solely to the survey at the 2009 conference, as well as multiple calls for respondents online through a range of different sites, etc.), but also in the variety and types of questions posed. For example, one section of the survey that provided some of the most interesting and nuanced responses asked participants to discuss “what they wish they had known or thought to ask before taking whatever job or position they currently hold”—a subject about which everyone (from grad students just beginning their studies, to tenured faculty recently promoted to senior administrative positions) had a lot to say!

The survey also explicitly delved into respondents’ understandings of mentoring, the types of mentoring they had experienced in the past, and their hopes for mentoring in the future. Not surprisingly, a high number of non-tenure track and untenured WPA respondents indicated a desire for more co-mentoring in the future, as well as for greater access to online material and resources. The Executive Board of CWPA has already heeded these calls, and has approved a host of new initiatives, including the establishment of a Mentoring Blog to be hosted by CWPA.

Finally, because the Mentoring Project itself is an initiative undertaken by a group of people within a professional organization (Council of Writing Program Administrators), I was mindful of the work of James Paul Gee and other scholars of organizational communication regarding *enactment* or how discourse works within organizations not only to reproduce ideology and sets of practices, but also to promote and make possible new subject-positions and relationships. In surveying mentoring (which on one level can be seen as a process by which people attempt to gain access to knowledge and power within a community they may not feel fully part of), I believe we not only gain more insight into the often unspoken values and beliefs that underpin the work of our field, but simultaneously, we make possible new ways of imagining (and therefore enacting) that work. If nothing else, my hope is that the survey and the accompanying report give us not only new ways to talk to each other about the work we already do, but also new ways of imagining our relationships to each other, and new ways to define our mission as an organization moving forward, always forward.

USING THE SURVEY: SOME THOUGHTS FROM DUANE

We hope that the mentoring survey serves as a tool for fostering mentoring of current and future writing program administrators, and that it leads to more “stories of mentoring,” such as those collected by Michelle Eble and Lynee Lewis Gaillett. In our conversations with colleagues at the annual

CWPA conference in recent years, we have heard many stories about successful mentoring, tales of colleagues helping colleagues solve political problems that have no easy solutions. Those stories need to be told in conference presentations, journal articles, and book chapters because they can help more colleagues more fully appreciate what Donna Strickland and Jeanne Gunner observe about our work: “that writing program administration, like teaching, is a political act with consequences” (xiii). These stories of mentoring can become part of the “story-changing work” that Linda Adler-Kassner champions, work that shapes the narratives of WPAs’ practices.

We also hope that the mentoring survey fosters conversations in writing programs and in the larger administrative units that house them—departments or colleges. Although CWPA can initiate dialogue among its members, the discussions also need to occur at members’ home institutions if they are to have a larger impact. At the local level, colleagues can pose questions such as the following:

- Why do we need mentoring at our institution?
- What should be the goals of mentoring at our institution?
- What are the opportunities for mentoring at our institution?
- How can we encourage colleagues to participate in mentoring?
- Who can effectively mentor whom at our institution?
- How can mentoring be structured at our institution to enhance the likelihood of tenure and promotion?

These and other questions can help to extend mentoring to sites where it can have the greatest effect.

The Mentoring Survey also reminds us that CWPA needs to partner with other organizations that share common interests with CWPA. These include the Two-Year College English Association (TYCA) and the International Writing Centers Association (IWCA), as well as their regional affiliates. Because our work is so entwined with the work of these organizations, with some CWPA members belonging to one or both of the other groups, such collaboration and cooperation can inform and strengthen mentoring initiatives.

Finally, we hope that CWPA members and others will send us suggestions for enhancing the WPA Mentoring Project. For example, what sessions can we add to the annual conference to focus greater attention on mentoring in the organization? What mentoring resources can be made available on the CWPA web site? How can CWPA more effectively form mentoring coalitions with other professional organizations?

SUMMARY OF RESULTS FROM THE CWPA MENTORING SURVEY¹

Sheldon Walcher, Joseph Janangelo, and Duane Roen

INTRODUCTION

This summary reports results of the CWPA Mentoring Project Survey, the research component of a larger initiative begun by Joseph Janangelo, Duane Roen and Sheldon Walcher in March 2009 and aimed at fostering opportunities for professional development and mentoring at the Council of Writing Program Administrators Conference held in Minneapolis, Minnesota in July of 2009. These efforts consisted of planning seven additional mentoring panels at the conference, and developing an online survey to assess attitudes toward mentoring and general professional concerns of members of CWPA.

As many questions within the Mentoring Survey asked participants to evaluate their experiences with various facets of CWPA, much of the Discussion section of this report has been organized to highlight specific information that may be of interest to different constituencies within the organization. Specifically, we focus on five topic areas that seemed to emerge as most pressing at the time: mentoring, technology, CWPA events, institutional diversity, and differences in priorities/needs of various constituencies. We then conclude by reporting some of the recommendations made by survey respondents on various issues, as well as steps that have been undertaken by the Executive Board of CWPA since the first submission of this report to address many of these concerns (see Initiatives Undertaken).

While the bulk of this report focuses on problems and concerns that respondents identified, it is important to note at the outset that the overwhelming majority of feedback received was positive, constructive, generous, often warm and quite funny, and extremely thoughtful—precisely those qualities participants repeatedly mentioned and were eager to celebrate about their colleagues and the organization as a whole. In fact, we are focusing on critical comments (some of which appeared several times in the same survey responses) so that those critiques can serve as catalysts for conversation and change, which is the larger point of the WPA Mentoring Project.

Indeed, out of 109 people who answered the question, “How satisfied are you overall with the tools, resources, and opportunities that the Council of Writing Program Administrators provides its members for professional development and collaboration?” not a single respondent answered that they were unsatisfied or dissatisfied with the work of the Council. Indeed, over 70% of respondents claimed that there was either no room or only

minor room for improvement in the work of the organization, which is an incredible testament to the fine work of the Council and the quality of its leadership over the years.

In fact, the final open-ended question of the survey asked respondents if they had anything else they wished to add, and a number wrote with great pride and admiration of the work of the Council:

“This is a great organization, and I look forward to everything it does in the future.”

“CWPA is a godsend!”

“I feel very lucky to be in the position I hold, and the WPA is becoming increasingly essential to that work. Thank you for all of your efforts on behalf of our field and colleagues.”

“WPA does a great job—better than most professional organizations to which I have belonged.”

“This is a great, thoughtful survey - or at least it gave me a chance to be thoughtful about this great organization. I do feel I have a great many mentoring relationships in WPA!”

THREE KEY FINDINGS

Still, the survey asked people to reflect critically on their experiences, and to offer specific suggestions on how the organization could improve the professional development and mentoring support it provides members—and respondents certainly were not shy about doing exactly this. Indeed, beyond the specific topics that will be detailed in the Discussion Section, three broad patterns seemed to emerge.

First, the data clearly suggest that CWPA is made up of an increasingly diverse membership, and that the various constituencies within the organization have different needs, attitudes, priorities and beliefs. Not only did responses significantly differ on some key issues, these differences often seemed to break along lines of rank and institutional affiliation. Thus, while there are many areas of agreement across positions, ranks and institutional contexts, the interests and goals of many WPAs also appear to diverge significantly at times.

In many ways the differences in attitude and belief among various groups follow what one might expect; in other cases, the results were surprising and require further investigation. For example, one group that responded in ways often difficult to predict were those who identified themselves as Associates, and seemed to profess needs and beliefs quite different

from both their more senior and more junior colleagues on some key issues. Another group whose needs and concerns seemed somewhat at odds with what one might expect on several issues were Non Tenure Track WPAs (which for the purposes of the survey included staff, part-time and full-time instructors, and graduate students).

Second, the data seem to indicate that there is a strong perception among several constituencies that CWPA is made up of “insiders” and “outsiders,” and that the interests and concerns of larger research institutions often dominate the conversations and practices of the organization. Even initiatives such as the Mentoring Project itself—which aimed at creating more opportunities for inclusive, egalitarian exchanges across all levels—was described by several respondents as paternalistic and unidirectional. Whether this impression is accurate and reflects some of the attitudes and practices of the organization in the past, or merely indicates a level of anxiety and confusion among certain members, the sheer existence of such a perception is troubling. Indeed, such complaints—though certainly not predominant—were fairly widespread, coming from respondents of all ranks and in all sorts of institutional contexts.

While initiatives such as WPA Directions and “WPA Listens” forum at the 2009 Conference represent clear attempts to include a wider array of voices and perspectives within CWPA, many respondents feel more could be done to create structured and recurring opportunities for exchange and collaboration. (Many of these comments are included in the Recommendations section below.)

Third, it is clear both from the level of interest generated by the survey (and the Mentoring Project more generally), as well as the number of respondents who actively called for more such opportunities in their open-ended responses, that CWPA should investigate ways to provide/promote more formal mentoring within the organization. The fact that over half of respondents at all ranks (51.8%) indicated that they would “Very Likely” or “Definitely” participate in a mentoring program if it were offered by the organization, and a significant number said they would certainly consider it (32.1%), indicates that such an initiative would be welcomed by many members.

Further, a majority of the most marginalized members of the organization—namely, untenured and non-tenure track WPAs—indicated they had no access to mentoring opportunities within their current institutions (58.3%), and more than 22% said they were not even involved in informal mentoring relationships.

Add to this the high number of respondents who indicated that their current program either has no mentoring system, or that the one in place needs

improvement and it becomes clear that additional forums where mentoring best-practices could be discussed would be enormously beneficial.

FIVE AREAS OF CONCERN

This section details five topics/areas of concern that emerged from all the data collected, as well as some specific suggestions on how these issues might be addressed in the future. Before proceeding, we include a breakdown of the overall demographics of survey respondents.

Overview of Demographics

The Mentoring Survey was administered both online and in print formats beginning on July 8, 2009, and in the eight weeks that the survey was open for data collection, 124 people participated in the study. Of this number, 108 participants finished all sections of the instrument—a completion rate of just under 88%.

The largest percentage of respondents identified their current professional status as Assistant Professors (30.3%), followed by Associate Professors (23.8%) and Full Professors (11.5%). Graduate Students and Full-time NTT Instructors each accounted for the same number of respondents (7.4%); followed by Staff (4.1 %). Nearly 15% of respondents identified themselves as “Other,” the highest number of which described themselves as full-time non-tenure-tract (NTT) administrators (graduate students, staff, and instructors currently serving fulltime as WPAs.)

A majority of respondents identified themselves as currently writing program administrators (69.7%), and their current institutional/organizational affiliation as University (81.1%); followed by Liberal Arts College (14.8%); and Two-Year College (3.2%). In terms of the overall size of their institutions, the largest number of respondents described their organizations as consisting of more than 30,000 members (25.4%); followed by 20,001-30,000 (24.6%). Then, almost an equal number of respondents described their institutions as falling into each of the remaining size categories: 15,001-20,000 (12.3%); 10,001-15,000 (13.9%); 5,001-10,000 (11.5%); and less than 5000 (12.3%).

The Desire for Mentoring

As suggested in the introduction, some clear differences emerged in the attitudes, beliefs and experiences of various ranks and stakeholders taking the survey. Nowhere did these differences seem more pronounced than in responses to mentoring, beginning with the most direct question posed in

the survey on this topic, “If the Council of Writing Program Administrators were to offer some kind of mentoring program, how likely would you be to participate in it?”

As Figure 1 indicates, willingness to participate in CWPA sponsored mentoring seemed to significantly decrease the higher one’s professional rank.

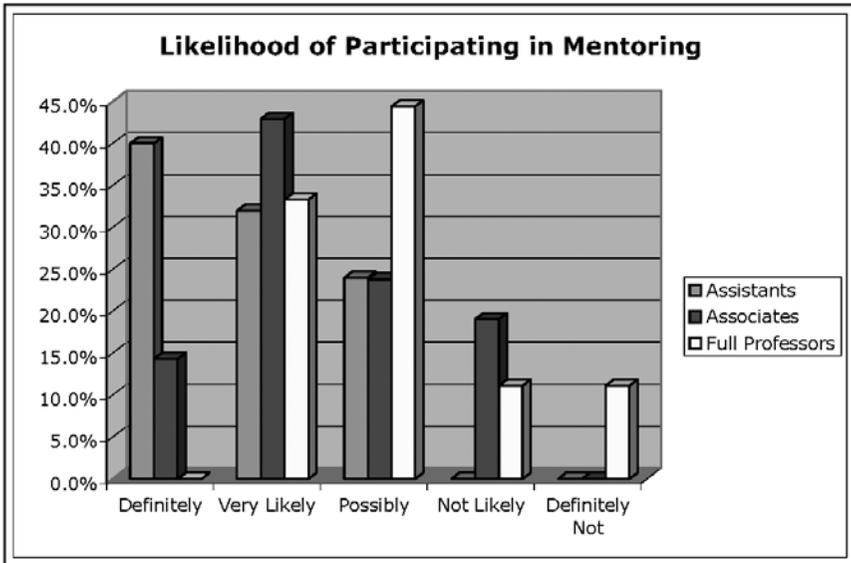


Figure 1

Among Assistant Professors, 40% indicated that they would “Definitely” participate in such a program if it were offered, while just 14.3% of Associate Professors seemed to agree. No Full Professors (0.0%) indicated that they would “Definitely” participate in such a program.

At the other extreme, not a single Assistant Professor (0.0%) indicated that they would be “Not Likely” or “Definitely Not” participate in a mentoring program, whereas 19.0% of Associate Professors and 11.0% of Full Professors described themselves as “Not Likely” to participate. Additionally, 11.1% of Full Professors indicated that they would “Definitely Not” participate in such a program.

Whether such responses reflect differences in access to mentoring in other forms for the various ranks, or suggest disparate attitudes about the nature and purposes of mentoring is unclear. When asked whether their “current organization/institution [has] a formal mentoring program for members,” and if so, whether they participate in such a program, each of the ranks again responded quite differently. 50.0% of Assistant Professors

indicated that their institutions provided no form of mentoring for faculty, whereas 34.5% of Associates and 35.7% of Full Professors responded similarly. Of those who reported having access to some form of mentoring within their current institutions, 88.9% of Full Professors participated in it, as did 80% of Assistants. Interestingly, 70.6% of Associates reported participating in mentoring at their institutions when they had access to it, and 6.9% of these same Associates indicated not knowing whether their institution had any kind of mentoring available.

Access to institutional mentoring was very poor for survey respondents who identified themselves as NTT (graduate students, staff, and instructors) and currently serving in WPA positions, 84.6% of whom reported having no form of mentoring available within their current institution. Respondents who said they did not have access to formal mentoring within their institutions were asked in a separate question to identify all other types of mentoring relationships they were currently experiencing. Again, 61.5% of respondents who identified themselves as NTT and currently serving as WPAs indicated “not being in a mentoring relationship of any kind.” Similarly, 23.8% of Associates also reported not being in any kind of mentoring relationship.

The question defined informal mentoring as a “relationship that was created spontaneously and maintained informally” among the mentoring partners. And as Figure 2 indicates, these types of mentoring experiences were among the more common across all ranks—particularly among Assistants (52.0%). In contrast, E-mentoring (“a relationship that occurs primarily or exclusively online”) was an experience that not a single NTT WPA nor Full Professor reported being engaged in, while 16.0% of Assistants and 19.0% Associates reported some experience with E-mentoring.

Finally, Group Mentoring (a “relationship in which more than a pair of individuals come together, with one or more in the group providing support or direction to the others”) was reported as far more common among Full Professors (22.2%) and Associates (19.0%) than Assistants (12.0%) and NTT WPAs (7.7%).

Another question asked respondents about different types or styles of mentoring relationships they had experienced in the past, and the overwhelming majority of respondents at all ranks cited Hierarchical Mentoring as the most common (52.2%).

The question defined Hierarchical Mentoring as “mentoring primarily between two people at different stages of their careers” in which “the primary role of the mentor is to provide advice and guidance to the mentee, who in turn primarily consults the mentor when questions or problems arise.” In contrast, Peer Based mentoring was defined as primarily taking

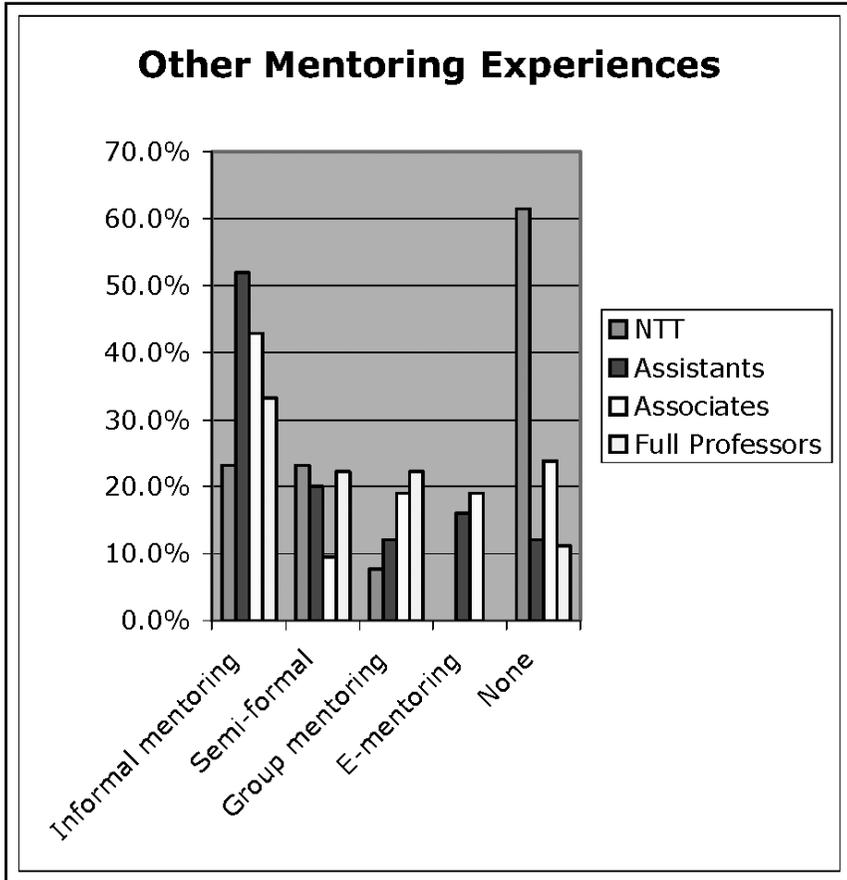


Figure 2

place, “between people at similar stages of their careers” with the primary role of both parties being, “to share information and to assist each other when problems or opportunities arise.”

No Full Professor or Associate Professor described having experienced Peer Based mentoring. In contrast, 25.0% of NTT WPAs and 24.0% of Assistants said they experienced Peer Based mentoring.

Co-mentoring (defined as a relationship between, “people at different stages of their careers, or between people in different fields/professions” with “the primary role of both parties to share information and to assist each other when problems or opportunities arise,”) was least common among Assistants (12.0%), while all other groups reported being significantly more familiar with this style: Associates (38.1%), Full Professors (33.3%), and NTT WPAs (33.3%).

Finally, the survey asked respondents who identified themselves as currently serving as WPAs whether they had any kind of mentoring system implemented within their own programs, and if so, how effective they believed those systems to be.

Again, each rank of WPA seemed to have very different experiences with—and views on—mentoring within their own programs (Figure 3). 44.4% of Full Professors indicated that their programs already had a mentoring system in place, and that this system seemed to work well. Only 4.0% of Assistants said the same thing about their own programs. 23.1% of NTT and 23.8% of Associates (23.8) shared this assessment.

Assistants (36.0%), Associates (47.6%), and Full Professors (33.3%) agreed that while they had mentoring systems in place, they needed some improvement. In contrast, only 7.7% of NTT WPAs said that their mentoring programs needed improvement. This may be due to the fact that 53.8% of NTT WPAs indicated that their program had no mentoring system at all, but said that they thought having one would improve things.

Among Assistants, 44% indicated that their program had no mentoring system, but said that having one would be good. Among Associates 14.3% and 11.1% of Full Professors seemed to agree, but this may be explained by the fact that both groups indicated already having some kind of mentoring system in place. No NTT WPA or Assistant indicated that their program “Has no mentoring system and does not need one,” whereas 4.8% of Associates and 11.1% of Full Professors said that their programs neither had nor needed such a system.

The only thing that all respondents who had mentoring systems in their programs unanimously agreed on was that such systems should continue: not a single respondent said, “Yes, my program currently has a mentoring system, but it should be eliminated.”

Conclusions

Clearly there are differences in how WPAs at various ranks perceive, define, and pursue mentoring. It is also understandably hard for people to commit to a potential or an incipient program without more information. Yet the fact that so many untenured and NTT members have little access to mentoring and expressed a need for it, while many tenured respondents seemed less eager to become involved in such relationships, suggests that CWPA can play a role in providing flexible and adaptable initiatives, support, and recognition for such relationships in the future.

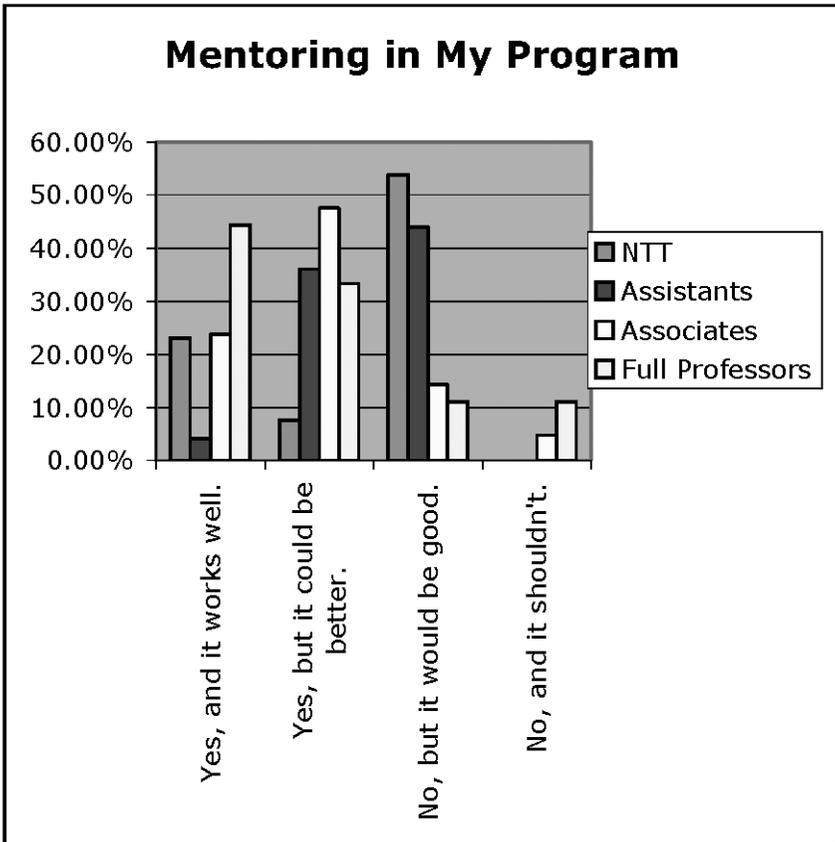


Figure 3

Technology

Because e-mentoring is one model we wanted to explore for this project, an entire section of the survey asked participants to rank their familiarity with and use of a number of technologies, including web-based communication and social networking tools. The survey also asked respondents to rank the use of these technologies personally and professionally, and also on programmatic, departmental and institutional levels.

Personal use: the most common form of technology identified by respondents was having or using Facebook/MySpace (70.1%); followed by YouTube (67.7%), then personal web sites (61.9%). The least common form of technology used personally was Twitter (24.2%); followed by Podcasts (28.4%), and Wikis (39.6%).

Professional use: the most common form of technology identified by respondents was having or using websites (76.3%); followed by wikis

(57.3%), then YouTube (51.7%). The least common form of technology used professionally was Twitter (13.5%); followed by Podcasts (31.5%), and Facebook/MySpace (42.7%).

Two noteworthy trends:

- Websites were the only technology reported widely used on programmatic (89.1%), departmental (94.0%), and institution-wide (97.8%) levels; websites were the only technology whose use consistently increased as respondents were asked to consider larger institutional structures and clearly dominate other forms of web-based communication at these levels.
- While blogs are used with some frequency on personal (43.8%) and professional (48.4%) levels, and are used on an institution-wide level with some frequency (37.9%), they are one of the least popular forms of communication on programmatic (27.8%) and departmental (14.6%) levels. Another survey section asked respondents to rank their familiarity with and usefulness of various tools that CWPA members have access to. A similar trend was apparent. The WPA Listserv

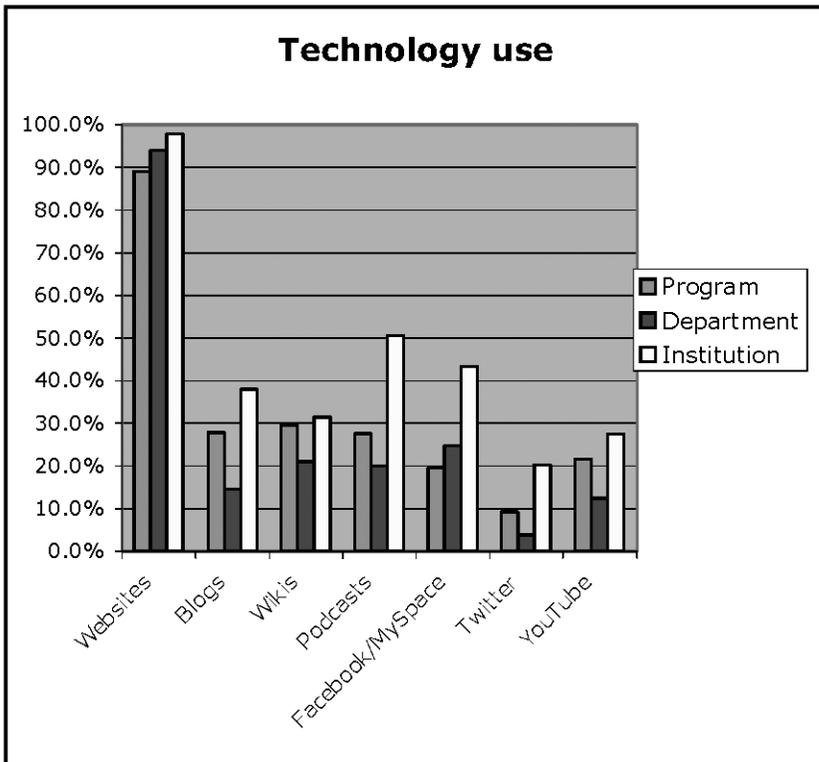


Figure 4

(94.6%) and Website (93.6%) remain the most commonly used and appreciated forms of communication, while the WPA Member Blog remained the least used and valued (17.8%).

Conclusions

It would seem that the use of blogs is not prevalent among most of our survey respondents. Even though they are perhaps one of the most writing-intensive forms of web-based communication, blogs are also extremely labor-intensive to produce, and seem to work best when institutional resources and support are devoted to their creation and upkeep. As noted previously, there also seem to be differences in the ways that various ranks of WPAs use technology with respect to forming and maintaining mentoring relationships; a number of Assistant and Associate respondents reported being involved in e-mentoring, whereas not a single NNT or Full Professor responded similarly. Thus, for e-mentoring to be a viable model for CWPA to pursue in the future, care must be paid both in how participants are recruited and supported, but also how such a system is explained to those not currently familiar with such tools. Indeed, beyond its uses in mentoring, many respondents specifically cited technology issues as something they would like to see addressed in various ways and forums in the future.

CWPA EVENTS AT THE MLA AND CCCC CONFERENCES

Because we were interested in learning more about how CWPA members view and utilize current forums for social networking and professional exchange, we asked respondents to evaluate several longstanding initiatives supported by the organization. While respondents were universally positive about the value and usefulness of the CWPA Conference, Summer Workshop, and Institutes, other events were seen as needing improvement.

Among respondents, 73.8% indicated that they had never attended the CWPA Reception at Modern Language Association's (MLA) convention, and of those who had attended 40.7% described the event as "Not Useful," while a majority found the event only "Fairly Useful" (55.6%).

While 57% indicated that they had attended the WPA Breakfast at the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) convention, 36.8% also described this event as "Not Useful," and 47.4% found it only "Fairly Useful."

Some respondents who indicated that there was room for improvement elaborated on their concerns. Representative comments include:

“WPA Breakfast—I attend every year and feel like it doesn’t quite serve the purpose that it could. Have we ever thought about having a WPA Happy Hour? Why is it so early in the morning? And it conflicts with the Newcomers’ Breakfast—an event that many of us should be attending.”

“I do love the CWPA. However, I jokingly refer to the WPA breakfast as boys and bacon. I stopped going a few years ago because I was getting up really early in the morning to listen to lovely people congratulate one another - kind of exclusive in feel. I don’t think that is true of the workshops or the conference.”

“While the CWPA is made of very friendly, kind people, it can act as a closed community at times. Specifically, I have attended the breakfast and receptions at CCCC and while I introduced myself around, and made attempts to talk with people, I was mostly ignored and made to feel unwelcome. It will be difficult for me to make myself attend these events in the future.”

Of particular note in these responses (and echoed within comments or a variety of other topics within the survey) is the perception that CWPA is made up of “insiders” and “outsiders,” and that while the organization is open and welcoming to newcomers in many venues, at other times it can seem closed and paternalistic. As one respondent explained:

“My experience with the organization has been that the fora in which many of my colleagues have participated have been very, very helpful. My interactions with the leadership of the WPA has been much less warm, inviting, and engaging. It may be my own peculiar perception, but I have always felt as though there was an inside and an outside, and that the leadership was inside. There are exceptions, of course, but the lack of public opportunities for interaction with the leadership as a body has been problematic for me.”

Another respondent specifically cited the CWPA Breakfast as one such event that seemed less inviting and rewarding to newcomers:

“Graduate students shouldn’t bother attending the WPA breakfast at Cs, unless they go with a well-networked faculty member who will make sure to introduce them to people. The breakfast is, rightly, a time for people who have known each

other for years to socialize; those not already connected, in my experience and that of some grad student colleagues who attended with me, are ignored. I think there are other, better venues for grad students to meet long-time WPA members.”

Conclusions

While a majority of survey respondents expressed a high degree of satisfaction overall with events and activities sponsored by CWPA, because the MLA Reception and WPA Breakfast are specifically designed to provide more opportunities for social and professional exchange for all our members, the perception among some that these events could be more inclusive deserves further thought. Indeed, the Executive Board has undertaken two recent initiatives to address many of the perceptions expressed by survey respondents (see Initiatives Undertaken below). Other suggestions include planning alternate receptions at venues such as the annual meetings of the International Writing Center Association (IWCA) and Two-Year College Association (TYCA), and investigating ways to restructure current events.

CWPA, WPA WORK AND INSTITUTIONAL DIVERSITY

In addition to the perception among some respondents that the organization can at times feel comprised of insiders and outsiders, others felt that CWPA seems overly focused on the concerns of large research programs to the detriment of smaller institutions. Such comments were fairly common in answers to two open-ended questions:

- 1) If you indicated there is room for some improvement with respect to the tools, resources, and opportunities the Council of Writing Program Administrators provides its members for professional development and collaboration, what are some of the things you'd like to see changed?
- 2) If the Council of Writing Program Administrators were to provide additional forums to discuss professional issues in the future, what topics would you like to see covered?

Representative responses include:

“I do sometimes struggle as a WPA at a small liberal arts college to find my peers among all the enormous state-U WPs that (understandably) tend to dominate discussion, development, and even pedagogy. There are a lot of things that we can

share, but sometimes the more industrial solutions deployed by an ASU just don't translate (at all) to my situation—and I have trouble finding alternate models.”

“WPA roles have many configurations; sometimes it appears that the conversation focuses primarily on those who direct curriculum in large research universities. But many of us work in quite different environments, and I'd like to see this acknowledged.”

“More emphasis on WPA work at other than R1 institutions.”

“I'd like to see more outreach to a variety of types of colleges, including small and community colleges.”

“A lot of the focus seems to be on the larger institutions, and as a member of a small institution, I would like to see some additional focus there.”

“I think it would be useful for WPA to consider the different institutional contexts that people work in and figure out how to address the idea that what happens at a large research institution applies to all schools.”

“Encourage wider range of approaches/points of view.”

“WPA seems dominated by large public institutions, and that experience is not relevant for me.”

Further, some respondents mentioned these issues in responses to a third open-ended survey question:

- 3) Aside from professional development and mentoring issues, are there any other topics or areas that you would like to see the Council of Writing Program Administrators address in the future?

“Administration at small colleges.”

“I'd like to see more outreach to a variety of types of colleges, including small and community colleges.”

“More emphasis on WPA work at other than R1 institutions.”

“A lot of the focus seems to be on the larger institutions, and as a member of a small institution, I would like to see some additional focus there.”

Conclusions

The number and variety of responses echoing these concerns across several different questions suggest that many members feel this is a significant issue, particularly when considering that 23% of respondents said their institutions had fewer than 10,000 students, and 18% identified their institutions as Liberal Arts or Two-Year Colleges.

At least two avenues have been suggested for addressing this concern. First, the Nominating Committee could take deliberate steps to create a slate of nominees that guarantee at least one ballot choice between faculty at “smaller” institutions, just as it does with our official Two-Year College faculty slot. Ideally, there would be other slots open to Liberal Arts or Two-Year College faculty. However, one possible concern with this approach is that when only one person is designated to “represent” a constituency that often compels them to act as a lone, exemplary voice.

A larger strategy would be to revisit all of our activities and artifacts (e.g. the conference, journal, the CWPA Mentoring Project) to make sure that dialogical forums are in place to serve our multiple constituencies. For example, CWPA might sponsor a pre-conference institute and online conversations on “WPA Work in College Contexts” just as we did with the CWPA 2009 MLA Session “WPA Work in Community College Contexts.” As CWPA continues to “reach out” to other organizations such as IWCA and TYCA, and full-time non-tenure-track faculty, we should continue to work on drawing institute leaders and plenary speakers from smaller and two-year institutions.

PERCEIVED DIVIDE BETWEEN UNTENURED AND TENURED WPAs

Many respondents perceived a division in the attitudes, beliefs and goals of untenured and tenured members of the organization. Here are some representative concerns that were voiced:

“I do feel I have a great many mentoring relationships in WPA, but I do feel like the voices of quite experienced jWPAs get left out at the Executive levels and the more explicit shaping of the organization.”

“Why do we - the academy - so mistrust change? So mistrust junior faculty?”

“Despite gestures to the contrary, the organization often seems less interested in nurturing junior faculty and untenured WPAs than it could/should be. Further, the latest generation of WPAs have been trained for their positions—and have cer-

tain expectations and beliefs about the field—that our predecessors simply could not have had because most of this field didn't exist then. So we all need to be more attentive to shifting values and beliefs about the nature of our work.”

“I do think there needs to be a real change in the ‘support’ for jWPAs. The mentoring program at the conference is a good step, but it’s too unidirectional. How come it’s such a hierarchical model of collaboration? I know that when I mentor students I learn so much from them. Isn’t that true for sWPAs? I feel I hear this as an underlying thread in the conference but it’s not coming from the most established voices. I would like to see CWPA try not to speak FOR jWPAs but WITH.”

“I think it’s time to shake up the leadership in the workshop - things are changing and instead of arguing that junior WPAs and graduate WPAs shouldn’t be in those positions, shouldn’t we talk about how those can be engaging positions? The CWPA feels a bit paternalistic to me. Well-intentioned, but paternalistic nonetheless.”

“Additional opportunities for professional development at the junior level would be beneficial. The organization seems very hierarchical in its structure and culture.”

Survey results appear to confirm that there are differences in outlook and priorities of our members at various ranks. In particular, one question explicitly asked respondents to discuss what they believed should be the main purpose of a professional organization such as CWPA. Given the multi-purposed nature of CWPA’s identity and work, it makes sense that there were significant differences reflected in the ways that various ranks prioritized the various possibilities:

Assistant Professors identified “Establishing guidelines and standards for practice,” as their top priority for CWPA (36.0%). Associate Professors ranked, “Advocating on behalf of the profession,” as their number one priority (42.9%). Full Professors cited, “Creating forums for networking and the sharing of information,” as their chief organizational concern (44.4%).

Similarly, there were differences in how the various ranks responded to a question asking respondents how satisfied they were “overall with the tools, resources, and opportunities CWPA provides its members for professional development and collaboration.”

Among Full Professors, 44% indicated that they were, “Extremely Satisfied – no room for improvement,” as compared to 23.8% of Associate

Professors who felt the same way; whereas only 4.0% of Assistant Professors shared that view. In other words, 96% of Assistant Professors felt some improvements could be made; of those, 20% believed somewhat substantial changes were required.

Conclusions

Since exactly half of respondents (50.0%) identified themselves as untenured or non-tenure track (assistant professors, full-time instructors, staff, and graduate students), the perception that significant differences between senior and junior levels of the field exist is not too surprising. The survey itself—which presupposed that mentoring is an important topic, and attracted respondents who are interested in receiving additional support within CWPA—this call for change in the culture and practices of the organization is both expected and desired. Both the Mentoring Project and the Survey are designed to be tools for organizational learning and change.

At the same time, it is clear that there are differences in the ways that untenured and tenured WPAs understand and perceive mentoring, the organization, and the work of the field. While providing additional opportunities for professional exchange and networking may address some of these concerns, CWPA should create additional forums for examining and discussing these differences.

ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS FROM RESPONDENTS

This report has touched on several different issues in such a short space that it is difficult to propose just one set of actions or initiatives that might address everything covered. Since we received many thoughtful suggestions, requests, and recommendations from survey respondents on a wide range of topics, and it seems only fitting that we end by reporting directly some of what they had to say.

First, many people made excellent suggestions about mentoring:

“I do think more can be done in terms of supporting peer and hierarchal mentoring within the organization, such as providing more structured support for the relationships that develop at the WPA workshops. I realize that this is difficult because we are all so busy. However, simple things like setting aside “reunion” times at the WPA or CCCC’s conferences might be a start.”

“WPA Workshop—as a former workshop leader, I think that the workshop has a lot of value. I wish I had attended as a new WPA. But I think that we could provide better networking opportunities for those new to the WPA role (participating in the workshop) and other WPAs who have been in the organization, and in the profession, for awhile.”

“I do think there’s room for more mentorship. The colleagues that I met through the WPA Summer Workshop have stayed in touch and been an incredible resource, but it would have been nice to have a pool of people with more experience that I could have felt comfortable getting into contact with.”

“I wish there was an opportunity for WPA career-path mentoring that was confidential.”

“I think we are missing out on more opportunities for online mentoring, as well as a more formal online version of the WPA conference.”

“Formal mentoring relationships would be good. Not enough help for senior faculty who can still benefit from mentoring by other senior faculty.”

“A more structured mentoring program available—perhaps even for specific areas: mentoring in assessment, working with administration, professional development, etc.”

“There has been no particular effort yet to provide sustained, programmatic mentoring: using the organization/institution of WPA to match volunteer mentors with less-experienced faculty for extended mentoring with some common organizational goals to be achieved over time (say, a two-year stint, initially), or to formally link/support groups who co-mentor across time about specific issues in WPA.”

“Since relatively few WPAs find themselves employed in institutions that also employ senior/former WPAs, a huge number of WPAs can find job-related mentoring only through national contacts. The WPA organization could serve WPAs and the profession well by designing and supporting some kind of organizational/institutional mentoring program.”

“While there are many sources of information for its members, it would be wonderful if there were more hands-on/forum type opportunities online for WPA members.”

The Mentoring Project committee and the Executive Board have undertaken a series of initiatives we believe help to address many of the concerns and requests expressed above; in the meantime many respondents also had a number interesting suggestions concerning outreach, particularly with respect to institutions other than large research-oriented schools. I also would like to see a way for the WPA to reach out to those WPAs or de facto WPAs who are going it alone without the resources to come to the summer workshop or conference or even the knowledge about WPA. For example, I’m thinking about those playing the role of WPAs in community colleges. To do this, I suggest we look at working with TYCA, which has developed an increasingly vibrant set of regional organizations, each of which holds its own conference.”

“Perhaps offering regional meetings, lists, or discussion opportunities would be helpful. Networking with other WPAs in my area has been more difficult than I would have anticipated.”

“At 4Cs I talked to someone (Eli Goldblatt?) who said that there were plans afoot to establish local/regional branches of the WPA. I would *love* to get involved with other WPAs in my geographical area to network, co-mentor, help with professional development at each other’s institutions, etc.”

“Regional conferences would make access to f2f networking opportunities and mentoring more accessible for WPAs with few or no travel funds.”

“Conferences, summer institutes and workshops, and breakfasts are very expensive for colleagues who do not receive support from their institutions and who are on a budget. Is grant funding available to lower the costs of attendance?”

Clearly many respondents hope to see CWPA promote its affiliates program, as well as do more to support local and regional conferences and meetings, particularly with travel budgets so limited. Additionally, several respondents asked if additional funding opportunities might be available through CWPA to assist members from under-represented institutions and

constituencies to attend the summer conference, workshop and institutes. One or two respondents also suggested that CWPA could do more to provide online access to many of the events and sessions at the summer conference, through streaming video, Skype, live-blogging, or other technologies.

Several respondents wanted to see more opportunities for professional development and collaboration, and some representative comments include:

“I wish there were more opportunities for targeted professional development. I am struggling with moving my work toward publication, and I wish there was a way to access support from WPA.”

“How about running a summer institute for *teams* from institutions, say the WPA, a departmental faculty member, and an administrator? Like a briefer version of the Knight Institute at Cornell?”

“I’d like to see alternative multi-day workshops focused on a single issue: assessment programs; portfolio programs; faculty development programs; etc.”

“I would like to see more concrete help for JWPAs to clarify their job descriptions and self advocate on their campuses.”

“I’d like to see the conference foster more collaborative work sessions, which could be designed to actually develop and forward the agenda of the organization, with less time spent on concurrent sessions, as those are more appropriate to a different type of conference. With the level of folks at this conference, the time would be better spent in conversation rather than presentation.”

“Better opportunities for networking and collaboration on research—what about a research network forum of some sort?”

“Research and quality research; collaboration with the other wpa-related orgs more—writing center and wac/wid—too much overlap in positions but distinct conferences are troubling.”

INITIATIVES UNDERTAKEN SO FAR

In response to the many helpful comments and suggestions made by respondents to the CWPA Mentoring Project Survey—as well as the count-

less other recommendations and requests received throughout the process of planning and conducting the WPA Mentoring Portal Sessions at the CWPA 2009 conference—several initiatives have been approved by the Executive Board in the last few months.

1. To achieve more inclusive and diverse perspectives on professional development and mentoring, the WPA Mentoring Project Committee has been expanded to include Michael Day (Director of the First-Year Composition Program at Northern Illinois University), Timothy Dougherty (a graduate student at Syracuse University), and Michele Eodice (Director, Writing Center & Writing Across the Curriculum at the University of Oklahoma and immediate past President of the International Writing Centers Association). In continuing its work, the Committee will seek more volunteers, suggestions, and ideas.

2. The CWPA Mentoring Project collaborates regularly with WPA-GO (WPA-Graduate Student Organization). This organization seeks to strengthen connections between graduate students and professional WPAs through social networking and educational development opportunities. In support of graduate student WPA preparation, WPA-GO works with faculty WPAs to provide the following: mentoring activities, workshops, scholarships and awards, and social events. WPA-GO is administered by the WPA-Graduate Student Committee (WPA-GC), a committee within the Council of Writing Program Administrators.

Current officers of the WPA-Graduate Student Committee (WPA-GC) are co-chairs: Cristyn Elder (Purdue University) and Megan Schoen (Purdue University).

Local conference chair: Ryan Witt, Temple University (2010 conference)

Committee members: Meaghan Brewer (Temple University), Timothy Dougherty (Syracuse University), Steven Lessner (Michigan State University), and Ryan Skinnell (Arizona State University).

WPA-GO membership does not require fees in addition to CWPA membership dues. All members of CWPA are welcomed to join WPA-GO and are encouraged to participate. To officially join WPA-GO and receive WPA-GO updates, please send an e-mail to wpago1@gmail.com with “Join” in the subject line. You can also follow on Facebook by sending a friend request to WPA-GO.

Timothy Dougherty is a member of The CWPA Mentoring Project; Joe Janangelo and Duane Roen serve as advisors for WPA-GO.

3. Based on the success of the Mentoring Portal events at the 2009 Conference, it was agreed that future conferences and events will include some opportunity, session, or other recognition of mentoring as a commitment to the future of the field. The 2010 Conference in Philadelphia featured two days of mentoring events suggested and led by CWPA members. WPA-GO members led four conference sessions and participated in many others.

4. To provide additional opportunities to learn from colleagues working in a range of institutional and professional contexts, a rolling Mentoring Blog will encourage members to ask and respond to questions pertinent to their professional development and work. The blog will offer posts by volunteer and invited bloggers (representing a wide range of perspectives, experience, and ranks), responding to questions posed by members. In addition to serving as a clearinghouse for professional development, we are investigating ways such a site might be used to facilitate the formation of mentoring relationships (a space where those seeking mentoring on a variety of levels might be matched up with others). The Committee will be working on this during fall 2010. Stay tuned for news.

5. In response to the results of the WPA Mentoring Survey, CWPA President Linda Adler-Kassner asked the Breakfast Committee to devise ways of making the CCCC CWPA Breakfast more collegial and interactive. To that end, the 2010 CWPA Breakfast featured themed “Table Talk” tables that were aimed at supporting conversations and building community. Board members and WPA colleagues served as “ambassadors” and WPA will make a more focused effort to make sure that newcomers receive a warm and attentive welcome.

6. The Mentoring Committee and volunteers will also compile annotated mentoring resources by developing an online space where members can post links to works about mentoring (in any medium or genre), with 500-word descriptions of its relevance. We hope this will help members seeking information about how mentoring is implemented across institutional contexts and various levels (undergraduate mentoring, graduate, faculty, etc.).

7. We hope to honor excellence in mentoring by developing a digital “Mentoring Mosaic” where members can post stories about successful mentoring. Highlighting such moments will give us all a better sense of best-practices, traditions, and innovations in mentoring. It will also give

members a public opportunity to honor those who have helped them, and may prompt reflection and contributions as people comment on and respond to such stories.

CONCLUSION

In closing, we would like to thank everyone who participated in the survey. There is much more work to be done, both in terms of assessing the specific needs and concerns of the various constituencies that make up CWPA, as well as in developing new programs and initiatives to address these needs. There is also much more to report, and we look forward to sharing much more of what we have learned from surveying our members in the near future. But it is clear that the strength of our organization lies in the diversity, ingenuity, and generosity of our members. The time and care that respondents took to reflect on their experiences and offer concrete suggestions to complex problems shows just how resourceful our colleagues are when given the opportunity. Indeed, as one respondent so succinctly put it: "I'm sure there's room for improvement, but every time I turn around some brilliant person has thought of a new, improved tool, resource, or opportunity. I love this organization!" In many respects this is the essence of effective mentoring: providing occasions for people to meet and to share their ideas to improve the tools, resources, and the opportunities available in an organization they admire and love. We hope the mentoring survey and this preliminary report in some small way serve these ends as well.

NOTES

1. Originally submitted to the Executive Board of the Council of Writing Program Administrators by Sheldon Walcher, Joseph Janangelo, and Duane Roen on September 26, 2009. (Revised to include initiatives undertaken: September, 2010)

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