

From the Editors

Although we do not intentionally assemble issues with a particular theme or focus in (our collective) mind, the four articles and three Symposium responses in this issue seem to share a common focus. They might be seen as diverse responses to the question of “Why and how and with whom do we create, maintain, sustain productive relationships?”

As journal editors, we grapple with this question about relationships regularly, often unconsciously: about the relationship(s) among members of our editorial team, between us and the many authors who submit their work to the journal, between the journal and its readers, between the journal and CWPA, between the journal and our “profession.” Unlike active WPAs and their local colleagues and connections, though, journal editors don’t experience the daily interactions with all those with whom the journal is in relation. We hope readers know that our “door” is open. We welcome comments, questions, and / or conversations that might help us all—editors and contributors—make this journal and our collective work more meaningful and useful.

ARTICLES IN THIS ISSUE

In “Addressing Instructor Ambivalence about Peer Review and Self-Assessment,” Pamela Bedore and Brian O’Sullivan report on a small study of ways in which WPAs can help instructors to use these approaches. They conclude that WPAs who believe in collaborative assessment models of writing feedback should engage instructors in ongoing conversations about peer-review and self-assessment that include discussions of their own experiences as students giving and receiving feedback to peers and assessing their own writing. They offer nine key themes arising from their data that might be points of focus for such discussions.

In “Troubling the Boundaries: (De)Constructing WPA Identities at the Intersections of Race and Gender,” Collin Craig and Staci Maree Perryman-Clark theorize their professional experiences as Research Assistants

to their local WPA and as African American WPAs entering the racialized and gendered spaces of the institution and the CWPA conference.

Brad Peters shares the results of an exploratory, multi-year project in “Lessons about Writing to Learn from a University-High School Partnership.” One result “suggests that such partnerships can provide the training and follow-up necessary for cross-curricular faculty to produce statistically significant student learning outcomes through the implementation of writing to learn.” Another result, perhaps as important, “suggests the efficacy of specific practices in writing to learn, even in difficult learning environments, contributing to a more ‘pedagogically useful theory’ for implementing writing to learn in secondary and post-secondary settings.”

In “Program Transitions and TA Training: What TAs Say Makes the Difference,” Amy Ruper Taggart and Margaret Lowry offer a cross-institutional, TA survey assessment study with the dual aims of mediating local WPA transitions and improving the graduate TA practicum.

RESPONSES TO THE “SYMPOSIUM ON FOSTERING TEACHER QUALITY”

Three respondents challenge us to extend and emphasize further the challenging themes presented in the Symposium.

Sue Doe believes the essays ask us to “commit to professionalism,” but more important, recognize “what can happen when we take hold of the potential of our writing programs in their current forms[,] embrac[ing] what is over some eidolon of what was or what ought to be.”

Claire Lamonica expands the purpose of the Symposium essay, calling for a “culture of professionalism in our work to improve teacher quality and improve student learning. . . . creating a community of caring professionals who share high standards for themselves and their students’, work collaboratively to help each other reach those standards, and continually evaluate and re-evaluate their own progress as developing professionals in light of those standards.”

Mike Palmquist foregrounds “our increasing reliance on instructors who work in contingent positions,” and emphasizes that our “[p]rofessional development initiatives must begin with an understanding of the places in which so many members of our discipline find themselves and of the places where we hope to go, together, as a profession.”

BOOK REVIEWS

In “What is Real College Writing? Let the Disagreement Never End,” Peter Elbow follows his classic book *What is English?* with his review essay on the first and second editions of *What is College-Level Writing?* (2006, 2010).

While he finds much to praise in these books, he focuses on his frustration with levels and standards: “My goal is real excellence We seldom get it unless some standards or criteria are not met. Really excellent writing often has some genuine faults or problems.” Thus he argues for “the deep tradition of permeability or even chaotic non-standards across US higher education.”

“Reinventing Writing Assessment: How the Conversation is Shifting” is William Condon’s encyclopedic review essay about—but not entirely restricted to—twelve new books on writing assessment. Condon sees the central thread of this work as not only “the entry of the writing classroom into the writing assessment arena, but . . . the engagement of writing assessment within the writing classroom.” This overview is essential reading for every WPA encountering assessment issues, which is to say, for every WPA.

SPECIAL FEATURE

Anticipating this summer’s CWPA Conference in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, Shirley Rose interviewed Irv Peckham and Jim McDonald, the two local hosts of the conference. She shares those conversations in “Crabgrass and Gumbo: Interviews with 2011 WPA Conference Local Hosts about the Place of Writing Programs at their Home Institutions,” inviting readers (and conference attendees) to learn more about the unique culture and context of southeastern Louisiana and how it affects two local writing programs.



Extending an invitation to join the Council of Writing Program Administrators

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