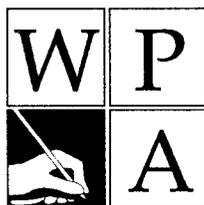




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Council of Writing Program Administrators

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Writing Program Administration

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Council of Writing Program Administrators

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- The Theory and Philosophy of Writing Program Administration
- Issues of Professional Advancement and WPA Work
- Projects that Enhance WPA Work with Diverse Stakeholders

This 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.

Submission Guidelines

Submissions should be approximately 4,000–7,000 words, though occasionally longer articles will be accepted if the subject warrants.

For complete submission guidelines, please see the information at the journal's website <<http://wpacouncil.org/info-for-authors>>. Editors will acknowledge receipt of articles.

Reviews

WPA publishes reviews of books related to writing programs and their administration. Publishers are invited to send appropriate professional books to Ed White, 3045 W. Brenda Loop, Flagstaff, AZ 86001, who assigns 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 journal@wpacouncil.org and include the text in both the body of the message and as an MS Word or RTF attachment.

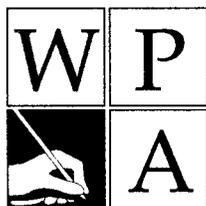
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Writing Program Administration

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From the Editors

This issue contains what we hope is now seen as the usual array of interesting research and writing about writing program administration. In addition, we have an engaging symposium that was assembled by the assistant editors, on issues raised by our publication of the mentoring report last year. We consider the journal to be a work-in-progress, as we look for ways to bring the readership the most useful information and insights we can offer. This issue also contains some follow-up to the CWPA national conference in Baton Rouge, as we are fortunate to have conference plenaries from speakers Carolyn Calhoon-Dillahunt and Barbara Cambridge.

Insofar as change is our normal state, you may have noticed that our book review policy has shifted in recent issues to asking scholars to produce state-of-the-art essays, including within them reviews of a number of recent books on a particular topic of importance. As book review editor Ed White has noted, review essays are not new to journals in our field (Stephen North discussed existing examples at some length in his essay on reviewing eighteen years ago in *Rhetoric Review*, 10.2, Spring 1993, 348–63), but considering them as state-of-the-art essays as well as book reviews is a new idea—indeed one way to respond to some of the recommendations North made for reviewing more books and upgrading the status of reviews. We were concerned that this policy might limit opportunities for publication of younger scholars, for whom a book review is often a first publication, but that has not occurred; senior scholars, as you will notice in this issue, are usually collaborating with their younger colleagues in researching and writing these demanding essays. Ed White continues to oversee this section of the journal.

There is one correction to be made to the spring issue. Bill Condon's review of multiple assessment texts misattributes Chris Gallagher's article to *College Composition and Communication*, when in fact that article was published in *College English*. We apologize for this error.

And there are some comings and goings to the editorial team putting together the journal for your reading pleasure. We are sorry to be saying good-bye to Glenn Blalock as co-editor, as he has been called to more

administrative duties at his institution and like the rest of us, has only 168 hours in a week. Deb and Alice and the whole team offer their heartfelt thanks to Glenn Blalock for his excellent contributions to our editorial work over the past two years. He will be sorely missed, and we wish him all the best as colleague and friend.

Duane Roen is leaving the editorial board while serving as CWPA president, and Peggy O'Neill has also stepped off the board. We thank Joe Hardin for delivering an ad hoc review for the journal this past year. On another more positive note, we have waved a happy good-bye to Donna Scheidt, who completed her PhD at the University of Michigan and accepted a full-time job at High Point University in North Carolina. Jason Carabelli, our capable undergraduate student assistant will take on Donna's work, overseeing ads, calls and announcements from his new post as a graduate student at the University of South Florida. Our new undergraduate student assistant at Oakland is Janae Greene, a Writing and Rhetoric major who has plenty of office management experience and will be looking after various aspects of journal production.

ARTICLES IN THIS ISSUE

In this issue, we present four articles that report on an array of research useful to WPAs. "Are We Having the Effect We Want? Implementing Outcomes Assessment in an Academic English Language-Support Unit," this issue's opening article, presents a careful assessment study completed by Li-Shih Huang in a writing center at a Canadian university. Her findings offer useful insights concerning both the ways that writing centers can be helpful to student writers and the ways that assessment using a variety of strategies can be useful to writing program administrators and others.

Steve Lamos suggests in "Credentialing College Writing Teachers: WPAs and Labor Reform," that WPAs should work to "define a national set of knowledge and skills" for college writing teachers. He argues that credentialing may improve both the professional status of writing in the university and the working conditions of college teachers of writing.

In "For Slow Agency," Laura Micchiche argues that WPA agency "operates on a continuum including action and change as well as less visible but no less important forms of agency like thinking, being still, and processing."

Todd Ruecker describes, in "Improving the Placement of L2 Writers: The Students' Perspective," a mixed-methods study in which approximately four hundred students in mainstream and ESL writing classes were surveyed about their attitudes towards placement and linguistic identity labels. He

concludes by offering specific suggestions for WPAs to consider in improving the placement of L2 writers.

We are fortunate to be able to present written versions of two of the plenary addresses given at the summer conference in Baton Rouge. Carolyn Calhoun-Dillahunt's talk provides an insightful description of the overall situation of students and faculty at community colleges around the country, from Calhoun-Dillahunt's vantage point as president of the Two-Year College English Association. She discusses in some detail the situation for those who lead writing programs, whether or not they have a WPA title. The challenges of work on placement, assessment and other aspects of program administration are mitigated to some degree by collaborative work; reading this plenary yields many important insights about the work of our colleagues at the two-year colleges. Barbara Cambridge's provocative talk provided the WPAs gathered in Baton Rouge a perspective drawn from her work as the NCTE liaison in Washington DC. Her experiences in this position have led her to advocate that all students learn to write for public audiences and to encourage WPAs to use their research knowledge and skills to help policymakers reach informed decisions about teaching and learning reading and writing.

THE FALL SYMPOSIUM

For our fall/winter WPA Symposium, the journal's three assistant editors sought to answer the call made by the authors of "The CWPA Mentoring Project and Survey Report" to create new forums to discuss the work of untenured and non-tenure-track WPAs. The narratives collected here were composed by Joyce Olewski Inman, Katherine Gindlesparger, Darci L. Thoun, Collie Fulford, and Tim McCormack, and provide insights into the challenges faced by early-career WPAs within a broad variety of institutional contexts.

WPAs IN DIALOGUE

We are happy to have a response to Peter Elbow's review of the two volumes of *What Is College-Level Writing?* from the spring issue by Kelly Ritter along with Peter Elbow's reply.

BOOK REVIEWS

This issue's two book reviews are from Sid Dobrin and from Tanita Saenkhum in collaboration with Paul Matsuda. In "Ecology and Concepts of Technology," Sid Dobrin reviews four recently published books on the impact new technologies are having on our understanding of writing and

writing studies. Focusing on the inseparability of technology and writing, Dobrin explores how these four books provide us with a more thorough understanding of the ecology of our changing discipline.

Saenkhum and Matsuda take up three recent books on the teaching of writing to ESL students. Because non-native speakers are now students in many writing programs, they discuss the books' usefulness to WPAs and all teachers. They point out that "as the student population in writing programs continues to shift, it is important for WPAs to keep abreast of the demographic trends as well as ways to address the presence and needs of diverse groups of students."



Are We Having the Effect We Want? Implementing Outcomes Assessment in an Academic English Language-Support Unit Using a Multi-component Approach

Li-Shih Huang

ABSTRACT

In response to a call by writing-center researchers and professionals since the 1980s for rigorous scientific assessment, this paper reports on a project that is the first to implement a multi-component assessment of a writing center based on a year-long gathering of data from multiple sources, including the writing center's usage profile, users' perceptions related to writing, learning outcomes-based evaluations, and a satisfaction survey. In addition to the value of the findings from this project and its implications for writing-center research and practice, information about the procedures involved in implementing this multi-component assessment approach may be useful to administrators, researchers, and practitioners in academic language-support units across institutions of higher education.

INTRODUCTION

In response to the call since the 1980s for rigorous scientific assessment issued by writing-center researchers and professionals, this paper reports on a writing-center-assessment project that is the first to implement a multi-component assessment with a year-long (academic year 2009–2010) gathering of data from multiple sources, including the Writing Center's usage profile, users' perceptions related to writing, learning outcomes-based evaluations, and a satisfaction survey. A previous paper detailed the component centered on a center usage profile constructed as a source of outcomes assessment.¹ This paper reports on the results from the three remain-

ing components: a learning outcomes-based assessment, users' perceptions related to writing, and a satisfaction survey, all conducted for the purpose of critically evaluating the effectiveness of academic English language support and services provided by a writing center at a Canadian university. In addition to the value of the findings from this project and its implications for writing center research and practice, the information about the procedures involved in implementing this multi-component assessment approach may be useful to administrators, researchers, and practitioners in academic language-support units across institutions of higher education.

REVIEW OF RELEVANT RESEARCH

Although writing centers sometimes resist assessment for immediate practical and longer-term implicational reasons, it has proven to be beneficial both for evaluating the effectiveness of services provided by academic English language-support units in order to plan and improve services to students and for answering the age-old question: Does what we do matter (Niller; Henson and Stephenson)? In response to the call since the 1980s for rigorous scientific assessment issued by both the research and practice-oriented communities in the field of writing-center research (Hawthorne; Henson and Stephenson; Lerner; Neuleib), this paper reports on a writing-center outcomes assessment project in the context of a newly established language-support unit.

Since the 1970s, studies have used numerous methods to substantiate the impact or effectiveness of writing centers. These methods have included, for example: focus groups (e.g., Cushman et al.), comparison of grade-point averages or course grades (e.g., Lerner; Newmann; Roberts; Sandlon; Sutton and Arnold; Waldo), surveys (e.g., Morrison and Nadeau), proficiency exams (e.g., Naugie; Hyland, Howell, and Zhang), comparisons of drafts before and after students' visits to the writing center (e.g., Bennett; David and Bubloz; Henson and Stephenson; Niller), using an error recognition test (e.g., Wills), students' satisfaction levels (e.g., Carino and Enders), measurement of students' attitudes toward writing (e.g., Ady; Clark; Davis; van Dam), and students' perceived levels of confidence after visiting the writing center (e.g., Ady; Matthews).

Writing-center researchers have emphasized the need for an evidence-based approach to outcomes assessment (e.g., Bell; Hawthorne; Henson and Stephenson; Pemberton) that is critical to moving the field forward (e.g., Lerner). Since the 1980s, many have cited such issues as time and resource constraints, the need for expertise in assessment research methods, (mis-)conceptions about purposes of assessment (e.g., Lerner; Schuh

and Upcraft), and, most importantly, difficulties involved in substantiating the link between the support received and any improvement in students' writing (see Jones; Pemberton and Kinkead) as major challenges. Writing-center researchers have developed a rich body of qualitative work, and, in recent years, the field has also witnessed efforts to utilize quantitative methodologies to assess writing centers' work (e.g., Henson and Stephenson; Niller); however, to date, such evaluation studies are still lacking (Hawthorne; Jones).

Most qualitative studies that provide indirect evidence of students' writing-ability improvement have indicated writing centers' positive impact, but the results have been less clear-cut in quantitative studies. Some have found significant improvements in writing produced by students who use writing center (e.g., David and Bubloz; Henson and Stephenson; Carino and Enders; Sutton and Arnold), but others have indicated inconclusive results (e.g., Bennett; Roberts). There have also been cautions issued about the use of statistics (e.g., Enders; Lerner). As many have pointed out, the field is rich with anecdotal evidence, reflections, and studies that are qualitative in nature, but quantitative studies published in journals remain lacking (e.g., Jones; Johaneck; Lerner; Neuleib). Although I agree with Johaneck, Lerner, Jones, and others who call for quantitative methodologies, I argue that the types of questions asked should drive the methods that one employs, whether they are be quantitative, qualitative, or mixed, to fully address the questions at hand (Tashakkori and Teddlie).

Ultimately, assessment in the context of higher education and in the case of a language-support unit is a process of asking questions about what students have gained from the center (e.g., knowledge or information, thinking, or performance-based abilities). A variety of proposed assessment or program-evaluation models have various orientations in line with the purpose of the assessment (e.g., Hawthorne; Upcraft and Schuh). According to Allen, assessment may involve asking questions about "students' satisfaction with their educational experience," "the amount of their engagement or participation," and/or "what they actually gained from that experience" (96).

The current project, drawing on Allen's work and that of Schuh and Upcraft regarding the student-services assessment model, is an outcomes-oriented assessment that is complemented by non-outcome data to present a fuller picture of the program. The categories of outcomes, as also clarified by Allen, involve the following: For engagement or participation-based assessment, it involves analyzing how the center is being utilized over a period of time. In the questions for a satisfaction-based assessment, the aim is to learn what users did and did not like, or how they felt they did or did

not benefit as learners by asking students to rate their satisfaction with, for example, the quality of tutoring, the variety of offerings, the support anticipated and received, and the perceived benefits or impact on their academic work. Research investigating questions about learning outcomes, which is the component that is often missing or lacking in writing-center research, deals with the crucial issue: What can the student do as a direct result of the support received that he/she did not demonstrate before receiving the support?

This study implemented a multi-component assessment strategy by gathering both direct and indirect evidence from multiple sources over the course of an academic year. The goal was to provide information that would help more language-support units engage in and benefit from systematic self-examinations of their programs. Specifically, this paper addresses the following research questions:

1. *Users' writing-related perceptions:* What are users' perceptions about their writing after their visits to the Writing Center?
2. *Learning outcomes:* Is there a difference between the drafts produced by students before and after their Writing Center visits? Is there a difference, as indicated by students' writing, between Writing Center users and nonusers?
3. *Satisfaction survey:* How satisfied are students with the offerings and support provided by the Writing Center?

THE INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

The outcomes (or more accurately, progress) assessment project was undertaken at a mid-size, comprehensive university in Canada. The university's academic programs include ten faculties and two major divisions. According to the enrollment figures in 2008/09, approximately 8% of its 22,025 undergraduates and 13% of its 2,593 graduate students are international students. In 2006, the university founded an English Language Proficiency Working Group to examine policies supporting and challenges facing students. In 2007, the university's Writing Center was established as part of the Learning and Teaching Center, which serves the academic language-learning needs of both graduate and undergraduate students. In 2007, a needs-assessment research project was undertaken to better evaluate graduate and undergraduate students' academic language-learning needs and to review any skill gaps identified by students and instructors (Huang, *Graduate, Seeing Eye to Eye*). The needs assessment was conducted for both English-as-an-additional-language (EAL) and English-as-a-first-language

(EL1) students. Results from the needs assessment were used to inform the development and offering of English for Academic Purposes programs and workshops tailored to both graduate and undergraduate students' needs. This project then led to the current progress assessment conducted in the 2009–2010 academic year, which was designed to evaluate the effectiveness of the support and offerings provided by the Writing Center.

METHODS

Data Collection

The project² employed a multi-component strategy of assessment that involved collecting multiple forms of data. According to standards of high-quality research, triangulation (i.e., using more than one method to approach a topic or situation and ferret out information) is substantially preferable in terms of the resulting quality of information and the trustworthiness that is placed in that information (Denzin). The three major assessment components covered in this paper are as follows:

1. Learning outcomes-based evaluation: The learning outcomes-based assessment examined drafts produced by students who provided their informed consent to participate in the study. An open letter was sent to invite instructors' participation in the study. The letter sought to identify instructors who would be receptive to providing their students the option of visiting the Writing Center before the final grade for each of their papers was assigned. A class visit was subsequently made, with the instructor's permission, to invite students who expressed a willingness to participate in the study and to obtain their consent to collect their written work throughout the term. For every assignment, after submitting their first drafts, students were given one week to voluntarily visit the Writing Center before submitting their second drafts. Clean copies of the first and second drafts were collected through voluntary submissions from both users and nonusers who agreed to participate in the study.

2. Writing- and writing-center-related perceptions: A survey was distributed at the end of the fall term to a group of randomly selected users after their visits to the Writing Center. The survey examined whether the support that users received had helped them in twenty different specific areas (e.g., I have learned strategies for revising; I have learned strategies to continue improving my writing on my own; my ability to discuss issues in class has improved). The purpose was to provide an indication of users' perceptions about their own writing/speaking after receiving support from the Writing

Center, and also of the relation between participants' usage of the writing center and their self-perceptions about their writing/speaking abilities.

3. Satisfaction-based evaluation: A detailed student-satisfaction survey regarding the Writing Center was distributed through the university's registrar at the end of the spring term. The survey, modified from Morrison and Nadeau's instrument, contained five key sections, namely, (a) the respondent's background (e.g., year of study, program of study, department, language background, and gender), (b) questions about the Writing Center's offerings (e.g., frequency of visits, types of support used, and workshops attended), (c) support received and satisfaction levels, (d) tutors and workshop satisfaction, and (e) future involvement with the Writing Center. The survey was designed to gather both qualitative and quantitative data that would address the question related to the extent of students' satisfaction with offerings provided by the Writing Center. Given that the main goal of this assessment project was driven by the needs of a particular program, a balance was sought between generating high-quality information from the survey and maximizing the number of users who would complete a detailed 20- to 30-minute survey with multiple sections.

Data Analysis

In the process of addressing the research questions in each component of the project presented above, both qualitative and quantitative methods that complement each other were utilized to maximize the data obtained. For the learning-outcomes analysis, students self-selected whether or not they would use the Writing Center. All 338 before- and after-drafts, 274 produced by writing-center-users and 64 by nonusers, were collected throughout an academic term. The drafts gathered were each assigned a number code that concealed any identification information such as names, course numbers, submission dates, and so on. To minimize biases that might occur if drafts were placed in sequence as how they were submitted (i.e., the before-draft comes before the after-draft, assignment 1 comes before assignment 2, and so on), all drafts were arranged in random order. The drafts were then rated independently by three raters³ using two scoring methods: analytically for macro-level features (e.g., purpose, development, and organization) and micro-level features (e.g., citation/format, grammar, and punctuation), using scoring rubrics adapted from standardized scoring rubrics suitable for the study (see Appendix A), as well as holistically for the drafts' overall quality.

To address questions regarding differences between the before- and after-drafts and the drafts produced by users and nonusers, the ratings were subjected to statistical analyses using *t*-tests to identify any differences between the before- and after-drafts produced by those who used the writing center and between users of the writing center and those who opted out. Trend-line analyses were conducted for users who submitted three or more drafts over the course of the term to see whether their work improved over time. Finally, both inter-rater and intra-rater reliability were evaluated using the intra-class correlation to ascertain the level of consistency within, between, and among individual raters' analytical and holistic ratings. All analyses were conducted using SPSS Version 15.0, with an alpha level of .05 to determine significance.

RESULTS

1. Learning Outcomes-Based Evaluation

A total of 338 drafts were collected from students across disciplines (e.g., engineering, English, psychology, linguistics, political science, and law). Among those, 64 drafts were produced by Writing Center nonusers, and 274 before- and after-drafts were collected from students who volunteered to use the center.

Before examining the data to answer the research questions related to this component, both inter- and intra-rater reliability were assessed. Results from the inter-rater reliability assessment derived from the ratings of 274 drafts indicated that, for the macro features of purpose, development, and organization, the correlation coefficients were $r = .37$ ($p = .000$), $r = .50$ ($p = .000$), and $r = .42$ ($p = .000$), respectively, and for the micro features of citation/format, grammar, and punctuation, the coefficients were $r = .11$ ($p > .05$), $r = .45$ ($p = .000$), and $r = .29$ ($p = .000$), respectively. The correlation coefficient for overall ratings among the three raters was $.41$ ($p = .000$). The evaluation of development had the highest correlation among the raters; raters' consistency in their ratings of citations/format and grammar was the lowest. None of the correlations exceeded .45, however. When the correlations between raters (i.e., rater 1 vs. rater 2; rater 2 vs. rater 3; rater 1 vs. rater 3) were examined, the values ranged from .29 to .32 for purpose, .30 to .45 for development, .27 to .40 for organization, .25 to .29 for citation/format, .21 to .31 for grammar, .23 to .29 for punctuation, and .31 to .37 for overall ratings at $p = .000$. Overall, the agreement between raters 2 and 3 was slightly higher than that between raters 1 and 3, and raters 1 and 2 had the lowest agreement rate.

Results from the intra-rater reliability assessment derived from the ratings of a subset of 80 randomly selected drafts showed that, for the macro features of purpose, development, and organization, the coefficients were $r = .62$ ($p = .000$), $r = .72$ ($p = .000$), and $r = .69$ ($p = .000$), respectively, and, for the micro-level features of citation/format, grammar, and punctuation, the coefficients were $r = .95$ ($p = .000$), $r = .46$ ($p = .003$), and $r = .37$ ($p = .019$), respectively. On the basis of the results from the inter- and intra-rater reliability assessment, an examination of ratings by each individual rater was conducted in order to gauge the differences in work produced by users before and after their visits to the center.

1.1 A comparison of users' before and after drafts: Is there a difference between the drafts produced by students before and after their Writing Center visits?

As Table 1 shows, overall, ratings for the after-drafts were slightly higher than those for the before-drafts in terms of all macro- and micro-level features, as well as in terms of the scores for the overall rating; this difference indicates that users' writing improved after their visits to the Writing Center. Levene's test for the homogeneity of variances was used to test whether the variances in means of ratings between the before- and after-drafts differed significantly. Results showed that none of the variances were significantly different between the before- and after-drafts, and thus equal variances can be assumed. The t -tests were then conducted to examine the equality of means, and results indicated that none of the differences were significant ($p > .05$).

Table 1. Overall Comparison between Before- and After-Drafts

Level/Feature		Draft	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Macro	Purpose	Before	3.73	.68
		After	3.83	.60
	Development	Before	3.51	.68
		After	3.78	.62
	Organization	Before	3.63	.69
		After	3.88	.59

Huang / Are We Having the Effect We Want?

Level/Feature		Draft	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Micro	Citation/Format	Before	3.47	1.00
		After	3.87	.90
	Grammar	Before	4.02	.45
		After	4.17	.37
	Punctuation	Before	4.27	.33
		After	4.33	.30
Overall Holistic Rating		Before	3.53	.66
		After	3.77	.56

Note. *N* = 137 for each before and after drafts (total *N* = 274).

When each rater was examined separately, the results showed that each individual rater rated the after-drafts as better than the before-drafts in both analytical and holistic ratings. To determine whether the mean differences were statistically significant, the means of the analytical features and holistic ratings were compared using *t*-tests. The results showed that, for rater 1, the macro-level features development ($p = .000$) and organization ($p = .000$), the micro-level feature grammar ($p = .019$), and the overall holistic rating ($p = .000$) were significant. For rater 2, the differences between the before and after drafts were statistically significant in terms of one macro feature, organization ($p = 0.43$) and two micro-level features, citation/format ($p = .040$) and grammar ($p = .006$). For rater 3, differences were significant for two macro-level features, development ($p = .029$) and organization ($p = .041$); one micro-level feature, citation/format ($p = .018$); and the overall holistic rating ($p = .008$). The shaded cells in Table 2, which indicate that the differences between the before- and after-drafts were statistically significant, show that organization is the only feature shared among all three raters.

Pearson correlational analyses were conducted to ascertain the relationships between the macro- and micro-level features in the analytic ratings and the holistic ratings. As shown in Table 3, overall, all features in the analytic ratings were correlated with the overall holistic ratings, with very strong correlation values ranging from .821 to .926 between features at the macro level and the overall holistic ratings, and moderate to low correlation values ranging from .410 to .506 between the three micro-level features and the overall holistic ratings. This pattern suggests that raters may have placed more emphasis on macro-level features when determining the holistic scores. Correlations among individual raters also indicated that the

Table 2. A Comparison of Before- and After-Drafts by Individual Raters ($N = 274$)

Rater	Draft	Macro-level Features			Micro-level Features				Overall
		P	D	O	C/F	G	Pu		
1	B	$M = 4.03,$ $SD = .75$	$M = 3.64,$ $SD = .81$	$M = 3.88,$ $SD = .87$	$M = 3.44,$ $SD = .81$	$M = 3.82,$ $SD = .54$	$M = 3.95,$ $SD = .44$	$M = 3.78,$ $SD = .75$	
	A	$M = 4.15,$ $SD = .61$	$M = 4.08,$ $SD = .64$	$M = 4.22,$ $SD = .67$	$M = 3.64,$ $SD = .67$	$M = 3.98,$ $SD = .53$	$M = 3.97,$ $SD = .46$	$M = 4.01,$ $SD = .53$	
2	B	$M = 2.96,$ $SD = 1.23$	$M = 3.01,$ $SD = 1.15$	$M = 2.99,$ $SD = 1.17$	$M = 3.45,$ $SD = 1.6$	$M = 3.83,$ $SD = .68$	$M = 4.22,$ $SD = .49$	$M = 2.92,$ $SD = 1.12$	
	A	$M = 3.12,$ $D = 1.17$	$M = 3.20,$ $SD = 1.11$	$M = 3.25,$ $SD = 1.1$	$M = 3.88,$ $SD = 1.26$	$M = 4.02,$ $SD = .56$	$M = 4.32,$ $SD = .42$	$M = 3.14,$ $SD = 1.06$	
3	B	$M = 4.15,$ $SD = .81$	$M = 3.89,$ $SD = .62$	$M = 4.04,$ $SD = .74$	$M = 4.34,$ $SD = .77$	$M = 4.37,$ $SD = .65$	$M = 4.63,$ $SD = .54$	$M = 3.91,$ $SD = .79$	
	A	$M = 4.28,$ $SD = .71$	$M = 4.09,$ $SD = .71$	$M = 4.21,$ $SD = .66$	$M = 4.63,$ $SD = .641$	$M = 4.51,$ $SD = .54$	$M = 4.69,$ $SD = .478$	$M = 4.14,$ $SD = .65$	

Note. B = before; A = after; P = purpose; D = development; O = organization; C/F = citation/format; G = grammar; Pu = Punctuation. Shaded cells indicate that the differences between the before- and after-drafts were statistically significant at $p < .05$.

Table 3. Correlations between the Holistic Ratings and Features in the Analytic Ratings

Rater		Macro-level Features			Micro-level Features			
		P Mean	D Mean	O Mean	C/F Mean	G Mean	Pu Mean	
1	Holistic Mean	.585**	.774**	.720**	.551**	.497**	.362**	
	<i>p</i>	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	
2	Holistic Mean	.911**	.948**	.944**	.427**	.401**	.373**	
	<i>p</i>	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	
3	Holistic Mean	.792**	.867**	.821**	.357**	.192**	.098	
	<i>p</i>	.000	.000	.000	.000	.001	.107	
Overall	Holistic Mean	.821**	.926**	.903**	.410**	.506**	.428**	
	<i>p</i>	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	

Note. B = before; A = after; P = purpose; D = development; O = organization; C/F = citation/format; G = grammar; Pu = Punctuation. ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

highest correlations were between development (a macro-level feature) and the holistic ratings for each of the three raters.

1.2 A comparison between users and nonusers: Is there a difference, as indicated by students' writing, between Writing Center users and nonusers?

The results indicated that, overall, the mean ratings of Writing Center nonusers were higher than those of users for all three macro-level features (purpose, $M = 3.20$ vs. $M = 3.00$; development, $M = 3.17$ vs. $M = 3.08$; organization, $M = 3.20$ vs. $M = 3.09$) and for one micro-level feature (citation/format, $M = 4.30$ vs. $M = 3.48$), but lower than those of users for two micro-level features (grammar, $M = 3.82$ vs. $M = 3.95$; punctuation, $M = 4.19$ vs. $M = 4.29$). Overall ratings also indicated that the mean rating of nonusers' drafts was higher than that of the users ($M = 3.30$ vs. $M = 3.13$). With the exception of the micro-level feature citation/format ($p < .001$), the t -test results indicated that there were no statistically significant differences between the drafts produced by users and nonusers of the Writing Center in terms of individual-rated features or their overall ratings.

1.3 Users' development over time: Is there a difference over time between the drafts produced by students before and after their Writing Center visits?

To explore differences between before- and after-drafts over time, repeated measures, which can provide an omnibus test of mean differences over a set of time points, were used to analyze the variables measured over the term. The results indicated a statistically significant difference for the macro feature of purpose ($p = .001$).

A trend-line analysis was conducted to assess the ratings in terms of the presence of trend components. This analysis helped determine which models/lines were the best fit for the ratings, and whether there was any general tendency for the means of the features to increase steadily as time passed. The comparisons were between the mean ratings for the successive assignments submitted over the course of a term. Table 4 presents results from the tests identifying significant trends for the before- and after-drafts, as well as overall trends. Overall, the results revealed that, for the features of organization, citation/format, grammar, and the overall holistic ratings, there were statistically significant linear trends (shaded cells). This finding means that there is statistically significant tendency for the mean level of these features to increase (i.e., move upward) or decrease (i.e., move downward) over time. Results that indicated significant quadratic trends suggested that the outcomes were uneven and that the cubic trend represents a more complex pattern, with more than one change of direction over the course of the

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term. None of the features or the overall ratings in the after drafts showed a significant linear upward trend. The trend-line analysis over the course of the term, however, indicated that only one macro-level feature, development, and one micro-level feature, citation/format, had a linear, upward-progression trend ($p < .05$).

Table 4. Results from the Trend-Line Analyses ($N = 274$)

Level	Feature	Draft	Trend	Direction	p
Macro	Purpose	B	Non-linear (Quadratic)	Upward	.002
		A	-	-	<i>n.s.</i>
		Overall	Non-linear (Quadratic)	Upward	.002
	Development	B	Non-linear (Quadratic)	Upward	.000
		A	-	-	<i>n.s.</i>
		Overall	Non-linear (Quadratic)	Upward	.001
	Organization	B	Non-linear (Quadratic)	Upward	.001
		A	Linear	Downward	.011
		Overall	Linear	Downward	.002
Micro	Citation/Format	B	Linear	Upward	.024
		A	-	-	<i>n.s.</i>
		Overall	Linear	Upward	.003
	Grammar	B	Linear	Downward	.000
		A	Linear	Downward	.004
		Overall	Linear	Downward	.000
	Punctuation	B	Non-linear (Cubic)	Downward	.040
		A	Linear	Downward	.047
		Overall	Non-linear (Cubic)	Downward	.017
Overall Holistic Rating	B	Non-linear (Quadratic)	Upward	.000	
	A	-	-	<i>n.s.</i>	
	Overall	Linear	Downward	.004	

2. Writing- and Writing-Center-Related Perceptions

Of the 252 students who provided their email addresses when they visited the Writing Center during the fall term, 72 users responded to the survey focused on their writing- and center-related perceptions after their visits to the Writing Center, for a response rate of 28.6%. Table 5 presents the demographics of users who responded to the survey.

Table 5. Demographic Profile of Participants ($N = 72$)

Level of Study	Undergraduate 37 (51%)		Graduate 35 (45%)	
Divisions	Humanities 14%	Social Sciences 72%	Physical Sciences 17%	Life Sciences 8%
Language	EL1 62%		EAL 38%	
Gender	Male 11%		Female 89%	

Students reported that they visited the center for 39 different courses. When respondents were asked how they learned about the Writing Center, 48.6% reported that they learned by word of mouth, 37.8% were recommended by professors, 21.6% from the website, and 13.5% from emails sent out by the Learning and Teaching Center. Some others learned from beginning-of-the-term-orientations, flyers, or from passing the Writing Center office.

In terms of respondents' frequency of visits, 29.7% visited the Writing Center once during the academic year; 43.3% visited the center between two and five times; 12.8% visited from five to 10 times, and 10.1% visited more than 10 times. The top-five reported reasons for visiting were the following:

1. I want some feedback on an early draft: 73%
2. I need help with grammar in a piece of writing: 67.6%
3. I need help with writing discipline-specific writing: 45.9%
4. I am not sure what to do with a written assignment: 32.4%
5. I need a better grade: 29.7%

According to respondents' comments, users viewed the function of the center as focused mainly on editing and surface issues. In addition, only 8% each of the respondents indicated that they would use the Writing Center for workshops related to oral communication and grant applications. These numbers indicated that students were missing opportunities to view the center as a valuable resource for developing other language domains and specificities, as identified in previous needs-assessment studies (Huang, *Seeing Eye to Eye*).

Table 6 presents the percentages of respondents who responded "agree" or "strongly agree" in the 20 areas related to their perceptions about their writing/speaking. Overall, 78.5% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the Writing Center had helped them with their writing-related skills (items 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12). For speaking-related skills, 26.2% of the respondents perceived their speaking skills and confidence had improved (items 4, 13, 14, 15, and 16). A total of 44% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that workshop(s) helped them perform better in the course; this agreement was corroborated by the finding that 42% agreed or strongly agreed that their course grades had improved. Overall, 58% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the Writing Center had helped them in their academic studies. The results in relation to specific individual items showed higher percentages of agreement concerning areas in the writing domain perceived by the students, such as skills learned, enhancement in confidence levels, improvement in ability, and promotion of self-regulated learning strategies. The high percentages were corroborated by the respondents' comments. For example, one of the undergraduates wrote:

Generally, the tutors at the Writing Center have provided me with critical analysis that encouraged me to take more initiative to support my arguments, while also improving my writing self esteem in general. I know that without this service, my marks would have suffered immensely, and I would have experienced a much more frustrating academic year. Without this service I would have felt neglected by the University (S35).

Table 6. Statements Related to Users' Perceptions about How the Center Did or Did Not Help Them

No.	Statement	%
1	I have come to understand that writing is a process.	80
2	I have learned strategies for revising.	85
3	I have learned strategies that I can apply to future papers in other courses.	80
4	I have learned strategies to continue improving my oral communication skills on my own.	25
5	I have learned strategies to continue improving my writing on my own.	81
6	I have learned to teach myself to find and correct grammatical problems (self-editing and proofreading strategies).	74
7	I have learned to write with more clarity.	83
8	I have learned to use sources effectively and to cite them appropriately.	72
9	I have learned to organize my writing in a logical, coherent manner.	75
10	I have made progress in my thesis writing.	75
11	My ability to write has improved overall.	81
12	My confidence in my ability to complete written assignments has improved.	75
13	My ability to discuss issues in class has improved.	27
14	My ability to make presentations in class/conferences has improved.	25
15	My confidence about engaging in class discussion has improved.	24
16	My confidence about making presentations in class/conferences has improved.	30
17	The information in the workshop(s) has helped me to perform better in courses.	44
18	I feel more comfortable using the Writing Center as a learning resource.	81
19	When I sought help from the Writing Center, the grade I received for that assignment improved.	42
20	The Writing Center has helped me in my academic studies.	58

3. Satisfaction Survey

A total of 108 nonuser and 184 user respondents from undergraduate and graduate levels across disciplines completed a detailed satisfaction survey. Table 7 provides the demographic characteristics of respondents who completed the survey. Results from the survey showed that 32.6% visited the center once, 52.6% visited from two to five times, 10.5% visited from six to ten times, and 4.2 % visited more than ten times during the 2009–2010 academic year. Among the 108 respondents who indicated that they

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had not used the center, 58% cited the reason that they did not need to use the services, 27.8% indicated that they did not know about the center's existence, 20.8% received help from others, and 28.4% reported that they were too busy to use the center. In terms of what services they used, 93.4% indicated those mainly related to writing support, with 60.4% using the one-on-one writing tutoring service and 33% using the drop-in service. Among users, 84.8 % indicated that they had not attended any workshops, and the remaining users had attended mainly writing-related workshops.

Table 7. Demographic Profile of Writing-Center Users (*N* = 184)

Gender	Female	71.7% (undergraduate); 61.2% (graduate)
	Male	27.7% (undergraduate); 37.3% (graduate)
Level of study	Undergraduate	70.7%
	Graduate	24.9%
	Diploma and other	4.4%
Year of Study	1	8.8% (undergraduate); 22.1% (graduate)
	2	36.4% (undergraduate); 23.5% (graduate)
	3	26.9% (undergraduate); 14.7% (graduate)
	4	28.5% (undergraduate); 4.4% (graduate)
	5 and above	9.3% (undergraduate); 35.3% (graduate)
Division	Humanities	24.7%
	Social Sciences	50.5%
	Physical Sciences	10.5%
	Life Sciences	13.2%
Language	EL1	83.3%
	EAL	16.6%; 29 different languages

Note. EL1 = English as a first language; EAL = English as an additional language. Percentages of users in each category do not add up to 100 because of cases in which respondents specified "other."

Results from the third section of the survey on support expected and received, as well as satisfaction levels, which are presented in the order of what users expected to receive from the most to the least, are summarized

in Table 8. The overall satisfaction rate was 77%, with work on organization, clarity, and conciseness receiving the top-three satisfaction ratings from users, and work on planning a paper, writing for a specific audience, and developing a format receiving the lowest satisfaction ratings. The overall satisfaction rate of 77.01% was tabulated on the basis of the satisfaction level in relation to individual items (see Table 8), which was corroborated by the result at the end of the survey, where users were asked to rate their overall satisfaction with the help they received; this rating was 76.1%.

Respondents were asked to explain the basis for their overall satisfaction rating. An analysis of the 92 responses that users provided generated the following key areas. Responses that were positive centered on three key areas: (a) tutors' traits (key descriptive words were "helpful," "respectful," "supportive," "patient," "professional," "positive," "friendly," and "encouraging"), (b) content (e.g., "tools," "strategies," and "explanation" of "APA rules," and "grammar rules" received), and (c) self-perceptions (e.g., confidence enhanced and writing improved). Responses that were linked to lower satisfaction centered mainly on four key areas: (a) tutors' traits (e.g., lacking the discipline-specific knowledge, language skills, and expertise required to help advanced writers), (b) content and delivery (e.g., workshop approach, focus too much on basic grammar), (c) outcomes (e.g., grades), and (d) time allotted per session (over 40% of respondents' comments were about this final area).

Beyond providing a measurement of users' satisfaction levels, the findings also, more importantly, generated data about the specific support that users most expected, and whether or not the support received was what they had expected. When the users were asked about whether they had informed the tutors they worked with about the specific help they needed, 91.6% indicated that they often or always clarified their need to tutors. When asked whether or not the tutor with whom they worked had clarified what he/she intended to focus on during the session, 61% of the users reported that their tutor often or always did.

Table 8. Tutoring Support Expected and Not Received, and Overall Satisfaction Level

Support	Expected	Not Received	Satisfaction Level*
Grammar	61%	15.1%	82.5%
Organization	58%	11.4%	90%
Clarity	54.1%	11.1%	87.8%

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Support	Expected	Not Received	Satisfaction Level*
Conciseness	53.2%	14.3%	84.8%
Development of ideas	53.2%	13%	80%
Format	43.6%	20.3%	66.7%
Sentence structure	43.4%	9.8%	77.4%
Citation and documentation	43.3%	12.5%	73.3%
Building argument	42.2%	13.9%	71.8%
Thesis statement	40.3%	14%	75%
Punctuation	39.2%	10%	88.5%
Word choice	39%	13.3%	84.6%
Supporting ideas	38%	9.3%	81.8%
Logic	36.1%	15.8%	78.2%
Transitions	35.1%	12.3%	80.9%
Thesis or dissertation concerns	35.1%	13.8%	73.9%
Writing for a particular audience	34.7%	14.3%	66.6%
Paragraph writing	33.8%	17.2%	77.3%
Self-editing strategies	33.8%	20.7%	72.7%
Discipline-specific writing	33.8%	21.3%	71.4%
Summarizing	30.4%	14.8%	78.5%
Clarifying an assignment	28.8%	14.3%	75%
Planning a paper	26.8%	14.0%	56.3%
Paraphrasing	23.9%	16.4%	73.3%

Note. The satisfaction level here indicates the percentages of somewhat and very satisfied.

The fourth section of the survey concerns tutor and workshop satisfaction. The numeric results from this section on items related to tutors generally supported the qualitative data provided by respondents. It was understood that respondents might have worked with more than one tutor. In such cases, respondents were reminded to provide an overall rating that best represented their agreement with the statements presented in Table 9. The results demonstrated users' overall satisfaction with the tutors who had interacted or worked with them. When respondents were asked about whether they planned to use the Writing Center again, 60.6% strongly agreed with the statement, and 15.2% somewhat agreed. In terms of the

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level of satisfaction with the workshops they had attended, results are based on slightly over 15% of the respondents. Among the 14 workshops and workshop series offered during the 2009–2010 academic year, those that had the highest levels of satisfaction included Managing your Thesis or Dissertation for Graduate Students Series ($n = 9$), Writing Tips Series: Stronger Sentences ($n = 4$), and Writing Tips Series: Grammar ($n = 3$). When users were asked how well the tutors/instructors had helped them improve their oral communication skills, 21 of the 34 users (61.8%) responded indicated “good” or “excellent.”

Table 9. Level of Agreement in Response to Statements Concerning Tutors

Statement	Level of Agreement*
The tutor was friendly and made me feel welcome.	85.9%
The tutor worked with me in a respectful and professional manner.	91.3%
The tutor listened to me and took my work seriously.	89.7%
We dealt with the issues and concerns that I had in mind.	72.4%
The tutor helped me to think critically about my writing.	74.5%
The tutor communicated the information clearly and effectively.	89.5%
The tutor helped me to do my own work, rather than doing the work for me.	90.1%
The workshop presenter communicated the information clearly and effectively.	87.5%
I was able to apply what I learned in the session to future writing.	75%
The learning resources provided by the Center are useful.	81.5%
The tutor is knowledgeable about writing.	87%
I left knowing what I needed to work on to improve my writing.	77.6%

Note. The agreement level here indicates the percentages of somewhat and very strongly agree.

In the fifth section of the satisfaction survey, respondents were asked about their future involvement with the Writing Center. A total of 50.7%

of respondents indicated that they would use the tutoring services more if their schedules fit the center's hours. This total is followed by 57.9% who indicated that they would do so if they understood how the center's offerings could help them, and 43.6% who would if they understood how the tutors could help them. A total of 60% of users indicated that would use the tutoring services more if they needed more help, and 16.4% would attend if certain workshops were offered in different formats (e.g., webinars, one-on-one coaching), or with different content (e.g., discipline-specific writing, critical reading for academic purposes, planning a scientific paper, writing at the graduate level in specific disciplines, research-proposal workshops for sciences, workshops for advanced-level, competent writers and speakers). Respondents' repeated reference to and mention of support targeted to advanced or specialized writers or communicators in comments such as the following point to an area that the center can further develop: "The service is fine for undergraduates who need more general help with writing, but it didn't help me with my graduate-level, discipline-specific questions or writing. . . ." Another commented: "I'm a strong writer, and I wanted a set of critical eyes to go over my SSHRC applications [. . .]. I was a little frustrated by my tutor's [. . .] command of the English language, which made debates about word connotations and grammar a little challenging." Finally, when asked whether they would recommend the Writing Center to another person, 85.3% responded "yes" and 14.7% responded "no."

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The difficulty involved in assessing writing ability is well recognized in the field of language assessment, and variability in judgments of writing quality or ability is a specialized area of study in the language-testing field. To capture this difficulty, Gamaroff identified rater reliability in language assessment as "the bug of all bears" (31). Numerous studies of variability in assessments of writing performance have illuminated various possible sources and factors that may be connected to variability in the scoring methods used (e.g., analytical vs. holistic ratings), including those that are task-related (e.g., task types, topics, text types or genres, time), rater-related (e.g., language and cultural backgrounds, professional experience, age), and context-related (e.g., sequencing of the writing samples, writing/testing conditions) (e.g., Bachman, Lynch and Mason; Eckes; Johnson and Lim; Schaefer; Schoonen). Existing studies have produced mixed results. A few have reported high inter-rater reliability (e.g., Niller, *Number Speaks*), and this reporting might give practitioners a false impression that achieving acceptable inter-rater reliability is the norm rather than the exception; oth-

ers have identified substantial degrees of variability associated with raters' characteristics, types of tasks, scoring procedures, and contextual factors demonstrated in studies in the language-testing field (Erdosy).

Unlike existing studies that have achieved an acceptable degree of reliability through, for example, a necessary narrowing to a certain type of text from a particular course (e.g., Niller, *"The Number Speaks" Again*), this project's learning outcomes-based evaluation involved evaluating writing samples across disciplines with multiple text types and genres that most writing centers encounter when dealing with students across disciplines, and that are completed in non-testing, uncontrolled contexts. Even though (a) the time between the before- and after-drafts was controlled, (b) the rating procedures involved both analytical (i.e., following specific, identical scoring rubrics) and holistic ratings, and (c) the assessment involved three experienced raters, multiple sources of variance were anticipated, and they manifested in the degrees of correlation between and among raters. As Gamaroff and many others have pointed out, rater variation is expected, "owing to the fact that language is closely connected to human rationalities, imaginations, motivations and desires, which, because they each comprise an extremely complex network of biological, cognitive, cultural and educational factors, could easily compromise the quest for objectivity" (34). It is questionable whether there is such thing as a bias-free judgment and whether there can ever be a "true" rating. Raters may differ in the amount of importance they attach to various criteria. The same scores among the three raters do not necessarily indicate similar judgments, nor do different ratings among raters necessarily indicate different judgments (Gamaroff 32).

One might argue that such measures as limiting the number of courses where writing samples of only certain specific types are gathered, collecting more samples from the same courses across disciplines, adding more raters, or providing more training for raters in order to minimize variability in their judgments of writing samples would provide ratings with high inter-rater correlations. One could counter-argue, however, that, in a center designed to serve students across disciplines who have different writing demands, an assessment must entail the scope of the evaluation that was attempted in this project. There is also no guarantee that increased rater training would eliminate variations in ratings. Further, even extensive training and feedback regarding raters' ratings have been shown to be much less effective at reducing rater variability than researchers expected (e.g., Barrett; Elder, Knoch, Barkhuizen, and von Randow; Lumley and McNamara; Lumley; Weigle). Above all, how realistic is it for writing cen-

ters to allocate resources for more independent raters of hundreds of drafts, especially in times of financial difficulties and cutbacks?

Even though inter-rater reliability between and among raters is moderate to low, the resulting combined ratings, nonetheless, provide an important piece of the puzzle concerning overall performance in terms of each macro- and micro-level feature and as a whole. First, given the level of consistency within raters, a comparison of each individual rater's ratings of the before- and after-drafts and the trend lines of their ratings over time offers an important source of evidence for validating the impact of writing-center work. Mean ratings provided by each of the three individual raters were higher for *all* after-drafts than they were for before-drafts, with 11 out of 21 mean differences reaching the standard significance level (Table 2). Second, correlations between individual analytic features and the holistic rating exhibited similar association patterns; the similarity suggests that the three raters derived their individual judgments about the holistic ratings in a consistent way.⁵ Third, the inclusion of writing samples from a wide variety of disciplines, including multiple text types and genres, which is the daily reality of what most writing centers address, would make achieving high coefficients the exception rather than the norm. Even when high reliability is achieved, no one can guarantee that the same outcomes would be derived if the study were ever to be replicated. As such, criticisms concerning the potential lack of generalizability in learning outcomes-based evaluation may have gravely overlooked the comparison of each individual rater's ratings of the before- and after-drafts and the trend lines of their ratings over time (e.g., Tables 2, 3, and 4). One must note that a measure's reliability sets an upper limit on the strength of its correlation with other measures. If differences in means *over successive occasions* or in trend-line analyses (as was previously reported) emerge as statistically significant, however, the findings indicate that, even with the error variance, the effect was sufficiently strong to emerge as significant. In other words, noteworthy effects were found despite the reliability challenge.

In terms of the perception-based assessment, the average agreement concerning support in the speaking domain (e.g., academic oral conversation skills, oral presentation skills) (i.e., items 4, 13, 14, 15, and 16) provided by the center was 26.2%. This low level of agreement, in conjunction with results generated from the satisfaction survey and the usage profile analysis, suggest an opportunity to increase students' awareness of the range of services and support that the center provides. Concerning the statement regarding whether the support they received had helped them perform better in concrete terms (e.g., grades), 42% agreed. This percentage could be considered high, given that developing writing skills takes time and that the

survey was not conducted immediately after users' Writing Center visits, when, as anyone working in the writing-center field knows, the feedback is often overwhelmingly positive. Those who responded to the survey had time to see how they performed in the courses or assignments for which they had sought help or support from the center.

The perception-based survey might be considered limited by the low response rate (i.e., 6.9% out of the total number of different users of the center in fall 2009), which does not fall into the "magic sampling fraction" (74), according to Dörnyei, and because of the possibility that users who respond to a survey may be a particularly eager group of participants, rather than a cross-section (and, as such, the results can provide only some perceptions related to the center's impact on respondents' writing abilities or confidence levels). Still, the results are valuable in that, first, the relatively high percentage (78.5%) of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed about the center's positive impact in the areas presented in Table 6 indicates that the center is successfully helping students "develop [their] abilities and confidences as [writers]," according to the center's mission statement. In addition, information obtained about how users learned about the center, their reported main reasons for visiting the center, and low percentages in the speaking domain point to an opportunity to increase students' awareness of the range of services and support that the center provides. This recommendation is also supported by results from the satisfaction survey, where respondents indicated that they would use the center more if they understood how the center's offerings or tutors could help them.

Finally, results from the satisfaction survey provided indirect evidence about the value of the services and support provided by the center and its team of tutors. Such gathering of evidence serves several important purposes. First, this evidence indicates in a concrete way how those involved in writing-center work are contributing to students' educational experience. Second, the evidence provides a fuller depiction that can be used in assessing the center's services and support. Users' high level of satisfaction with the support received in organizing a paper, for example, was reflected in the significant improvement in the before- and after-drafts, as evaluated by all raters. These assessments of users' work provide a firmer ground for claiming the impact of the center's work. In addition to illuminating the center's strengths, results from the survey components, in combination with sources of data provided by other components utilized in this systematic, purposeful assessment project, serve as signposts that can direct efforts and limited resources toward best meeting the needs and expectations of the students that the center is designed to support. Further to the recommendations related to such matters as staffing, session length, and frequency of visits,

which were offered in an earlier report on the center's usage profile (Huang, *Forest of Forests*), findings reported in this paper suggest the need to consider or reconsider the following areas:

1. Reevaluate the length of tutoring sessions, a step supported by the usage-profile analysis reported in a previous paper, by the learning outcomes gleaned from the learning outcomes-based evaluation, and by the satisfaction survey.
2. Create a checklist of areas of focus, such as the one presented in Table 8, as the point of departure, where tutees and tutors can clarify their needs and expectations during the session. Recognize the importance of beginning tutoring at points where tutees perceive that support is needed and guiding tutees so that they can accurately self-diagnose areas where they need to devote effort and attention.
3. Raise students' awareness of what and how the center can support their academic studies. In addition to what the center is already doing (e.g., orientation events, class visits, connections with faculty members), consider creating a program that would draw on the volunteer services of faculty members who are willing to answer students' communication questions about writing or speaking in their disciplines, professions, or areas of expertise. This kind of work would strengthen the standing of writing-center work as part of the institution's learning and teaching fabric and also mediate the need for greater discipline-specific expertise in expressing ideas that convey users' specialized, sophisticated knowledge.
4. Design and implement writing and communication workshops that support the needs of students in specific disciplines, especially the physical and life sciences.
5. Conduct ongoing, systematic assessments that will strengthen the Writing Center's impact on students' learning and experience. Such assessments are needed to facilitate longer-term trend-line analyses that can help address demographic and enrollment trends at the institutional level.
6. Include the Writing Center as part of the student-experience survey conducted by the university. This inclusion would encourage an important shift toward both thinking about and viewing the Writing Center as an integral aspect of each student's entire educational experience.

The feasibility of an investigation that could be undertaken beyond the present academic institution was carefully considered. For those who have attempted or are contemplating an outcomes-based assessment in the field of writing-center research, the assessment methods employed in any outcomes-based assessment that goes beyond collecting usage data and constructing a usage profile, as suggested in another report (Huang, *Forest of Forests*), will hinge upon the real time and resource constraints that each writing center faces. Given today's budget pressures, the allocation of funds for such endeavors constitutes a challenge, but, without evidence obtained through systematic and/or longitudinal studies, administrators and practitioners cannot fully address the question: "Are we having the effect we want?" Both the process and product illuminated through this project point to the possibility for collaborative efforts by writing program administrators/writing-center practitioners and researchers in fields related to the work of writing centers when conducting such assessments.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The results must be considered within the context of the study's limitations. First, collecting authentic assignments produced by students for real course requirements as opposed to work done for research purposes necessarily involves evaluating students' writing with different lengths, purposes, tasks, and settings. Despite the control of a one-week period between the submissions of the before- and after-drafts, the myriad of individual and contextual variables and the individual raters' attributes unavoidably interject sources of variability in the rating process and outcomes. The validity and appropriateness of examining each individual rater's ratings have been clearly demonstrated, however.⁶ This analysis and the findings by no means suggest that one should forgo the attainment of higher inter-rater reliability. Collecting samples from the same variety of courses over multiple terms and using the same raters, who share similar rater characteristics, would facilitate a sub-level analysis by subject areas and possibly minimize potential sources of rating variability. These efforts would only further enhance the evidence provided by such assessment endeavors.

Second, the learning outcomes-based assessment focused on one-on-one writing support provided by the center. Gathering sources of direct evidence to validate the effectiveness of writing or speaking workshops offered by the center was beyond the scope of this assessment component. Instead, in the current project, workshops were assessed through the perceptions- and satisfaction-based components. With the knowledge that the validity of measuring learning outcomes on the basis of students' attendance at a

single 50-minute or 1.5 hour workshop may be limited, a follow-up study designed to focus on specific workshops would require different methods to assess the impact of such support on students' learning outcomes.

Third, the multi-component approach to writing-center assessment implemented in this project provided multiple sources of data to better understand the Writing Center's role in promoting students' learning and experience in relation to the support and services that the center has been set up to provide. Assessments of this scope and data of this kind are often lacking for various reasons, as pointed out previously in the paper. One should recognize that no single study can address all questions about the efficacy of a program or unit, nor can it fully measure its impact at all levels. This initiative, however, represents an important attempt to understand the overall functioning of a unit that has been established for just two years at the time this project commenced. The initiative is also consistent with the framework advanced by Betsy Barefoot in the context of the first-year seminar and also advocated by Lerner. A fuller understanding of any writing center's impact must be complemented by follow-up studies that, like the one presented here, involve multiple components. In addition, these studies need to use other methods, such as case studies of individual tutoring sessions and longitudinal studies that follow and track how groups of writing-center users develop their academic writing or speaking skills over the years.

CONCLUSION

Questions about what students gain from their participation in a particular academic program are at the heart of learning in higher education and, as such, an evidence-based approach to outcomes assessment deserves serious attention. In line with Lerner's vision that "mov[ing] toward 'measurable' outcomes can [. . .] be a potential opportunity rather than an impending threat" (2001: 4), this multi-component, outcomes-assessment study responds to the call for research in a specialized field that empirically substantiates the impact of writing-center work and can also be used to enhance the center's practice and operation. The study's findings present a complex picture of students' use of the Writing Center and the center's role in promoting the development of the academic English-language skills that it has been designed to support. The findings have immediate implications for recognizing the Writing Center's important work and for current practices at the institution where the assessment was conducted. Beyond those implications, this project provides practical guidance to writing program administrators and researchers seeking to conduct outcomes assessments. The description of the multi-component assessment method, which utilized

complementary sources of data, and its implementation should be useful to administrators, researchers, and practitioners in academic language-support units at many institutions of higher education. As institutions demand or undertake more writing-center assessments, the increased data and information will make it possible for writing centers to gauge their own effects, to make well-informed programmatic and pedagogical decisions, and to serve as guides in implementing changes that reflect their own institutional contexts.⁷

NOTES

1. The center usage-profile analysis was reported in an earlier report (Huang, *Forest of Forests*).

2. The ethics protocol for the project was approved by the university's Research Ethics Board in September 2009, with the Protocol Number 09–319.

3. Rater characteristics: All have advanced degrees in English, linguistics, applied linguistics, or education; one EL1 speaker and two EL1-like speakers; mean age: 50.3; mean years of teaching experience in academic writing: 19; and mean years of experience in rating: 8. All three raters received either formal or informal training in performance-based writing assessment; all have taught or are currently teaching at universities.

4. The same line of argument can be made about the variability involved in studies that used course grades from different courses taught by different instructors as sources of an indicator for comparing users and nonusers and/or pre- and post-center-visit assignment grades.

5. A qualitative post-rating response was elicited from each rater to understand his or her process of developing a holistic score for a piece of writing and to determine whether the rater employed a particular focus when forming a general impression of a draft's quality. All three raters, despite the variability among their ratings, reported placing a similar emphasis on the macro-level features as the primary focus that affected their impression of a draft's quality while deriving their holistic ratings. Each rater was provided a draft that had been assigned distinctively different ratings among the three raters. Each rater was then asked to "think aloud" as they re-rated the draft. Finally, raters were asked to reflect on whether they encountered any challenges in reconciling authentic subjectivity and objective precision as they followed the rubrics, and what they did when they found themselves having to reconcile their overall impression of a particularly hard-to-evaluate draft and the rating descriptors. The raters' responses revealed their individually complex and richly informative thinking and decision-making processes. Although rater judgment is not the focus of this paper, and adequate coverage of it would require more space and study, the greater understanding of

raters' thinking and decision-making processes obtained through this research has implications for future writing-center assessment endeavors.

6. A detailed qualitative study is currently underway that focuses on examining textual differences between the before- and after-drafts gathered from users who submitted three or more written assignments over the course of an academic term.

7. I owe a debt of gratitude to Catherine Mateer and Teresa Dawson for their vision and support that made this study possible; to Julie Bauer Morrison for her permission to adapt her survey instrument; to Lauren Charlton and Norman Thom, who assisted with distribution of the surveys; to Dahlia Beck, Brittney O'Neill, Chris Whitney, Shu-min Huang, and Carrie Hill for their assistance with data management and rating aspects of the project; and above all, to the Writing Center staff, the participants, and their inspiring instructors who supported this important initiative.

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Huang / Are We Having the Effect We Want?

APPENDIX A. SCORING RUBRICS

Score		Purpose	Development	Organization	Citation/ Format	Grammar	Punctuation
Superior (5)	A paper at this level to a high degree accomplishes all of the following.	Shows clear evidence of purpose, intention, and focus	Shows clear evidence that ideas/claims are extended, explained, elaborated upon, and clarified	Shows clear evidence of logically sequenced writing and coherent sequencing of ideas	Shows clear evidence that writing follows accurately and consistently the format required by the discipline	Demonstrates mastery of the standard conventions of grammar	Demonstrates mastery of standard conventions and mechanics
Strong (4)	A paper at this level to a high degree accomplishes all of the following.	Addresses the topic and task well, though may respond to some aspects of the task more effectively than others	Is generally well developed through the use of appropriate and sufficient explanations, examples, and/or details	Is generally well organized	Generally follows the format required by the discipline, with minor errors	Demonstrates strong control of the standard conventions of grammar; may have a few errors	Demonstrates strong control of standard conventions and mechanics; may have a few errors
Adequate (3)	A paper at this level has one or more of the following characteristics	Addresses only some part of the topic/task	Is adequately developed and generally supports ideas with reasons and examples	Is adequately organized, but the connection of ideas may be occasionally obscure	Adequately follows the format required by the discipline, with some errors	May have some errors	May have some errors

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Score		Purpose	Development	Organization	Citation/ Format	Grammar	Punctuation
Marginal (2)	A paper at this level may include one or more of the following weaknesses.	Is unclear or seriously limited in addressing the topic/task	Provides limited development in response to the topic	Is poorly organized	Has frequent errors in following the format required by the discipline	Has an accumulation of errors	Has an accumulation of errors
Weak (1)	A paper at this level is seriously flawed by one or more of the following weaknesses.	Lacks focus	Provides little development; simplistic development without support	Has very weak organization	Has serious and persistent errors in following the format required by the discipline	Is marred by persistent and serious errors	Is marred by persistent and serious errors
Incompetent (0)	Not connected to the topic, undeveloped, illogical, incoherent, disorganized; has serious mistakes, a format/citation structure that is not recognizable as following a particular style, and persistent errors in grammar and punctuation						

Credentialing College Writing Teachers: WPAs and Labor Reform

Steve Lamos

ABSTRACT

This article contends that WPAs who are concerned with issues of labor equity in the “research-focused academy” (RFA) should work alongside college writing teachers to develop and implement a national credential for college writing instruction. Credentialing can help us collectively to define and promote what college writing teachers know and do as professionals in ways that underscore the value of the teaching mission to the RFA. It can also contribute significantly to promoting professional equality for college writing teachers.

INTRODUCTION

Those of us who are presently WPAs know all too well that the work of professional non-tenure-track writing teachers in the contemporary “research-focused academy” (RFA)¹—that is, the work of those whose exclusive paid function is college-level writing instruction rather than some combination of teaching and research typically associated with the tenure track²—is increasingly devalued even as it is increasingly common. In her 1999 book *Composition in the University*, Sharon Crowley summarizes the plight of many college writing teachers:

Today, many people become interested in composition because they want to teach, and they enjoy the one-on-one encounters with students. . . . Many people who choose composition instruction as their life’s work also do so in part because they desire to serve the university community by helping students to write better. . . . Once they are embarked on this career, however, they discover that teachers of the universally required [first-year] course are underpaid, overworked, and treated with disdain. (120)

Since Crowley's assertion more than a decade ago, the denigration of college writing teachers and their work has clearly continued. Much college writing instruction, and as much as 93% of all first-year writing instruction (Scott 46), continues to be performed by non-tenure track faculty hired into "casualized" positions undermined by low pay, low levels of job security, and low job satisfaction (see Schell and Stock; Bousquet, Scott, and Parascondola). This instruction also tends to be "feminized"—that is, both performed disproportionately by women (as well as by people of color and members of other marginalized groups) and disregarded as excessively "emotional" in comparison to the "scientific" work assumed to be performed by researchers (see Worsham; Trachsel; Schell; Micciche).

In light of the marginalization of college writing teachers, those of us who are WPAs face a profoundly important question: how do we act carefully and critically within our roles as middle managers to advocate for the fair treatment of both teaching work and of professional writing teachers? Or, to put the question in terms articulated by WPAs, how do we consider what Joseph Harris calls "the issue of good teaching for fair pay" (45) in a way that, as Donna Strickland argues, "privileges teaching *along with teachers*, making visible rather than concealing [teachers'] labor" (55)?³ I argue here that WPAs can begin to answer this important question by developing and implementing a national apparatus for "credentialing" college writing teachers. If thoughtfully conceived and implemented, credentialing can help WPAs to define a national set of knowledge and skills essential to professional college writing instruction. Credentialing can also help WPAs to promote significantly improved material and professional conditions for college writing teachers themselves.

I realize, of course, that WPAs must work in concert with college writing teachers and their allies (especially their collective bargaining agents and unions) if credentialing is to have any substantive impact on the pursuit of fair pay, benefits, significant job security, and the like. However, contrary to Marc Bousquet's assertion that what we really need is a "university without a WPA" (185), I believe that WPAs can and must utilize the particular power that we possess as middle managers in the RFA to help shape the terms and conditions of college writing teacher employment. I further believe that credentialing constitutes one centrally important expression of this power—a means for WPAs to generate what Tom Fox characterizes as "the multiple points of pressure" (26) that are needed in order to effect any substantive institutional change within the RFA.

THE CURRENT STATUS OF CREDENTIALING WITHIN THE RFA

Scholars in sociology who study the growth and evolution of professions have long been interested in how credentialing mechanisms aid the work of practitioners within a given profession. According to Elliot Freidson, credentialing processes operate in two main ways: first, by helping practitioners to define and articulate the specific body of knowledge and skill that they possess, thereby offering an “official acknowledgement of . . . a candidate’s qualifications to perform a particular kind of work competently and reliably . . . [in ways admitting them] to membership in [a] special association” (63); second, by establishing the terms and conditions under which professionals labor by creating a kind of “occupational cartel, which gains and preserves monopolistic control over the supply of a good or service in order to enhance the income of its members by protecting them from competition by others” (63). Kim Weeden terms this second function of credentialing “occupational closure,” defining it as the process whereby groups use credentialing as a means to “monopolize advantages and maximize their rewards by closing off opportunities to outsiders they define as inferior or ineligible” (58).⁴ In these ways, credentialing functions to describe *what* it is that practitioners in a given field should know as well as to influence *how* this knowing and doing should shape the material contexts and conditions in which practitioners work.⁵

To be sure, those of us who work in the RFA, whether on or off the tenure track, already possess a range of professional credentials: the PhD, MA, MFA, and many others. We also use these various credentials to perform work in our academic world. For instance, our credentials serve as proof that we possess a particular level of expertise in our subject matter: a PhD holder is assumed to have both mastered his or her field of study and to be able to produce new independent research within this field. At the same time, these credentials also help us to differentiate ourselves professionally, academically, and materially from one another: a PhD holder is typically assumed to possess more expertise in the discipline than an MA holder and is therefore perceived to be more qualified for certain kinds of jobs (for example, a traditionally defined tenure-track position) or to deserve higher pay.

It is also clear, however, that contemporary RFA credentials are granted as proof of individual ability to understand, produce, and/or utilize new *research*, most often through traditional publication within a discipline, rather than as proof of the ability to *teach* first and foremost.⁶ Embedded in this current RFA credentialing arrangement is a number of highly problematic attitudes towards teaching: for instance, the belief identified

by Margaret Marshall that “teaching is a simple activity, merely the job to be done in the bureaucracy that is higher education” (143) or the belief described by Stephen North that “the teaching of first-year composition . . . the teaching of writing in general . . . and to a lesser but still considerable extent, lower-division teaching of all kinds . . . [can] be turned over to the less-than-fully-compensated and/or less-than-fully-qualified” (235). In turn, these problematic attitudes both justify and promote unequal working conditions for college writing teachers. In other words, because these teachers are perceived as doing “simple” work reserved for the “less-than-fully-qualified,” they are also especially likely to be “less-than-fully-compensated,” especially within a contemporary higher education context where institutional appropriations per FTE from 2009–2010 are nearly 20% lower than 1999–2000 levels after being adjusted for inflation (College Board 3). Making matters still worse is the current oversupply of potential college writing teacher candidates considered for this (purportedly) non-professional and non-important college writing work. There are tremendous numbers of PhDs, MAs, and MFAs from across many (mostly Humanities) disciplines who have had the experience of teaching freshman composition in some form or another as graduate students: their presence in the pool of potential applicants for college writing teacher jobs serves to drive down pay, curtail benefits, and otherwise negatively impact working conditions. Problematic attitudes toward teaching and problematic treatment of teachers thus go hand-in-hand.⁷

CREDENTIALING COLLEGE WRITING TEACHERS IN THE RFA: KEY OBJECTIVES

Given the problematic attitudes and circumstances that have long faced college writing teachers within the RFA, it is unsurprising that neither college teaching in general nor the teaching of college writing in particular has been credentialed as a professional activity, at least not in any nationally recognized way. Nonetheless, it seems clear that a thoughtful credentialing program could help us to achieve a number of worthwhile national objectives,⁸ including the development of

1. an explicit set of guidelines articulating what college writing teachers know and do as professionals;
2. new graduate-level educational programs designed to provide focused training with respect to these professional bodies of knowledge and skill;

3. robust assessment mechanisms, each grounded in peer review, that can be used to certify whether individuals possess these required professional bodies of teaching knowledge and skill;
4. credential-based hiring, assessment, and retention practices that can be used by WPAs to promote occupational closure for teachers (especially by stressing these teachers' value to and relative scarcity within the contemporary RFA);
5. credential-based collective bargaining and unionization strategies that can be used by professional college writing teachers to pursue occupational closure further (especially by arguing for improved salaries, working conditions, and job security on the basis of teachers' professional value to and relative scarcity in the contemporary RFA).

The first two of these objectives—the development of a nationally recognized body of knowledge and skill along with the creation of nationally recognized graduate programs providing access to this body—should help us to articulate and publicize the things that professional college writing teachers routinely know and do. In this sense, these objectives should establish college writing instruction as important professional work that is distinct from yet complementary to other traditional positions in the RFA, including tenure-track professor, graduate student teaching assistant, and “free-flyer” adjunct teacher. The third of these objectives—the creation and implementation of assessment mechanisms for determining who does and does not possess this professional knowledge and skill—should allow us to begin offering “proof” of individual teachers’ professionalism and expertise as supplied by their peers. Finally, the fourth and fifth of these objectives—the implementation of credential-based hiring, assessment, and retention guidelines to be used by WPAs and the creation of credential-focused collective bargaining and unionization strategies to be used by teachers themselves—should help to promote occupational closure by changing both the demand for and supply of professional college writing teachers. Indeed, WPAs should begin identifying, hiring, and reappointing teachers on the basis of their professionalism, affording these professional teachers increased value within the RFA even as their overall supply is decreased (at least in comparison to the current oversupply of non-credentialed teachers); meanwhile, WPAs should support college writing teachers as these teachers demand better working conditions on the basis of their nationally valued knowledge and skill set coupled with their relatively scarce supply.

Ultimately, I see all five of these objectives reflecting Bruce Horner's recent recommendations about how best to promote contemporary labor equity for college writing teachers. Horner worries that, at present, too many well-intentioned efforts to promote labor equity within the RFA—especially efforts to unionize college writing teachers (see Bousquet, Schell, Scott)—assume that teaching labor is really no different from any other kind of labor. These efforts assume, in other words, “an hour's work for an hour's pay, no matter the worker or the material social specificities of that hour's activities” (81), thereby advocating stances that “deny, ironically, the very conditions” (81) needed to reward the specific work of teaching within the RFA environment. Horner insists, rather, that all efforts to improve teachers' working lives must focus directly on the unique and situated nature of teaching work and its connection to the overall health of the RFA:

Redefining the work of composition in a way that acknowledge[s] that work as an activity that involves all its participants—students as well as teachers, WPAs, and untold others—working both within and on the social through what and how they write, reflect on their writing, and revise—would be a step toward a more accurate, just, and intellectually honest assessment of its real and potential value. (85)

Taken together, the five objectives of credentialing can help us both to achieve the kind of “accurate, just, and intellectually honest” understanding of teaching work that Horner advocates as well as to push for labor equality on the basis of this understanding.

I also see these five objectives of credentialing as resonating strongly with the positive ways that professional credentialing has operated for K-12 public school teachers.⁹ These teachers are currently credentialed through state-issued teaching licenses that provide proof of their professional knowledge and skill. In turn, these licenses are supported by a number of nationally recognized credentialing bodies, including both the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC)—an organization comprised of teachers, administrators, principals, and other educators which aims to help standardize new teacher licensing processes across states—and the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS)—a group of teachers, administrators, principals, and other educators which strives to assess the advanced teaching skills of already-licensed teachers. I mention these latter two groups by name because both explicitly attempt to define K-12 pedagogical knowledge and skills and to aid teachers in their collective bargaining activities in ways that are instructive to those of us in the RFA.

Specifically, the INTASC's "Test of Teaching Knowledge" articulates an explicit body of pedagogical knowledge for use in teacher licensing examinations, including knowledge of pedagogical strategies, student learning and development, assessment practices, language acquisition, and linguistic difference and diversity (Council of Chief State School Officers, "Test of Teaching Knowledge" par. 1). The INTASC also promotes a number of peer-review-based portfolio assessments of new teachers' praxis that are reviewed by "experienced teachers who are trained as scorers" (Council of Chief State School Officers, "INTASC Portfolio Development" par. 6). Along similar lines, the NBPTS's extensive discipline-specific portfolio assessment focuses on the actual teaching practices of experienced K-12 teachers by requiring context-specific analysis of students' work, of teachers' own work with both small and large groups, and of teachers' work with parents and others in the community (NBPTS, "Adolescence and Young Adulthood" 2-1 and 2-2). NBPTS portfolio assessment further relies on extensive peer review, with each teaching portfolio that it receives reviewed by at least twelve already-credentialed NBPTS teachers (NBPTS, "Assessment Practices" par. 4). And, finally, credentials from both of these groups serve as important nodes around which teachers' collective bargaining agents and unions, particularly the National Education Association (NEA) and the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), can organize. Scholars of K-12 education point out that these credentials are routinely wielded by both the NEA and AFT as part of efforts to "solidify broader control over education policy and practice and the conditions and incentives under which teachers work" (Rotherham and Mead 31) as well as part of efforts to "restrict the supply" of teachers and "put upward pressure on salaries" for those who are credentialed (Ballou and Podgursky 77).

I mention these contemporary K-12 credentialing processes from the INTASC and NBPTS here for two reasons. First, they demonstrate that administrators, teachers, and their allies can work together successfully to characterize professional teaching work, to develop worthwhile assessments rooted squarely in peer review, and to advocate for labor equality on the basis of this characterization. Second, as I will describe in more detail later, these K-12 credentialing processes can serve as models for at least some of the types of credentialing that we might imagine within the RFA. Even though credentialing has not solved all K-12 teachers' contemporary problems,¹⁰ it has managed to influence positively these teachers' professional lives in ways that we in the RFA should consider emulating.

WHY NOW? CREDENTIALING AND CONTEMPORARY PRESSURES FACING THE RFA

The potentially positive outcomes of credentialing outlined above are certainly worth exploring. But it is also clear that those of us interested in pursuing the idea of credentialing must be prepared to grapple with an extremely difficult question: namely, if the RFA has long dismissed teaching activity of all kinds, and if the RFA is under present-day pressure to cut costs, then how can WPAs possibly convince other cost-minded RFA administrators to adopt a credential that is designed both to professionalize teaching activity and promote occupational closure (read: raise salaries)? Answering this question is not easy, but it is possible, especially if we consider this credential in light of the unprecedented pressures that the RFA currently faces to attend to undergraduate education.

One important pressure emerging in the wake of skyrocketing undergraduate tuition costs is that of “accountability” regarding the quality of undergraduate instruction within the RFA. As the price of public four-year tuition has increased an average of 5.6% beyond the general rate of inflation for each of the last ten years (College Board 1), and with tuition at four-year public institutions having risen on average 7.9% for in-state students and 6.0% for out-of-state students from 2009–2010 to 2010–2011 alone (1), the RFA is feeling more and more pressure to prove that the public is getting what it is paying for with its undergraduate tuition dollars. Higher education accreditation expert John Bardo characterizes this pressure as a public demand for “accountability for student learning outcomes and cost containment” (49) that is emanating from “across the political spectrum” (48). He further argues that this demand is “much more outcomes based than in the past” (48), explaining that “many outcomes of learning that have been held up by higher education as paramount, but are rarely fully defined or evaluated, will need to be operationalized and linked to the specific structure of the curriculum” (56). Bardo even highlights the particular accountability pressures being placed on writing instruction, arguing that “collegiate-level writing and communication skills, and the ability to apply them, are often incorporated in specific courses, but most institutions make little effort to ensure that these skills can be used effectively in a variety of settings” (56). Such demand for accountability, both for undergraduate education in general and for undergraduate writing instruction in particular, is forcing the contemporary RFA to think carefully about its teaching mission in new ways.¹¹

The RFA is also facing increasing competition for undergraduates and their tuition dollars, especially from the for-profit education market. This

market is growing faster than any other sector within higher education during the last decade, now serving roughly 10% of the entire US undergraduate population as of 2010 (Wilson par. 2).¹² And, as many scholars of for-profit education suggest, one crucial factor accounting for this growth is for-profit institutions' direct focus on students and their learning. Education scholar Vincente Lechuga asserts that for-profit institutions cultivate an ethos that is "centered equally on the ideas of teaching *and* learning" in ways that make "faculty partially responsible for ensuring that students learn the course material" (300). He also argues that these institutions promote an explicit customer-service mentality that stresses ease of scheduling for students, availability of on-line instruction, and other kinds of on-demand educational services (303).¹³ In contrast, the type of undergraduate education offered by many RFA institutions—for example, one featuring large lectures and/or a lack of personal attention from faculty—may seem especially unattractive to prospective undergraduates.¹⁴ Clearly, then, the RFA is facing considerable competitive pressure to demonstrate its explicit commitment to undergraduates and their needs.

The RFA is further expected to demonstrate its connection with and value to the immediate communities in which it operates. Shirley Rose and Irwin Weiser describe this as specific pressure on RFA institutions to demonstrate "engagement with their stakeholder communities" and "the contributions their work makes to the public good" (2). They add that such engagement is increasingly expected to ensure that "both sides of the engagement partnership [that is, university and community] . . . not only will contribute expertise and other resources but also will garner new knowledge and develop new resources" (7).¹⁵ In this sense, RFA institutions are expected to begin replacing their purported ivory tower isolation with activities resulting in communal construction of knowledge, skill, and expertise—all requiring effective, dedicated, and professional undergraduate teachers.

Finally, the RFA is feeling considerable internal pressure to understand the short-term and long-term implications of its own overwhelming reliance on non-tenure-track teaching labor. Higher education scholars Jack H. Schuster and Martin J. Finklestein report that many faculty and administrators within the RFA believe that there has been a "revolution in academic appointments" (192) resulting from an overwhelming reliance on non-tenure track teaching, especially in composition (192). They also assert that this shift is "remarkable—we would say astonishing" (195) in terms of its effect on higher education hiring practices in ways that raise a host of profoundly important questions for RFA faculty and administrators, including

1. How might these practices threaten to reinstall “a discredited old European model [of higher education] featuring an imminent central figure in an academic program, surrounded by concentric circles of lesser beings whose professional status is marginalized” (354)?
2. How might these practices threaten to disrupt further basic relationships between teaching and research in the RFA (357)?
3. How else will these practices shape the overall “direction and effectiveness of the academic profession” (363)?

These questions challenge RFA faculty and administration to think carefully about how their RFA work environment has changed as a function of casualized teaching labor. They also challenge faculty and administration to consider what these changes might mean for our collective future in academe.

Each of these contemporary pressures being placed on the RFA stresses issues that are directly related to undergraduate teaching. Each also helps to create a contemporary context in which the credentialing of college writing teachers, a tool whose primary goal is to promote successful undergraduate writing instruction, becomes increasingly viable. I will have much more to say in a later section of this essay about exactly how WPAs might begin addressing these specific pressures as they advocate for credentialing. For now, though, I want to stress that these pressures are creating a *kairotic* moment for credentialing to which we ought to respond.

CREDENTIALING IN THE RFA: KEY ISSUES

Having outlined briefly the potential value of credentialing in the RFA and having described some of the contemporary pressures that might help us to pursue credentialing in the immediate future, I now want to explore some of the issues (each related to the aforementioned five objectives) that WPAs will need to discuss if we are to imagine the parameters of and possibilities for a national teaching credential for college writing teachers. Of course, these issues constitute a beginning point, not an ending point, for careful discussion that will likely be ongoing for some time.

Issue 1: What kinds of knowledge and skill ought to be included in a national credential for college writing teachers and why?

If WPAs are to initiate a worthwhile credentialing plan, then we will need to discuss how best to define the professional teaching of writing

within the knowledge-making environment of the RFA. Developing such a definition is made difficult by the many ways in which teaching has long been discounted within the RFA. However, in his 1990 book *Scholarship Reconsidered*, Ernest Boyer offers us a potentially useful starting point for positively defining teaching within the RFA, especially as he discusses two concepts: the “scholarship of integration,” which Boyer describes as a combination of “serious, disciplined work that seeks to interpret, draw together, and bring new insight to bear on original research” (19); and the “scholarship of teaching,” which he describes as “stimulating active, and not passive, learning and encouraging students to be critical, creative thinkers” in ways that involve “not only transmitting knowledge, but *transforming* it and *extending* it as well” (24). We WPAs should articulate the ways in which professional college writing teachers within the RFA enact these two kinds of crucial knowledge-making work on a regular basis: for instance, by trying to “integrate” the latest knowledge and information being produced within composition and rhetoric into teaching practice and/or by trying to “transform” and “extend” this knowledge through public teaching work such as service learning and community engagement. We should also articulate carefully how such teaching-based knowledge-making work remains integral to the mission of the RFA yet distinct from the kind of “scholarship of discovery” work that the RFA has long privileged, work that Boyer describes as “fostering the commitment to knowledge for its own sake . . . and to following, in a disciplined fashion, an investigation wherever it may lead” (17). By defining teaching as an important knowledge-making activity, we can move toward clearly articulating both the value of and distinctiveness of professional college writing instruction within the RFA.

WPAs also need to discuss the specific bodies of knowledge and skill that professional college writing instructors should possess. Although doing so in a way that balances the needs of a national credential with the needs of local institutions will certainly be a challenge, we might begin by discussing teacher knowledge and skill in terms of

1. writing and literacy theory;
2. education and learning theory (especially work with second-language, second-dialect, and special-needs learners);
3. writing pedagogy techniques and practices relevant to traditional classroom, one-on-one, and digital settings across a range of humanities, social science, and natural science disciplines (for example, through relevant work in FYC programs, WAC/WID programs, residential life programs, and others);

4. curriculum-building across a range of modalities;
5. institutional and programmatic assessment, especially of actual student learning;
6. various means through which to make teaching activity explicitly public through mechanisms including (but not limited to) service learning and community engagement.

Considering the first four of these should help us to delineate key components of effective professional writing instruction as discussed within a range of contemporary teacher-training literature (for example, Gottschalk and Hjortshoj; Glenn, Goldthwaite, and Connors; Pytlik and Liggett; Ward and Carpenter). In turn, considering the fifth and sixth of these should help us to imagine worthwhile ways to prepare college writing teachers to respond to the aforementioned pressures facing the RFA. Specifically, substantive work with programmatic and institutional assessment (for example, Huot; Huot and O'Neill; Broad) should help credentialed teachers contribute immediately to institutional, regional, and national efforts to document the learning promoted by effective writing programs. In turn, substantive work with community engagement and service learning (for example, Parks; Flower; Kinloch; Rose and Weiser; Grabill) should help to ensure that credentialed teachers are well prepared to engage in the kinds of community-based activity that the RFA is under pressure to produce.

Issue 2: How might we develop graduate programs that offer training directly relevant to this credential?

WPAs will also need to discuss the types of graduate training that we will offer in order to educate credentialed college writing teachers most effectively. These discussions will need to account for the fact that some of us will prefer stand-alone credentialing coursework whereas others will prefer to offer such coursework as part of a larger advanced certificate or degree program. These discussions will also need to account for the fact that our programs need to offer nationally recognized training and education in ways that are simultaneously compatible with local institutional contexts and cultures. We will, therefore, want to entertain a variety of options.

In some institutional contexts, shorter versions of programs like those described by Irene Ward and Merry Perry might make the most sense:

1. one graduate-level pedagogy seminar and one graduate-level composition theory seminar focused specifically on the areas of knowledge needed for this credential;

2. a formal observation program offering credentialing candidates access to the work of both peer and expert writing teachers;
3. a formal faculty mentoring program overseen by an experienced writing teacher that offers detailed, honest, and critical feedback concerning a credentialing candidate's teaching methods and techniques; and
4. development of a professional teaching portfolio and/or collection of professional work demonstrating a candidate's requisite knowledge and skills. (126–130)¹⁶

In other institutional contexts, longer programs of the sort characterized by Judith Glazer as she describes the typical format of the late 1960s and early 1970s “Doctor of Arts in Teaching” degree¹⁷ might be more desirable:

1. multiple semesters of graduate coursework in a “major” subject (here, writing instruction);
2. multiple semesters of graduate coursework in a “minor” subject matter related to effective college teaching;
3. one or more official teaching internships and/or externships (that is, teaching experiences outside of a candidate's home institution) designed to offer a candidate detailed, honest, and critical feedback concerning her or his teaching methods and techniques;
4. comprehensive oral and written exams; and
5. a final major research project focused directly on college teaching (here, again, the teaching of writing). (14–16)

Finally, regardless of whether we want our institutions to develop shorter or longer programs, we should imagine ways to offer educational experiences that extend across multiple courses and multiple semesters (as opposed to the single one-semester semester TA training course offered by many RFA institutions as their sole introduction to college writing instruction); to offer chances for formal self-reflection on teaching activity (see Rose and Finders; Bamberg; Burnham and Jackson); and to offer explicit opportunities for professional development and job market training (see Carpenter).

Issue 3: How—and by whom—should this credential be granted?

Once issues of knowledge, skill, and training have been discussed at length, WPAs will also want to consider (in especially close consultation with teachers and their allies) the assessment mechanisms that we can use to

grant this credential. In particular, we will want to weigh the relative merits of instituting some sort of standardized assessment, of instituting a more portfolio-based assessment approach, and of instituting some combination of the two—deciding which of these has the greatest chance of balancing national needs with local concerns. We will also want to determine the degree to which we might use K-12 credentials like those offered by the INTASC and NBPTS as models for our work. For instance, we might emulate aspects of the INTASC’s “Test of Teaching Knowledge” as we imagine our assessment, especially its direct focus on “theories of teaching and learning, cognitive, social, and physical development, diagnostic and evaluative assessments, language acquisition, the role of student background in the learning process, and other foundational knowledge and skills essential to the profession of teaching” (Council of Chief State School Officers, “Test of Teaching Knowledge” par. 1). We might similarly emulate aspects of the NBPTS’ elaborate portfolio assessment system, especially its requirements that credentialing candidates

1. “analyze students’ growth and development as readers/interpreters of text and as writers” (2–1) using actual examples of student work as evidence;
2. illustrate “teaching strategies . . . for whole-class discussion in which the students engage with [their teachers] and with each other in meaningful discourse about a topic, concept, or text related to English language arts” (2–1) using videotaped examples of actual teaching; and
3. demonstrate “partnerships with students’ families and community, and [their own] development as a learner and collaborator with other professionals, by submitting descriptions and documentation of [their] activities and accomplishments in those areas.” (2–2)

Although our assessments of college writing teachers will ultimately need to stress RFA-situated knowledge creation in ways that these K-12 credentials do not, WPAs nonetheless stand to learn a good deal from carefully considering these key aspects of INTASC and NBPTS activity.

We will also need to discuss the role of teacher-led peer review within any assessments that we develop for our credential: after all, national peer review has long been central to assessment of research activity within the RFA as well as to successful K-12 credentialing mechanisms for teaching. Given that WPAs need to implement this credential from scratch so to speak, initial peer review might be best achieved by assembling teams

composed of WPAs, seasoned college writing teachers, tenure-track faculty, and credentialed K-12 teachers: these teams will represent a variety of stakeholders while offering at least some measure of explicit peer review performed by college writing teachers themselves. However, once this credentialing process has been operating successfully for several years, fuller peer review might be best achieved by assessment teams composed mostly of other already-credentialed college writing teachers (perhaps still accompanied by a small number of WPAs and other stakeholders). Employing already-credentialed teachers as the majority of peer reviewers for this credential will ensure that teachers exert direct control over entry into their own professional ranks.

Issue 4: How can this credential best be used by WPAs to promote occupational closure?

At the same time that assessment mechanisms are being discussed, WPAs will also need to determine (again, in especially close consultation with college writing teachers and their allies) how this credential can be used as part of efforts to promote occupational closure for teachers, keeping in mind that these closure efforts will be complicated given that teaching has been perceived as decidedly unprofessional for so long. For instance, WPAs will want to imagine various approaches to hiring, evaluation, and retention for college writing teachers that are rooted in this credential. We might begin to write job ads for new college writing teacher positions that include specific references to this credential and the bodies of knowledge that it privileges: this would allow us to begin hiring from among a pool of job candidates who possess professional knowledge and skill as we have defined them. We might also begin hiring a certain percentage of credentialed college writing teachers for our teaching positions, slowly increasing this percentage over time, so that we can eventually make this credential a prerequisite for new employment. Both of these steps would help us to create a stronger demand for credentialed professional teachers even as their overall supply shrinks.

WPAs will also need to establish teacher evaluation and reappointment processes at our home institutions that reflect the basic tenets of this national credential. We might consider, for instance, how our local institutional evaluation and reappointment criteria can be immediately revised so that they better reflect the areas of knowledge and skill included within this credential. We might further imagine how, once these evaluation and reappointment criteria have been in place for a reasonable period, we can require that teachers seeking reappointment at our home institutions pos-

sess this credential as a prerequisite for their reappointment. These criteria should further increase demand for credentialed college writing teachers within the RFA even as their supply is limited.

Finally, in the spirit of fostering true peer review conducted by college writing teachers themselves, WPAs should also imagine how best to incorporate already-credentialed college writing instructors from outside of our home institutions into our home evaluation and reappointment processes. We should also have our own credentialed instructors serve other campuses in this capacity. By doing so, we would begin to offer a decidedly national dimension to teaching evaluation that complements the national focus of our credential. We would also begin to move past the kinds of routine problems with teaching evaluation that Boyer points out: namely, that in many RFA contexts,

The question of how to evaluate *teaching* remains a mare's nest of controversy. The problem relates not only to procedures but also to the weight assigned to the endeavor. Teaching, as presently viewed, is like a currency that has value in its own country but can't be converted into other currencies. It may be highly regarded on a sizeable campus, and yet not be a particularly marketable skill. . . . For teaching to be considered equal to research, it must be vigorously assessed, using criteria that we recognized [sic] within the academy, not just in a single institution. (37)

Using this credential as a centerpiece of our evaluation practices should help us to begin transforming the "currency" of teaching from a purely local one into one with more clearly defined national components.

Issue 5: How can this credential best be used by college writing teachers themselves to promote occupational closure?

At the same time that WPAs are imagining some of their own actions with respect to this credential, we should also be encouraging college writing teachers and their allies to imagine this credential as the basis for their various efforts to promote occupational closure, again mindful that these efforts will be complex ones within which credentialing plays just one part. WPAs might encourage college writing teachers, for instance, to develop credential-based collective bargaining and/or unionization strategies anchored in the idea that, as Tony Scott argues, "those who teach writing are legitimate professionals with advanced education in composition and rhetoric" (53). WPAs might also work alongside teachers to imagine how teachers can emulate some of the successes of K-12 credentialing and organization as outlined earlier. And, especially important (at least

in my view), WPAs might also work with teachers to stress the possibilities for teaching tenure within the RFA. If college writing instruction can be successfully characterized as an important strain of knowledge-making work, and if this characterization can lead to rigorous evaluation of teaching in ways that truly recognize and reward excellence, then college writing teachers ought to be able to pursue the option of tenure for their best and brightest. As Mary Webb and Kathleen A. Boardman argue, failing to allow for the possibility of teaching tenure can make even “good” contemporary college writing teacher jobs—that is, those jobs which feature multi-year contracts, strong working conditions, and other advantages—seem only “sort of equal” (38).¹⁸ Of course, making arguments about teaching tenure and true professional equality will be difficult, especially given the overall shrinking of tenure possibilities within our current climate of RFA cost-cutting. Nonetheless, we can and should try to make these arguments on the basis of teachers’ newly credentialed knowledge and skill, as well as on the basis of teachers’ newly articulated value to the knowledge-making enterprise of the RFA.¹⁹

CONCERNS ABOUT THE “COST” OF CREDENTIALING WITHIN THE RFA: POSSIBILITIES FOR STORY-CHANGING

There is one crucially important final concern that WPAs will need to grapple with directly if credentialing is to be successful: namely, the problem of its perceived cost. As I have already suggested, any attempt to credential college writing instruction within the RFA is likely to encounter significant resistance from cost-conscious administrators, especially since one of the explicit goals of this credential is to improve teachers’ working conditions. However, WPAs can think strategically about specific ways to overcome such cost-based resistance to credentialing with the help of Linda Adler-Kassner’s strategy of “story-changing.” This strategy aims to “change the dominant story about the work of writing instruction” (2) in order to “have some voice in the frames that surround our work and the tropes that emanate from those frames regarding our classes and students” (37). It also aims to help WPAs to think systematically and strategically about

where we have the most influence and the loudest voices—at our local levels. We can think about who we can reach out to, learn from, and enlist as allies. And with them, we can develop a communication plan that helps all of us shape and communicate messages about writers and writing to audiences who might just attend to those messages—and change the stories that they tell. (163)

With the help of story-changing, WPAs can begin to transform existing institutional narratives about the potential “costs” of credentialing into narratives that highlight credentialing as a kind of “investment” in the future of undergraduate instruction within the RFA, especially if we focus on the contemporary pressures that the RFA faces.

WPAs should focus explicitly, for instance, on the connection between credentialing and accountability. We can stress that this credential will ensure that college writing teachers have received rigorous pedagogical training and experience before walking into the RFA classroom—proof of our willingness to be more accountable for the quality of our undergraduate instruction. We can also stress that, with the aid of this credential, college writing teachers will have both been trained in assessment theory and practice and prepared to participate in national peer review of other teachers’ work—all skills enabling them to further demonstrate accountability for undergraduate instruction. We might even argue that, through these benefits, credentialing will help us to promote what Adler-Kassner and Susanmarie Herrington describe as joint “responsibility” for undergraduate education to be shared between the RFA and its various stakeholders. Such responsibility, Adler-Kassner and Herrington insist, is best achieved by “talk[ing] with external stakeholders about how we and they understand learning processes, find[ing] common ground among these ideas, and work[ing] together to develop shared projects that investigate whether and how students are developing and not—in ways that we consider significant” (91). We can stress, in other words, that credentialing should allow the RFA not only to demonstrate accountability to stakeholders but also to request stakeholders’ direct participation in and joint responsibility for undergraduate education in ways that can help ensure long-term public investment in RFA undergraduate education.

WPAs should likewise pursue story-changing that focuses on how the RFA can use credentialing to compete for undergraduate tuition dollars. Here, we can underscore the fact that our national credential will focus squarely on improving undergraduate writing instruction in ways that make the RFA more attractive to tuition-payers. We can also highlight the fact that credentialing fits especially well with arguments for the “branding” of writing instruction as articulated by scholars like Keith Rhodes. Rhodes contends that branding “elite composition” as a type of theoretically grounded and student-focused writing instruction can help us to distinguish our work from the usual “Brand X composition,” which he describes as little more than a “weak hodgepodge of leftover grammar correcting and hackneyed process stages . . . that has come to be the public image of composition among even relatively savvy audiences” (62). WPAs

can stress that credentialing aims to cultivate elite composition instruction that is dedicated to developing undergraduate writing abilities through rigorous coursework, community engagement, and the like. We can also emphasize that this resulting elite composition will move beyond the kind of hackneyed hodgepodge of which Rhodes is rightly critical and toward an RFA-specific brand of writing instruction recognized for its integral ties to effective knowledge-making activity.

WPAs should also conduct story-changing activities that underscore the other key contemporary pressures being placed on the RFA. With respect to pressures for community engagement, for instance, WPAs can highlight the fact that credentialed teachers will already have moved past the initial steep learning curve that successful community engagement work requires. Credentialed teachers should thus be more likely than other non-credentialed teachers to forge successful long-term partnerships with the communities in which they work. They should also be well prepared to contribute to what Michael Norton and Eli Goldblatt describe as the “confluence of faculty involvement and institutional support [which] contributes to sustaining an ongoing partnership” (38) between the RFA and its surrounding communities. With respect to pressures on RFA faculty and administration to understand recent shifts higher education employment patterns, WPAs can stress that the future ability of tenure track research faculty to do their work within the RFA depends, at least in part, on their embrace of professional RFA teachers as doing legitimate and valuable work. Or, to use Boyer’s terminology, WPAs can stress that the future of the “scholarship of discovery” within the RFA depends in part on a thoughtful embrace of the “scholarship of integration” and the “scholarship of teaching” as well.

Each of these story-changing activities tries to address concerns about the cost of credentialing in ways that emphasize its potential as an investment in the future of the RFA. Each focuses, that is, on an issue of considerable concern to the RFA, highlights the relationship between credentialing and that particular issue, and stresses the ways in which credentialing can help to address that issue directly and forcefully. And, in so doing, each of these story-changing activities aims to identify and capitalize upon contexts “where we have the most influence and the loudest voices” in the pursuit of labor equality.

NEXT STEPS: NATIONAL AND LOCAL

Although the labor situation faced by many college writing instructors has long been a problematic one, my hope is that the credentialing processes proposed here can help WPAs to begin advocating for labor equality more

effectively. We should propose such a credential, we should discuss carefully the various issues related to its development and implementation, and we should consider various story-changing strategies designed to overcome concerns about the costs of credentialing. We should also, however, create and sustain both national and local venues where these issues can be discussed openly. By focusing on both the national and the local, we can successfully acknowledge Adler-Kassner's caution that

It's easy to become concerned about actions that have the potential to substantially affect WPA work at the national level. . . . But an individual WPA, or even a group of WPAs collaborating together, is but a fly on the windscreen of this approaching steamroller [of anti-education sentiment]. On the other hand, working at the local level, we can develop assessment strategies within our own programs that reflect what *we* value, that ask questions and implement procedures that reflect what we know about best practices within our own courses and discipline. We can then use these assessments as bases for conversations beyond our programs. . . . (184)

Combining national and local plans for action should help us to avoid the fate of the "fly on the windscreen": we can dream big in terms of national credentialing, but we should complement our big dreaming with smaller actions that begin to enact effective change on a more local level.

As one important national step, we should establish a CWPA-led task force dedicated to talking about and through the many issues related to credentialing. This task-force might work in direct consultation with some of the other central professional organizations already advocating for college writing teachers' needs: for example, the CCCC's Committee on Part-Time, Adjunct, or Contingent Labor; collective bargaining agents and labor unions such as the AFT, NEA, and AAUP; and K-12 groups such as INTASC and NBPTS. This taskforce might also be charged with developing a mission statement or written outline for a national credentialing activity, perhaps equivalent in importance to the WPA's "Evaluating the Intellectual Work of Writing Administration" or its "Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing." This type of written statement would help us to develop a concrete blueprint for national action relevant to credentialing. Meanwhile, we should also try enacting ideas relevant to credentialing on a more local level. For instance, we might try to develop localized credentialing and education mechanisms to be used by a smaller number of schools (for example, by all schools within one specific system or one specific region). At the same time, we should also work toward building local and regional review and reappointment processes designed to promote localized

peer review of teaching activity even before our national credential begins operating. This kind of simultaneous national and local action will give us the best chance of pursuing credentialing—and thus the best chance of pursuing a fuller sense of labor equality for college writing teachers within the RFA environment.²⁰

NOTES

1. Lance Massey and I have begun using the term “research-focused academy” (RFA) in other publications in order to reflect the fact that all institutional types, spanning from two-year community colleges through Research I universities, are demanding increased traditional research productivity from their tenure-track faculty—especially in an age where this research productivity is central to institutional prestige and “ranking.” (see Hazelkorn). Education researchers Jack H. Schuster and Martin J. Finklestein describe this shift toward research across these institutions as part of “an overall pattern . . . of increasingly widespread publication extending well beyond the research university sector. . . the data clearly suggest a system that expects research and publication almost across the board [that is, across institutional types]—even as it is imposing a return to heavier teaching loads” (103). For other discussions of increased research pressures across the RFA, see also Glazer; Gappa, Austin, and Trice.

2. Given my purposes here, college writing teachers can be defined as those individuals in the RFA who are hired first and foremost to provide teaching services off the tenure-track rather than to engage in the usual teaching/research/service split of the traditional tenure track. See Gappa, Austin, and Trice for a more detailed characterization of the work of these individuals.

3. For other articulations of these questions, see also Snyder; Scott.

4. The idea that credentialing deliberately attempts to create a professional monopoly aimed at “closing off opportunities to outsiders” may sound a bit off-putting, even troubling, to some readers who are concerned with labor equity. However, this exclusivity is actually fundamental to the power of credentialing and the benefit that it affords. Freidson argues, for instance, that the exclusivity afforded by credentialing, while capable of being abused or otherwise used in a “defective” fashion (64), ultimately acts as the means whereby an individual practitioner within a profession “establishes the possibility of gaining a living” (87). Similarly, Weeden insists that, although such exclusivity might sometimes be “based on any convenient or visible characteristic, including race, social background, language, religion, and gender” (58), it reflects in general the more benign principle that “social groups can and do act to further their collective economic interests” (59). So, while credentialing and its occupational closure functions are admittedly exclusive, this exclusivity is important to improving the working lives of individuals possessing the credential.

5. For other discussions of credentialing and its professional effects, see various contributors to Hatch; Brown.

6. I recognize, of course, that there are many individual institutions that do require proof of a teaching job candidate's teaching ability and experience—whether a teaching portfolio, a teaching demonstration, teaching-related publications, a graduate-level “teaching certificate,” or some combination of these. I also recognize that a number of individual writing programs have been certified by groups such as the CWPA and the CCCC. But, at present, individual college writing teachers are not systematically credentialed as individuals in any national sense.

7. For other discussions of the problematic treatment of teaching in the RFA, see Glazer; Boyer; Gappa, Austin, and Trice.

8. I use the term “national” provisionally at this time: as one of the reviewers of this piece has rightly noted, such a credential might ultimately be easier to implement at a regional or state level. I still believe, however, that given the need to make this credential seem as legitimate and as widely accepted as possible, a truly national credential for professional writing teachers should be our ultimate goal.

9. When I refer to K-12 public school teachers, I mean those individuals who are teaching in traditional public school contexts rather than in public charter schools or in other schools that rely on “emergency” certification of one type or another.

10. K-12 public school teachers obviously face many contemporary hurdles: No Child Left Behind and other similar legislation designed to force problematic notions of “accountability” upon them; politically motivated attacks on their day-to-day work environments, systems of tenure, and collective bargaining organizations—especially evident in the very recent attacks on teachers' unions waged in Wisconsin, New Jersey, and elsewhere; shrinking public budgets that increasingly force them to do more in their classrooms with less; and the rise of charter schools and programs such as Teach for America that reject outright the notion of formal teacher credentialing. Nonetheless, it also seems clear that K-12 public school teachers and their organizations are continuing to fight against each of these attacks—and that their professional credentials help them to do so.

11. See also Eaton; Brittingham; Murray.

12. Enrollment at for-profits is currently declining slightly, likely as a function of recent government investigation into faulty admissions practices and misuse of federal aid money (see Blumenstyk; Kutz).

13. See also Breneman; Floyd; Turner.

14. Of course, the actions of for-profit institutions deserve critical scrutiny: these institutions rely on an entirely non-tenured teaching force, with 90% or more of this force permanently part-time (Lechuga 291); they offer little or no

academic freedom in terms of course design, implementation, or assessment (294); and they typically deny faculty the formal opportunity to pursue research (295).

15. See also Grabill; Norton and Goldblatt.

16. For other shorter programs designed to train college writing teachers, see Lattrell; Bamberg; Martin and Paine; Lingren; Liggett.

17. The Doctor of Arts in Teaching degree was developed at about 40 institutions across the United States, primarily during the late-1960s and early-1970s, as part of a larger Carnegie Commission on Higher Education effort to educate college teachers for work within newly emerging two-year and four-year institutional contexts. For a discussion of the history of the DA, see Glazer; Salmon.

18. Webb and Boardman discuss the split between college writing teachers and tenure-track faculty:

In our experience, status issues gain importance after instructors have been in lectureship positions for some time, perhaps after sixth-year review, when the differences between tenure-track and lecturer faculty members with the same number of years of service become more marked—differences in working conditions, security, expectations, status, and scope of opportunity. . . . lecturers begin to see that, although they have invested similar amounts of time (and a similar proportion of their working years) in college-level teaching, service, and professional development, they are only “sort of equal” [to tenure-track faculty]. (43)

Webb and Boardman are quite clear here: professional college writing teacher positions in the RFA, even if they are “good” jobs in many ways, will never seem more than “sort of equal” unless those teachers in them have the chance to stand for tenure.

19. The direction in which I would like to see teaching tenure taken is in some ways a different one from that recently advocated by the AAUP. I am not personally in favor of either the AAUP’s recent proposal that all teachers in the RFA who have been at an institution for a specific period of time be granted automatic tenure (“Tenure and Teaching-Intensive Appointments” sec. 3), nor am I in favor of the specific version of this proposal that was recently circulated at my home institution of CU-Boulder (sec. 4). In my opinion, such blanket advocacy for tenure largely ignores the RFA’s own concerns regarding the rigorous hiring, review, and assessment of teachers—not to mention issues of cost—in ways that make tenure even less likely to be granted to college writing teachers than it is now. Instead, I believe that teaching tenure is a workable proposition only if it is rooted in a careful definition of what professional teachers know and do, rigorous national hiring processes based on these definitions, rigorous reappointment processes based on these definitions, and a great deal of the kind of story-changing work that I will discuss later in this essay. I do ultimately agree with the AAUP, however, that we need to work hard to make teaching labor matter enough to deserve tenure in the eyes of skeptical administrators.

20. I would like to thank all those who have helped me to write this article, especially Alice Horning, two anonymous *WPA* reviewers, Lance Massey, and Pete Kratzke. I would also like to thank my colleagues in the Program for Writing and Rhetoric at CU-Boulder for raising many important questions about what it means to be a professional college writing teacher in the RFA.

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For Slow Agency

Laura R. Micciche

ABSTRACT

This essay proposes hypermiling as a generative metaphor for WPA work. By building on the idea that slowing down decreases energy consumption and increases resource preservation, I introduce alternative ways to think about WPA agency, giving serious attention to the arts of productive stillness, resource preservation, and slowness—what is called “gradual arrival” in the hypermiling movement. My aim is to illustrate that agency operates on a continuum including action and change as well as less visible but no less important forms of agency like thinking, being still, and processing. The essay ends with a reflective look at an object passed down from previous WPAs in my department, an object that offers a different but tangential metaphor for reconsidering pace and action.

When I began my tenure as WPA three years ago, I suffered stomachaches and had trouble sleeping. No matter how comprehensive my plans for the program, I had an unshakeable sense that I was forgetting something crucial. Like most WPAs, I suspect, I found a rhythm and a strategic way of compartmentalizing after that first year. But the felt experience of being physically and mentally over-taken by the enormity of the job, and the ostensibly normative status of this experience, at least as rendered in WPA scholarship and in anecdotes from the field, represents more than a rough patch to be endured and then transformed into portable advice. This state of disorientation is an opportunity for sustained thinking about alternative, even aspirational, models of administration.

WPA action tends to align with what I call “big agency,” or actions that intend structural results and effects. Recent job ads, for instance, seek candidates who will participate in campus governance, design and lead assessment initiatives, revise curriculum, hire, train, and oversee new teachers,

advocate for the writing program at college and university levels, and coordinate writing initiatives across campus. These expectations are echoed in “Evaluating the Intellectual Work of Writing Administration,” developed by the Council of Writing Program Administrators as a resource for constructing equitable tenure and promotion requirements. Categories of intellectual work highlighted in this document include the following: Program Creation, Curricular Design, Faculty Development, Program Assessment, and Program-Related Textual Production (“Evaluating”). Suggested guidelines for evaluating contributions in each area are based on the WPA’s work in terms of innovation, improvement/refinement, dissemination, and measurable results.

The WPA whose actions have traceable effects back to her and her alone might be an anachronism in the context of current theories of agency (especially those engaged with new materialism), but this possessive, linear model of agency is alive and well in the world of administration (for critiques, see Gunner; McGee and Handa). Articulating a more dynamic model of agency, Marilyn Cooper, in her recent essay, defines agency as “a matter of action; it involves doing things intentionally and voluntarily, but it is not a matter of causing whatever happened” (439). Cooper’s view acknowledges what many of us know in practice—extenuating circumstances mediate agency so that intention and will are only pieces in a process, not determining factors. For Cooper, “[e]mergent properties (such as agency) are not epiphenomena, nor ‘possessions’ in any sense, but function as part of the systems in which they originate. And causation in complex systems is nonlinear: change arises not as the effect of a discrete cause, but from the dance of perturbation and response as agents interact” (421). Cooper’s view of agency as rhetorical flux largely focuses on the association between agency and change/action as outer-directed and so visible to others. Falling into a supportive role that Cooper says “should go without saying” are “‘mental’ actions—speaking, writing, reflecting” (424–25). Making more explicit these and other hidden agencies, I contend here that agency can be figured in myriad ways, including the counter-intuitive view of agency as action deferred. Deferral is not necessarily a sign of powerlessness, inactivity, or dereliction of duty. On the contrary, it creates much-needed space for becoming still and getting places, allowing for regenerative returns.

What follows is not an argument against action, change, and empowerment; it’s an argument for acknowledging a wider spectrum of WPA agencies. Agency operates on a continuum that includes action and change as well as less measurable but no less important forms of action like thinking, being still, and processing—hardly a contentious point given that over the

past 15 years or so *reflection* has played an important role in defining WPA activities as intellectual work. As Shirley Rose and Irwin Weiser explain in *The Writing Program Administrator as Researcher*, “effective WPAs reflect before acting, but they also reflect upon the actions they take” (ix). In addition to conceptualizing reflective moments in relation to agency, we might also come to see suspended agency as a valuable strategy for WPAs. This point is related to one that Linda Adler-Kassner makes in her preface to *The Activist WPA*, where she draws from yoga practices to convey a message about WPA work. She writes that striking a yoga pose reminds us “to focus on the here and now—to be in *this* moment, in this time and space. Not two minutes ago, not in the future—now, now, and now” (vii; emphasis in original). The typical pace of WPA work is fast and hectic, a manic, awkward dance rather than a set of deliberate poses (especially for junior WPAs working toward tenure). Thus, attentiveness to the moment requires a kind of pacing and ethos that, I’d argue, seem largely unavailable to WPAs on a daily basis. To focus some on why this is so as well as on strategies for being in the moment, I address pacing, agency, and administration, a triangulation of issues that simultaneously vex and energize WPA work at alternative turns.

SOME CONTEXT

When first writing about this idea, I turned to an unlikely source of inspiration: the hypermiling movement. The term *hypermiling* was coined by Wayne Gerdes in 2004—a summer of \$4-a-gallon gasoline prices—in response to the widespread anxiety, frustration, and concern about fossil fuel dependence, the likes of which was unseen in the U.S. since the energy crisis of the 1970s (Silver). Gerdes’s development of hypermiling was based on the idea that changing driving behaviors could make a difference in conservation efforts by maximizing fuel efficiency and decreasing resource depletion. Effective techniques include driving barefoot, removing unused cargo racks, coasting in neutral, using cruise control to reduce fuel-hungry accelerations, exploiting tailwinds, and over-inflating tires (Chin). While some techniques are controversial and others outright unlawful (driving barefoot), the most sensible practical strategy among hypermilers is slowing down in order to decrease energy consumption. This practice might be understood as slow agency, for it focuses not on tasks or deliverables but on pace, the rate at which activity progresses.

I was introduced to the hypermiling movement and its philosophy several years ago by close friends who kept exhaustive records of their driving habits, experimenting with various techniques as they slowly and delib-

erately changed their daily lives. I was intrigued by their conviction and follow-through; they moved beyond political alignment with environmental causes to meaningful behavioral change. At the same time, I became aware of my own reluctance to practice hypermiling because of how much I thought it would require of me. I'd have to transform my everyday habits, which seemed unrealistic since I could not imagine driving under the speed limit and delaying my time of arrival—not even for the sake of environmental sustainability. How would I get everything done if I spent more time getting places? It was nearly impossible to imagine a different daily pace when I ticked off the many responsibilities competing for my attention and energy. Despite my initial apprehensions, I have come to appreciate the way hypermiling calls serious attention to the arts of productive stillness, resource preservation, and slowness—what hypermilers call “gradual arrival.”

The movement's simple yet utterly radical recommendation to slow down and delay arrival offers a fresh standpoint from which to reimagine WPA work. This standpoint suggests to me that we might benefit from focusing on the rate of speed that is likely to result in the desired outcome, adding a temporal dimension to existing research on innovative structures, strategies, and methods for accomplishing WPA work. Pace complicates understandings of agents and the activities that stick to them by turning us toward our bodies in motion as part of the energetic matter of writing programs. We embody raw human resources that can be depleted and hijacked as well as conserved and protected. And, as suggested by others, the use and misuse and plain old neglect of such resources is mediated by the multiple positions we occupy, the intersectional identities that compose WPAs, individually and collectively (see, i.e., Banks and Alexander; Craig and Perryman-Clark; Janangelo).

BIG AGENCY

The continuous motion and activity associated with WPAing evokes for me Diana George's memorable description of WPAing as “plate twirling.” Much like these entertaining performers, she writes, WPAs are “on stage, trying to sustain the illusion of perpetual motion, worried over how to end the show without losing control as those plates go crashing onto the stage floor” (xi). The WPA's state of being, characterized by George as on the verge of losing control, contextualizes sentiments voiced by contributors to *Women's Ways of Making it in Rhetoric and Composition*, particularly in Chapter 4: Succeeding Despite It All. One representative respondent to the authors' survey issued this warning to junior faculty: “Do NOT take on

ANY administrative work of ANY kind other than regular committee service prior to being awarded tenure. In particular, do NOT accept a WPA position of any kind” (qtd. in Ballif et al. 117). When criteria for judging a WPA’s performance includes the creation and maintenance of significant architectural structures, and when the wildcard, for many, is tenure and/or promotion, who has the luxury of treating agency as that which can be measured by anything other than tangible outcomes? Documenting outcomes in progress, as I’ll suggest later, is one strategy for proving the value of one’s work toward promotion and tenure while simultaneously practicing slow agency.

Our collective nervous condition in relation to WPA agency—often presumed to entail implementing initiatives on the quick—helps to explain why getting a handle on power occupies such an important place in the scholarship (see Amorose for an excellent overview). It also illuminates why research on building administrative structures is pervasive, for this work offers reassuring narratives about how the seemingly impossible—i.e., revising placement procedures, generating funding for computer classrooms, and implementing large-scale program assessment—is not only possible but potentially reproducible. We see this through-line in, for example, *Administrative Problem-Solving for Writing Programs and Writing Centers* (Myers-Breslin), *The Longman Sourcebook for Writing Program Administrators* (Ward and Carpenter), Kelly Ritter’s “Extra-Institutional Agency and the Public Value of the WPA,” and Amy Goodburn and Carrie Shively Leverenz’s “Feminist Writing Program Administration,” to hail just a few examples.

Another angle on WPA agency and its potential reproducibility is accessible in what might be described as legacy work, or research aimed at detailing the evolution and contributions of particular programs or key figures: *A Field of Dreams* (O’Neill, Crow, Burton); *Historical Studies of Writing Program Administration* (L’Eplattenier and Mastrangelo); *Local Histories* (Donahue and Moon); and Part II of *The Writing Program Administrator as Researcher* (Rose and Weiser). Among other effects, this scholarship provides us with (sometimes uneven) progress narratives that situate our everyday actions, in all of their incomplete, compromised, and ambivalent glory, within broad historical context, suggesting that the long haul provides hope for the sustainability of WPA work.

Sustainability is certainly a valid concern given the energy-hungry quality of WPA work, so thoroughly acknowledged and fretted over in disciplinary culture that it has inspired a board game. In “Praxis and Allies: The WPA Board Game,” the authors describe a game, intended to prepare graduate students for administration, which focuses on “competition for

resources” (Sura et al. 78), “juggling multiple roles and responsibilities” (79), and learning how to use that “most precious [of] personal resources: energy” (79). On this last point, the authors add that WPAs must “learn to use wisely (and sometimes conserve) their supply of personal resources” (78). Indeed, ever-depleting resources of all kinds—physical spaces, support services, teachers, good health, funding, patience—are heavy on one’s mind when directing a writing program. And as the authors suggest, WPAs must carefully decide how to expend energy, including that which is needed to keep all of the plates in the air. This decision-making extends to *pacing* so that, in speeding from one fantastic trick to the next, WPAs have to be mindful of the consequences of missteps.

With its attention on resources and energy, the WPA board game provides a unique context for discussing slow agency and hypermiling. Both strategies require deliberate thinking and slight alterations to how we orient ourselves in particular contexts. Both are possible only as achievements earned through a deliberate and sustained change of behavior. And both entail giving up what’s familiar for what’s counter-intuitive. Yet, despite my first impression, hypermiling does not compromise one’s ability to get anywhere; it merely slows the pace of arrival. This slight shift in priorities—from fast to gradual arrival—reminds us that there’s no imperative to drive five miles over the speed limit on highways, tailgate, rush to an intersection and stop suddenly rather than gradually slow down, and so forth.

Likewise, the plate-twirling WPA is no imperative, though this figure casts a deep shadow and is even inadvertently endorsed through statements like that referenced above, “Evaluating the Intellectual Work of Writing Administration.” Hypermiling forefronts energy consumption and resource preservation, elements of WPAing that tend to get over-shadowed by the understandably pragmatic attention to solving problems and implementing new initiatives. This shadow can sometimes allow us to forget that corporeal aspects of our work are part of the felt experience of being WPA. We use our bodies and our energy, our endurance, as we establish a physical and emotional pace. Perhaps this is why it strikes a chord when Jonikka Charlton and Shirley Rose proclaim, “WPA is not just a job title, but a way of being” (114). Being a WPA is more than a sum of initiatives and accomplishments. Borrowing from political theorist, Jane Bennett, being WPA is experiencing materiality as a “lively force” that interacts with “the ensemble nature of action and the interconnections between persons and things” (51, 37). In other words, agency is relational. It entails a conglomeration of resources and activities that exceed a single agent but engulf her in a field of energy and activity. A rush to action can reinforce illusions of linear cause-effect actions while also neglecting the larger scene of activ-

ity that constructs institutional decision-making. Deferral and/or slowing down can be useful in this regard.

A good deal of scholarship already implicitly values deferred action and being in the moment. For example, research on feminist models of administration (Dickson; Goodburn and Leverenz; Gray-Rosendale; Phelps), masculinist models (Barr-Ebest; Gillam; Holbrook; S. Miller), and WPA protectionist strategies (Holt; Rhodes; Ward) suggests that the speed of getting things done, along with the enormity of tasks involved, creates ideologies and practices that disrespect and dehumanize programs and people. The problem such scholarship evokes but does not often directly address is that the correspondence between *agency* and *speed* remains stable, despite very convincing, even heart-breaking critiques of the turmoil they generate (see, for example, Bishop and Crossley; Hesse). This correspondence, in other words, affirms that effective agents are those who produce results quickly. It's not hard to see how this untroubled coupling of agency and speed leads to perceptions of WPAs as "the central symbol of writing on a campus. Worse, they are expected to be the actual glue that holds it all together" (Cambridge and McClelland 157). While feminist models of administration have forwarded alternative administrative structures that distribute power among agents, thereby resisting the single WPA figure who stands for "writing" at any institution, these models have not altered pacing expectations. Alternative structures tend to spread work around in more equitable, mutually productive ways, but they do not typically question why so much needs to get done in a given time-frame. As most WPAs already know, acting overwhelmingly in response to ever pressing urgencies frequently prevents us from coming to terms with a larger circumstance. It also creates barriers to occupying spaces of deliberate uncertainty in hopes of achieving a renewed standpoint on a situation.

Much as fast capitalism gobbles markets at lightning speed, fast agency inculcates pride in getting things done swiftly, obscuring conditions that make speediness necessary and normative in the first place. Editors Peter Case, Simon Lilley and Tom Owen note in their introduction to *The Speed of Organization* that Herbert Marcuse's reality principle helps to illuminate the role of speed in contemporary organizations. The reality principle is "based on competitive economic performance" that generates consent "enlisted through . . . acceptance of the prevailing order" (12). They continue, "The current reality principle emphasizes speed as a characteristic of performance efficiency. Speed, itself, can become elevated in our consciousness to the level of fetish" (12). Speed operates as a commodity, mystifying the relations and conditions that make it desirable and necessary. Noting the high premium placed on speed in our culture, Case et al. find

that speediness among organizations (and I include writing programs here) is considered “more admirable” and “more valuable” than a slower, more deliberate pace. Speed comes to represent “pure magic” (13). Serious recalibration, and perhaps vulnerability, is required if we are to believe that suspended agency, deliberate slowness, and intentional stillness benefit the health and vitality of writing programs and WPAs. Richard Miller articulates at least one difficulty associated with such postures. He writes that “we are all regularly called upon to act in the absence of [a full account of the necessary] information for the simple reason that collecting all the relevant data and interpreting it in the fullness of time is a luxury extended to no social agent at work in the world” (11). Like Miller, I recognize and regularly experience the perceived need to respond to a problem before I know enough. But I’d like to advocate for the value of sometimes residing longer than is comfortable in the complexity, stillness, and fatigue of not knowing how to proceed.

Suspended agency offers a counter-discourse that poses questions about big agency, program ownership, and the virtues of a good defense. It also creates openings for practicing vulnerability as a strategic administrative stance and for generating alternative work rhythms that allow the program and the person to do more than survive until the next director comes along.

TOWARD A DIFFERENT PACE

Donna Qualley and Elizabeth Chiseri-Strater reveal ambivalence around WPA agency. In “Split at the Root,” they describe vulnerability as central to a WPA’s vitality and critical understanding of the job:

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. (172)

Their stance on learning, renegotiating, inventing, and collaborating values deliberate efforts to control pace and distribute agency among stakeholders. This view of administration permits us to depict writing programs as a swirl of actors, things, structures, economies, and forms of matter always interacting to create effects. Like hypermiling, this construct of administration remains mindful of energy consumption and production by distributing it across subjects and recognizing relationality as central to enduring

ance, resourcefulness, and sustainability. In this section I describe how I've attempted to apply some of these principles in my daily activities.

When I began my tenure as WPA, the most pressing task I faced was shaping a newly implemented intermediate composition course. Our instructors, many of whom had taught the first-year sequence for years, had created well-conceived course templates, but even they felt unsure about the overall purpose of the intermediate course. Originally conceived as a writing-in-the-disciplines course, it never quite moved in that direction, largely due to a lack of institutional support and the absence of an enthusiastic advocate to enact the vision spearheaded by the former director. I needed to make the course intelligible to teachers, students, advisors, and programs across the university. Given that there was considerable anxiety among faculty about the identity of the course, as well as resistance to codifying it—particularly since the first-year courses were organized around a unified curriculum—I faced a real urgency. Timing was important because the course was required for most students at the university and was already being taught each quarter. The thirty-plus sections we were offering each term did not look very much alike, nor did they seem to be guided by shared principles or outcomes.

I could have made this a signature initiative for the beginning of my tenure. By developing a curriculum and set of goals and outcomes based on my prior experience and familiarity with current scholarship, I could have proceeded like Doug Hesse did during his first year in a new job, fulfilling the role he describes as “WPA-as-father.” Revealing the seductive nature of going it alone as a WPA, Hesse writes that he could have consulted colleagues when initiating a much needed curriculum change, but he knew

it would be more efficient [to work alone]. Developing a curriculum through collaborative work would be a long process of meetings, drafting, and revision. I was confident (aren't we all?) that my sense of theory, research, and pedagogy positioned me to develop state of the art courses, and I was confident, further, that my colleagues shared enough of my view that they would agree to the types of courses I drafted. (48)

His assumptions turned out to be correct, but his detailed accounting of the personal costs of his paternal approach to WPAing makes clear that getting the job done quickly because it *can be done quickly* is not necessarily the best option.

With Hesse's cautionary tale in my head, I decided to approach curriculum development as a marathon rather than a sprint, despite the time-sensitive nature of the issue. Because I was just stepping into a program,

I wanted to support and build on the strengths of the already established community of full-time writing teachers by involving them in curricular decisions that directly affect their work lives more than any other group of teachers in the program. Short-term confusion seemed worth the potential long-term gain: a community of empowered teachers who could claim some ownership over the program and in relation to their work with students. First order of business, then, was to establish a composition advisory committee. In addition to leading curriculum review and development, members also observed and mentored new teachers, participated in pedagogy workshops, co-organized writing-related events in the program, and acted as liaisons between the committee and other teachers in the program.

Developing a curriculum philosophy and description for intermediate composition took nearly eighteen months. Some of our discussions were difficult and tense, punctuated by serious concerns about how both to define and structure a course and to create opportunities for teacher-invention. Without our bi-weekly discussion and debate, we would not have achieved a flexible curricular model, one that established a coherent assignment sequence with some built-in flexibility for experienced teachers. Slowing down helped us to create a collaborative space where program matters became the subject of engaged, often spirited dialogue resulting in curricular revision that represented our collective and diverse expertise and value systems.

The process was a good lesson in organizational time. Few changes happen quickly in large organizations. While pressure is constantly exerted on WPAs, creating conditions that are made to feel like emergencies, rarely does the reality bear this out. In fact, upper administration—including those who review and assess WPAs—often take the long view themselves, a discovery that surprised me during that period of curricular revision. For example, I documented our ongoing progress and goals for the upcoming year in my annual program report, which satisfied the department chair and dean; it was also featured on the provost's webpage. Documenting the process, making the deliberateness visible to those outside the program, was viewed as a valued form of accountability. Even though the revision was incomplete, the report made clear just how much work was involved in the process.

Still, I recognize that WPAs are not always in control of work pace. I came to appreciate this during revision of our placement procedures. Unlike the previous example, this project involved oversight from superiors—department head, dean, and provostal officers—and coordination with faculty from other colleges and staff outside the writing program, including representatives from Enrollment Services, the Registrar's office,

and our course management system. The process was set in motion by alarmist emails from staff members in Enrollment Services (ES), which led to equally reactionary responses from the Provost's office. The issue was a familiar one: in looking for ways to trim budgets, our in-house placement program was identified as "redundant." Staff members in ES generated data, without involvement or input from writing faculty, indicating that ACT scores agree 86% of the time with our in-house placement results. And, it was argued, ACT scores deliver this (questionably) equivalent information without any extra cost to the college or university and with a degree of efficiency impossible through a human-powered placement system.

Because placement has been embattled for a long time at my university, my colleagues and I strategized how to make this protracted history work in our favor, reminding one another that change has never come quickly to placement protocols at our school. Despite the rapid-fire emails that called for immediate action, we pulled back in hopes of changing the pace and tenor of the discussion. Thus, while the immediacy of the budgetary crash and the fiery rhetoric from an ES officer (a long-time critic of in-house placement) put writing program faculty on the defensive, we responded not with in-kind urgency but with a request for a meeting involving all interested parties and, following that, research to produce a deep data set upon which we could together make an informed decision about how to proceed. These moves immediately slowed the pace and created a way for us to get out from behind email. In the end, placement revision took seven months to revise and another year to finalize. During that time, we were able to focus on gradual arrival as our goal, using energy and resources efficiently by involving more people in the process who could speak about placement operations from different standpoints and resisting the impulse to proceed defensively. Moving forward in this way required considerable calm and a willingness to be in the moment puzzling through issues of validity and reliability, funding, training and support, etc., *with others*, many of whom we initially believed did not come to the table with good faith.

The outcome was modest, not ideal by any means, but it was not as bad as we initially expected. In the beginning, members of ES made clear that they would fight any efforts to preserve the in-house placement essay; their intent was to make an irrefutable case for using ACT scores, an argument that was especially timely given budgetary realities. They were not entirely successful. We ended up with a hybrid model that requires students who score a 20 or lower on the combined English and Writing exam to take our in-house placement; students who score above that are placed into our first-quarter writing course. The class of 2010 was the first to be placed according to this system, so the coming years will necessitate careful assessment

of student progress and placement validity. Again, the outcome is not ideal, but a work in progress that has resulted in improved relations between different offices and constituencies across the university.

What both examples have in common is valuing collaboration as a way to draw in more stakeholders to the writing program. This is slow work. Hypermiling is a generative metaphor here because it heightens awareness of pacing, encourages deliberate strategies to preserve energy, and imagines a sustainable environment that admits others into its creation. In its application, administration-as-hypermiling challenges the bureaucratic stance critiqued by contributors to *Writing Instruction in the Managed University* (Bousquet et al.), characterized by an unwillingness to view work practices critically. By altering the pace of work and its distribution among stakeholders, hypermiling sheds critical light on dominant bureaucratic ideology: speed and big agency are stable, assumed, fixed goods.

It's not a given, of course, that those who oversee and assess WPA work will value slow agency, even occasional forms of it—a concern for junior faculty administrators in particular. Thus, establishing initiatives as multi-phase projects (and realizing that most are) and publicly documenting completion of each phase—similar to the annual report referenced above—can help to control how administrative accomplishments are perceived and measured. The deliberative approach that tends to accompany slow agency can actually help build credibility with other administrators, many of whom value the transparency achieved through public documentation of programmatic change. Revealing process can be an effective way to highlight outcomes, data collection, and assessment, among other practices inclined to be institutional priorities. These components can also feed into scholarly projects since narrating challenges and improvised solutions to local issues can lead to expansive research projects relevant to the wider community of WPAs (cf. Frank Dew). Slowing one's pace is not equivalent to loafing; making that case, however, requires persuasive, strategic communication,

POSTSCRIPT: THE DOORSTOP

I often have a hard time slowing down while driving, as I do not like the indeterminate space between here and there, even though that space can be sometimes utterly liberating. Still, liking indeterminacy almost never happens without effort or coercion (i.e., a traffic jam). To suggest another means beyond hypermiling by which to reconsider pacing and action, particularly for those who have their doubts about the utility of this metaphor, I end with a story about things, agency, and administration.

My office door will not stay open. A bad hinge, crooked floor, or deviant airflow tugs the door closed, defying my open-door policy. When I first moved into the office in 2008, I used a jar of coins, inherited from the previous director, to prop it open. Then one day a colleague and former WPA who was preparing to retire stopped by to pass along items she rightly thought I might want. These included several decorative plates from Italy, a small stack of books, decades-old memos and hand-outs relating to the administration of the writing program, and a rickety wooden object that turned out to be a doorstop originally owned by Jim Berlin, rhetorical and cultural theorist, historian, and WPA in my department from 1981 to 1985 (see figure 1). Berlin is not generally remembered for being a WPA, and this essay offers no evidence to suggest he should be remembered as such. As lore in my department goes, Berlin wasn't particularly fond of administration. His interests lay elsewhere—most notably, in community activism and the scholarship he went on to produce, which continues to influence the field sixteen years after his untimely death from a sudden heart attack.



Figure 1: A photo of Jim Berlin that I found in a filing cabinet. I added the caption and tacked both to my door.

I never met Jim Berlin, but now I have his doorstop. Perhaps it's fitting that the doorstop is in the form of a miniature wine cask and bottle (see

figure 2). I remember reading Irwin Weiser's tribute to Berlin in the pages of the *Journal of Advanced Composition* where he noted that Berlin liked to party ("Memories"). Maybe he liked Spanish wine in particular; that might explain why the barely legible text on the miniature bottle is in Spanish. Initially, I thought the doorstop looked like an antique because of its utility, condition, and seeming rarity, but on closer inspection, I discovered a faded gift shop price tag on the bottom betraying its kitsch lineage.



Figure 2: Berlin's doorstop

This doorstop is not an object that I would ordinarily think much about. I'd expect to find something like it at a garage sale, indistinguishable from other similarly forgettable, ready-to-be-discarded knick-knacks, perhaps purchased impulsively at an airport gift shop. Yet, this doorstop has a respectable past and an ongoing present. Among other thoughts that have crossed my mind while sitting in my office with door propped open by Berlin's doorstop: What conversations did this doorstop permit and/or invite? Which ones were overruled by the heavy door, gravity, and/or a need for privacy—forces too heavy for this or any doorstop?

The doorstop is a professional heirloom and a symbol of place, relationships, past directors, and program evolution. A physical remainder, it represents the energy and evolution of a writing program. The doorstop has vitality, a capacity "not only to impede or block the will and designs of

humans but also to act as quasi agen[t] or forc[e] with trajectories, propensities, or tendencies of [its] own” (Bennett viii). The doorstep is a tangible part of a larger field of tactile things circulating through this office, accumulations of time spent, work produced, bodies oriented toward this or that task. Such things include memos revealing placement battles stretching back to 1987, a worn copy of Janet Emig’s *The Composing Practices of Twelfth Graders*, a stack of weathered curriculum guides going back over 20 years, student portfolios, records of grievances, hundreds of program evaluations completed by former students, and files containing random program matter: photos, thank you notes, handwritten notes, drafts of memos with revision notes scrawled in the margins. Because the doorstep controls pace by stopping the slamming of the door, it stands out as an object with real consequences. When the door tries to swing closed, the doorstep, usually haphazardly pushed to a midway point in the doorway, prevents its closing. Due to the force of the door, the doorstep frequently inches, as if in slow motion, past the halfway point but never fails to hold its own. The doorstep essentially puts the brakes on the door’s inclination—to find the doorjamb and slam shut; it’s a physical embodiment of slowing motion.

In this sense, the doorstep is a lively non-human agent in our writing program. Bennett calls this form of agency “Thing-Power,” “the curious ability of inanimate things to animate, to act, to produce effects dramatic and subtle” (6). Its thingness, embedded in a larger network of relations, produces a physical reminder (and literal instance) of gradual slowing and sometimes stopping, as means for preventing the fast slam. Of course there are moments when fast agency is appropriate and ethically necessary. But we should empower ourselves to slow down sometimes, grant ourselves enough agency to defer action in cases for which we need to be in the moment rather than racing against moments or believing that every request or problem requires an immediate response. This involves realizing that the program we oversee will not, in most cases, crumble if we fail to act under duress in each and every case. We can take advantage of the doorstep in order to preserve the energy we will inevitably need to address the various tasks that are an ordinary as well as extraordinary part of Writing Program Administration.

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Improving the Placement of L2 Writers: The Students' Perspective

Todd Ruecker

ABSTRACT

Much of the work focused on improving the placement of second language (L2) writers in writing programs has been researched and written about from the perspective of teachers and administrators. However, recent scholarship has drawn attention to student attitudes towards ESL and mainstream writing placements, finding that resident students may have different attitudes towards an ESL placement than international students. Building on more qualitative studies by these scholars and others, this article reports on a mixed methods study in which approximately four hundred students in mainstream and ESL writing classes were surveyed about their attitudes towards placement and linguistic identity labels. Using a student-centered, data-driven approach, the author of this article raises important issues and offers specific suggestions for WPAs to consider in improving the placement of L2 writers.

Over the past decade, works such as Paul Kei Matsuda's "Myth of Linguistic Homogeneity in U.S. College Composition" have called attention to the increasing linguistic and cultural diversity of students in composition programs, noting the slowness of rhetoric and composition scholars, instructors, and administrators to respond to this diversity. A 2006 edition of *WPA Journal* responded to these calls, with the issue editors stating their goal as "to facilitate the process of integrating second language issues into the field of writing program administration by providing an overview of some of the key issues and by exploring possible approaches to such integration" (12). In that issue, Ana Maria Preto-Bay and Kristine Hansen draw attention to the "tipping point," writing that composition programs need to prepare for a demographic shift that has already begun occurring and will cause serious problems if WPAs fail to enact the needed changes to their

programs to support their changing student populations. Unfortunately, as evidenced by the limited number of presentations at WPA conferences and articles in *WPA Journal* (outside of the 2006 issue) focused on linguistically and culturally diverse student populations, it is clear that WPAs still need to focus more intently on the needs of second language (L2) writers. It appears that the “disciplinary division of labor” (Matsuda, “Composition”) between L1 and L2 writing professionals still exists and is increasing the risk that writing programs will reach the “tipping point” without making necessary changes in course design and placement practices.

In the interest of pursuing informed changes, this article continues the discussion begun in the 2006 *WPA Journal* by examining student perspectives on the effectiveness of writing placement practices. Over the course of two semesters, I surveyed approximately 400 students at a major university in the southwestern U.S., both native and nonnative speakers of English as well as U.S. resident and international students, who were placed in both ESL and mainstream writing classes. In these surveys, students were asked to consider their attitudes regarding the way they are labeled, their feelings about placement, their conception of the difference between mainstream and ESL classes, and their ideas regarding how students should be placed. The findings from this study provide WPAs of both mainstream and L2 writing programs with student-centered data which raise a number of issues to consider in improving the placement of L2 writers. In particular, the data reveal the importance of considering the diversity of student perspectives regarding placement in order to design a writing program that effectively accommodates the growing number of L2 writers in higher education.

WPA WORK AND L2 WRITER PLACEMENT

Tony Silva, a foundational scholar in the L2 writing field, first drew attention to issues surrounding the placement of L2 writers in writing programs in 1994 with an article in *WPA Journal*. Here, he identifies four placement options for L2 writers: mainstreaming, basic writing, ESL writing, and cross-cultural composition courses. He writes that mainstreaming is the least desirable option because students would often be left to sink or swim in classes taught by teachers unprepared to address their needs. While Silva feels that cross-cultural composition is the best of the four options (see Matsuda and Silva for more on this option), the mainstream and ESL writing options have remained the top two avenues of placement for L2 writers. Later scholars have explored these types of placements, with George Braine reporting problems such as teacher and student antagonism towards L2 writers being a problem with mainstream placements. Matsuda (“Basic

Writing”) has explored the presence of L2 writers in basic writing programs, arguing for a more inclusive definition of basic writing so that it includes all students subject to its policies.

Much of the work on WPA and L2 writers has taken a broad, administrator-centered perspective. Richard Haswell focuses on placement practices, namely the usage of direct and indirect testing. He explains that indirect testing (e.g. SAT, ACT, or TOEFL scores) is the most common placement method but also the most problematic. Haswell piloted a two-round placement method with non-ESL specialists reading essays the first round and ESL-specialists reading the second round. He reports that more tested students (40%, up from 20%) were mainstreamed through the new method and that chances of passing the placement increased if a student’s ESL status and individual information about a student (such as grades, study habits, etc.) were known by the scorers. Deborah Crusan (“Assessment”) takes an even stronger focus on placement testing, criticizing dependence on indirect testing and multiple choice placement exams even at major respected universities. She finds that an essay test is a better grade predictor than a multiple choice grammar test but using both in tandem is the most accurate predictor of student success.

More recent scholarship has focused on distinguishing between international and resident students, understanding that these two populations have different needs as well as placement preferences. This shift in focus is especially noticeable in the 2006 *WPA Journal* special issue, where Ana Maria Preto-Bay and Kristine Hansen make a distinction between domestic L2 writers and international students, with the former often being “involuntary minorities” with a sense of powerlessness while the latter, coming to study on student visas, are often members of the privileged classes in their own countries. Patricia Friedrich addresses these distinctions in more depth, distinguishing between international ESL, resident ESL, and monolingual basic writers. She explains that international students may be more comfortable with more formal, academic writing than other ESL students due to the quality of their previous literacy education. According to Friedrich, basic writers know how to use English but are acquiring the academic version while international students may be acquiring both with domestic ESL students somewhere in between.

In the same issue, Gail Shuck writes from a novice administrator’s perspective, discussing the difficulties of being “the ESL person” on campus while raising a few salient issues concerning the myth of transience, linguistic containment, and monolingual ideology. She explains that her university provides a few ESL classes before a mainstream transfer, with the expectation that these few classes were all students needed in order to learn

English academic literacy. While they were in the ESL track, students were “contained,” that is, they were not seen as part of the regular composition program. Like Silva, Shuck embraces the cross-cultural composition model but emphasizes the challenges it poses to administrators: maintaining an equal ratio of L1 to L2 writers, recruiting a sufficient number of native English speaking students, and finding instructors qualified to work with both types of students.

Susan K. Miller-Cochran has also written from the WPA’s perspective about the WPA’s dilemma, realizing that scholars have raised a call to action to address the increasing presence of L2 writers in writing programs without always providing specific directions on how to do so. After articulating various myths surrounding L2 writers and writing programs such as the misbelief that they are easy to identify, Miller-Cochran writes that WPAs are responsible for taking steps in “gaining an understanding of the linguistic and cultural influences that affect students and their written language” (217). Her recommendations for action include hiring instructors with backgrounds in L2 writing, incorporating L2 writing study in graduate programs, and providing workshops and other training to prepare TAs and faculty to work more effectively with L2 writers.

IDENTITY LABELS AND STUDENT PLACEMENT PREFERENCES

Some recent work focusing on the placement of L2 writers in writing programs has shifted towards examining identity labels and student attitudes towards these labels and placement. This conversation was largely initiated by Kimberly Costino and Sunny Hyon’s article “‘A Class for Students Like Me’: Reconsidering Relationships Among Identity Labels, Residency Status, and Students’ Preferences for Mainstream or Multilingual Composition.” Their study focuses more intently on the student perspective and the use of linguistic identity labels (e.g. native/nonnative speaker) than previous work had. For their study, Costino and Hyon interviewed nine students, two from the U.S. and seven from six other countries. All students viewed the native English speaker and bilingual labels positively in regard to English ability while others, such as English as a second language speaker, were seen positively by a few international students but negatively by the other international and U.S. students. All the students they interviewed were satisfied with their placement, with their reasons focused on the following: “(1) a desire to be in a class that addressed their language ability level and (2) a desire to be in a class with students ‘like’ them” (72). The U.S.-born students had been placed into mainstream sections and, when asked, emphasized that they would not have liked to be placed in an ESL section.

In discussing the implications of their study, Costino and Hyon feel that administrators should consider the labeling of students, especially when the ESL label may be seen negatively. They also emphasize the importance of involving student voices when making placement decisions.

More recently, Christina Ortmeier-Hooper reports on three case studies of U.S. resident multilingual students in an article with a telling title, “English May Be My Second Language, but I’m not ESL.” Finding that her focal students did not identify with the ESL label but did in fact identify English as their second language, Ortmeier-Hooper problematizes our use of labels, pointing out the stigmatizing potential of labels like ESL, ESOL, or ELL. She explains how U.S. resident students may be less likely to identify with these labels and the courses to which they are attached, since they graduated from the U.S. K–12 system.

STUDY DESIGN, PARTICIPANTS, AND CONTEXT

The project discussed here investigates and responds to a number of issues raised by the research reviewed in the previous section. Building on Silva’s argument that the cross-cultural composition course should be a standard placement option, this study draws from student perspectives to articulate the insufficiency of the traditional ESL/mainstream dichotomy. It draws on the work of Matsuda, Braine, and others to explore student understandings of the different course options, arguing that there should be no one-size-fits-all option for L2 writers, especially given the differences between domestic and international L2 writers noted by scholars such as Preto-Bay, Hanson, and Friedrich. Following on work by Haswell, Crusan, and others, there is also discussion on the way students are placed, and students in this study join these scholars in revealing the problems with dependence on a single placement instrument. This study was most directly influenced by the works of Costino and Hyon and Ortmeier-Hooper, which raise concerns about the problematic nature of linguistic identity labels and their connection with the placement of L2 writers. Wanting to build on the valuable student-centered findings about labeling and placement satisfaction in these two studies, I constructed this study with the goal of having a larger sample size and an increased focus on placement and perceptions of course options. The study discussed here used a mixed methods design, as a quantitative survey instrument allows for collecting data from a large sample while adding open-ended responses to the survey along with interview data gives qualitative data to provide the depth needed to understand the complexity of student responses. For the purposes of this article, the focus on identity labels has been reduced in order to allow greater focus on

students' placement satisfaction, an issue that is a more immediate concern for WPAs.

This study was conducted at the University of Texas at El Paso, a 22,000-student university on the U.S.-Mexico border that draws most of its students from the region. The student body is over 70% Latino, with around 8% of the student body commuting daily from Mexico. Non-Mexican international students (mainly graduate students) constitute a small group, totaling about 3% of the student body (Center for Institutional Evaluation, Research, and Planning). As depicted in figure 1, based on this study's survey responses, the majority of students in both mainstream and ESL classes speak two or more languages. While 93.4% of the ENG 1311 students attended high school in the U.S., 94.7% of the ESOL 1311 students attended high school in Mexico.

Given the unique demographics of UTEP's student population, multilingual students are the majority at this institution. While these demographics make applying this study's findings to other institutions more difficult, they certainly provide advantages. For instance, unlike institutions where multilingual students comprise only a small minority, UTEP has a multilingual student population large enough to collect sufficient data for quantitative analysis. Additionally, as evidenced by the student responses in figure 1, UTEP is home to a large number of resident L2 and so-called generation 1.5 students, students who have migrated to the U.S. at some point during their lives before starting college. As discussed by Preto-Bay and Hansen, Friedrich, Ortmeier-Hooper, and others, resident L2 students have attitudes towards ESL placements that international L2 students may not possess.

As every institution is unique, and UTEP is likely more unique in its demographics than most, it is important to understand its demographics may result in different student perspectives and attitudes towards placement. For instance, ESL is generally less stigmatized in El Paso than elsewhere because the majority of inhabitants of the city and students at the various educational institutions are multilingual. Nonetheless, it appears the findings from this study are applicable in other contexts for a various reasons. For instance, as elsewhere in the U.S., the official language of all educational institutions in El Paso is English, and the vast majority of instruction outside of grade school bilingual programs occurs in English. Students in this study commonly exhibited attitudes found by researchers in other locations, such as resentment at being placed in ESL and a belief that mainstream classes were places where students learned more. However, one major area of difference from institutions where there are more international students may be students' concern that they would be speaking

mostly Spanish in an ESL class with fellow students. In a more international environment, students in an ESL class would be more likely to practice English with their peers, as this would be their common language. In sum, while the student body at UTEP is different than many U.S. colleges and universities, it provides a unique location for research on Latino resident or generation 1.5 L2 students, a student demographic that is becoming increasingly common throughout the U.S.

Table 1. Demographics of Surveyed Population

	ESOL 1311	ENG 1311
Surveyed students	193	204
Gender	44.3% male, 55.7% female	53% male, 47% female
Languages	96.4% speak two or more languages	80.8% speak two or more languages
Time in U.S.	4.7% of have lived in the U.S. all their life, 52.9% part of their life, and 42.5% live in Mexico or another country	70.2% have lived in the U.S. all their life, 23.9% part of their life, and 5.8% live in Mexico or another country
High school	94.7% attended high school in Mexico	93.4% attended high school in the U.S.

When students at UTEP participated in this study, they were enrolled in one of two credit-bearing FYC courses: ESOL 1311: English Composition for Speakers of ESL or ENG 1311: English Composition, which are both first-semester courses in a two-semester FYC sequence. According to UTEP's placement policy, the following groups of students are required to take an English language placement test:

- Non-English speaking students who received their secondary education (high school) in a language other than English.
- Students who attended English as a Second Language or bilingual classes in high school.
- Students who have taken the TOEFL exam but did not attain the score required to be placed directly into regular courses offered in English.
- Students taking the *Prueba de Aptitud Academica* (PAA)² as part of the admissions requirements. ("ESOL Placement Exam")

If students score high enough on the first two multiple section choices on the placement exam to test out of lower ESOL sections, they are required to write an essay which will determine if they are ready for ESOL 1311. Once placed, “students in the ESOL program must continue taking ESOL courses until the required course sequence is completed. ESOL students cannot change from ESOL to English courses, or vice versa, unless special permission is granted” (“ESOL Course Sequence”).

Per IRB requirements, informed consent was obtained electronically from the survey participants and via a paper form for the interviewees. Beginning of semester surveys were administered in class to 397 English L1 and L2 students from ten ENG 1311 and ten ESOL 1311 classes over two semesters. Much shorter surveys, designed to assess if placement preferences shifted, were administered at the end of the semester (See appendices A and B for the ESOL surveys—ENG surveys were virtually the same, with minor wording changes when inquiring about placement). Additionally, I interviewed nine students—five from an ESOL class and four from an ENG class—all identifying English as their second language. The surveys were designed and piloted over the course of a semester, with Zoltán Dörnyei’s *Questionnaires in Second Language Research* providing guidance for the survey design process. The research questions driving the survey design and the data analysis were as follows:

1. What are multilingual students’ attitudes towards various labels commonly used to describe students like them? Are these attitudes affected by students’ self-identification with the labels or self-reported usage of English?
2. How do students view mainstream and L2 writing courses differently and how do course titles affect student perception of the courses? If multilingual students see certain labels negatively, will they be more likely to see the associated courses negatively?
3. If given the choice, would multilingual students placed into ESL and mainstream classrooms choose the same placements that the institution assigned them? Does their placement satisfaction change between the beginning and end of a semester?

The presentation of data in this article focuses mainly on questions 2 and 3, given that these would likely be of more immediate interest to WPAs. In order to answer these questions, the qualitative and quantitative survey data were analyzed together. Qualitative survey responses were generally a phrase or sentence in length and were read carefully using inductive data analysis, in which the “research findings emerge from the frequent,

dominant, or significant themes within the raw data” (Mackey and Gass 179). After reading through the responses, I formed categories, placed the responses within them, and further refined/consolidated the categories with repeated readings. Quantitative survey data were analyzed using filtering tools that were part of the online survey service, which enabled me to sort responses by reported use of English, U.S. residency status, and other characteristics.

The nine interviews were transcribed, read repeatedly, and coded for patterns. Codes were attached to stanzas, which James Paul Gee has described as a set of lines in a section of discourse dedicated to a certain theme. As with the qualitative survey responses, the categories were developed inductively while reading through the data. The interview data were analyzed in conjunction with the survey data.

PLACEMENT SATISFACTION

Questions 14 and 15 on the beginning of semester survey and questions 4–6 on the end of semester survey focused on obtaining data about placement satisfaction. For question 14, ESOL students were asked, “If given the freedom to choose, would you rather be in your current writing course ESOL 1311, or a 1311 course in the ENG department?” ENG students were asked the same question, with the ESOL and ENG names reversed. Looking at the responses depicted in Figure 1, there was a clear difference between the ENG and ESOL student placement satisfaction levels. ESOL students were clearly less satisfied with their placements, as 95.6% of ENG students preferred their current class while 72.9% of the ESOL students did. An analysis of the qualitative survey responses for this question gives more insight into the overall numbers.

Among ENG students, 7 of the 9 who desired to be in ESOL instead of ENG explained their choice. Of these, 2 appeared to have a mistaken understanding of the ESOL course, thinking that they would learn about different languages: “Only if I could learn and improvise some more with Italian and French.” However, the other 5 students were concerned their English was not good enough for ENG 1311 or felt more comfortable with students like them. For instance, one wrote, “because I might be a little behind in the learning comparing to the rest of my class,” while another wrote, “I feel better when I’m with people who speak the same language.”

Among ESOL open-ended responses, 32 of 119 came from students who indicated they would have preferred to be placed in ENG instead of ESOL. These responses fell into several different categories including a desire to learn and speak more English (9), expectations of the course being

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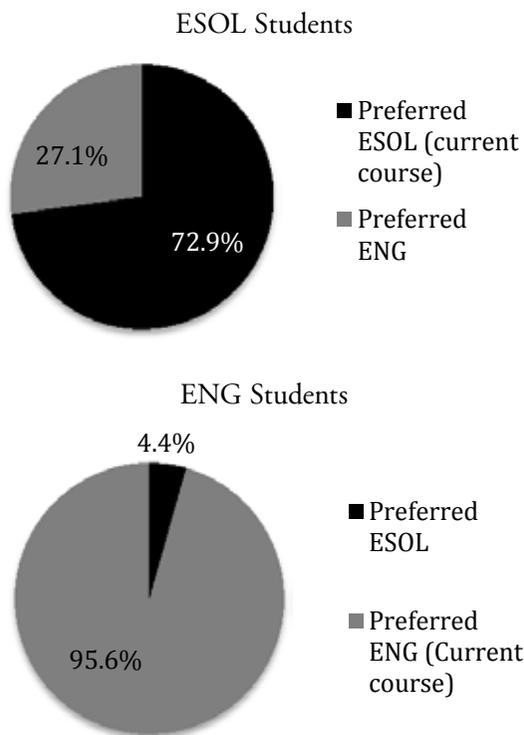


Figure 1. Percentage of students who were satisfied with their current course or preferred the other option.

more challenging or faster (8), desire to be with native English speakers (NNSs) (4), belief that they knew enough English (4), simple dissatisfaction (3), anti-labeling/division (2), and a concern with course credits (2). One student whose response was placed in the first category wrote, “because I believe that in that department I could learn more than in the other one.” A student in the second category felt that being in an English course would be more challenging so they would learn faster while a few other students thought they could graduate faster even though ESOL 1311 counted for the ENG 1311 credit.

The remaining open-ended ESOL responses, 87 of 119, came from students who were satisfied with their placement in ESOL. Like the responses discussed above, these fell into a number of categories: the course is better for their needs and can help them better (21), they have more to learn and are not ready (16), it is easier because others speak their language (14), it is more comfortable because students are at the same level (14), the teacher

or teaching style is better adapted to learning needs (10), simple preference (7), and they do not know what the ENG course is like (5). Some students in the top category, saying the course is better for their needs, reflected the attitude of Costino and Hyon's participant who described an ESOL class as a "class for students like me." One of the students in the present study described his preference for the ESOL class, writing, "because this course is made for the students like me who doesn't speak very well the English, and who need special attention in some areas that the English students already dominate." Another student, clearly understanding the limitations of a monolingual teacher who has tacit knowledge of the structures of a language, wrote, "because the teachers understand our necessities as a second language learners. and they can explain us better than a English teacher will do." Another large group (14) simply felt more at ease in ESOL, with these responses ranging from a simple "I feel more comfortable" to "I think its better because if I make a mistake my teacher will correct me and I won't be embarrassed."

To examine whether or not the students' placement satisfaction changed over the course of the semester, students were asked a question very similar to question 14 on the end of semester survey. Unfortunately, this survey only received 99 responses this question, compared to 193 at the beginning of the semester. This resulted from a lack of access to computer labs at the end of the one semester, requiring a number of students to take the survey voluntarily. An overall view of these responses finds 77.8% of students, slightly more than 72.9% at the beginning of the semester, preferred ESOL over ENG. Given the limited data, a better picture comes from tracking changes in individual responses. Using phone number identification data, I compared the beginning and end of semester responses of 53 students. 43 of these students did not change preferences while 3 shifted from preferring ESOL to ENG while 7 shifted from preferring ENG to ESOL. This information, combined with the overall data and the interview responses of Osvaldo,³ whose placement opinion shifted from wanting to be in English to preferring ESOL, indicates that some students may have become more satisfied with their ESOL placement as the semester progressed.

Whereas responses to question 14 revealed that students had a diversity of preferences, with some anticipating more opportunities to improve English in a mainstream section and others preferring the comfort of an ESOL section, responses to question 15 revealed a new layer of complexity to student responses—a layer that demonstrates the value of cross-cultural composition courses and the inadequacy of placement systems solely dependent on an assessment tool. In order to understand students' preferences from a different perspective, question 15 asked them a question similar to 14, but

using different labels. It read, “Would you rather be in a writing course with all nonnative speakers of English (NNESs) or in a class that includes both native and nonnative speakers of English?” While only 27.1% of ESOL students wanted to be in a class in the English department, 79.2% wanted to be in a “Class that includes both native and nonnative speakers of English.” This is almost a complete reversal of the results of question 14, indicating that students value a course dedicated to their needs but also see the value of a more mainstream environment. Among open-ended survey response for this question, 19 of the 133 were from students who preferred an all-NNES class, with responses falling into the following categories: being on the same level with the other students (8), feeling more comfortable (5), having similar needs (2), and 1 response each saying that they would have more confidence, be better than the other students, be able to speak Spanish, and learn more. The 114 responses that preferred a mixed class fell into several categories as well: the chance to practice more English (32), they would learn faster (19), possibilities for cultural exchange (17), belief that their English and Spanish were good enough for a mixed course (11), mixed is simply better (5), while the remaining few students said it would help build tolerance or had no preference. The responses here certainly connect with some of the qualitative responses for question 14 with the interesting aspect being that many students who indicated a preference for the ESOL course in question 14 indicated a preference for a mixed course in question 15. For instance, in question 14, a surveyed student explained their preference for ESOL, writing that “I’m with people with the same level of English that I am.” In the next question, the same student indicated a preference for a mixed class, writing that “being in contact with native speakers is better.” As discovered through survey filtering tools, this preference shift occurred in half of the total ESOL responses.

Turning to the interviewed students reveals a bit more about these seemingly contradictory responses. The interviewed students in ESOL explained their preference for the mixed class by explaining that they would be forced to speak more English if having to work with NES peers. However, Pamela’s statement revealed an ambivalence that appears to have been shared by many of the respondents which helps explain the disparity in responses for questions 14 and 15:

I think that in English, maybe I will be with people that speak in English, so it will be better to me because I will be forced, because for example, in the ESL classes, my classmates speak Spanish, so . . . the outlines and the teamwork’s, they’re in Spanish too, when the teacher

say . . . speak in English, I do, but when she didn't notice, we speak in Spanish, and, I don't know, I, but I like the ESOL classes and I think that there are more, like, um, *como dedicadas* [like dedicated].

Here, Pamela reveals that Spanish is the dominant language among peers in the ESOL classes, and her concern that she does not practice enough English as a result. Nevertheless, she prefers this environment because it is “dedicated” to serving the needs of L2 writers, something that a mainstream English class is not. The importance of cross-cultural composition offerings and DSP in resolving this contradiction will be discussed more in the final section.

COURSE TITLES

Students were also asked if they would consider enrolling in a composition courses based on titles. English Composition and English Composition for Speakers of ESL are actual titles used at UTEP while English Composition for Native Speakers, English Composition for Multilingual Writers, and English Composition for Second Language (L2) Writers were hypothetical titles. As illustrated in Figure 2, students' current course titles were the most popular, with 84.3% of ENG students choosing English Composition and 60.2% of ESOL students choosing English Composition for Speakers of ESL. English Composition for Multilingual Writers was chosen about equally by students from both groups, albeit by a relatively small percentage (23.5% ENG and 22% ESOL) of respondents. English Composition for Second Language Writers was also a popular choice among ESOL students with 42.4% of respondents choosing it. 33.5% of ESOL students chose English Composition while 17.8% chose English Composition for Native Speakers, which reflects the strong desire of a number of students to either be in a more mainstream course and to work in closer contact with NESs with the hope to practice and learn English more quickly.

Students' conceptions of a course titled English Composition for Multilingual Speakers deserves more examination here. A number of the interviewed students picked the multilingual composition section as one of their choices and explained why they liked the title. Here is an exchange with Joanne:

Interviewer: Down below I had asked about course titles . . . and for example you chose English composition and English comp for multilingual writers . . . Why did you choose those two and not the other ones?

Joanne: Because they don't label you, for example here, second language writer is ESL right? So, I don't know if that means you're not very proficient, you're not, but you wanna learn. So making that title will change that, I'm going to English, I'm not going to a secondary language, or something like that.

Interviewer: OK. And so, and you like this one even though it includes a label, English composition for multilingual writers. Why did you like that?

Joanne: Because you're not saying you're not proficient in one language. You're saying that you're proficient in more than one language.

In this exchange, Joanne reveals the problem with stigmatizing labels like ESL and is conscious of the way that they attempt to construct her as an inferior student, especially when compared to native speakers. While she was generally antagonistic towards labeling, she chose multilingual it because it labeled students in a positive way by indicating proficiency in multiple languages, unlike a name that includes terms like "second," "limited" or "non." Miguel shared Joanne's view, saying, "I don't really like that ESOL or that English, so I like the term bilingual and multilingual, cause, you know I think things are better." Both Joanne and Miguel had been placed in the ESOL section.

While students like Joanne and Miguel appreciated the title "multilingual," the term also has the potential to confuse and turn away students. In a question seeking how much students identified with different linguistic identity labels, not many students identified with multilingual because they thought it was defined as one who speaks more than two languages, a belief shared unanimously by the interviewees. When asked why he did not choose the English composition for multilingual writers course, Osvaldo replied, "For multilingual writers? Because those are, I think that those are for people who speak more than two languages and it's a little bit more complex, more complex right?" Interviewee Sandra and a number of students who responded to the open-ended part of the course title question on the survey held the belief that they would be practicing and learning other languages in the multilingual composition course. For instance, a survey respondent from ENG 1311 who indicated an interest in the multilingual course wrote, "I would love to learn how to write proper in German and Spanish."

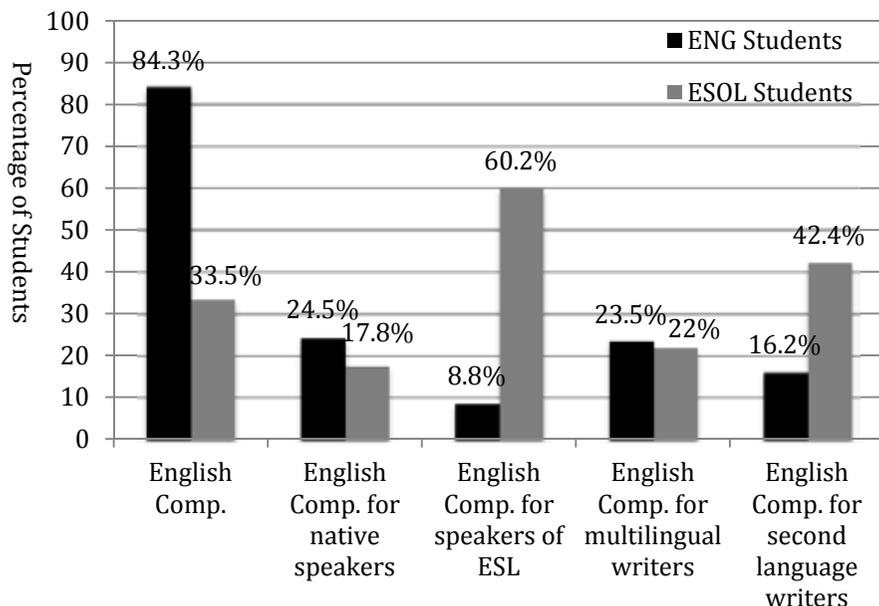


Figure 2. Percentage of students from the ENG and ESOL classes that indicated interest to take a course based on its title.

PLACEMENT SYSTEM PREFERENCES

For another question, students were asked, “How important should the following be in deciding first year writing class placements for second language writers? Student opinion, test scores, high school English grades, and student advisors.” They were asked to rate these as “Not important,” “Not very important,” “Important,” and “Very important.” Overall, the responses between the two groups were virtually identical and averages for each option were all closer to “Important” than any other answer choice. The largest difference between the groups was high school English grades, as the ESOL students ranked them slightly less important than the ENG students did. Test scores were valued the most highly by both groups while student opinion was valued second highest.

Several of the interviewed students felt that student opinion would be important and that they or others in their classes could have benefited from an interview to decide placement. For instance, Joanne, who was unsatisfied with her placement in ESOL, felt that she could have explained her case better in an interview. In fact, she approached the department chair in an attempt to avoid a course that she did not think she would benefit from;

however, he was unable to help her because of UTEP's rigid placement system. Pamela explained that other students in her ESOL 1311 class wanted to be in ENG 1311, something they could have expressed in a placement interview. On the opposite end, Andrea, who was placed in ENG 1311 but indicated on the first survey that she would have rather been in ESOL 1311, said interviews could be helpful to allow students to indicate they did not feel comfortable taking a mainstream course.

From the survey and interview results, it is clear that students believe an effective placement system should use a variety of information sources. The interviewed students in the ESOL classes recalled taking several tests upon beginning college in the U.S., and found them useful but problematic as their score could easily be affected by a bad night before the test or test-induced stress. In making an argument for a greater weight on high school English grades than test scores, Sandra pointed out that a "grade is like what you accomplished throughout the year, a test is what you take in one day." Miguel favored student advisors, because he felt they would know more about students: "if you see him on a regular basis, he will know your potential and everything." In contrast, Sandra pointed out that she did not relate well to her advisor, and rarely saw her, so she could not be as helpful as expected in deciding placement. All the ESOL students interviewed valued student opinion, arguing that they provided a different dimension to understanding student preferences and motivations that scores and grades could not. In sum, it appears that students thought all the surveyed elements should play some role in determining placements.

DISCUSSION

Considering student perspectives in placement adds a new layer of complexity because student attitudes are intimately connected with identity, which Bonnie Norton describes as "multiple, a site of struggle, and changing over time" (14). Applying this understanding of identity to student placement preferences, I will draw on the findings discussed in the previous sections to articulate ways that mainstream WPAs can work with ESL WPAs (if separate positions) to examine their institutional contexts and improve the way L2 writers' needs are served at their institution. When programs are separated like at UTEP, addressing the issues raised by this study is certainly a task that requires cross-program collaboration. As a result, in addressing WPAs in the following discussion, I am generally referring to contributions by both mainstream and ESL WPAs.

The findings presented in the previous sections reveal the multiplicity of student preferences, as the majority of students felt satisfied in ESOL

courses but many of the same students desired more interaction with native English speakers. While some students in this study were concerned about embarrassing situations in a mainstream classroom or felt that the ESOL classroom would better address their needs, others felt that more interaction with NES students in a mainstream environment would help them learn faster. As seen by Pamela's interview response and the survey results, most students desired the best of both worlds—a desire that is not fulfilled at most colleges and universities where the ESL/ENG dichotomy is the norm.

In response to students' multiple preferences, WPAs can work to expand the types of placement options offered, focusing especially on options that promote interaction between L1 and L2 learners while addressing all student needs. Tony Silva and Paul Kei Matsuda have written about the value of a cross-cultural composition course taught at Purdue, with variations more recently implemented at other institutions. In a cross-cultural composition course, L1 and L2 students are intentionally placed in the same class and taught by an instructor has been trained to work with both types of writers, ideally someone who has had graduate work in rhetoric and composition with coursework focused on L2 writers. This results in an environment where L1 and L2 writers can comfortably interact and support each other, while including elements of cross-cultural learning. Because the instructor would have knowledge about working with both types of learners, L2 students would receive more specialized assistance than they would likely receive in a mainstream class. Unfortunately, while a cross-cultural composition course seems to be the ideal way to address the multiple preferences of the students surveyed in this study, it is has a reputation of being challenging to implement. For instance, it requires the creation of a new course, instructors who are specialists in L1 and L2 writing, informing students about this unique course option, and finding students to self-select the course.

As a simpler alternative to creating cross-cultural composition courses, WPAs and instructors from mainstream and ESL writing programs can collaborate in finding new ways to link courses and their content. This linking would ensure that all course options are credit bearing, which is the case at UTEP and an important point for students. Mainstream and ESL WPAs can coordinate course curricula, so that students have similar writing experiences in both classes, something that has also been done at UTEP. By having similar writing assignments, instructors can bring together students from different classes for certain writing projects and activities such as peer review. This way, students will have teachers and classes dedicated to serving their needs while having the opportunity to learn from diverse students via an exchange of linguistic and cultural knowledge.

The second point of Norton's definition of identity, that it is a "site of struggle," is obviously present in placement, which is a site of tension between student feelings about placement and the decisions that institutions make. In this study, the struggle is apparent in the 27.1% of ESOL students who indicated a preference for an ENG placement. It is perhaps most vividly clear in Joanne's comments and active resistance of her placement. As evident in the exchange quoted earlier, Joanne resisted the ESOL placement in part because she saw this label stigmatizing students, saying they were not ready for "real" college work. In the interview, she questioned the rationale that required her to take a sequence of ESOL courses after finding them overly easy while also receiving high grades in mainstream disciplinary courses, commenting, "I took history, I also took philosophy, I took sociology, so I'm like those are really hard classes for reading, so why should I go to ESOL." As Joanne's experience attests, unexamined course titles and placement systems can negatively influence student lives. Joanne's comments and the opinions shared by many students in this study reveal that students do pay attention to the way they are labeled and placed, and, when in the few cases like Joanne's where they challenge a placement, are often shown they may be unable to take the courses they feel would most benefit their education.

Unfortunately, WPAs are often constrained like Joanne in their ability to effect change in their institutions and there may also be tension between what WPAs see as best for their programs and broader institutional and political contexts. Placement systems may be coordinated by other departments that show intense resistance to change. Public institutions such as UTEP's may be even worse as placement systems can be dictated at the state level by people with very little knowledge of the local institution's context and student demographics. Nonetheless, change can occur and should begin by forging collaborations with other WPAs on campus and, together with them, conducting studies like this one to evaluate the placement of L2 writers on campus. By building alliances and collecting data, WPAs will gain a better understanding of the shortcomings with their system and have the data and alliances to argue for change whether to the department responsible for testing and placement or, if necessary, at the state level.

In order to mediate the tension between programs and students, WPAs can advocate for systems that place students more accurately and more fairly, involving student opinions in the placement process, and developing course titles that do not marginalize students. The students in this study felt that all elements on the survey, test scores, high school English grades, advisors' opinions, and students' opinions, should be considered because any element taken alone is too limited. Too often, placement systems rely on a

single test score, even though research by Crusan and others have shown this to be inadequate. Of all surveyed options listed above, student opinion is likely to be least considered; however, this has begun to change with the growing acceptance of Directed Self-Placement (DSP).

DSP, proposed for mainstream students by Daniel Royer and Roger Gilles, is certainly an option for L2 writer placement and has been more recently recommended by Edward White in *WPA: Writing Program Administration* and by the “CCCC Statement on Second Language Writing and Writers.” In the Royer and Gilles model, DSP consists of informing students about the different placement options and letting them make the decision of whether a mainstream or basic writing placement would be best for them. Implementing such a placement program for L2 writers could work in a similar way, as the information session would focus on the advantages and disadvantages of both an ESL and a mainstream writing placement and, if available, a cross-cultural composition section. If deciding to implement cross-cultural composition sections, this information session would be an ideal place to recruit interested students. The results of this study have shown that students have varying and conflicting preferences but certainly value having a say in where they are placed, so an informed decision made by them might be the most effective way for placement.

For some WPAs and programs, moving completely to a DSP model may be a too radical or difficult step given their institutional politics, and some may find simply that their student population may not make appropriate placement decisions on their own. Instead of giving students complete say in their decision, gaining their opinion via a placement interview may be an option, but probably not very feasible for mid-size or large institutions given the cost and time involved in interviewing hundreds or even thousands of students a year. For those concerned about implementing DSP policies and the costs of placement interviews, Crusan has discussed an innovative Online DSP module for L1 and L2 writers that requests demographic information and other data, such as how often a student translates from their native language when writing in English. According to Crusan, it determines a placement by calculating an algorithm based on the questionnaire responses combined with more traditional data, test scores, GPA, and class rank (“Politics” 214). While Crusan admits that this is not completely self-placement, surveying students online becomes a cost-effective way to better know students, their experiences, and preferences when placing them into first-year writing courses. Although this survey would not give students complete power in the placement process, it would make them feel a larger part of the process and the results would provide programs with data to improve and reconsider their placement practices. By

keeping students' responses on file, WPAs could turn to these responses as an additional resource to discuss a student's placement if the student challenges it at some point.

As noted by Joanne and other students, course titles can marginalize students, making them more antagonistic about a certain course placement and increasing the tension between students and placement systems. Students in this study had clear and sometimes very strong opinions about what an ENG or ESOL class was, as well as what a course like English Composition for Multilingual Students might be like. Some did not like labels such as "ESL" and "nonnative speaker" being attached to courses as they saw them as stigmatizing, focusing on what students could not do as opposed to what they could. When considering the relation between labeling and language hierarchies in composition courses, there are two aspects to consider: the use of "English" to describe a composition course and the attachment of a linguistic identity label like "ESL." In order to avoid pushing an English-only ideology and to encourage the incorporation of multiple languages in students' research and writing processes, composition courses should be thought of and labeled as composition courses and not English courses. Concerned about the implications of attaching potentially negative linguistic identity labels to courses, WPAs at some schools have reported renaming course titles like "Composition for speakers of ESL" to "Composition for Multilingual Speakers" (Costino and Hyon; Goen-Salter, Porter, and vanDommelen). However, this move is complicated as students in this study felt they would have to know more than two languages to be in such a course. Some students even thought a course labeled "multilingual" would give them the opportunity to learn other languages.

The diversity of student perceptions regarding course titles demonstrates a clear need to educate incoming students about the actual content of courses so that they can develop more informed opinions about them. Such an information session could be incorporated into the summer orientation program and focus on the differences between the course options, ranging from the differences between assignments to the types of students who enter certain courses and succeed in them. While such an informational session would be essential when implementing a DSP program, it could also be useful for a university where DSP is not in place, as providing students with informed understandings of differences between ESL and mainstream courses may help potentially dissatisfied students become aware of the benefits of an ESL placement.

Finally, as student preferences are likely to change over time based on experience with courses, language development, or discourses they pick up from fellow students, placement systems need to be flexible. Among the 53

ESOL students whose preferences I was able to track from the beginning to the end of the semester, almost 20% changed their mind from the first survey to the last. One interviewed student, Amanda, was initially placed in ENG despite wanting to be in ESOL, although she later became satisfied with her ENG placement, saying, "Cause I didn't think I could do it. I thought it was too difficult . . . and . . . but now I think if the rest of my classes are going to be in English, I should start right now with that, practicing English." On the other hand, Pamela was placed into ESOL and initially preferred an ENG placement, but later became satisfied with ESOL.

Of the recommendations suggested here, creating a flexible placement system may be the easiest to implement. The system currently in place at UTEP requires students to take a sequence of ESOL courses, regardless of how they are doing in the courses, their opinions about them, or how they are doing in mainstream disciplinary courses. For instance, Pamela had to take not only two writing courses, but also a reading course and a few others before passing out of the full ESOL sequence, courses she would likely receive limited benefit from given her negative attitude towards being required to take them. In contrast, a more flexible system would allow a student like Pamela to move out of ESOL earlier, a decision that could be made based on student preferences or preferences combined with some kind of standard, such as a certain GPA needed in either the ESOL or mainstream courses completed or the student advisor's opinion. In evaluating the value of a flexible placement system, WPAs can monitor the success of students switching from one track to another in order to evaluate whether students generally benefit or suffer from these transitions. While this information should not be used to end a flexible system, it could be used to make recommendations to future students who question their placement.

CONCLUSION

Despite efforts to improve placement practices and find new ways to consider student opinion, no placement system will ever be completely effective due to the complexity of student preferences and abilities. As researchers have repeatedly shown, L2 students are diverse and measures of language proficiency and residency status will not account for other factors that are constantly shaping their preferences. Student preferences are multiple and shifting, often resulting from a confluence of discourses that include friends' experiences in mainstream and ESL courses, students' personal experiences, and discourses surrounding labels used to describe students and courses. Preferences are further shaped by the grades students receive in classes, the type of teachers they have and classes they take, and the value

they perceive in the ESL courses they take. Whenever writing programs place students, they simplify this complex and shifting reality; however, it is obviously necessary to categorize and place students in courses for students with similar yet diverse needs.

WPAs should strive to improve placement for L2 writers, understanding that institutional and state bureaucracies will often stand in the way of their efforts and that a perfect system will never exist. It is obvious from the voices of the researchers at the beginning of this article and the voices of students in this study that placement systems should be examined and improved. While UTEP may be unique in the number of L2 writers that it has, its students certainly share concerns of students from other institutions, as the participants in this study echoed the responses of students in the Costino and Hyon and Ortmeier-Hooper studies. Moreover, moves to improve placement with cross-cultural composition, DSP, and increased flexibility have been implemented at other institutions while a more linguistically diverse institution like UTEP remains behind the curve in this regard. Moving to a more effective placement system is certainly not easy and there is certainly no blanket solution for all contexts. Moreover, while this article has advocated a larger consideration of student opinion in the placement process, WPAs will always need to balance student opinion with more traditional data measures, such as how well students do in the classes in which they are placed.

Since the scope of some of the suggestions presented above may seem overwhelming, I will end by describing some first steps. Mainstream WPAs can begin making a difference by paying attention to research focused on L2 writers, starting with the 2006 *WPA Journal* special issue and attending more presentations focused on L2 writing issues at conferences. They can ensure all their instructional staff have knowledge about working with L2 writers, even if it is simply a day devoted to L2 writers in a composition theory and pedagogy class for new TAs or occasional sessions devoted to L2 writers at program workshops. Then, they can form stronger collaborations with ESL and even basic writing WPAs at their institutions, if they are separate positions, joining with them to conduct formal or informal studies about the efficacy of placement for different types of writers at their institutions. They can then utilize these alliances and data to make the argument to implement some of the suggestions made above or other changes that may be necessary given their findings and local context. By understanding the complexity of the placement process, evaluating the efficacy of existing placement systems, and working together to implement some of the recommendations presented here, WPAs from both mainstream and ESL writing

programs can actively work together to improve writing instruction for all students.

NOTES

1. English for speakers of other languages. As indicated by the course title, this abbreviation, along with ESL, is commonly used to describe L2 writing classes at UTEP. In this article, I use ESOL when referring specifically to the UTEP context and ESL when discussing L2 writing programs generally, since the latter is more widely used.

2. The PAA is a university entrance examination designed to assess native Spanish speakers.

3. This and all other student names are pseudonyms.

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APPENDIX A: BEGINNING OF SEMESTER ESOL SURVEY

1. By checking this button and clicking next, I confirm that I have read the above and agree to participate in this study. I know that being in this study is voluntary and I choose to be in this study. I know I can stop being in this study without penalty.
2. Please enter the last four numbers in your phone number. This will only be used to connect your beginning and end of semester responses.
3. What is your gender?
4. How many languages do you speak?
5. How well do you think the following labels describe you? Native English speaker, nonnative English speaker, ESL speaker, ESL student, English language learner, Limited English proficiency, bilingual, multilingual, monolingual? Not at all, not very well, somewhat, very well, perfectly? (Note: ESL=English as a second language bilingual=speaks two languages multilingual=speaks more than one language monolingual=speaks one language).
6. Do you think the following labels are positive or negative? Native English speaker, nonnative English speaker, ESL speaker, ESL student, English language learner, Limited English proficiency, bilingual, multilingual, monolingual? Very negative, somewhat negative, neutral, somewhat positive, very positive? Please explain why you marked some labels negatively.
7. How strongly do you identify with these aspects of U.S. culture? Language, food, music and movies, people, politics. Very weakly, weakly, somewhat, strongly, very strongly?
8. Which culture do you identify more strongly with: U.S. or Mexican? Only U.S., more U.S., U.S. and Mexican culture equally, more Mexican, only Mexican. If you identify with a culture not mentioned here, please name that culture and how strongly you identify with it.
9. How often do you speak English with your grandparents, your mother, your father, your brothers/sisters, your friends? Never, rarely, sometimes, usually, always, N/A.
10. How long have you lived in the United States: all my life, part of my life (please specify numbers of years in the box below), I live in Mexico, I live in another country and am studying abroad at UTEP (please specify home country in the box below).
11. Where did you attend high school? United States, Mexico, or other (please specify)?

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12. Were you in a bilingual education program in high school? Yes or no?
13. If you were in a bilingual education program, how satisfied were you with the program? Very dissatisfied, dissatisfied, neutral, satisfied, very satisfied.
14. If given the freedom to choose, would you rather be in your current writing course, ESOL 1311, or a 1311 course in the English department? Current course or course in the English department? Please explain your choice.
15. Would you rather be in a writing course with all nonnative speakers of English or in a class that includes both native and nonnative speakers of English? All nonnative English speaker class or class that includes both native and nonnative speakers of English. Please explain your choice.
16. Based the following titles, which of the following writing courses would you consider taking? You can choose more than one answer. English composition, English composition for native speakers, English composition for speakers of ESL, English composition for multilingual writers, English composition for second language writers.
17. How important should the following be in deciding first year writing class placements for second language writers? Student opinion, test scores, high school English grades, and student advisors.
18. If you have comments about anything in this survey or would like to say something more, please do so here.

APPENDIX B: END OF SEMESTER ESOL SURVEY

1. By taking this survey, I confirm that I took the beginning of semester survey and was informed of the benefits and risks of participating in this study.
2. Please enter the last four numbers in your phone number. This will only be used to connect your beginning and end of semester responses.
3. Have the reading and writing assignments in your 1311 class been too easy, too hard, or just right for your English ability? Too easy, too hard, just right.
4. If you had been given the choice, would you have chosen your current writing course, ESOL 1311, or a 1311 course in the English department? Current course or course in the English department.
5. Would you rather be in a writing course with all nonnative speakers of English or in a class that includes both native and nonnative speakers of

English? All nonnative speaker class or class that includes both native and nonnative speakers.

6. You have to take another semester of first-year composition. Would you like to stay in the ESOL department or would you prefer to take a class in the English department? Stay in the ESOL department or take class in the English department.

Writing Programs Without Administrators: Frameworks for Successful Writing Programs in the Two-Year College

Carolyn Calhoon-Dillahunt

Looking over the student's COMPASS scores, I tell her, "You placed into ENGL 095 and Math 050." English 095 is highest of the developmental writing courses at my college, one step below English 101, and Math 050 is arithmetic, one of four basic math classes she'll need to complete before meeting the pre-requisite for a college-level math course. This young woman—and approximately 65% of our college's students are women—is an *average* student at Yakima Valley Community College, which serves an essentially bi-cultural population, about 40% Latino and nearly 60% white, in south Central Washington. With agriculture as our rural county's economic mainstay, our community is poorer than the state average. This student, like the majority of our YVCC students, depends on financial aid to attend college. She works part-time. She's the first in her family to go to college, though it took her a couple of years to muster up the courage to fill out an application. She didn't earn the kinds of grades, nor take the sort of classes in high school that would make her a strong candidate for a university education. She never considered taking the SAT. Besides, she's place bound, out of financial necessity, her fear of leaving the familiar, and her insecurity about whether she belongs in college at all. She's not sure what she wants to do with her education, but she knows that college is the key to improving her earning potential, to avoiding the fieldwork her parents were relegated to when they crossed the border illegally before she was born.

In many ways, this student represents the statistically "average" community college student, though the idea of "average" certainly oversimplifies the diversity of those who choose to attend two-year colleges. According to the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC), nationwide, female students outnumber male students, approximately 60% to 40%. The average age of a community college student is 29, but the age range is broad, given that many community colleges serve high school students in

dual credit or concurrent enrollment programs (AACC, “Community”). I have personally had ages ranging from 16 to 65 in a single class. Over forty percent of community college students are first generation college students, about 40% are ethnic minorities, over 45% receive some sort of financial aid, and over 80% work at least part time (AACC, “2011”). Two-year college students are three to four times more likely than their four-year college counterparts to be considered “at risk” and “underprepared” (MLA). In fact, according to institutional placement exam results, nearly half of all newly enrolled two-year college students need remedial classes (MLA), and two-year colleges teach the vast majority of developmental courses (Millward, Powers, and Crump).

The American Association of Community Colleges asserts, “Community colleges are the gateway to postsecondary education for many minority, low income, and first-generation postsecondary education students” (“Community”). For many returning—and often place bound—students, for students who struggled academically in high school, and for low-income students, two-year colleges may be the *only* means they have for accessing higher education. Also, as tuition costs rise, many “traditional” students seek out two-year colleges because of their value. For example, in Washington state, the legislature freed its public four-year colleges and universities to set their own tuition rates. The University of Washington’s tuition will be raising about 20% next year (Long, “UW”). Additionally, the University of Washington has reduced in-state admissions, to allow more space for the more lucrative out-of-state enrollees, who can further subsidize in-state tuition rates (Long, “Why”). Community colleges, of course, are not immune to tuition hikes. Yakima Valley Community College, where I teach, has raised tuition 7–10% each year for the past three years; however, with public two-year college’s tuition averaging \$2,713 annually as compared to the average public four-year college’s \$7,605 a year (AACC, “2011”), two-year college tuition is still a bargain, especially since the typical two-year college student commutes to campus from home.

As I continue with my advising appointment, I scan the online course catalog, looking for an open section of English 095. Most of the classes are already full with a waitlist. An increasingly common scenario. According to the 2002 Community College Survey of Student Engagement, “Two things happen when the economy has a downturn: (1) enrollment . . . increases as laid-off and anxious workers try to improve skills or change careers, and (2) community college budgets are cut in response to tighter state budgets” (qtd. in Millward, Powers, and Crump). That confluence of events is happening now in community colleges across the country, including my own, which is bursting at the seams with new and returning students, includ-

ing this young woman sitting before me, anxious to begin her educational career. At the same time hundreds of new students are flocking to our doors seeking out new opportunities, Yakima Valley Community College has cut seventy-six sections for fall 2011—and cut faculty and staff pay 3%—in response to state budgetary reductions (Snelgrove). Facing the fourth year of significant budget cuts in a row, there is simply nothing left to cut. And, as I try to cobble together a schedule for this young woman, I'm reminded that regardless of the quality of our writing program, if I can't get her into a developmental writing class during her first quarter of college, her academic aspirations will be seriously hindered, both because she won't be developing the reading, writing, and thinking skills and habits needed to be successful in college and because 101-readiness is the ticket *in* to most other college-level courses on campus. Nationally, class shortages and long waitlists extend the time it takes to earn a certificate or degree, making "at risk" students all the more vulnerable. The most recent report from the Center for Community College Student Engagement found that, among first-time, full-time students seeking an AA degree, like the student I'm advising, only 28% complete a certificate or degree within three years, and, even after six years, only 45% have completed a certificate or degree (Lipka).

Two-year colleges are known for their diverse students, students who tend mirror, demographically, the communities in which they are situated. However, community colleges themselves are also very diverse places, often more different from one another than the same. While public two-year colleges are nearly all open-admission and multifaceted, providing vocational, transfer, adult basic skills, and community programs, they are hardly uniform. How can they be given, as Howard Tinberg describes, the "comprehensive" and "contradictory" nature of their missions (Tinberg and Nadau 6)? And these differences are both concrete and philosophical. Twenty-five percent of community colleges serve 1000 or less students, and 14% serve 10,000 or more, often tens of thousands more. They are situated everywhere, most concentrated in large cities, suburban areas, or mid-sized cities, sometimes as single campuses, sometimes as multiple campuses (AACC, "Community"). Two-year colleges have distinct histories, missions, administrative structures, departmental organization, programming needs, student bodies, and student goals. Kevin Dougherty states, "When they first appeared at the turn of the [twentieth] century, community colleges were largely liberal arts oriented institutions . . . But over the years, this orientation changed radically. Community colleges added programs in adult education, community education, remedial education, and most importantly occupational education. Today, vocational education is the dominant program in the community college, enrolling between 40 and 60% .

. . . of community college students . . .” (qtd. in Tinberg and Nadau 6). The increasingly vocational thrust of community colleges also complicates the objectives of the two-year college writing program, which typically serves both transfer and workforce education students, in addition to preparing students for either degree program with developmental writing courses. Add to that the proliferation of Dual Credit/Concurrent Enrollment programs, teaching freshman composition to high school aged students, and the job of writing program administration, whatever that may mean in the two-year college context, becomes quite complex indeed.

What is common in two-year colleges is the faculty. The ratio of full time to part-time faculty is one-third to two-thirds (Millward, Powers, and Crump). Seventy-one percent of full time instructors have a Master’s degree (AACC, “Community”). Among full-time faculty, 64% are tenured or tenure track, though often two-year colleges do not have faculty titles or ranks (Millward, Powers, and Crump). Tenure, where granted, is based primarily on teaching with little or no reward for research and publication. However, tenure is an area that is quickly eroding. In fact, 26% of full time instructors have no access to tenure (Millward, Powers, and Crump). And those percentages are just among full time faculty. Overall, when considering adjunct faculty as well, the majority of the two-year college work force, less than a third of community college instructors are tenured or tenure track (ADE). Workloads for full-time faculty are typically heavier than their four-year college peers. From visits with my TYCA peers, my sense is that roughly fifteen instructional units, usually about five class sections, per semester is somewhat typical—on top committee work, advising, and other professional activities. However, full-time instructors are not the norm, so “workload” is a complicated issue. Freeway flyers of urban areas often cobble together an overload of sections on multiple campuses. In my travels as a TYCA officer, I’ve met individuals teaching eight sections or more per semester as well as individuals teaching online courses with as many as fifty students enrolled per section. (Yes, in composition!) Working conditions, then, are another significant challenge to effective writing program administration. In two-year college English departments, writing courses tend to make up the majority of the course offerings—composition is, after all, required, but very few of those teaching writing courses have any theoretical background in composition and rhetoric or writing pedagogy. In my own department, most full time and part-time faculty have degrees in literature or creative writing. That said, those teaching composition in community colleges are often experienced practioners, unlike the graduate students who so often do the work of teaching composition at major universities with well-developed writing programs led by a WPA. Additionally,

the Community College Survey of Student Engagement report finds that teacher satisfaction in the two-year college remains high, as community college instructors see their work more as a mission than a job; our work quite literally transforms lives (MLA).

Thus, the landscape of two-year colleges is rich and varied, as are the writing programs contained within. According to the American Association of Community Colleges, “Community colleges serve close to half of the undergraduate students in the United States . . . In fact, half of the students who receive a baccalaureate degree attend community college in the course of their undergraduate studies” (“Community”). The National Center for Education Statistics estimates that seven million students attended two-year institutions as of fall 2010. Given that half of freshman composition courses and most basic writing courses are taught at the community college, not to mention that two-year colleges often sponsor the ever-increasing number of dual credit and concurrent enrollment programs nationwide, the need for well-developed two-year college writing programs is clear. Community colleges, with their open admissions policies, can be the gateway to a more promising future for many students. But many issues limit the community college’s ability to offer students the high quality programming they need and deserve. The Center for Community College Student Engagement argues that, “while national education goals prioritize attainment, community colleges must focus on quality” (Lipka); however, many forces work against this goal. Assessment measures often focus on criteria, such as graduation rates, that do not capture well the work we do, pressures to address poor student retention rates may encourage ineffective solutions, like lowering standards or expectations, and the impact of state and federal legislation around K–12 education often “trickles up” to community colleges directly and indirectly.

The aforementioned budgetary issues are among the most significant barriers to WPA work, of course, reducing funding for professional development or administrative release time needed for effective writing programs, even reducing the programs themselves. Students’ access is limited with each cut section, and developmental courses, which the majority of our YVCC students have to take, may be among the most vulnerable. Policymakers resist what they see as “paying twice”—once in high school and once in college—for the “same” curriculum, and Financial Aid restricts the number of pre-college courses underprepared students can take. Nationwide, budget cuts tend to hit two-year colleges harder as our budgets are more dependent on state funding than four-year colleges and universities. And these budget cuts impact our students as they have fewer options and resources than their more “traditional” peers.

After conducting some informal email interviews with several TYCA colleagues who are, in some capacity, serving as WPAs in their home institutions, several other key challenges emerged with respect to writing program administration. Jeff Klausman, WPA at Whatcom Community College in Bellingham, Washington, notes the difficulty with maintaining coherence with a faculty that is largely made up of adjuncts. He finds this situation to be very distinct from university graduate TAs, as adjuncts are mostly unsupervised, largely unsupported, and often teach on multiple campuses. Klausman states that, with few, recognizable two-year college models, WPA at the community college is little understood and may be even mistrusted. Malkiel Chosed, Onondaga Community College WPA, in Syracuse, NY, adds that both full time and part-time faculty are unlikely to have backgrounds in composition or teaching writing; thus, both would benefit from professional development, though these opportunities are minimal given the scarce resources, heavy faculty workloads, lack of leadership, and faculty resistance to change (after all, these *are* experienced teachers). Stephen Brandor from J. Sargent Reynolds Community College in Richmond, Virginia, and Holly Hassel from University of Wisconsin Marathon County, both agree: professional development is difficult because of a lack of time and money, and it's hard to get two-year colleges to invest in widespread, ongoing professional development. Brandor adds that students are "taught by those with the least amount of time to think about changing how the course gets taught." Jared Anthony of Spokane Falls Community College in Washington state adds that, unlike supervised graduate TAs, "everything [in community college writing programs] happens through consensus building." Democratic, yes, but not easy, and it requires a high level of commitment which may not be shared by those having to rush off to another college to teach another couple of classes.

Others have written about the issues facing two-year college writing programs and the difficulty of establishing WPAs. Tim Taylor notes that little has been published in the past couple of decades about writing program administration in the two-year college. Among those who have, Helon Raines and Elizabeth Nist find that many two-year college English faculty resist typical aspects of many university writing programs, such as common textbooks and scripted syllabi, because they perceive it an affront to the academic freedom they so strongly value (63). Jeff Klausman has written about how "the institutional marginalization [of adjunct faculty] . . . acts as a centrifugal force countering the centripetal efforts of building a coherent writing program" ("Not Just" 363). Because two-year colleges have unique institutional histories from four-year colleges, writing programs developed in very distinct ways. Taylor argues that, in the hier-

archical construct of four-year colleges, writing programs had to *create* a space and a position of authority within or beyond the previously literature-centered English department, thus creating a “center.” By contrast, two-year colleges often lack such a “center” and, thus, often “lack institutional authority on writing matters” (Taylor 131). Discussing Gunner’s call for “decentering” the WPA, Taylor recognizes that, while this model may be democratic, “in many two-year college programs those citizens do not have a right to vote, in a sense” (132).

Exacerbating these challenges is the invisibility or ignorance of two-year college writing programs. Helon Raines asked in a 1987 survey, “Is there a writing program in this college?,” and found in her 236 responses that the question was “teasingly elusive” (153). She notes, “the term ‘writing program’ does not evoke a precise image of what we [community colleges] do” (154). Victoria Holmstein adds that, in the two-year college, English departments “do not house writing programs as much as they are writing programs . . . composition is what we do” (qtd. in Taylor 122). Jeff Andelora corroborates this view: “In contrast [to four-year college English departments], two-year college English departments aren’t built around literary studies, not do they have writing programs—they are writing programs . . . So, the way WPAs are defined in four-year colleges (and I recognize this varies greatly) doesn’t transfer readily to two-year colleges. We never needed to carve out a new space” (qtd. in Taylor 129).

While Klausman argues that “. . . most two year colleges—lacking a WPA—have a collection of writing classes, not a program” (“Mapping” 239), Joseph Janangelo, states in the NCTE “Issue Brief: Writing Programs,” “Writing Programs are physical and online spaces that help students write effectively for audiences both within and beyond the academy, develop their abilities as rhetors, and do their best work by composing and revising texts based on academic and self-sponsored literacy projects . . . Writing programs, for CWPA’s purposes, specifically include all writing-across-the-disciplines programs, writing centers, and writing courses with multiple sections.” By this definition, a “collection of writing courses” does indeed a program make, though the quality of such program may be questionable. However, I think that part of the problem CWPA, as an organization, may have gaining traction in the two-year college is that, while two-year college English faculty generally agree that their primary job is to teach writing, they, too, may not see these sequences of composition courses as a “program,” and many see themselves primarily as teachers, so may not identify with the title of “administrator.” Taylor noticed this in his 2006 survey about WPA work in the two-year college. The low response rate (only 21 surveys returned out of 125) reflected a number of realities of two-

year college writing programs. Besides the workload and workforce issues, many two-year college faculty members, most of whom are *not* composition specialists, know little about CWPA and may not see its relevance. Few two-year colleges have designated WPAs (only 3 of 21 in Taylor's survey). Similarly, only 18% of respondents in the 2005 TYCA Research Initiative Survey responded they had institutionalized writing across the curriculum programs (Roberts 141). Instead, writing program administrative duties are often spread out among a variety of "leaders"—department chairs, deans, writing center directors, for instance—or added on to an already existing position, say English department chair, without any additional compensation or release time.

Regardless of the challenges of two-year college WPA work or of the lack of clear positions or titles in two-year college writing programs, many are creating "frameworks for success." The TYCA Research Initiative Survey reveals that, while few two-year colleges have formalized writing across the curriculum programs, many had features of WAC, including writing intensive courses, linked courses or learning communities, and writing in the disciplines assignments within composition classes (Roberts 143). Additionally, 78% of respondents indicated their college had a writing center, and 92% of those writing centers served students from all disciplines (144–145). Assessment, another typical feature of a writing program, is institutionalized in most two-year colleges. Ninety-eight percent responded that their college administered placement exams. Half relied on standardized measures alone, but a significant number used multiple measures (Sullivan 8–9). Fewer than half administer some sort of "exit" exam, and those who do usually do so to transition students from developmental writing to college-level composition (Sullivan 17). However, Sullivan noted that many of those surveyed indicated their departments were interested in developing exit assessments (19). Also, increasingly colleges are attempting to measure student learning as a part of accreditation, and often students' written communication and critical thinking skills are focal areas of those assessments, and those sort of measures may not have been interpreted as "exit" or proficiency exams on the survey.

As my own college opts to not fill the positions of retiring full-time faculty and to cut faculty and staff pay rather than lay off additional employees, the idea of an actual WPA position seems far out of reach. However, Yakima Valley Community College's model of a "decentered" writing program enables our faculty to collaborate to create a coherent writing program while allowing space for faculty autonomy. Taylor's survey of Writing Program Administration in community colleges found that much of the WPA work at most two-year colleges utilizes a "team approach," which provides

“flexibility, stability, and respect for differences in pedagogy” (121). This model fits our situation at YVCC well, both because of the lack of release time or compensation for our work and because of the nature of our largely full-time faculty. In the twelve years I have worked at the college, we have, as a group, served on hiring committees for English faculty; mentored new faculty, both adjunct and full-time; reviewed placement tools and cut scores (multiple times); improved placement procedures; revised the grading system for developmental writing courses (pass, credit, no credit vs. letter grades); instituted an end-of-program assessment; revised course outcomes to improve sequencing and improve student achievement (and assessed the results); and coordinated with the adult basic skills division to improve student placement and transition in addition to regular efforts at professional development, including end-of-term collaborative portfolio readings. We do have a department chair, an uncompensated position, who serves as the point person and representative of the department for everything from student concerns to division-wide meetings, and we have a scheduler, who receives a credit or two of release time each term in exchange for developing an annual schedule and a detailed quarterly schedule, which the department, as a whole, has had the opportunity to discuss and offer feedback on. The leadership of these various projects rotates among various department members, so the title Writing Program Administrator does not seem to apply to a particular individual in our department.

Because each major programmatic issue in our department has been handled collaboratively, faculty buy-in is high, and indirectly, each project we have undertaken has served as professional development. For example, our department has been studying placement on our campus for the past decade. Initially concerned about what we anecdotally perceived as “misplaced” students, English department members collaborated with the math department to collect data on placement scores and student success, which led to a change in cut scores, as well as implementation of procedures to handle students wanting to retest and to “jump” students who may have been inappropriately placed into developmental courses. As we remained dissatisfied with the standardized tool we use for placement, we explored other possible methods, piloting a locally administered timed writing test, the eWrite tool, combined reading and writing scores, and a reading/writing experiences questionnaire used while advising.

Placement is, in a very real sense, *high stakes* testing for community college students. In our research (and these results have been corroborated in other studies), we have found that the lower students place, the less likely they are to complete a certificate or degree program, whether it is because they run out of money (Financial Aid covers only a limited amount of non-

degree credit bearing courses), run out of time (low placing students who *do* persist to degree may take up to six years to earn their two-year degree), become frustrated or disillusioned (those who place low in English generally also score low in math, so they may have a year or two of developmental course work to take before making *any* progress toward a degree), or must choose a new path due to family or other pressures (most have jobs, many have families, and many have complicated lives). So the scores they receive have real consequences for these students. At the same time, students who are inappropriately placed may fail, often languishing repeatedly in a course that does not fulfill their needs, and failure quickly leads to dropping out. Additionally, if too many students enroll in a class that is beyond their ability, the entire curriculum can become skewed, and none of the students in that class may finish the course with the requisite competencies needed to succeed in their subsequent course work. So placement has real consequences for instructors and programs as well.

Our studies have led to many important and fruitful changes in our writing program, though, unfortunately, not a new placement tool—not yet, anyway, as the standardized test remains the most economical option and “accurate enough” for the price. And legislative efforts to standardize placement tools and cut scores statewide may further undermine our efforts. That said, our collaborative work on student placement indirectly provided rich professional development opportunities. For instance, our department’s efforts prompted us to ask and try to answer important questions about what abilities were needed to meet the course outcomes of each course in the writing sequence and to define, in an advising brochure, for ourselves, other advisors, and students, what to expect in each class. Having common outcomes and a clear understanding of those outcomes, more so than common course design and texts, has created a sense of cohesion, as we all develop our own unique curricula and use our own distinct methodologies to meet common goals for student learning. Having read and discussed hundreds of student writing samples, we also have greater agreement about what features we expect in student writing in each course of the composition sequence, which has helped many of us improve our consistency and effectiveness in evaluating student work.

Our English department’s work on “end-of program” assessment, work which was commended in our last accreditation visit and for which we received a TYCA Diana Hacker Outstanding Program award, is another activity that has proven rich for professional development and instrumental in creating a cohesive writing program. Initially prompted by our dean to explore a tool for measuring student learning at the end of the composition sequence after an accreditation visit, department members brainstormed

a way create a manageable tool with the limited resources we had available. The target course for our assessment was English 102, the second of a two-course freshman composition sequence that focuses on argument and requires more extensive source use. Our department faculty decided early in the process that our concern was not evaluating individual student's achievement, as we had no means by which to further remediate or reward low or high performing students, but rather to determine whether or not students, in general, were achieving our course outcomes. We began by collecting a "final" essay from every student in every section of English 102 for the academic year. Over the summer, a random sample of essays (about 10%) was selected and all identifying information removed, and department members, including most adjunct faculty, read and rated the essays prior to our "assessment retreat" in the fall. The little compensation we received for our efforts included permission to cancel a class day to have a working retreat, an off-campus venue to meet, lunch, and the assistance of an educational researcher to guide our conversation and to help us collect data.

In the discussions that ensued, we were surprised by how much discrepancy there was in some of our evaluations and how "all over the board" instructors seemed to be in the types of essays they assigned students. We didn't even agree on what concepts, like "integrate" or "acknowledge," looked like in actual student writing. We probably had an hour-long debate on the meaning of "coherence." In other words, we were engaging in the same sorts of questions and debates that surround the question, "What is College-Level Writing?," Tinberg and Sullivan explored in their book of the same title. One thing we did agree on was that we weren't satisfied with our students' performance on several course outcomes, particularly their ability to integrate relevant and credible sources in their texts and their ability to address multiple perspectives on an issue. Ultimately, our day-long retreat, led to a number of important programmatic changes. While all department members strongly value academic freedom and autonomy in the classroom, we also recognized, for assessment purposes, it was much easier to evaluate essays that addressed all course outcomes. We agreed that the essays submitted for our future English 102 assessment work must be multi-source essays that integrate sources in support of a claim and acknowledge other viewpoints. Those general requirements still provide instructors much freedom while enabling us to "compare apples to apples" for end-of-sequence assessment. We also revised the course outcomes so that all department members had a clear understanding of and consensus about what the course is trying to accomplish, regardless of each individual's methodology or thematic choices. This helped us also to reduce the grandiosity of our expecta-

tions—our goals tended to express ideal performances rather than broadly achievable (and measurable) outcomes—and to articulate what we believe all students who satisfactorily complete our courses should be able to do. And then, with some eagerness, we decided to try this again.

We experienced similar results the following year. We again were disappointed in aspects of our students' writing, but this time our conversations moved us to work on ways to improve our teaching and curriculum, which included a department workshop to share assignment ideas and teaching strategies and a decision to revisit the entire composition sequence from the lowest-developmental course to English 102, to ensure that each course was building upon the previous course and preparing students for the subsequent course and beyond. For instance, we recognized that students were still really struggling with attributing and citing sources at the end of the *last* composition course they would likely ever take. Clearly, a ten-week quarter isn't long enough to develop that skill, so we began introducing source use and documentation in a limited way in our developmental writing courses. We also recognized that the sort of work we had been doing for end-of-sequence assessment was a valuable way to assess student learning and writing proficiency in all of our composition courses, and we have since used the same method of collecting, rating, and discussing student work and revising course outcomes in every writing course in the sequence.

After a few years, we no longer had the funding for a consultant, but we had enough experience that we were able to continue to have productive retreats, focusing on one course each year, often for multiple years in a row if we want to test the impact of curricular changes, and we continue to do so to this day. These conversations have proven valuable to all, particularly adjunct faculty who willingly participate when possible because it offers them the rare opportunity to participate equally—to be a part of important and engaging conversations about student learning and teaching writing and to have a stake in program development.

I offer these examples of our department's work not because we are exceptional, but because they are models of how, even without the benefit of a WPA position, writing program work can get done collaboratively. And this type of teamwork is taking place on myriad campuses. For example, on a trip to TYCA-Midwest for a conference several years ago, I listened to a presentation by faculty at Des Moines Areas Community College about another "end-of-program" assessment tool, a portfolio primarily assessed on the students' self-reflections, with the writing projects providing evidence to back up students' assertions about their learning and their proficiencies. Like my own department's experiences with assessing student writing, these speakers reported that their efforts in assessment not only provided insight

into the effectiveness of their writing curriculum and the quality of student writing at their college, it also initiated rich conversations about writing pedagogy. Unlike YVCC, their faculty members were compensated for their assessment efforts, making it an attractive opportunity for part-time faculty to be significantly involved in the work of the writing program. On a recent trip to TYCA-Southeast, I was given a copy of a freshman composition textbook that the Mississippi chapter had created for Mississippi community colleges. Their textbook, called *For Our Students*, arises out of their particular context, both in terms of the content and the material realities of their teaching conditions. This collaboratively developed text, largely a labor of love, also creates some curricular commonality between campuses without dictating course design. At CCCC in Atlanta, Holly Hassel and Joanne Giordano, from University of Wisconsin Marathon County, presented on successful departmental collaborations in their writing program, including the creation of a set of learning outcomes for Basic Writing and First Year Comp courses that the University of Wisconsin Colleges English Department ultimately adopted for each of its thirteen campuses and the development of a Basic Writing program designed to better prepare basic writers for Writing-Intensive degree-credit courses, which included revised placement methods and course curriculum. These examples are but a few of the many programs I've read about in journals or heard about in conference presentations that suggest that much good work is being done in community college writing programs, often without the coordination of a WPA. It's not just possible; it's fairly common.

That said, these efforts would likely be greatly facilitated with compensated leadership, especially given how the ratio of full-time to part-time faculty has been upended in the past couple of decades. And those who hold WPA positions at the two-year college (often with only partial release time) are making great strides. For instance, Jared Anthony, Composition Director at Spokane Falls Community College, works with a high school/college articulation initiative and coordinates WID courses on his campus in addition to organizing departmental writing assessment work. Writing Across the Curriculum work often falls to the WPA if there is such a position on campus; without a WPA, the sort of faculty development needed to promote writing in the disciplines is less likely to occur and the success of such programs is likely to be far more limited. Since community colleges maintain close relationships with the K-12 system and universities as well as the communities they inhabit, Anthony's work on high school/college articulation is also important work that is hard to perpetuate without a clear "leader." Jeff Klausman, a WPA at Whatcom Community College, claims he's making up the position as he goes, but he's certainly on a

good track. Recognizing that adjunct faculty teach many, if not most, of the courses in the two-year college writing program and receive little in return in terms of pay or recognition, he began his WPA work by surveying and interviewing adjunct faculty to ascertain their attitudes about WPA and their expectations of the writing program administrator. His surveys revealed that adjuncts often expect to work as equals with the WPA on curriculum assessment and that they want their experience and expertise, which is often underutilized, to be valued (“Not Just” 366). He also found the isolation and “institutional disregard” that adjuncts and contingent faculty face undermine his efforts as a WPA (“Not Just” 368). Adjuncts feel shut out from meaningful participation and full membership in the department, and the college treats them as a disposable workforce and offers little support—material or otherwise—for the essential work they do. Recent articles in the *FORUM* corroborate these perceptions. Brad Hammer argues that adjunct and contingent faculty are often viewed as poor teachers and forced to teach “canned” curriculum, which degrades and silences them and deprofessionalizes the work they do (A2). Thus, part of the role of a WPA position in two-year colleges may be working to address this marginalization of adjunct faculty and promote their sense of professionalism and their sense of belonging within the program, a much different goal for a WPA position than imagined on most four-year campuses. And CWPA support for workplace equity in addition to its professional development resources may increase its capital among two-year college faculty.

Ultimately, leadership and coherence among two-year college writing programs remain elusive, but I would assert, community college writing programs are as effective—if not more so—than those of many universities whose students are taught by inexperienced TAs using scripted curriculum; after all, as is articulated in the recently published *Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing*, our work is about developing students’ reading, writing, and thinking abilities and rhetorical strategies, not about delivering a standardized content. Despite the challenges and the forces that work against effective WPA work in community colleges, two-year college writing programs, mostly without writing program administrators, somehow manage to teach the majority of developmental and undergraduate writers and serve multiple missions, and our efforts, according to several measures, suggest we are succeeding in many ways. The Community College Survey of Student Engagement finds that 94% of students surveyed would recommend their college to others, and 86% of students evaluated their entire two-year college educational experience as “good” or “excellent” (Millward, Powers, and Crumb). In the PBS Documentary, *Discounted Dreams: High Hopes and Harsh Realities at America’s Community Colleges*, students praised

the small class sizes, one-to-one attention, and caring faculty found at two-year colleges, a common refrain, while Nancy Shulock, California State University, Sacramento professor and Executive Director of the Institute for Higher Education Leadership & Policy, asserted that two-year college students who transfer into the California university system fared as well or better than “native” students. We’ve found the same results with Yakima Valley Community College students who transfer to the most nearby university, Central Washington University; our transfer-in students achieve better success and retention rates than those who began their educations at CWU. Perhaps this is because whom we teach and what they need is central to the work we do at community college. As Chosed says, “the shape of our student body informs our decisions about policy and curriculum.”

So where do we go from here? My impression is that both *kairos* and *exigence* exist for increased collaboration between TYCA and CWPA to promote strong undergraduate writing programs. The *Frameworks for Success in Postsecondary Writing* may provide a starting point—not simply because it is a useful tool that has already been receiving some recognition through regional TYCA conference presentations, but because habits of mind, such as openness, engagement, creativity, persistence, and flexibility, provide a disposition for respectful and productive partnerships between our two organizations. From my TYCA-related travels, I can say that CWPA, as an organization, remains invisible or irrelevant to most two-year college faculty. Invitations to attend CWPA events are certainly welcome, but, in an era of budget crisis—seemingly a perpetual state for community colleges, those types of outreach efforts will unlikely yield much more two-year college participation. It may be more productive for CWPA, particularly two-year college WPAs, to become visible in two-year college spaces, such as *TETYC* publications or regional TYCA conference presentations. However, for CWPA to take hold in community colleges, it must offer something that the two-year college’s overworked, underpaid, often marginalized faculty needs to do their jobs effectively. For instance, I think two-year college faculty would feel supported if CWPA stands against the exploitative working conditions of adjunct and contingent faculty, provides practical resources and strategies for professional development, and shares research to enable two-year college faculty to make strong cases to their administrators in support of effective writing programs. Two-year colleges can offer themselves and their work in return. Community colleges are fruitful places in which to do research and have many model programs and effective practices to share, particularly for working with developmental writers. Ultimately, the “framework for success” in writing programs with or without

administrators is in our conversations and collaborations around our shared interest: student writing.

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Research and Policy: Antithetical or Complementary?

Barbara Cambridge

Just over a week ago I was in the office of the US Secretary of Education. Three NCTE members were interviewing the Secretary about literacy and federal policy. When the teachers had finished their conversation with the Secretary, he asked about the Connected Learning Coalition, a group of six organizations representing different content areas, including NCTE, that have banded together around a set of six learning principles. He asked me an unexpected question in relation to the Coalition's work, "What do YOU want ME to do?" On the fly, I asked that he acknowledge in public statements that education associations are unified in their commitment to literacy as the foundation of all learning and that he consult the Coalition to discuss how to improve teaching and learning in a systemic way. My suggestions were certainly not profound or earthshaking, but, if adopted, would help highlight the centrality of literacy in learning and would help dispel the notion of some policy makers that people in disciplines are only self-referential.

My answer to Secretary Duncan was research based in that the Connected Learning Coalition, which includes science, math, social studies, instructional technology, career and tech, and English, had spent almost two years generating a set of principles around which it had coalesced, examining research as well as practice to decide on the principles. The Coalition exists to be called on and to assert the importance of integrated learning because it has a research base but also because it has built relationships among executive directors and association boards that enable the principles to be called into action. In answering Secretary Duncan's question, I thought about the research-based principles but also about the circumstances of his office. One circumstance of his office is that he has a bully pulpit, and a second is that he needs ready access to information from professionals, which I will later define as intermediaries, in important decision-making circumstances.

I begin with this recent experience because it speaks to how policy makers can get information for decision making. Yet, in this political climate it's easy to identify conditions that work against considered decision making based on research findings. *You* can already identify such conditions, which include adherence to ideology regardless of evidence, distorted loyalty to party rather than country, and inability to consider something rationally and passionately at the same time.

Today, fully recognizing these barriers, I'd like to focus on research that helps us sort through the current use or lack of use of research by policy makers. Then I will suggest what you might choose to do in your roles as citizens, writers, researchers, teachers, and writing program administrators to promote effective decision making and policy setting.

First, two excellent resources can help us understand the relationship between research and policymaking. The first is a 2009 report, written by Steven R. Nelson, James C. Leffler, and Barbara A. Hansen, based on a study conducted from fall 2008-spring 2009 by the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory and the Center for Knowledge Use in Education. The study included structured focus groups and individual interviews of 65 influential leaders in six groups of federal, state, and local educational interests, including congressional staff members, deputy state commissioners of education, state education committee legislators, school board trustees, school district superintendents, and school district staff. The report is entitled "Toward a Research Agenda for Understanding and Improving the Use of Research Evidence."

This study yielded answers to five questions concerning educational policy and practice:

What factors influence change?

What evidence is used?

What are barriers to using research evidence?

What facilitates using research evidence?, and

What sources of research evidence are used?

You may feel discouraged, even if you are not surprised, by the findings from the first question about what factors influence change in educational policy and practice. Study participants asserted many other factors currently take precedence over research evidence, including "political perspectives, public sentiment, potential legal pitfalls, economic considerations, pressure from the media, and the welfare of individuals" (2). Not one par-

ticipant in this particular study identified research findings that they felt had a dramatic effect on practice or policy.

Barriers to the use of research abound: lack of sophistication in interpreting research, “time constraints, the volume of research evidence available, the format in which it is presented, and the difficulty in applying research evidence to their own situations.” These barriers are linked to an “underlying belief that much research is not to be trusted or is, at least, severely limited in its potential applicability.” Survey participants felt that “research could be shaped to say anything, that one piece of research often conflicts with another, and that much research is not timely for users’ needs. . . . The preference for research evidence that links to their local context was the strongest need identified by all study groups” (2).

Research, however, was seen as useful if it comes from trusted sources. Intermediaries, described as “unbiased organizations and individuals that can help locate, sort, and prioritize the available research” serve an important role (3). “Policymakers and practitioners appear to have a special relationship with small groups of ‘trusted individuals,’ who are valued as credible, objective sources of information. It appears that intermediaries are in a prime position to help users aggregate, translate, and apply research evidence directly to specific, local issues” (3).

If policymakers do sometimes use research evidence, why are they interested and when? A second resource can help us with those questions, a 2010 book by Karen Bogenschneider and Thomas J. Corbett from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Although this rich resource, entitled *Evidence-Based Policymaking: Insights from Policy-Minded Researchers and Research-Minded Policymakers*, addresses many topics, we’ll use it today to look at the reasons for using research and the characteristics of research in which policymakers show interest.

In annual interviews with one set of policymakers, state legislators, Bogenschneider and Corbett found four main reasons that legislators use research: (1) to help make good decisions, (2) to help avoid making mistakes in the details, (3) to earn the respect of colleagues and constituents, and (4) to build support for legislation they want to pass (27–32).

(1) Making good decisions is important to legislators. One fourteen-year incumbent with a good sense of humor said to researchers,

“This is a job that you are hungry for information. I mean, you can’t have enough information. Political or whatever . . . people in this job . . . are always striving to know stuff. When we pass a law, first of all, we want it to work, at least until we’re out of office. You do research and need information . . . to make you feel that you are doing the right thing.” (Bogenschneider and Corbett 27)

(2) Avoiding mistakes in details is a second reason for using research. When legislators have an established position on an issue but haven't worked out details of a piece of legislation, they reported to Bogenschneider and Corbett that research "at the front end of the policymaking process (can) help avoid making bad decisions" (29). For example, one legislator stated, "Once in a while, you find something on the other side that's so strong that you flip your position. Good information, no matter what side of the issue, is important, but the most invaluable is the kind that saves you from yourself" (29).

(3) Legislators known for their depth of knowledge about a certain topic value research on that topic so that others can rely on their judgment. Advice-giving legislators are often identified as "go-to" legislators, or in scientific studies, "cue-givers." "Relying on the expertise of their colleagues is a conscious attempt to build efficiency into a system that has become more and more complex" (31). A fourteen-year veteran of the legislative process explains it like this:

Let me tell you how the legislature works. I mean, we have about an inch of knowledge. We know a little bit about a lot of things. And so what we really do, we research as much on a topic as we want to. If you're the chair of a committee, or a ranking member of a committee, but especially if you're the chair or it's your bill, you really research it a lot. You dig into things or try to, because that's your area of expertise. The way that the system works is on a trust factor because we all can't know everything about everything. So we have people who chair committees or are ranking members or serve on committees that vote and send bills to the floor, and we trust our colleagues' judgment on these pieces of legislation. We trust that they did their homework. (30)

(4) A fourth use of research is to build support for legislation that a legislator wants passed. So, "research can be useful in partisan politics not only to provide direction that will guide legislation toward its intended goals but also to provide ammunition that will enhance the prospects of its eventual passage" (31).

If, then, research does, in fact, in certain circumstances get used for multiple purposes, what are the qualities of the research that evoke its use? In Bogenschneider and Corbett's work, the same five characteristics topped the chart for both elected officials and agency officials: (1) the scientific quality of the research is high, (2) the research is unbiased, (3) research findings are available at the time decisions are being made, (4) research

reports provide brief summaries of key findings, and (5) research findings are understandably written (39).

Let's turn now to how these findings about research and policy making can apply specifically to you as a writing faculty member or a writing program administration. What can you do to bring together research and policy making? I have five suggestions.

1. LEARN TO KNOW THE POLICYMAKERS WHOM YOU WANT TO INFORM: THEIR VALUES, THEIR KNOWLEDGE BASES, AND THE CONDITIONS OF THEIR PROFESSIONAL POLITICAL LIVES.

As rhetoricians we understand the importance of audience, yet we sometimes ignore the circumstances. For example, raise your hand if you know the name of the Representative to the federal government from your district. Now raise your hand if you have communicated with that Representative in the past six months.

You may or may not yet know your Representative, but I would contend you should. If you care about the existence of Pell Grants, for example, you need to know where your representative came down during the near fatal defunding of a major part of the Pell Grant program this spring. Because that funding will come up again in the future, how will you make a case that students with weak backgrounds in writing, whether from attending poor urban public schools encumbered with some of the least prepared teachers in the country or from being a recent immigrant for whom English is a second language, especially need Pell Grants to enter colleges and universities?

If you care about the continued professional learning that school teachers need to keep abreast of emergent knowledge about composition and about technologies that influence writing processes, how will you make a case with a legislator who may have heard recently from teachers that current professional development activities are a waste of money and that they need job-embedded time with other teachers to continue to grow in their profession?

Legislators, of course, are not the only policy makers whom you want to get to know. Remembering that research shows that you should develop relationships *with* policymakers before delivering recommendations *to* them, consider, say, your local school board. In the March, 2011 *American School Board Journal* an article called "The Right Call: How and When Should You Use Research to Influence and Enhance Decisions?" the authors report results of a team observation of 140 committee and school board meetings between September 2, 2009 and August 31, 2010. These

meetings included controversial subjects during which over six hundred citizens testified. Authors drew the conclusion that determining what the audience, in this case the school board members, knows about the subject, what the competing interests are, and what examples or experience might help explain the research are key in preparing ahead for using research in discussions about pending decisions.

A citizen wanting to use research in explaining a point of view may smartly tie it to values of the community for which decisions are being made. For example, you may know all the research there is to know about the advantages and disadvantages of dual enrollment composition courses, but you need to know all you can also about the context of the community whose school board is considering, say, expanding the number of such courses. If the local paper has repeatedly reported on a need to increase the number of local students attending and completing college, if the parent group has recently supported having more AP classes, and if your college has had little prior contact at the school board level, you must tailor your information about dual enrollment classes to this situation. Do you have the trust of the school board members in your credibility on the subject for them to listen to you parade the downsides of dual enrollment? Will you be seen as elitist, viewing reality from an ivory tower? Do you have information about the success rate in second-semester college composition classes of students who entered with dual enrollment credits versus AP credits? In other words, have you anticipated the values and experiences of the school board and of the other citizens who will be at the meeting?

Knowing your audience seems a given, and you may be wondering why I bring it up. I do so because I see advocates at the federal level bring to visits with legislative staff and with legislators uninformed assumptions about their audience. Often visitors expect ignorance. They assume that if staffers and legislators only knew what they know, the laws would look different. They neglect to consider the conflictual context of the political setting, the fact that staffers and legislators are responsible for a wide range of topics, and that federal law must accommodate fifty states with all their diversities. These conditions necessarily influence the decision-making processes of staff members and legislators.

In his recent book, *Solidarity or Service: Composition & the Problem of Expertise*, John Trimbur writes,

Material conditions are a necessary part of any proper understanding of the lived experience of professional work and the formation of professional identities and desires. It helps us see that the professions are

not monolithic entities or actors in their own right but rather internally stratified social formations where life chances are fashioned and refashioned in highly volatile and insecure circumstances. (189)

Because policy making is fraught with “volatile and insecure circumstances,” knowing those conditions is important in attempting to work with a policy maker. Getting to know the person and the conditions for that person’s work can help refine a sense of that policy maker as audience for the information to be shared from research and/or practice.

Research on research-minded policymakers shows that they listen best to people whom they trust from knowing over time. I recommend visiting your federal district Representative in person at least once a year during his or her weeks at the home district office. The purpose of these visits is to build relationship. Then you may be ready when the time is ripe to provide the information that will be heard and used in decision making.

Borgenschneider and Corbett report that they heard over and over again that policymakers prefer presentations over written materials. Lawmaking comes with an oral tradition: lawmakers are elected through interpersonal skills, they operate by “hearing constituent concerns, listening to testimony, questioning lobbyists, and talking with legislative colleagues” (45). Although you have to make extra effort to talk with your legislator in person, establishing your tie to the legislator through this face-to-face visit places you within the oral tradition that is part of the legislator’s profession. Borgenschneider and Corbett conclude: “If there is one insight that is repeated endlessly in this book, it is that policymakers respond to people they know and trust” (51).

They also conclude “The most valuable work may no longer be to generate new policy ideas but rather to create a space for talk and discussion outside the contested turf of bureaucratic and partisan warfare” (51). Each of us needs to be that known and trusted person for at least one policymaker. If you haven’t yet developed that kind of relationship with at least one policy maker, I challenge you to do so.

RECOMMENDATION 2: BE KNOWLEDGEABLE ABOUT EMERGENT POLICY ISSUES.

Like politicians, we have much on our minds, much to keep track of in our professional lives. So, it is easy to get frustrated and even disgusted by the contradictory reports we hear about issues being considered by our legislators or the media hype around conflicts when we have to guess if they are real or not. Tracking issues over time aids us in better judging whether a

policy issue is stagnant, either dormant or stagnant in its inflexibility, or whether a policy issue is still malleable.

Although there are many reasons to identify the malleable policy issues, let's consider one reason directly related to faculty members and program administrators. Faculty members in many colleges and universities have to build a research agenda in order to advance in their profession. This cultural context means that researchers are often engaged in long-term research projects, tackling particular elements of research questions in a sequential way. Even if they wanted to tackle a public policy issue, by the time they could incorporate that issue in some coherent way into their research work, the public policy issue may have already been taken up and decided. If you are known by your policy makers and they turn to you, if you are unable to provide the information they need, your credibility decreases immediately.

I'm not advocating intellectual ambulance chasing, but I am suggesting that every faculty member's intellectual and research agenda could include a policy issue that warrants continued attention so that when a need emerges, the faculty member, like the Congressional committee chair or ranking member, has the background to speak to the emerging issue. Bogenschneider and Corbett state that "the ideal points of interaction between research and public interest should begin not when research is complete but rather when the questions of interest are initially formulated" (17).

CWPA, NWP, and NCTE have modeled this kind of anticipatory knowledge awareness and sharing in the *Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing* document they published within the last year. I have distributed the piece to every legislative aide with whom I've met since its publication. As the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act continues to progress, albeit probably not happening until after the 2012 election, through this publication legislative staff have a basis for considering content and language in the bill. The piece did not come at a precise decision making time but in anticipation of it. Timeliness can mean "just in time" but it can also mean "ahead of time."

I want to raise the possibility of each writing program administrator in this country taking on one issue to know about and to share "ahead of time" or to know about and be ready to share "just in time." Writing assessment is an example of one such issue. Keith Gilyard wrote persuasively in an NCTE publication last year that K-12 issues are college and university issues. Right now, as two multi-state assessment consortia are generating tests to measure progress toward the new Common Core Standards adopted by almost all our states, many people are nervous about what the writing assessments will look like. Writing program administrators, who know more about writing assessment than most anyone else, need to get

involved with this emergent issue. Could you be reporting to these consortia research that supports the importance of assessing actual student work, or could you be incorporating into your own research agenda examination of writing assessments that do and don't support better writing? Who else will do this?

Different WPAs might track different emergent issues, including writing assessment. Could the Council of Writing Program Administrators keep a record of who is tracking what? Just like for legislators, there are too many subjects for writing program administrators to be more than an inch deep on all of them. CWPA could promote the availability of knowledgeable members to turn to in finding out about an issue, especially if there is a need to enter into advocacy concerning it or to supply information for a local context.

RECOMMENDATION #3: INCLUDE IN ALL EXPOSITORY WRITING CLASSES WRITING FOR THE PUBLIC.

I'm not suggesting having an assignment now or then or the option of an assignment, but the requirement of an assignment in every expository writing class. I'm charged about this topic for several reasons. First, civic discourse these days is marked by dishonesty, skewed information, opinion masked as fact, and either-or propositions when a continuum of choices is possible. Although some people claim that that's just part of politics, I'm convinced that the problem is currently exacerbated by policy makers so buried in ideology that they are unable or unwilling to peek out to see anything beyond their own focus. We are in a crisis in more than one way, but one way is rhetorically.

Trimbur points out in *Solidarity or Service* that there has been a turn in U.S. college composition courses toward community literacy projects and writing for social advocacy. This turn has, as he puts it, "brought into view devalued and neglected genres, such as flyers, fact sheets, posters, press kits, visual displays of information, public service announcements, and so on" (188). Although Trimbur warns that this kind of writing can become only uncritical community service, he asserts that writing assignments, such as the design of social advocacy campaigns, "can lead to the critical investigation of how rhetorical situations are constructed, how rhetorical agency is distributed, and how various genres can coalesce counterpublics" (188). I challenge CWPA to take a stand about the obligation of those who know most about communicating to be sure that students are ready to have rhetorical agency in the current political climate. Responsibility for addressing the plague of incivility and the ascension of blind belief over

reason must be assumed by as many people in higher education as possible. Writing programs are one site for change.

A second reason that I am suggesting that every expository writing course include writing for the public is that we need to save narrative. Why do I say this? In the development of the Common Core Standards, which will drive curriculum in the over 40 states that have adopted them, making an argument is privileged over narrative. In fact, a chief architect of the Standards has publicly argued multiple times that narrative is overrated in current English courses. The central place of narrative in writing history or writing up scientific discoveries or making an argument has been denigrated. As curricula are developed for students who must demonstrate progress toward Common Core Standards, narrative may indeed get short shrift.

Another place that narrative is central, of course, is in policy making. One well-respected state senator has said, “If you give legislators the research and facts, and I tell a heart-wrenching story, I will win every time” (Borgenschneider and Corbett 41). Those of you who have participated in NCTE’s, NWP’s, or other Advocacy Days in DC know the power of the classroom story, the narrative of what effect a certain practice or policy has had in teaching or in students’ learning. On the flip side, when our DC-based Advocates for Literacy group visits a legislative aide to advocate for a bill, we often hear a story of the aide’s favorite teacher or a story about a relative who is a teacher who has influenced that aide’s approach to education policy. Students who consider public policy implications of topics they explore and who practice writing for a policymaker audience, including using narrative, can influence policy decision making and develop habits of inquiry and representation that contribute to the public good.

RECOMMENDATION #4: WORK HARD TO SERVE ON TENURE COMMITTEES.

Although some people in this room are not and will not be on tenure track lines at their college or university, in all institutions there are criteria for appointment, reappointment, and advancement. As you listen, please translate the underlying points in what I’m saying to your own situation. Although I’m focusing on tenure criteria, you can make the shift to application of those points to your own setting.

Creating or translating research for public use is often viewed in the academy as service, not professional or academic work. A professor at a large land-grant university in 2009 summarized this problem: “If you are an academic, there are no rewards for policy work, and I don’t care what they say at the top, public service is simply not given any respect” (Borgenschneider

and Corbett 186). Trimbur resists the formation of professional identities that stratify social formations within the university. He argues that writing for targeted audiences helps writers to “examine how genres of writing mediate the relations between experts and laypeople and problematize professional knowledges, their circulation, and relation to popular knowledges” (188). While I find Trimbur’s much more complicated argument about this compelling, I know that many writing program administrators do currently live in the stratified social formation inflicted by tenure. I know, therefore, that the criteria for tenure must be modified for the university to illustrate and have the power to help mitigate the civic arrangements and maladies that I described earlier in political realms outside the university.

To return more directly to the relationship of research and policy, I’ll report on an article from the June 3, 2011 *Education Week* issue that chilled my blood. In the “The Professionalism of Teaching: What NEA Surveys Tell Us About a Common Knowledge Base,” the author, Darrel Drury, claims that teaching has made little progress toward achieving full professional status because it relies on “expert judgment, best practices, and conventional wisdom” (1). Drury is, therefore, elated about the increased use of quasi-experimental and randomized, controlled designs that, according to him, constitute research in a profession.

Acknowledging that professional development schools are doing more of the kind of research he deems necessary, Drury laments, however, that the results are “useful for individual practitioners within specific contexts and for focusing attention on a common problem” but do not “translate into knowledge that can be brought to scale” (2). The fundamental question of what research is for comes into play here: isn’t research that applies to individual, local situations dealing with common problems there credible, useful, and part of the responsibility of researchers?

Is research more important than the individuals the researcher is studying? Drury aims at a certain kind of knowledge building for the field rather than for student learning. Drury suggests that “Professional-development schools could seek waivers to extend the school year to accommodate the administration of assessments designed to measure a wide range of educational outcomes” (2). This kind of thinking exemplifies one of Trimbur’s biggest nightmares: this move objectifies research subjects by professionals who care foremost not about those individuals’ welfare but about the professionals’ own work.

I use this extended example because scholarship about teaching and learning, including about writing in actual classrooms, may well focus on the local and be done with those who are part of and can learn from the scholarship. Rather than dictating a particular kind of research, even alter-

ing the material conditions for learning at the expense of teachers and students, those who evaluate research must value multiple kinds of research, conducted in different ways and for different purposes. And those purposes must include making good policy decisions without sacrificing students and teachers in the process.

The people in this room are all too familiar with the denigration by some of our colleagues of research of any kind applied to policy, including policies regarding writing instruction and curricula within the university. Yet, the research about policy making that we have begun to examine today emphasizes the importance of the local. Research used in policy decision making requires applicability to the local.

So back to the recommendation. Writing program faculty and administrators need to assume the responsibility of doing the tough work of changing the tenure criteria regarding research. Until colleges and universities wake up to the crisis in our political system; acknowledge their responsibility to address it in multiple ways, including figuring out how to generate and communicate research that applies to the system; and value those of its faculty members and administrators who develop expertise in that responsibility, colleges and universities are failing the society in which they operate.

RECOMMENDATION #5: EDUCATE YOURSELF, STUDENTS, FACULTY MEMBERS, AND ADMINISTRATORS ABOUT THE POTENTIALLY POWERFUL FUNCTIONS OF RESEARCH IN POLICY MAKING.

This last recommendation really serves as an umbrella for the other four. Composition teachers and writing program administrators have special abilities to communicate. They must use their rhetorical prowess to educate students and colleagues about the potential, system-changing possibilities of the use of research in policy making.

Bogenschneider and Corbett can help our thinking here one last time today. They identify five shifts that can happen when sound research is brought to the “real world of doing public policy,” shifts in

Allocations	altering how resources are distributed
Tactics	altering how policies and programs are designed
Solutions	altering how policies and programs are pursued
Framework	altering how we basically think about certain social issues
Salience	altering how much importance we give to an issue
Awareness	altering even how we think about doing policy

(293)

Research and Policy Making: Antithetical or Complementary? How do you answer that question? I welcome now your ideas about this subject: comments, questions, experiences that you have had in applying scholarship and experience to policy matters. Let's talk.

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A Symposium on Mentoring the Work of WPAs

In response to “The CWPA Mentoring Project and Survey Report” published in the fall/winter 2010 issue, the assistant editors of *WPA: Writing Program Administration* solicited proposals from WPAs working in a variety of contexts beyond Research I institutions. We wanted to know what the council could do better to train future WPAs, mentor new WPAs, and support the work of experienced WPAs in diverse institutional settings. We were overwhelmed by the response to our call.

While we asked for contributions from experienced WPAs and early-career administrators alike, we received far more proposals from new WPAs whose experiences present a variety of compelling issues, challenges, and questions for the field to consider. The contributors to this symposium, then, are all early-career WPAs. They are new WPAs whose individual narratives speak to their own unique institutional and professional circumstances—but we believe their stories will resonate with untenured, non-tenure-track, and tenured WPAs around the country.

Joyce Inman opens this symposium by discussing her work as acting-WPA at an institution where she is simultaneously earning her Ph.D. Inman accepted the position of acting-WPA out of a sense of duty to the students and the writing program she loved, but against the advice of her trusted mentors. Kathryn Johnson Gindlesparger’s position as WPA at a small, private 4-year university also falls outside of the tenure process. Working on a full-time administrative track rather than on a faculty line, Gindlesparger is empowered to affect dramatic changes to the writing programs at her university without ever fearing how those changes may affect her chances for tenure. However, Gindlesparger is in the process of researching what it might mean to transition from an administrative WPA line into a tenure line WPA position.

Darci L. Thoune is in both the enviable and unenviable position of being the inaugural WPA at her small Midwestern state university. While Thoune’s graduate work and post-doctorate fellowship focused on program administration and prepared her for the variety of administrative responsibilities she now has, she suggests she was not prepared for the vagaries

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of working in a department with “no established guidelines, expectations, or history of a WPA.” In her contribution to this Symposium, Collie Fulford discusses her experiences as “a white, queer, rhet-comp, New England transplant acclimating to life at a historically black southern university.” Fulford suggests that ethnographic methods have helped her to learn about her new department culture, but these methods may also occasionally mark her as an outsider. Finally, Tim McCormack reveals his struggles transitioning from being a once outspoken adjunct—one who argued passionately for improved working conditions for part-time writing faculty—to being a new WPA who is, in some ways, complicit in maintaining the very working conditions he once railed against.

In their narratives, some of these authors praise the mentoring already provided by the CWPA through the annual conference, workshop, and institutes; through the journal; and the listserv. But the overwhelming response to our call and the narratives presented here suggest that early-career WPAs may desire both acceptance and a greater connection with the council through one-on-one mentoring. New administrators—like Inman, Gindlesparger, Thoune, Fulford, and McCormack—need mentors who will help them make productive sense of the institutional and individual contexts in which they do their work. They need someone to listen to their stories of success, frustration, and failure. And we need to hear those stories.

We invite readers to contribute to this discussion, either on the WPA listserv or by proposing a response for the spring 2012 symposium of *WPA*. Please submit your response to ostergaa@oakland.edu.

Reflections on Year One as an Almost-WPA

Joyce Olewski Inman

My introduction to my responsibilities as the Acting Director of Composition at a comprehensive doctoral and research extensive university did not include a search committee, a formal job description, or an English department faculty welcome party. I am, after all, a full-time, non-tenure track instructor and a PhD candidate. I am an Almost-WPA.

Three years ago, collegial relationships with English department faculty led to an opportunity to serve as the Basic Writing Coordinator at an institution with which I have an interesting and lengthy affiliation. Four years before, I left the program as a full-time instructor and a PhD candidate in composition and rhetoric when my graduate program was put on what was described at the time as a “permanent hiatus.” With the new position, my

previous reluctance to re-enter academia turned to excitement as I formed a relationship with the new Director of Composition and began teaching again.

The new WPA was dynamic, and we worked well together. I re-invested in my role as a teacher and an administrator and in my scholarly research interests. Within a year, however, my colleague decided to leave. In hindsight, I realize that those were exciting days for me, but not for him. My instructor-level position and dedication to an underserved student population allowed me to negotiate departmental politics without concern for retribution, as I posed no threat to anyone; the majority of my colleagues viewed me either as a former graduate student or a non-tenure track instructor. My colleague, on the other hand, surely felt alone in his attempts make changes at our institution, and I was incapable of providing him with the kind of mentoring and support he provided me.

When he told me he was leaving, after promising to support me and to continue to serve on my dissertation committee, he advised me not to accept the Director of Composition position if it was offered. In the summer of 2010, I was asked four separate times by two different administrators to consider becoming the new director. I finally decided that the position would provide me with invaluable administrative experience and that I had enough support within the department to “keep the train on the tracks,” serve the students I cared about, and complete my degree until the department was in a position to conduct a search for a tenure-track WPA.

I have strong relationships with a few senior faculty members in the department, with administrators university-wide due to previous professional positions, and with our phenomenal office staff. I was certain that, with their support, I could effectively pursue my own research goals and exceed the expectations of colleagues who opposed my appointment as Director of Composition. Telling my former colleague that I accepted this position, however, was one of the most difficult things I have ever done professionally. I knew he would be disappointed, but I also knew he would ultimately support me. The next week we spent hours discussing my future responsibilities. In true mentor fashion, he made an exhaustive list of topics I needed to know, to consider, and to act upon. Numerous legal pads later, I had a list of responsibilities and tasks that seemed insurmountable.

For the most part, I have been successful in these ventures, especially given the circumstances, though the challenges have been considerable. Teaching a six-hour graduate practicum as a graduate student is difficult to say the least. Comments from colleagues who feel I am underqualified are always disconcerting. Fighting the apathy of colleagues who, as one suggested, “simply don’t give a shit about composition” is an uphill battle.

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Most challenging, however, is attempting to serve—with no real voice in departmental decisions—as one of the few advocates for our undergraduate student population. In my position, I attend departmental and university meetings, yet without the ability to vote, I constantly feel like a voyeur—watching the inner workings of the department from the sidelines. But I am not on the sidelines. I have more administrative responsibilities and am responsible to more students than nearly any other faculty member in the department. This subject position creates a situation that puts me in constant need of support from colleagues.

If I can be said to have achieved any success thus far, it is only through my former colleague's early guidance and the mentoring of colleagues willing to share their insights. However, their support is not the same as receiving mentoring from other compositionists who understand more fully the needs of a comprehensive writing program. I need mentoring from colleagues who will understand my frustrations and appreciate my successes in ways that my colleagues who are not vested in the success of composition courses simply cannot. Yet I am loath to request this mentoring, as I fear I am considered a traitor in my own field.

The CWPA Mentoring project, along with the narratives it includes and the narratives it suggests, effectively challenges our field to rethink the mentoring needs of those involved in various capacities of WPA work. Joe Janangelo's desire to learn from the CWPA community and his commitment to pay attention to the diverse needs of its members strike me as challenging, timely, and necessary. Sheldon Walcher's narrative of isolation, disconnect, and alienation and his attention to the changing demographic of WPAs certainly resonates with me. I am also intrigued by Duane Roen's emphasis on the local and the questions that need to be raised in our home institutions.

However, while the authors of the project acknowledge the need for mentoring of untenured and non-tenure track WPAs, I wonder if by not focusing on the nature and rhetoric of our field we might be glossing over the underlying issue. Historically our discipline has struggled to define itself as a legitimate academic discipline, which in turn may lend itself to a privileging of compositionists and WPAs who, for lack of a better term, are pedigreed. We can continue to write resolutions regarding support for WPAs who are not tenured, not tenure-track, or not serving in research extensive institutions, but the very nature of our field may preclude the success of these efforts.

For example, it is not uncommon to hear others in the field refer to compositionists whose terminal degrees are not in composition and rhetoric as "posers." Indeed, when I accepted this position, a compositionist friend

politely but sternly informed me that I was doing a disservice to our field by accepting even a temporary Director of Composition position at a research university without the appropriate qualifications.

Rhetoric and ways of reasoning such as these are common as economic, political, and professional pressures increasingly require members of our discipline to justify themselves and their work. Moreover, this same ideology is what makes it difficult for people in situations such as my own to ask for the mentoring we need. I am isolated from my field because when trying to garner advice from colleagues in composition at other institutions, I feel pressured to explain the situation and how it came to be—to apologize for accepting the position of WPA. I suppose part of me is ashamed, in part because I already anticipate more comments like the one I heard from my friend.

True mentoring of WPAs who are in the trenches requires a shift in attitude, an acceptance of those of us who have devoted ourselves to teaching composition that transcends status, affiliation, or degree and that respects the fact that most professionals who accept WPA positions do so because they are genuinely motivated to influence the writing culture of their institutions. I am not suggesting that WPAs should not be properly trained and qualified for the positions they hold, but I am suggesting that they should not have to apologize when asking for guidance and that our own rhetoric is often what leads to feelings of disenfranchisement among those of us whose experiences lead us to feel like “outsiders.” The CWPA Mentoring Project is a valuable start to such an initiative, and I am hopeful it will lead to additional reflection on how our field might become more accepting of the fact that ideal circumstances rarely exist and more conscious of the ways our own rhetoric may be dismissive, not supportive, of WPAs who find themselves in these less than ideal situations.

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Snapshot of a Tenure Decision

Kathryn Johnson Gindlesparger

When I went on the job market in 2009, conventional wisdom dictated that administrative positions were a bad idea for junior faculty: at my graduate institution, faculty advised us not to take on WPA work until after

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tenure; I read piles of cautionary threads on the WPA-L warning against junior WPA positions; and at least one edited collection, assembled and brainstormed down the hall from my TA office, detailed the hazards of the job.¹ Recently, it seems that “safe” WPA work has slowly become the purview of graduate students and tenured faculty, two opposite ends of the same career continuum. This equation leaves junior faculty, many of whom are trained and practiced in administration, years from getting their hands on a program.

Ultimately, more and more WPA jobs will be filled by newly-minted PhDs and the conventional wisdom of the field will evolve to accommodate this reality. But what about the WPA positions that fall outside of the tenure track entirely? As an administrative-track WPA at a small university, it has been difficult to locate myself within the best practice debates over junior faculty and WPA. By mentoring new PhDs away from WPA positions, we keep young scholars from doing good work and writing programs from reaping the benefits. We also miss rich conversations about the various configurations of WPA and the attending benefits and disadvantages to the programs they serve.

As a graduate student, I got my administrative experience directing community literacy programs. These jobs were full-time experience in what I later realized was a pretty good fit for me: program building. This past fall I accepted a position as the Director of the Writing Program at Philadelphia University, a small four-year private institution in the midst of reorganizing around a new strategic plan. Formerly the Philadelphia College of Textiles and Science, the institution has a rich history. Founded in 1884 to provide education for textile mill workers, the school now specializes in professional education informed by the liberal arts. I was attracted to the school for many of the same reasons I loved working in the nonprofit sector. Both are nimble and entrepreneurial, a little DIY. The pace of growth is infectious.

But Philadelphia University struggles with the changing dynamics present nationally in higher education: balancing the needs of tenure-track and contract faculty, a reliance on adjunct positions, the structure of and debate over the necessity of general education. As with many small universities, these issues feel especially acute due to the flattened hierarchical scale of the institution, and this flattening is especially apparent from my position as Director of the Writing Program. In this position, I have access to decisions that are often tucked out of sight at larger institutions, such as what programs should be a part of institutional assessment and why, and whether writing should have a permanent place in the structure of shared governance. My exposure to these pressing issues has been one delight of the job.

The position of Director of the Writing Program at Philadelphia University was built with this internal access in mind. The position oversees the first and second-year writing seminars, as well as the WAC initiative and a burgeoning relationship with the office of Student Development. The Writing Program is staffed by the Director, two full-time faculty in writing and literature, and a large pool of contract and adjunct faculty. While the position comes with near czar-like oversight—for example, any new undergraduate course at the university must be approved by the Director of the Writing Program—it is also non-tenure track. The administrative line coupled with academic rank² is, in many ways, what gives the position its power. It gives me the ability to build the program away from the gaze of a tenure committee. But it is not a true faculty position. The very thing that gives the position such safety, freedom from the traditional confines of tenure, is also what raises the most concerns among well-intentioned mentors.

As the institution reorganizes, I have begun to rethink the structure of my position: should it be tenure track, or is it wisest to keep the position as-is, full-time administrative? Already, my discussions with colleagues and mentors have illuminated the need for more clarity between the benefits and drawbacks of WPA positions on administrative, as opposed to faculty, lines. While there are many benefits for the person holding this position as an administrator, there are also some clear drawbacks for the institution. For instance, that czar-like oversight is a continuity problem in the making: the three-year contract means that the school might always lose their WPA. And while the administrative line offers me some shelter from the scrutiny demanded of a promotion and tenure committee, if the institution were to acquire less supportive leadership in academic affairs, the position could be significantly revised or disappear entirely, leaving me to find a new job. At the same time, turning it into a faculty line opens up a problem WPAs have dealt with for years: without radically altering the tenure structure of the university, nearly all of the work of the position looks like service. In fact, one of the concerns about converting this particular line is that I do not currently teach enough courses to build a sufficient dossier for tenure at this institution.

There are some amenities I'd lose if I moved to the tenure track, benefits that are largely dependent on our institutional culture here. For example, as an administrator, I have an ample travel and professional development fund, student workers at my disposal, and "sitting" privileges on nearly any committee or meeting I need access to in order to build the best writing program I can. My twelve-month contract allows for one research day per week, but I am not obligated to produce research. In many ways, this freedom from an impending tenure timeline allows me to be more engaged,

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more a part of the campus community than many of my pre-tenure faculty colleagues.

Converting the position to faculty means radically restructuring the job and thus, the program. To accommodate the increased teaching load necessary for our tenure and promotion process, I would need to give away pieces of the Writing Program to other faculty members. I'm spellbound by how the exodus would transform the personality of the Writing Program: the basic writing coordination goes to a friend down the hall in exchange for a course release, the management of first-year composition, to another rhet/comp faculty member. The summer reading blog? To the longtime lecturer who relishes teaching the summer honors literature course. The transition would create a community-held writing program, one in which all writing faculty are invested; this seems like a move in the right direction. I also can't help but wonder if the possibility of tenure makes up for the loss in oversight.

Any conversation about the benefits of living out your junior years on an administrative line is a tricky one to navigate with elders in the field who often stridently advise graduate students against taking such positions (see the recent WPA-L thread, "Preparing job candidates for administrative interviews"). But this conversation can be fruitful. On my campus, it is a generative place to be, this intersection between tenure and administration. It's a shame I have to choose.

NOTES

1. See Enos and Borrowman, *The Promise and Perils of Writing Program Administration* (2008).

2. While I have the title of Assistant Professor, because I am not tenure track I am not, technically, faculty. I can advance to associate and full professor, but the system for doing so is murky.

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The Pleasures and Perils of Being First

Darci L. Thoune

The University of Wisconsin-La Crosse is a relatively small state university located in southwestern Wisconsin. Three years ago I was hired as an assistant professor and the Freshman Writing Program Coordinator, a tenure-track position located in an English department that is primarily literature focused. I am also the inaugural WPA at my institution. The decision to hire for my newly-created position occurred outside of the department, and although my colleagues supported hiring someone to do the WPA work in the department, most faculty had little idea what that work might be. Additionally, the departmental approach towards the instruction of first-year writing courses was uneven at best. Although there were pockets of instructors committed to best practices in first-year writing, in a program where everyone teaches a 4/4 load, where many faculty have other administrative commitments, and where a history of “hands off” instructor autonomy exists, it is challenging to create a centralized focus for a writing program. In other words, establishing a community of first-year writing instructors (comprised of full-time and part-time non-tenure track faculty as well as tenured and tenure-track faculty) has been difficult. In fact, my attempts to create a community of instructors willing to participate in even low-stakes conversations about teaching practices has been met with both suspicion and some resistance.

I should acknowledge here that I was incredibly fortunate to have a post-doctorate fellowship before I accepted my position at UW-L. During my fellowship, I was mentored in all matters of writing program work ranging from the challenging (budget and assessment issues) to the more mundane (grade disputes and reviewing syllabi). However, despite my excellent graduate and post-graduate educations, I remained underprepared for what it meant to work in a department that had no established guidelines, expectations, or history of a WPA. In many ways, I’ve not only had to create my own job, but also my own professional development opportunities as well.

My first year on the job was rough. I was eager to impress, to share all the wonders of first-year writing, and to create the teaching and learning community that I always wanted to belong to. However, all the education in the world could not have prepared me for the utter lack of accomplishment I felt after that first year. My well-planned workshops were poorly attended, my pleas with the chair for meaningful work (such as participating in the hiring process of new instructors, planning and coordinating assessment projects, and increasing the visibility of our writing program in

the department and on campus) were unheard, my requests to faculty for examples of syllabi and assignments to share were met with skepticism (I didn't even have any samples to build my own syllabus from when I was hired), and my discovery that there were no guidelines (other than student learning outcomes) for our first-year writing course left me scrambling and depressed. Also, it appeared that if I didn't intervene on my own behalf, my job could quickly become merely managerial in that my only real contribution to the department that year was to write end-of-the-semester reports assessing the work of our adjunct faculty.

I realized that if I wanted to be more than just a manager, I needed to learn more about the program I was joining, so I quietly set about a fact-finding mission to discover what was really going on in our first-year writing classes. After some serious consideration, I concluded that if I could observe some classes I might better understand how to be an effective WPA in this department. However, because I am untenured, observing tenured or tenure-track faculty felt risky. Consequently, I began observing our adjunct faculty to get a sense of the range of approaches to teaching first-year writing. What I found both inspired and disappointed. Some instructors were engaged in wonderful work—teaching that was rhetorically situated and pedagogically inspiring. Other classes confused me with their emphases on novels (ranging from *Lord of the Flies* to science fiction classics), current-traditional approaches, and a general lack of sophistication (too much love for the 5-paragraph essay). What I hoped to promote was a more rhetorically situated model of writing instruction that encouraged instructors to challenge their students to wrestle with writing in various contexts and genres and for multiple purposes and audiences.

I suppose some might feel elation at the prospect of creating their own job, but I just felt desperate. No matter my enthusiasm to be in the department or my desire to win over my colleagues, I had to figure out something else to do—obviously, my earnestness alone was not going to create any converts. And, while my fellow rhetoric and composition colleagues were very supportive, as the minority we hold relatively little sway in the department. Therefore, when the call came out for the CWPA Conference in the spring of 2009, I jumped at the chance to seek more experienced and enlightened minds. I scrounged around campus for the funds to attend the workshop and the conference (leftover start-up funds, departmental travel funds, pleading with the dean, etc.). Fortunately, the conference was in Minneapolis that year, which was close enough for me to drive to from La Crosse, and I had a colleague living in Minneapolis who was willing to let me sleep in her spare room for a week. Empowered by both the conference and the workshop, I resolved to be brave and to make programmatic deci-

sions that might risk what I perceived to be my precarious position in the department.

My second year, with a new chair and a renewed sense of purpose, marked a new beginning. I decided that instead of creating workshops that nobody was interested in attending, I would create a new ad hoc Composition Committee that was committed to all things first-year writing. With regular meetings, this committee became a place where we could begin the work of sharing our teaching materials and leaning on each other for help with the day-to-day work of teaching first-year writing. I also managed to secure a small grant that allowed me and two of my colleagues to study how students approach inquiry in first-year writing and to then present these findings back to the rest of our colleagues during a departmental colloquium. Perhaps the greatest triumph of this year was to revise (with the help of my fellow rhetoric and composition colleagues) several pieces of policy governing our College Writing I course. The first revision affected the acceptance of AP credit so that students who earned a 3 or 4 on either the AP English Language or English Literature exams were no longer exempt from our first-year writing course. Instead, students who earned 3s and 4s were required to take either the standard first-year writing course or a special section (College Writing I—Advanced Placement) designed with those students specifically in mind. Now, only students earning 5s were exempted from first-year writing. Additionally, we worked to change the passing grade required for our first-year writing class from a B/C to strictly a C. The logic behind this change was that if a C is average, or competent, then students should only have to be competent to satisfy this writing requirement. We also hoped that adjusting the passing grade to a C might counteract suspected grade inflation (instructors bumping students up to a B/C in order to pass them). This change also aligned the course with other General Education courses such as speech, math, and biology. At this point, I finally began to feel as if the work I did might matter.

If I complained that I didn't have enough to do as I completed my first year, I had no such complaints entering the summer of my second year. During that year I learned, late in the game, that I was also responsible for a neglected dual credit program at a local high school. While initially distraught (I had no background or training in such things), I have come to see this as a turning point in my brief career in the department. The discovery of the dual credit program coincided brilliantly with new publications and conversations on the subject. Again, the CWPA Conference proved invaluable in terms of providing resources for cultivating a program that was sustainable and adhering to best practices in the field. And, perhaps best of all, working with the dual credit program would provide the writing pro-

gram, with the consent of my chair, a modest budget and opportunities to work with area high school teachers. In fact, it has been working with these teachers that I have found some of the best mentoring and teaching experiences I've had while at UW-L.

I just finished my third year in this position and while I know there is still so much work to do, I feel supported and energized to do it. With the addition of a budget I was able to do the first-ever programmatic assessment of the writing program and to plan for an undergraduate writing conference next year. More importantly, perhaps, I feel less defensive about my position and more visible on campus. Change comes much more slowly than I ever anticipated, and I've had to learn to find pleasure in the small victories as well as the major ones. Small moments, like witnessing colleagues chatting about new class activities and the changes they've made to their writing classes have been priceless—even in the face of all the overwhelming work yet to be done.

Hit the Ground Listening: An Ethnographic Approach to New WPA Learning

Collie Fulford

North Carolina Central University (NCCU) is a mid-sized urban public HBCU. In 2009, I began a tenure-track faculty position in NCCU's Department of English and Mass Communication. The position included directing freshman composition. I started just two months after defending my dissertation.

Although intellectually well prepared for this position, I often felt overwhelmed and culturally displaced during my first months on the job. These are not unusual sensations for new faculty members, especially those who become WPAs for programs very different from where we were TAs. Complicating my transition were my cultural differences from many members of the institution. I am a white, queer, rhet-comp, New England transplant acclimating to life at a historically black southern university. The large department I joined is a racially mixed disciplinary cornucopia. There were evidently no other gay people and only one other compositionist when I was hired. The other twenty-eight tenure line faculty had backgrounds in literature, journalism, communication, education, creative writing, philosophy, linguistics, and history—a range further diversified by the thirty non-tenure track faculty.

I appreciated the diversity of my new home, but I felt lonely for other rhetoric and composition people, hyperaware of my own privileged and suspect race, and my gaydar wasn't beeping. Although I genuinely felt welcomed, there was no formal mentoring program to help me acclimate. So I turned to familiar research approaches to answer my teaching and administrative questions and to gradually develop a sense of belonging. As an ethnographer, listening and observing were my first instincts. These practiced research methods occasionally conflicted with the institutional culture, though, such as when I erred too often on the side of listening rather than speaking up. Overall, however, the ethnographic principle of receptively "being there" helped me find informal mentoring and begin to understand my new institution.

During my campus visit, I explained my listen-and-learn philosophy up front. This afforded me a vital period of acclimation once I was hired. Since I was ignorant about this particular context in all but the most superficial ways, I argued, I would need time to learn local realities, form relationships, and develop a basis for program decisions. At that time, I had not read Cynthia Nearman's analysis of her position as a white novice WPA obliged to make changes too abruptly in an HBCU's writing program. Nearman identifies early missteps that underwrote her subsequent departure from that position. Although her actions were well-theorized and well-intended, she explains that they were not sufficiently grounded in local realities to be successful. Her cautionary reflection makes me especially glad I had time to learn the terrain so I could begin to map how diverse intellectual commitments and racial complexities within the department affected the ways writing was taught.

The program I inherited consisted of three courses. These seemed awkwardly pasted together from a number of good intentions. A developmental course had been newly reconfigured to address many students' need for intensive writing instruction. It was very differently conceived than the Bartholomae and Petrosky-inspired basic writing program I had taught in as a graduate student. Instructors reported using a sentences-to-paragraphs-to-essays building blocks method. The Comp I guidelines seemed an amalgamation of approaches, including modes, process, literature, and frequent timed writing. The most theoretically familiar course was Comp II. At the chair's insistence, the course had been radically redesigned from its literature-based tradition to align instead with writing across disciplines approaches of other local universities. Changes to Comp II had reportedly been the cause of intense rancor within the department that fell loosely along racial lines. Discord lingered as I took on the directorship.

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In contrast to Nearman's experience, I entered on the heels of change rather than having to take the heat for it. Initially, I worked on behalf of the existing revisions while figuring out where I stood for the future. I advocated for the developmental course within a university system ambivalent about "remedial" education. I listened and advised Comp II faculty as they struggled with an unfamiliar curriculum. Comp I was due for a new textbook decision; I let the established book committee process take its course as I learned about the curriculum and my colleagues' rationales for their approaches.

A much greater range of disciplines and pedagogical approaches were in evidence than I had experienced at my former university's writing program. There, English TAs taught most sections and rhetoric and composition faculty shaped the program. At NCCU, half of the tenure line faculty taught composition classes. Non-tenure faculty with literature and education backgrounds handled many sections, thus the comfort with literature-based approaches. Some had been TAs in writing programs with more contemporary curriculums. Instructors with degrees in creative writing, philosophy, history, and professional writing also taught the course, and their teaching approaches were as disparate as their backgrounds. Because of our heavy workloads, I found it difficult to arrange regular teacher meetings to reconcile our divergences or learn from each others' perspectives. Yet by and large, faculty cared deeply about their students and their teaching even while holding widely divergent ideas about what constituted appropriate curriculum and pedagogy.

I hoped to build on our shared ethic of care for students and utilize the vibrancy of faculty interests. I also hoped to consolidate the program around some shared theory about writing. I could see promise in curricula centered by inquiry, argumentation, discourse community theory, or writing about writing, although I could not predict which were most likely to fly here until I knew the context better. So my practice included asking lots of questions. I asked colleagues to explain what worked, what needed work, and aspects of the program and institution that mystified me. And I asked for mentoring when I sensed I had blundered. For instance, early on I advocated that we adopt an online handbook for cost savings. Faculty response was mixed. The writing studio director was more familiar with our students and the digital infrastructure of the university, and she gently redirected my position by noting where my assumptions about digital access were not likely to be borne out by the local realities.

That moment of advocacy was atypical during my first year. My listener ethos was generally stronger than my voice. Yet having the spine to speak up and speak out matters here, and a member who mainly listens can be

suspect. What might quietness conceal? Recently, two trusted colleagues advised me against my usual reticence: “Collie, I can barely hear your voice in meetings. Speak up!” I interpret this comment two ways: 1) I need to improve my public speaking (true), and 2) perhaps I have done enough listening groundwork to make my voice welcome, even though it reveals my agenda and my disciplinarity, and its source is a queer, white body.

Having African American colleagues insist that I speak up and speak out was the impetus I needed to shift my identity emphatically from observer-participant to observant participating *member*. This is a crucial distinction for WPAs with ethnographic predilections. The image of a safari-suited outsider taking notes on the natives is a distressing, racist residue of ethnography’s roots. This colonizing anthropological gaze is precisely what I do not want to replicate in my WPA observations. Modifying the researcher’s investigative stance of “being there,” my evolving ethnographer-WPA identity becomes about being *here*, working side by side with colleagues. To enact that principle, I must balance observant practice with audible leadership. I also must mitigate objectification by using another contemporary ethnographic strategy: involving participants/colleagues in analysis. I usually co-design my WPA-related investigations with other faculty because we are shaping and using this program together. I have plenty of ideas about ways to improve our writing program, yet placement, assessment, faculty development, and curriculum design are all more functional when other writing faculty share in the design, use, and analysis.

Even though I embrace the complementary identities of ethnographer-administrator, I remain self-conscious about the ethics of this practice. I must take care that my instinctive approaches of listening and observing do not objectify or alienate other members of this community, especially since I am a white member of a historically black institution. Despite these ethical considerations, I recommend ethnography to other new WPAs. Ethnographic practices help us augment the disciplinary perspectives we arrive with by opening us to the vital local knowledge that can make our decisions truly contextual.

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Boss of Me: When the Former Adjunct Runs the Writing Shop

Tim McCormack

Here's a line from my "Adjunct Grooves" column in the alternative college newspaper, *The Messenger*, published at the City College of New York, where I worked as an adjunct long ago: "If the adjuncts who taught the writing courses were on the curriculum committees or the test development committees, we might be able to do a better job making the tests a meaningful and educational experience for the students, rather than the scatter-shot semester wrecker they have become." In that column from 1999, I rant about adjunct faculty's lack of say in writing testing policy, even though adjunct faculty taught 95 percent of the writing courses in the English Department.

Vitriol came easy then. For six years, I had moved through various college campuses clinging to the fringe of university faculty life as a graduate teaching fellow, adjunct faculty member, and one-time holder of the wind-fall semester: the substitute line. As a "gypsy scholar" or "migrant teacher"¹ and a zealot utopian, I was fueled by radical pedagogy, justified by theoretical critiques of the university as corporation, invigorated by raucous union rallies, and buoyed by national calls from the CCCCs for changes in higher education labor practices education.² I questioned my WPAs and department chairs about university mandated exit exams, unpaid office hours, lack of copy machine privileges, and all sorts of belittling practices and limitations on my ability to serve my students well. It was easy to be all "us against them"—even though I often liked "them" and was on a career path to be one of them.

Today I am. For the past two years I have directed the writing program at John Jay College of Criminal Justice, CUNY: an urban, commuter school with a public service mission and a midtown Manhattan location. Our 13,000 multicultural, multilingual undergraduate students have access to diverse majors in criminal justice, forensic science, legal studies, and the humanities. When I started as WPA, adjunct faculty taught up to 85 percent of each semester's 120 courses in basic writing, freshmen year composition, English as a second language, and professional writing (all part of my responsibility). Thus, I support and enable (deliberately avoiding the verb "manage" here) a diverse group of adjunct faculty: MFAs who publish short stories, poems, children's books, and novels, but have little income; former graduate teaching fellows who stay on as adjunct faculty to keep health

insurance and tuition remission; un-hired PhDs in literature and history who do their best to not be disgruntled about their wasted academic talent and dismal prospects for scholarly rebirth; and long-term adjunct faculty who have outlived a half-dozen WPAs prior to my arrival.

Adjunct faculty are no different than tenure track faculty: most are worthy, dedicated, and energetic teachers who decry the college's lack of curricular support, lack of access to professional office space and services, and lack of salary commensurate with their educational and employment experience. Mostly they cry out to me, as my door is open and my ears sympathetic, since their concerns stir my memory of my own adjunct faculty past.

Though John Jay does many things right for its adjunct faculty, I find myself speaking up for their rights and their professionalization. I have tried to train myself to use the full title adjunct professor in conversation, emails and memorandums—with the emphasis on “professor.” I have improved scheduling processes and classroom observation procedures, making them more explicit, fair, and expedient. I warn adjunct professors early when enrollment is down or when some other unforeseen structure will impact the courses they are offered. I invite adjunct faculty to join our outcomes assessment process to influence the direction of course requirements—and ask the college to pay them for this work.

As I am sure every WPA has, I occasionally receive compliments from some adjunct faculty that I am the best WPA they have ever had. Faint comparative praise, which nonetheless bolsters my belief that I am doing the best I can for my part-time colleagues. However, it never really leaves me that I am now a complicit participant in what one of my own former WPAs used to call “the university's dirty little secret.” The administration at John Jay has tried to minimize the vagaries of adjunct faculty life, and our college is more supportive than most, even hiring lecturer lines directly from the adjunct faculty pool. Still, in my administrative role, I have hired and fired adjunct faculty the week before classes start based on enrollment; I have been unable to upgrade adjunct faculty phone access and computer equipment; and I have agreed to lower the pay rate for certain writing electives that were not in line with equivalent courses. (It was exactly the kind of decision that I would have decried when I was an adjunct. But, I knew I could not win the argument.) Each semester, I listen to adjunct faculty stories of needed income, lost health insurance, and other consequences of life on the edge of full time employment. I too often respond with a cursory, “there's nothing I can do.” When I am feeling quite complicit, I am reminded of *Tenured Bosses and Disposable Teachers*, where Marc Bousquet writes, “Though composition has commonly expressed a politically committed orientation, many people who do composition scholarship find that

they are being asked to supervise, theorize and legitimate the steady degradation of the scene of college writing” (5). Working in a discipline with a long-established history of speaking up for the marginalized, is my only option to take a stand and opt out of WPA?

Of course, as an untenured faculty member running a large writing program, my status sometimes feels as tenuous as it did when I was an adjunct professor. These are my “publish or perish” years, and my meager steps to avoid the longstanding practices of adjunct labor abuse takes time from my work. A single consultation with an adjunct professor who has received a poor observation can take all the available scholarship hours out of my week. The necessary “meetin’ and testifyin’” to cajole and manipulate the hegemonic structures of this labor system can overwhelm my career. It seems easier and more personally fruitful to step in line.

Facing the possibility of my own tenure track demise, the conflicted realities of acting as the adjunct boss I never wanted to be came to a head when I realized that not all adjunct faculty were teaching their courses according to our five-year-old FYC curriculum. The new writing curriculum emphasizes writing to learn, reflective writing, scaffolded steps to a research project, and writing across the curriculum. It is outside the norm, and quite different from the traditional Literature-based, unit-by-unit curriculum that preceded it. As I looked closer at the faculty resistance, some of these faculty members, many of whom had not been observed in years, received consistently low student evaluations, had poorly written syllabi and were not participating in the paid faculty development hours the department offered. Clearly, some of the entrenched adjunct faculty posed daunting obstacles to advancing our writing program. My first reaction from my newly-minted administrative brain was to do the quick and easy thing: to clean house. But my former adjunct life helped me resist this instinct. I wondered if these adjunct professors had ever been given a voice in the new curriculum. Had their years of classroom experience been ignored? Did they feel resentful, marginalized and ostracized?

I invited them in, sometimes in groups, sometimes one-on-one. It took a full year, but each faculty member told a nuanced tale, and revealed their willingness to move toward the new curriculum—or not. None of the faculty turned out to be the lazy malcontents that they first appeared. I am certain that my status as WPA-forced-to-capitulate-to-the-forces-of-the-university-structure-that-marginalizes-adjunct-faculty led me to see their work and their disposability as the norm. It was only my previous adjunct life that enabled me to complicate that view. After initial discussions, some adjunct faculty appreciated the department’s interest in their work, reinvigorated their teaching, and tried out aspects of the new curriculum to a suf-

ficient degree. However, the story did not end happily for all. Others failed to address their low student evaluations, resisted opportunities to work on their curriculum collaboratively, and it became harder and harder to justify rehiring them.

My WPA role at the college has evolved from my unquestioning righteousness in support of adjunct faculty to a more nuanced understanding that includes making decisions based on what is good for the writing program and our students. Still, I remain complicit in unfair labor practices I cannot control. Often I am unable to change policy and ensure that adjunct faculty can teach courses to the best of their ability. Yet, I am conflicted in how much time to spend on these WPA issues, when my own career is not justified or enhanced by working in support of adjunct faculty. As I write this, our union has just announced that adjunct faculty health insurance is in jeopardy. The union claims that the university has chronically underfunded adjunct health insurance and, therefore, the welfare fund is going bankrupt. A loss of health insurance will drive some of the best adjunct faculty away from John Jay College. When the inevitable rounds of discussion take place on this issue, how will my lack of time and precarious career position limit and change my role in this debate? Will I and can I stand up with my adjunct faculty colleagues?

NOTES

1. Though almost generic terms at this point, Rudolphus Teeuwen and Steffen Hantke deserve mention here.

2. Of course the CCCC position statement calling the overuse of adjunct labor “the worst scandal in higher education” had come out in 1989 without impact, but I was a believer in the dawn of the new millennium.

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- Teeuwen, Rudolphus, and Steffen Hantke, eds. *Gypsy Scholars, Migrant Teachers and the Global Academic Proletariat: Adjunct Labour in Higher Education*. Amsterdam: Rodopi. 2007. Print.

Response to Peter Elbow's Review of *What Is College-Level Writing? Volumes 1 and 2*

Kelly Ritter

Each fall semester, I teach the graduate composition pedagogy course (English 747) at my institution. In doing so, I seek a balance between so-called practical versus theoretical readings, especially when some class members have extensive prior teaching experience at other institutions (or institutional types) while others have no experience whatsoever. To this group, college writing—and the act of addressing its agreed-upon components in a syllabus, let alone across assignments—is both pedestrian and mystical, finely outlined and amorphous. And so they ask, quite legitimately, year after year: What *is* college writing (anyway)?

That's no small question to posit, and one that has been hiding in the shadows of much of our field's scholarship since its inception, without a strongly voiced set of responses—until Howard Tinberg and Patrick Sullivan's recent two-volume project, *What is College-Level Writing?* I read the first volume of this project while finishing the manuscript for my book *Before Shaughnessy*, which challenges what it means to use curricular labels, particularly across diverse historical contexts. Tinberg and Sullivan's work not only provided me with a response to the queries of my graduate student teachers, but also clarified my own scholarly position on our field's nomenclature. If we cannot actually define "college-level" writing, I surmised, then *certainly* we cannot, by any good, comparative measure, define "basic" writing.

So, in my overlapping capacities as a reader of this journal, as a WPA, and as a scholar of composition studies, I'll admit I was a little upset when I read Peter Elbow's Spring 2011 review of Tinberg and Sullivan's work. Taking nothing away from Elbow's own obvious reputation or expertise, or his view of the state of our field (and the ways in which institutional and governmental assessment play complex roles in writing pedagogies), I feel he may have not fairly represented what Tinberg and Sullivan's work

does as much as emphasize what the mere existence of these volumes *might mean* to a critical outlook on assessment, testing, and standardization in our schools. Elbow seems to give the books very little attention *per se* in favor of using them as a springboard for a discussion of other issues. To put this point a better way: Elbow's review takes Tinberg and Sullivan's work to task for responding—in my view, in intelligent and important ways—to an often bureaucratic academic world that is not of their own making, nor in any way under their control. As such, I was compelled to write this response in order that my perspectives might bring forward a different way of viewing Tinberg and Sullivan's work, and in the process help other readers decide whether these books would be good inclusions in their own professional libraries.

Perhaps by briefly noting a sampling of the volumes' contents I can illustrate my counterpoints to Elbow's original review. In his essay, Elbow singles out just three pieces in detail, all from Volume One: by Ed White, Jeanne Gunner (as the "notable exception" to a search for definitions), and Sheridan Blau. In particular, Elbow focuses on Blau's passage about "the essence of college writing" (Elbow 157) and argues that Blau's definition is "elegant" but subsequently wonders "Do we really want to force everyone to agree on one [definition]?" (Elbow 157). In this example and in his review in general, Elbow focuses on the ways in which *a definition* might be posited—both by the books and by people *like* those contributing to these books. But I was comparatively struck by notable inclusions in these books that actually challenged Elbow's perception that high school and college teachers alike would use the two volumes (or the *presence* of them) to fall in line with national standardization. I was similarly struck by how much the books focus not on necessarily finding (or even debating) a *definition*, but instead on teasing out various arguments that illustrate the problem of engaging in cross-curricular leveling—even as we all may have, in many ways, already tried these very things on our own campuses, and failed.

Several essays in Volume One violate the obligatory curricular framing model we often assume is in place: college teachers blaming high school teachers for not doing their job (and the definition of the word "job" is one that these volumes contests as well), which results in dire need for strict classification, enforcing a college-level remediation of lessons "never learned" in high school. For example, Jeanette Jordan et. al.'s chapter, "Am I A Liar? The Angst of a High School English Teacher," articulates the frustration many secondary school teachers experience when faced with contradictory messages students receive in *college* writing courses—after often rigorous high school training. Jordan notes that although she taught "a variety of college writing courses" during her graduate education some fifteen years

ago, her “perception of what is expected may be dated.” Ultimately, because she strives to prepare students for postsecondary writing challenges, she would like “a clearer idea of what those challenges are at the college level today” (39). Far from falling into line with external mandates that necessarily limit and shape her classroom activities, Jordan says that she and her fellow teachers happily represent “a diversity of views on what a good paper looks like” (38). Despite this mission, Jordan concedes that “there must be some consistencies” across postsecondary writing programs (40). And I’m left with the question of whether this concession, as one articulation on the extensive continuum of pedagogical conversation, is so very bad?

Let me explain why I’m asking this question. In his introduction to Volume One, Patrick Sullivan acknowledges that

It may very well be that these conflicts [over uniform standards] are irresolvable and that all standards related to our students’ written work must ultimately be local, determined at least in part by our response to the complex realities of communities we serve and the individual students we teach. Any discussion of shared standards may require us to ignore or discount the very powerful political and social realities that help to shape students’ lives on individual campuses and in particular learning communities. We must also acknowledge that much outstanding scholarly work has already been done to address this issue, especially in the area of basic writing. On the other hand, it may well be that our profession could benefit enormously from reopening a dialogue about this question. At the very least, as a matter of professional policy, it seems reasonable to revisit issues like this routinely—to open ourselves up to new ideas and insights, and to guard against rigid or prescriptive professional consensus. (2–3)

In this articulation of the volumes’ purpose, I find ample capacity for both “sides” of the issue. On the one hand, yes, the local drives pedagogy (a concept with which I agree wholeheartedly). On the other hand, we cannot deny that some commonality *might* exist across venues, sometimes even in positive ways. Opening ourselves up to new curricular ideas about what is unique versus what is shared might very well improve our work, and would certainly better model the kind of critical and civic thinking we want our own student writers to do. While Elbow seems to reject this compromise in favor of what he calls “non standards” or “chaos” (157), I think Sullivan’s call is deserving of real attention in our literature.

This desire for a balanced consideration of micro and macro theories of teaching to, or against, standards seems to be echoed in other contributions in this volume. Whereas Elbow laments Tinberg and Sullivan’s work

as only representing an inappropriately broad “small slice” of all the writing that gets done in college (154), in fact their contributors finely articulate the many toppings, as it were, put upon that slice—which speak to the livelihood of many a writing teacher, particularly members of NCTE (the publisher of these volumes). Yes: a book, or set of books, on college writing writ large would be pretty interesting. But no: this project is not *that* project. And I think in order to fairly evaluate whether these two collections do a responsible job of what they set out to do, we need to keep their *actual* project in mind.

And responsible are the contributions within these books, in my view. For example, Yancey and Morrison’s essay, “Coming to Terms,” engages productively with the idea that college writing teachers might take up the role of “brokers” in regards to standards and high school to college transfer of skills and knowledge. Mosley’s “The Truth about High School English” provides a realistic (and sometimes stark) picture of the high school teacher’s workload and daily decisions regarding external assessment measures versus internal needs of students in any particular classroom. Mosley also calls for more dialogue between high school and college teachers—a call echoed elsewhere in our field, but often not respected at the local level. Muriel Harris’ essay “What Does the Instructor Want? A View from the Writing Center” voices a perspective not often heard in these debates: the writing center consultant, who is asked to be a servant to many masters. Whereas Elbow paraphrases a point from Harris’ essay that highlights the *end result* of defining “good” college writing—that “an A paper for composition might well get an F in engineering” (Elbow 155), I see Harris’ purpose as more nuanced, discussing process in sessions rather than final products in classroom teaching. As she puts it, “. . . as a tutor, I am not always sure which college-level writing I am supposed to recognize,” given the variety of styles and conventions represented by the disciplinary units assigning the work (121). This view is certainly one with which I can empathize, as a former writing tutor myself.

In Volume Two, essays such as Peter Kittle’s and Rochelle Ramay’s “Minding the Gaps: Public Genres and Academic Writing” and David Jolliffe’s “Advanced Placement English and College Composition: Can’t We All Get Along?” represent some of the more compelling responses to the project’s original framing question. Kittle and Ramay focus on the ways in which their students do, in fact, “engage intellectual issues in genres with public, rather than formulaic, tendencies” in their written work (102), responding to the call from many a writing teacher that student writing, and writing assignments, transcend the limited purview of the teacher. Jolliffe comparatively posits that since neither first-year writing courses nor AP

English curricula and examinations are going to “go away” (58) any time soon, should we not find ways to reconcile them as best as we can? Here is where, I imagine, Elbow would take issue: he might say that such concession (as opposed to rebellion) is a core weakness of this project. But I think that essays such as Jolliffe’s are clearly in the pragmatic spirit of these two volumes, one that says: let us see *where we are* and assess *what is, and what is not* true, useful, and possible, given the resources we share (but do not always effectively employ or acknowledge).

In this second volume, there is continued emphasis on student writing that itself addresses this question in variable ways. What I like about these pieces of student writing is that they are not used here as fodder for modeling, benchmarking, or anything, in fact, related to *norms*. Unlike the inclusion of student essays in readers, handbooks, or rhetorics—which *are* often meant to “show” student readers “how” to write—these essays are in the tradition of work featured in undergraduate publishing venues such as *Young Scholars in Writing*. They are themselves informed “insider,” contributions on the topic from a position very often neglected in this heated conversation. I think it is important to emphasize the value of this feature of both collections (and Elbow does mention it once, on page 154). We could use more scholarship that blends the voices of composition teachers and students on equal, dialogic terms.

This response has already gone on at quite some length, so I’ll say this: Tinberg and Sullivan, and their contributors, provide a healthy degree of the very skepticism Elbow argues we, as teachers, should adopt regarding universal “standards.” The authors in both volumes respond to the realities of external measurements of teaching and curricula within our classrooms, and in doing so represent all manner of voices admirably. They also raise allied challenges not interrogated in Elbow’s reading—such as how to identify the various “levels” of college writing (basic, standard, advanced, WAC-centered) against one another—and consequently articulate the difficulties we *all* have when balancing the local and national, the practical and theoretical, in our classrooms. As such, I know that these two volumes—while probably not perfect, as no book is—are going on my pedagogy course syllabus this coming fall.



Response to Kelly Ritter

Peter Elbow

I can't argue when Kelly Ritter complains that I was neglecting the traditional job of a review. Indeed I used exactly that phrase in the fourth sentence of my essay review—alerting readers to my neglect. Instead of arguing with Ritter, I can only thank her for doing so well the job that I didn't do—so that readers of *WPA* can now have that useful substantive kind of review.

I made it clear in my opening sentences that I was resorting to the broad genre of a “review essay” so I could take on a different task. I had decided that it was worth using my invitation to write a review in order to warn readers of an implicit danger that I felt was tangled up in the two volumes—a subtle danger that I thought few people would recognize, especially because the volumes did such a good job at what they set out to do. It's the danger of a tightly-coupled educational system with agreed upon standards: a system that frightens me because it narrows pathways to success and thus excludes more and more students. This system has already exerted huge influence on primary and secondary education in this country (given the powers of No Child Left Behind and other massive assessments). But the danger to U.S. higher education is too little noticed, and it scares me.

It's not that I claimed in my review essay that the writers and editors of these two volumes were consciously trying to foster such a system. They were simply trying to answer the question in the title: “what is ‘college-level’ writing?” But in doing this, they were tending to assume that the question *should* get an answer. That is, few writers in the volumes *questioned* the question. My claim is that we need to question it. (Jeanne Gunner questioned it, and forcefully.)

So what's wrong with the seemingly innocent job of defining college-level writing? What's wrong with trying to reduce the wild chaos of standards across higher education?—with trying for more neatness, coherence, and standardization? I used my review to spell out my reasons. Interest-

ingly, my central argument could be seen to follow from the diversity and excellence of the definitions of college writing given in the two volumes. My point was that if one definition should win—if we should succeed in defining college-level writing—we would create a tightly coupled system where students who create the wrong kind of excellent writing would be judged as having failed to reach the “level” of “college writing.”

In essence I made two points in my review essay and I acknowledge that both are very arguable.

(1) My review is arguable when I claim that most of the writers in the two volumes *do* assume or imply that their goal is to figure out what college-level writing really is—to figure out a definition or standard. Ritter says they are not making that assumption and points to the many real differences among essays in the volumes. Nevertheless, I think she herself makes that assumption. Look at her rhetorical question on her first page: “If we cannot define “college-level” writing, I surmised, then *certainly* we cannot, by any good, comparative measure, define “basic” writing.” The sentence surely implies (inadvertently?) that of course the volumes are indeed trying for an agreed upon standard—and that such agreement is a good thing.

(2) My review is even more arguable when I praise and indeed celebrate what could be called chaos and anarchy in standards for college-level writing. Is it really true that a system of agreed-upon, system-wide standards will narrow pathways to success and exclude more students? Is it true that if we tolerate different standards across different writing programs and different colleges, we will foster more *real* excellence and creativity than we get with tightly coupled systems such as we see with NCLB and the French and English systems of higher education? I give my reasons in my review, but plenty of readers will probably disagree.

(In this short response, I can't resist adding another point, also arguable, that I didn't make in my review essay. That is, the job of defining college-level writing is not just undesirable but impossible—by definition. The fact is that the goal of writing is to succeed with human readers, not to conform to some definition of excellence or to satisfy “trained scorers.” Human readers are just too different to ever agree on the same standards of quality. It's true that administrators of large scale assessments achieve “reliable scores” among human scorers, but only by forcing them to park their own human judgments or criteria at the door and do their scoring instead with common criteria—usually set by the administrators. See my “Good Enough Evaluation: When is it Feasible and When Is Evaluation Not Worth Having?” *Writing Assessment in the 21st Century: Essays in Honor of Edward M.*

White. Eds. Norbert Elliot and Les Perelman. Cresskill: Hampton P, 2011. 363–393.)

Readers will have to decide for themselves whether they agree with these three arguable claims—and whether it was defensible for me to abandon the task of a regular review in order to advance them.



Review Essay

Ecology and Concepts of Technology

Sidney I. Dobrin

Baron, Dennis. *A Better Pencil: Readers, Writers, and the Digital Revolution*. New York: Oxford UP, 2009. Print. 280 pages.

Blair, Kristine, Radhika Gajjalaand, and Christine Tulley. *Webbing Cyberfeminist Practice: Communities, Pedagogies, and Social Action*. Cresskill: Hampton Press, 2008. Print. 401 pages.

DeVoss, D'anielle Nicole, Heidi A. McKee, and Richard (Dickie) Selfe, eds. *Technological Ecologies and Sustainability*. Computers and Composition Digital Press. 2009. <http://ccdigitalpress.org/tes/>

Selber, Stuart, ed. *Rhetorics and Technologies: New Directions in Writing and Communication*. Columbia: U of South Carolina P, 2010. Print. 232 pages.

Writing, writing studies, and composition studies are inconceivable without technology, or at least a concept of technology. And, of course, the intersections of digital technologies and writing have been central to research in rhetoric and composition since before 1983, the year Kathleen Kiefer and Cynthia L. Selfe published the first issue of *Computers and Composition*, and six years after the release of the Apple II, the first successful, mass-produced home computer. As Stuart A. Selber notes in the introduction to his collection *Rhetorics and Technologies: New Directions in Writing and Communication*, it is difficult to imagine rhetorical activity untouched by ongoing developments in writing and communication technologies” (2). Some, including me, might even characterize composition studies as a technological field. Yet, with the inextricable bond between writing and technology in mind, the richness of composition studies’ technological research is often hamstrung by the limits of two primary lines of inquiry: first, the debate as

to whether or not technologies, digital technologies in particular, are beneficial or detrimental to writing/writers, and, second, how might writers and teachers of writers *use* technologies as *tools* to *improve* their writing and teaching of writing. That is to say, in much of composition studies, various computer and digital technologies are understood primarily as apparatus, as external elements used in the making of writing, not necessarily as indistinguishable from the writing or even as writing. Technology in composition studies is most often a prosthetic, a device, and a provision. In the review that follows, I address technology not as a tool or an assembly of tools to be used, but as a concept that is, at times, indistinguishable from concepts of writing. As R.L. Rutsky explains, “For all the discussion of the implications of technological change, remarkably little attention has been devoted to possible changes in the *conception* of technology” (2, emphasis in original). The inquiry into a concept of technology, of course, emanates from Heidegger’s “The Question Concerning Technology” in which Heidegger considers the “essence of technology” which “is by no means technological” (311). To frame a conceptual approach to technology and writing, I offer four maxims regarding writing and technology:

1. Writing and technology are spatial.
2. Writing and technology are ecological.
3. Technology is not a tool independent of a user.
4. Writing is not independent of technology.

In the pages that follow, I examine four recent book-length works that take up technology as central to rhetoric and composition. My intent in this review essay is not to identify what we might find “useful” about what each book offers (and, each does offer much), but how they, as contributions to a collective disciplinary construction of *Technology* push our concepts beyond the familiar and often reductive user/tool metaphors. Of course, these texts are not somehow unique among the many others published recently that have considered technology within the frame of rhetoric and composition—I’m thinking, for instance of books like Bradley Dilger’s and Jeff Rice’s *From A to <A>: Keywords of Markup*, Byron Hawk’s and Ollie Ovieda’s *Small Tech: The Culture of Digital Tools*, Amy C. Kimmea-Hea’s *Going Wireless: A Critical Exploration of Wireless and Mobile Technologies for Composition Teachers and Researchers*, Collin Gifford Brooke’s *Lingua Fracta: Towards a Rhetoric of New Media*, and Lynn Worsham’s and Gary A. Olson’s *Plugged In: Technology, Rhetoric and Culture in a Posthuman Age*, as well as many others from outside the field that influence our view of technology within (Rutsky, for example). Nonetheless, each of the four

books I address here is exceptional in its individual objectives, and each also stands to influence, whether intentionally or not, composition studies' concept of *Technology*.

NARRATIVE

As a matter of context, I want to begin this review essay with an abridged technology-literacy narrative, an explanation of sorts regarding my interest in technology and writing, or more accurately, technologies of writing, what M. Jimmie Killingsworth calls a “techno-autobiography” and my colleague Greg Ulmer would call an “electracy narrative.” Think of this as similar to the kinds of literacy narratives we so often ask our students to write, only framed as a technological or digital literacy narrative.

In 1982 when I was in the ninth grade, my parents purchased an Apple II for the family. Given that the cost of an Apple II at the time was somewhere between about \$1300 and \$2500 and that my parents were both earning faculty salaries, the investment was substantial. By late 1983, the Apple II was traded in for an Apple IIe with two Disk II drives and a copy of Word Star 3.0. I remember this because at my parents' insistence, on Saturday afternoons my brothers and I were driven to local computer club meetings to learn how computers work, to learn what we could use them for, and to learn the latest news and rumors about the guru-Steves from out West: Jobs and Wozniac. I also remember this because, among other things, those computer club meetings taught us how to disassemble and reassemble our machines, a skill for which I got in trouble after hiding the Afikoman inside the computer one Pesach.¹

By 1984—the same year in which Dr. Egon Spengler publically announced in *Ghostbusters* that “print is dead,” even though the Apple II had only been introduced seven years earlier and Wordstar only six years earlier—our school had an established computer lab, where we learned to program in Basic. Our father had learned Fortran as his “foreign language” requirement in graduate school (which apparently he used to predict and bet on horse races fairly successfully), and he encouraged us to learn programming. I recall two things about computer class: learning how to program our own versions of the classic 1982 Sirius Software, Inc. game “Snake Byte” and, inspired by the 1983 film *War Games*, getting in trouble for using the class modem to try to hack into other computers, which we never actually succeeded in doing. I also remember that by 1983 (tenth grade), I fulfilled all of my school writing assignments on the Apple IIe and printed them on a slow and annoyingly-loud dot matrix printer that sat adjacent to our computer desk in the living room. I also remember an

ever-growing prevalence of screens: after school and weekends at the arcade, in front of the Atari at home, or playing “computer games” on my friend’s father’s computer at the War College where he worked. Games and writing seemed the primary use for the machines. The club meetings confirmed such use-value.

In 1988, I opted to spend my junior year abroad at the University of Stirling in Scotland. I was required by my Arthurian literature seminar professor to write six critical essays during the course. The assignments were particularly difficult for me as there were no computer labs or computers available to students anywhere on campus. After submitting my first written assignment, I received a notice delivered to my dorm room that I was immediately to see my professor in his office. Given that the professor always served port and biscuits in seminar to accompany discussions of various Vulgate Cycles, I did not figure such a summons could be all that bad. The professor explained that he was unable to grade my assignment since the handwriting was almost completely illegible; of what he could read, there were an overwhelming number of misspelled words; and the assignment was only about 2/3 the length he had expected. The paper was not, the professor explained, of the caliber he expected from seminar students. He offered neither port nor biscuits. In my defense and in my best American-youth (read: jackass) attitude, I explained that if the University would move out of the dark ages and provide students with contemporary technologies, I wouldn’t have these problems. Spelling, legibility, and word count should be noted and fixed by the machine, I explained. He dismissed me from his office rather abruptly, and I was forced to learn how to hand write academic essays for the first and only time in my life.

Two years later, as I began my Master’s degree program, I accepted an adjunct teaching position with a large proprietary college. My teaching assignment included a rotation of four courses: technical writing, introduction to computers, introduction to computer programming, and introduction to office skills and filing. In my mind, these classes were operationally the same.

The review essay that follows addresses four recent publications within rhetoric and composition, each of which focuses on “technology.” I note that I read three of these four texts in print form; I only read *Technological Ecologies and Sustainability* on screen—splitting screen time between my two desk tops, lap top, net pad, and smart phone. Likewise, I wrote this essay strictly on screen, using the same five screens I used to read the text. It is with these experiences that I address these four texts.

ECOLOGY

As I have said, I am not very interested in questions regarding whether or not technology in general or specific technologies can contribute to improving one's writing. The idea of improvement is too ambiguous, too a-contextual. No research that I am aware of has established a substantial corollary between a writer's "success" or "improvement" and the technologies she uses. In fact, I am unaware of any research that shows that contemporary digital technologies serve writers "better" than did older technologies or that one technology somehow trumps another in terms of success, as Dennis Baron discusses in *A Better Pencil*. These are historical arguments, not technological arguments. They are arguments about ease, not arguments about improvement, and are tantamount to arguments about who had a tougher time as a child, often reduced to familiar claims like "You think you had it bad? At least you had shoes. We had to walk barefoot uphill both ways in the snow for three miles every day, eight days a week." What does interest me, however, are the ways in which the field constructs concepts of technology (including the *belief* that technology improves writing) and the ways that such concepts intersect with how we theorize writing, teach writing, and develop and administer writing programs. Given that much of our concept of technology is now driven by the proliferation of networked technologies and our current locations within complex, hyper-circulatory networks, many compositionists have embraced ecological approaches to theorizing Technology, writ large, specific manifestations of technologies, and writing as it intersects with both.

Many of the scholars who have driven the current ecological imperative in writing studies and computers and composition have opened doors to disrupting composition studies' technological teleologies, allowing us to rethink technologies not as simply material or even as *techne*—which implies thinking with the intent of application. Technology can be thought of as encompassing more than the material manifestation of the technology but as an intellectual position both a priori and posteriori to the material. The intellectual reaction extends across everything from inventive emergence, to the idea of technology's use, to the ideas that lead to the development of the materials used in making the physical expressions of technology, to the ideas that lead to the economic approach to disperse technology, to how users think about integrating and employing technology, to the thinking that disrupts or alters the thinking about how technology is *intended* to be used, or that technology is even *used*—and, certainly, any thinking that is altered by technology. In other words, the intellectual reaction's catalyst is thought or, more specifically, posthuman thought.

Composition studies' frustration with this degree of technological interaction often results in over-simplification of the very idea of technology and the reduction of technology to tool, things used to make and teach the making of writing (tied, as well, to an anticipation of ease or efficiency). In a historical moment when technology becomes inseparable and indistinguishable from writing (though, it really always has been; it's just flagrant now), such reductions constrain what we might theorize about writing. That is, writing studies needs to take up a different kind of approach to technology that alters the ontological position of technology and that rethinks the production of writing both within the technosphere and in light of posthuman subjectivity. Ecology appears to be one approach that is invigorating such work in the field.

On the *Technological Ecologies & Sustainability* home page and portal to the e-book, editors Dànielle Nicole DeVoss, Heidi A. McKee, and Richard (Dickie) Selfe set the context of their collection in this way:

Together, computerized writing environments (e.g., physical spaces, hardware, software, and networks) and the humans who use and support such technologies comprise complex ecologies of interaction. As with any ecology, a human-computer techno-ecological system needs to be planned, fostered, designed, sustained, and assessed to create a vibrant culture of support at the individual, programmatic, institutional, and even national and international level. Local and larger infrastructures of composing are critical to digital writing practices and processes. In academia, specifically, all writing is increasingly computer-mediated; all writing is digital.

They explain that many institutions have difficulty sustaining ecologies of digital writing. Their collection is designed to ask how to “best plan, foster, design, sustain, and assess the complex ecologies framing the study and practice of digital writing that we do (or hope to do) as teachers, scholars, learners, and writers.” The collection, they explain, “refines our discussions of the many components of sustainability, providing contextual, situated, and flexible modes and methods for theorizing, building, assessing, and sustaining digital writing ecologies.” As *Technological Ecologies & Sustainability* is the first published work from Computers and Composition Digital Press, I am more than energized by these objectives.

Setting their definition of *sustainability* in accord with Bruno Latour's distinctions between *Social* and *social* and Latour's Actor-Network Theory (ANT), DeVoss, McKee, and Selfe contend that the relationships between non-human, technological actants (Latour's term) and human actors function within complex ecological systems. The editors and the contributors to

Technological Ecologies & Sustainability offer one of the most dynamic discussions of ecology to have surfaced in the ever growing attention to ecological methodologies in composition studies. Through a framework that is grounded in ecology and sustainability, this collection solidifies a key moment in which we recognize that to address writing, particularly when considered in conjunction with/as technology, all but requires ecological perspectives. I have argued elsewhere that ecological methodologies are rapidly becoming—and should become—the primary theoretical lens through which we study and teach writing. This collection stands as paramount to that discussion within computers and writing.

The editors smartly acknowledge that within the framework of sustainability one must always ask questions as to what is to be sustained and why, locating the question of sustainability in the realm of the political. Framed within such inquiry, the editors organize the collection into four sections which progress from focus upon individuals and classrooms to programs and institutions to global concerns. Part One, “Sustaining Instructors, Students and Classroom Practices,” acknowledges that “although the scholarly exploration and use of digital media is becoming more important in our disciplines, our commitment to teaching and learning and our need to understand the rhetoric and processes of 21st century literacy practices tend to drive our choices of technosystems” (9). The five contributions to this section might be best characterized as addressing constraints in the form of institutional limitations which often make it difficult for teachers and administrators to develop and sustain technological ecosystems. As most of us experience, long-term support for digital resources and program start up and support of available resources is often inconsistent and at risk of removal. Notably, Ryan Moeller, Cheryl Ball, and Kelli Cargile Cook smartly identify how such inconsistencies often make it difficult to recruit and maintain digitally-active faculty. Moeller, Ball, and Cook, through a three-way dialogue propose that sustainable digital ecologies within English departments must operate in constant flux, their changes influenced through the needs of faculty and changes in available technologies. In this way, Moeller, Ball, and Cook’s ecological model is one of a complex ecology, a fluctuating system that anticipates and reacts to actants and agents within and exterior to the system. Pragmatically, too, Moeller, Ball, and Cook provide specific advice for job seekers and departments to take into account in recruiting and job searches, advice that I find particularly relevant.

Part II, “Sustaining Writing Programs,” focuses on institutional entities, particularly on the administration of writing programs. This part of *Technological Ecologies & Sustainability* is likely to be of most relevance to

WPAs, though to read it out of context of the remainder of the collection would devalue what the contributors achieve. Michael Day's opening chapter in this section does a remarkable job of examining technological infrastructures and explaining "why technology matters to writing programs." Day also delivers insightful strategies for developing sustainable technocologies in writing programs that address attention to the global, the local, and the key stakeholders. Likewise, Patricia Freitag Ericsson, by way of the 1987 United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development Report *Our Common Future*, also known as the Brundtland Report, offers a "three-legged" framework for developing sustainable programs, which she then employs to describe and analyze the Digital Technology and Culture (DTC) degree program at Washington State University. Given her interest in rhetorics of sustainability and her detailed historical account of sustainability, Ericsson's contribution to the collection provides one of the most useful and substantial discussions of eco-tech to date. The piece, in fact, serves to ground the remainder of the collection in a historical context of sustainability conversations. When considered in light of Kip Strasma's environmental approach to sustainability, the two selections within the larger scope of this part reveal the necessity for sustainable thinking, ecological thinking, and environmental thinking in writing studies and writing/technology studies.

Part III, "Sustaining Writing Centers, Research Centers, and Community Programs" brings ecological and sustainability thinking into conversation with institutional structures that often exist independently of traditional departments, programs, or other structures. Given the prominent reputation of Michigan State University's Writing in Digital Environments (WIDE) Research Center, and the remarkable work that faculty and graduate students from this program have forwarded, James E. Porter's "Sustaining a Research Center: Building the Research and Outreach Profile for a Writing Program," is a wonderful articulation of how to shape and sustain digital writing initiatives like WIDE and the ways in which such research centers support and promote the writing program writ large. Given the success and reputation of WIDE, Porter's account is both pragmatically useful and historically fascinating. When read alongside Mike Palmquist, Kate Kiefer, and Jill Salahub's "Sustaining (and Growing) a Pedagogical Writing Environment: An Activity Theory Analysis," which explores the development of Colorado State University's Writing@CSU website, we begin to see not only the evolutionary history of particular programs, but the ecologies that connect them within disciplinary environments.

Part IV, "Sustaining Scholarship and the Environment," as the editors describe, "illustrates the inclination among computers and writing scholars

to look beyond our own borders and to rethink our place not only in the university but also in the world” (13). There are many facets of this collection that make it one of the most relevant, interesting, invigorating, and urgent publications in composition studies in the past decade. The editors and contributors should be commended for their courage, rigor, and foresight in engaging ecology and sustainability in relation to writing and technology. As a University of Florida Sustainability Fellow, an affiliate faculty to UF’s School of Natural Resources and Environment, an active member of UF’s Environmental Humanities group, and a compositionist who has actively researched and written about intersections of ecology, writing, and technology for more than a decade, I am encouraged by the work this collection puts forward. I am particularly encouraged to see that the final part of this collection includes the often overlooked issue of the material consequences of writing programs’ increased technological ecologies upon the world around us. Shawn Apostle and Kristi Apostle’s “Old World Successes and New World Challenges: Reducing the Computer Waste Stream in America” addresses the growing global problem of e-waste. As they explain, “If we continue to erode our natural environment, then sustaining our workplace environments—our computers labs, our classrooms, and the other spaces in which we teach and research—is much more than a local matter, especially when viewed from a global, ecological perspective” (332). Apostle’s and Apostle’s contribution echoes calls from Kip Strasma in Part II to include “A sensitivity to using available resources to reduce waste—for instance, the use of local resources, resistance to products with high levels of “embedded” energy, sensitivity to overall energy conservation, etc.” as part of his Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED)-inspired assessment tool for computers and writing programs (197). We must not overlook e-waste as a critical byproduct of how we build technological ecologies associated with our writing programs and departments, particularly since one of the problems associated with e-waste is that the Western world has primarily dealt with e-waste by shipping it to underdeveloped countries where it is dumped in massive heaps, often in geographical locations inhabited by a country’s lowest socio-economic classes (for more about e-waste see <http://www.gizmodo.com.au/2011/04/the-story-of-e-waste-what-happens-to-tech-once-its-trash/#more-449320> and <http://www.greenpeace.org/international/en/campaigns/toxics/electronics/the-e-waste-problem/what-s-in-electronic-devices/>) As it sits, in vast mountain ranges of rubbish, the e-waste leaches toxins into the ground, contaminating local drinking waters, soil, agriculture, and ultimately the population. And while I’m pleased to see e-waste taken up in this collection, Apostle and Apostel, Strasma, and every other contributor to *Technological Ecologies*

Ecology & Sustainability fail to acknowledge the ecological and sustainability problems that mar the production of the devices that become e-waste.

While *Technological Ecologies & Sustainability* effectively problematizes the idea of technology, there is an overbearing understanding that much of the discussion we now have about technology refers to computer technologies or digital technologies. Technology, that is, is often assumed to suggest a device, a material representation of the technological concept. Devices and machines play a prominent role in the discussions of this collection, yet there is no discussion within its screens that addresses the origins of these machines. Our computers, smart phones, net pads, tablets, e-readers, mp3 players, televisions, monitors, and every other “technology” addressed in this collection require minerals like gold, tin, tantalum, and tungsten to work. Each of these minerals must be mined, refined, and smelted, processes that can be environmentally destructive. Recently, in the midst of war and violence in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Uganda, and Rowanda, mines that supply the electronics industry with these minerals have become hubs of violence and abuse as warlords fight for control of the mines, which provide revenue they use to support their war efforts. Those who control the mines use rape, murder, and other violent acts to intimidate and force native populations to work in the mines. Our technologies, our writing programs, our computers and composition-based pedagogies, our innovations, this collection, and even our own individual writing remains, to some degree or another, complicit in the violence involved in how conflict minerals are extracted from these mines. I cannot here explore the full history of the relationship between computer technologies and conflict minerals (the HowStuffWorks website provides a useful overview at <http://money.howstuffworks.com/conflict-minerals.htm>), but I don’t believe we can or should address the e-waste problem or the development of sustainable technological ecologies in association with writing programs without taking into consideration every aspect of the technologies we consider part of those relationships, not just acknowledge them from the moment we extract them from their boxes and introduce them into our ecological networks. For, as we, along with the contributors to *Technological Ecologies & Sustainability*, work to envision the democratic possibilities of our institutional, technological ecologies, we have to acknowledge that the institutional limits, the environmental oppressions, and the human oppressions are themselves ecologically bound. If we are to embrace ecological and sustainable approaches to understanding our technologies, then I urge, as well, that we turn to both ecofeminism and cyberfeminism to acknowledge that all oppressions are related and that to end one form of oppression, we must end all forms.

CYBERFEMINSIM

Drawing from Carole Stable's observations regarding the use of reproductive and scientific technologies toward the oppression of women and the need "to 'harness' technology for our political agendas," "it remains unclear," Blair, Gajjala, and Tulley explain, "whether feminism has harnessed technology to its fullest power" (1). In doing so, they acknowledge the "ways in which makers and owners of technology view women as a monolithic category, at once objects and users of the 'master's tools'" (subtly acknowledging the absence of women within the identity frame of "maker," a point Claudia Herbst addresses in her contribution) (1). Of course, Blair, Gajjala, and Tulley use "harness" and "tools" here metaphorically, but the metaphor exposes the a priori understanding of technology as tool, as identifiable and separate, as something to be attached to an agent, either used by or upon the agent. The distinction of technology as other, as tool, as a thing to which other things might be harnessed, appears to me to be problematic, whether *technology* is understood as the material manifestation of technological ideas, the ideas themselves, or the ideas needed to bring about the manufacture of technological manifestations, that is, the concept of technology. Whether in acknowledgement that technology changes bodies in material and political contexts, changes the very notion of the self and the ideas of who "owns" bodies, who has rights to bodies and their biological functions (as Donna Haraway so clearly exposed) or informatics technologies which circulate, remix, and manipulate the very information through which we see the world, the assumed distinction between technology and subject—whether male or female, human or non-human—poses a kind of restriction upon how technology in general, and cybertechnologies in particular, can only be engaged as distinct from the subject. Certainly, Haraway's cyborg provides the opening to consider not the amalgam between the technological and the (Enlightenment) subject, but the chimera in which technology and subject become indistinguishable—though always political. *Webbing Cyberfeminist Practice*, in all of its vitalizing discussion, is undergirded by such distinctions; yet, within the contents of the text, we see hints that such distinctions are difficult to maintain and (should) collapse within not just cyberfeminist discourse, but all technological/ecological inquiry. It would be remiss, though, not to acknowledge that there is a political and embodied war going on regarding women's bodies, reproduction, and individual rights and that the choice to encourage such collapse or to deny such collapse may very well effect Cyberfeminist political positions.

I am invigorated by the contributions to *Webbing Cyberfeminist Practice*, but I am not this book's audience. I can be no more than a tourist in

its discussion²; my review of the text here, in this venue, does a disservice to the power of each contribution, to cyberfeminism, and to feminisms. By reviewing this book here, I neutralize the book's radical possibility; I make it academic. I render the discussions in it as tools, ideas to which I might harness my own ideas and thereby find ways to *use* the technologies in ways they were not intended. And, these discussions are technologies, concepts of technologies; they are the ideas and concepts that drive the very technology beyond the technology which the contributors to this collection strive to make visible. Of course, using technologies in ways not intended can be considered a cornerstone of innovation, but this cannot be the case in my reading of these essays in the context of a journal dedicated to the very kinds of "master's tools" like administration and management against which cyberfeminism must work. Here my appropriations are detrimental to the radical objectives of cyberfeminism.

Webbing Cyberfeminist Practice is organized into three thematic sections: "Forming Virtual Kinships" which examines cyberfeminist practices that operate outside of academic parameters, "Redrawing Academic Borders" which examines cyberfeminism within academic pedagogical spaces, and "Resisting Gendered Hierarchies" which employs "intersecting and complimentary perspectives from the feminist, queer, and postmodern" to describe a "range of empowering web building processes"(3). What strikes me first about the importance of this collection's organization, much like *Technological Ecologies & Sustainability's*, is its opening not in the classroom or in familiar academic places, but in public places not governed by academic constraints. The five selections and one response essay in the opening section reveal an intrinsic and unavoidable discussion of spatial concepts that buttresses all conversation within the collection. Cyberfeminism survives in cyberspace and can no more be theorized outside of the spatial than can writing. It is this collection's powerful acknowledgement of the spatiality of cyberfeminism and of writing that reveals the necessity of ecological and spatial-theory-driven methodologies in writing studies.

The first part of *Webbing Cyberfeminist Practice* contains an evident and important underwritten argument about writing and technology extending beyond the limits of the academy and the importance of looking beyond academic places to the places where women (and all citizen/subjects) write their lives. I must admit this section of the book made me uncomfortable, as I suppose is the intent. For example, the powerful contributions from Kris Nesbitt; Angela M. Haas; and Christa Downer, et al address digital spaces that memorialize the loss of babies before, during, or shortly after birth; online infertility support communities; and pro-anorexia web sites, respectively. These are essays about women's bodies and women's flesh and

part of my discomfort comes from the fact that these are messy and difficult conversations, and as Nancy K. Baym acknowledges in her response to the selections in the first part, “The messier reality the authors in this section point to is far more complicated than either utopian hopes for the Internet’s liberatory potential or dystopian fears of its ability to enhance oppression presume” (127). But this is the necessity here: to get messy, to mess things up, to make uncomfortable. This is the trace of cyberpunk within cyberfeminism.

Part Two, “Redrawing Academic Borders,” turns to spaces of cyberfeminist pedagogies, and in doing so problematizes the very idea of pedagogical spaces and the restrictions of (academic) borders. The critique of spatial boundary that permeates the five essays and response essay in Part Two seems to echo Ludwig Wittgenstein, when in *Philosophical Investigations* he writes, “If I surround an area with a fence or a line or otherwise, the purpose may be to prevent someone from getting in or out; but it may also be part of a game and the players be supposed, say, to jump over the boundary; or it may show where the property of one man ends and that of another begins; and so on. So if I draw a boundary line that is not yet to say what I am drawing it for” (§137). The contributors to this part of the collection ask not only whether feminisms can be located within cyberspace, but also “what makes particular pedagogical practices and the resulting student interaction either feminist or cyberfeminist? What role does technology play in enabling or constraining the potential for feminist practice in educational space?” (8) And, I would add, what characterizes a given space as pedagogical, or somehow more pedagogical than another space to warrant it be named as such?

In light of composition studies’ pedagogical imperative, the pieces in Part Two of the collection are of particular interest. Margaret Strain, Melissa Fore, and Kara Moloney’s “Is N E 1 There? Designing and Building Community Within/Across Classrooms and Institutions,” for example, presents the results of a qualitative study in which the authors “sought to discover the necessary qualities for creating and maintaining an e-community among four first-year writing students and their instructors at two universities” (186). Set in a research terrain more than familiar to composition studies—first-year writing students—this essay offers much more than the story of the qualitative study it presents. Instead Strain, Fore, and Moloney shed light on the very ideas of physical, psychological, and digital space and spatiality and the imbrications of reality and self within those ideas. In doing so, the authors also open important doors to reconsidering the myths of collaboration that have dominated composition studies’ pedagogical narratives since Kenneth Bruffee introduced them to the field. In many ways,

“Is N E 1 There?” represents an overall nexus within the collection, bringing together many of the critiques and conversations dispersed throughout the collection. “Is N E 1 There?” that is, might be read as pivotal, as a collaborative hub within the collection (interestingly, the piece is located at the physical center of the collection, as well, which I imagine is the result of the editors’ careful planning of the material outcome of the text).

Within Part Two, though, Claudia Herbst’s “Master of the House: Literacy and the Claiming of Space on the Internet” stands out.³ Her well-articulated claim that “in cyberspace, ownership of computer languages empowers men with authority over communication tools, as well as authority over the style and content of transactions” reveals how the man behind the curtain, the code writer behind the interface, maintains control by way of the undetectable act of code writing (135). Through a history of internet programming that reveals that “not a single woman has been credited with an internet technology that has entered the mainstream,” Herbst contends that “programming is a factor in the struggle for dominance in cyberspace” and that “gender imbalances in programming translate into gender imbalances in the use of the Internet” (137–38). And, as Herbst so carefully shows, “use of the Internet” entails a substantial degree of violence by way of cyberbullying and silencing for women users. By way of Peter J. Bentley, Herbst identifies a fundamental perceptual distinction made between “users of technology” and programmers, to the extent that the word “users” is derogatory to programmers. In this context, of course, *users* suggests a second class status, an infantilizing position of inability. It also suggests a lack of ownership; programmers, as makers rather than users, imply a claim of technological superiority and entitlement (not to trivialize, but, think: Sark from *Tron*). Given Herbst’s assessment, particularly when supported by her research regarding the numeric domination of male programmers in relation to the near equal numbers of male/female users, her call to action is resounding: “We should not settle for the mere integration of women into the male-dominated world online; integration falls short of granting women full authority. Rather, women need to become authors of technology and thereby self-assured proprietors of virtual spaces. As what we refer to as natural language is a product of man’s making . . . so are the majority of computer languages. Where man can make language, so can woman—we should facilitate it on a grand scale” (149–50). While I agree with Herbst’s assessment, her position may be limited by a traditional (masculine?) approach to thinking about maker/user divisions. The maker/user split relies on an outmoded concept of origin, a concept that rests squarely in non-dialogic (or limited dialogic) approaches to invention and innovation. This is the same epistemological tradition that has dominated sciences

and technologies and is manifest in paradigmatic thinking. However, as Steven Johnson has explained, contemporary technological and scientific innovation can no longer operate under the myth of origin. He proposes, instead, a concept of platforming in which paradigms are not “shifted” as we have come to say, but are built upon, mutated, transformed, not by uniquely independent makers, but by collective, collaborative participation by users. In platform thinking there can be no distinction between maker and user as all users are, by their very engagement with technology, the collective makers, innovating, changing, and adapting nebular technologies to contextual uses, essentially re-inventing each technology as needed and extending a legitimate claim to ownership over those technologies. This, too, is the importance of hacking, a (sometimes subversive) act of programming to alter the intended purpose or function of a system. Some forms of hacking are an important part of innovation (hackers distinguish themselves from crackers who hack with malicious or self-interested intent). In this way, the concept of technology and the material outcomes of those concepts are always nascent, making “ownership” irrelevant and impossible; users and makers are indistinguishable and irrelevant categories.

Part Two of *Webbing Cyberfeminist Practice* is both rich and rigorous, and any summary I offer here can only gloss the significance of these five essays. In fact, I find Cynthia Selfe’s response at the end of this part particularly telling in her attempt to digest the lessons of these essays into two primary axioms. Yet, it is not her axioms, but two of the three corollaries she offers following the axioms that I find most telling. I address them here out of the context of her axioms, as they seem to me to function quite well as maxims on their own, not just in feminist context, but in all spaces of writing studies. Corollary 1: “Feminist teachers need to expand their own understanding of composing beyond the alphabetic, not only as *consumers*, but also as *designers* and *creators* of multimodal texts” (256) Corollary 2: “Feminist teachers need to understand digital and multimodal literacies in both *situated* and *ecological* terms—both locally and globally” (257). Of course, Selfe is (as she usually is) spot on about these issues, particularly given the set of principles she, Hawisher, and Berry establish in their contribution to the *Technological Ecologies & Sustainability* collection. And, of course, these corollaries are imperatives not just for writing teachers, but for all citizens. These maxims/corollaries are more than relevant not just to those already fortunate enough to have ventured into cyberspace to whatever degree, but particularly to those who have not, who have been denied access, and whose lives are invariably acted upon by the languages of the digital world. As I address momentarily, this is the power of cyberfeminism.

Part III, “Resisting Gendered Hierarchies,” turns to one of the collection’s primary questions regarding cyberfeminism: “how can we design and build action-based, technologically mediated networks for the benefit of marginalized populations”? With this question in mind, the five selections in this section take up a notion of resistance as an avenue toward the disruption of engrained hierarchies in digital spaces. For Mary Queen, such resistance is explored through the lens of transnational feminism applied to geopolitical areas of intense conflict to examine how digital representations might function as rhetorical action. Queen analyzes one Palestinian woman’s self-representation on the Web. As the editors explain, Queen addresses “‘e-merging’ subjectivities in relation to mobility/immobility and how legacies of colonial/imperial domination are central to processes of subject formation in online presences” (13). Similarly, Naida Zukic further develops transnational approaches in her analysis of the virtual community *Sehakia: The Voice of North African and Arab Lesbians*. The urgency of Zukic’s project grows from the “concrete, material ‘offline’ experiences of North African and Arab women, not merely out of theoretical speculations” (289). Zukic’s article is powerful, reminding us of the horrors of oppression while also echoing the claims of the essays in Part I regarding the need to look beyond classrooms to the places where women quite literally struggle to write their lives where they have been told not to write—or have lives.

Webbing Cyberfeminist Practice, like the other books in this review, and like nearly all research regarding writing and technology, is undergirded by metaphors of network, web, environment, space, system, and complexity. These metaphors reveal the inseparability of technology and ecology, or, perhaps more accurately, the current need to theorize technology from ecological perspectives. *Webbing Cyberfeminist Practice* is as much a book of ecology and spatial theory as it is a book of cyberfeminism, or, perhaps more accurately, it is as much a book of ecofeminism. That is to say, while ecofeminism is often cast simply as the common ground of environmentalism and feminism, its more complex agendas regard the overarching similarities of oppressions of women and nature, arguing that all oppressions operate in conjunction with one another and any struggle to end the oppression of women requires the ending of all forms of oppression. Ecofeminists, too, question the very divisions that contribute to oppressive ideologies: nature/culture, male/female, and nature/technology. From posthumanist perspectives, such divisions are erroneous. While cyberfeminisms’ activism is situated within digital spaces, we cannot overlook that such spaces are always already ecological locations and that whether feminism is situated within cyber-environments or “natural” environments, the objectives are indistinguishable.⁴

RHETORIC

At the beginning of this essay, I cited Stuart A. Selber as indicating the difficulty of conceptualizing rhetoric as untouched by writing and communications technologies; the reverse is, of course, also true. As editor of *Rhetorics and Technologies: New Directions in Writing and Communication*, Selber has brought together eleven remarkable essays that “invite readers to consider the ways in which rhetorics and technologies relate to each other—and to numerous other aspects, both material and symbolic, of writing and communication situations” (1). The contributors to the collection “assume a postcritical intellectual stance, meaning that technology is understood to be either an intrinsic or inescapable aspect of culture, an aspect that should be dealt with directly, seriously, and productively” (5). Given what I have already noted about the ways in which *Technological Ecologies and Sustainability* and *Webbing Cyberfeminist Practice* contribute not just to our understanding of the concept of technology but to an overwhelming recognition of the spatial and ecological dimensions of writing and technology, Selber’s collection is exemplary in its intrinsic ecological, spatial, and posthumanist approaches (despite what he labels as “human effects and interventions” (5) and an acknowledgement that “technologies, like rhetorics themselves, serve as interfaces for human relations and endeavors” (11).

Within the pages of Selber’s collection *ecology* is not a framework term; it does not even appear in the index. Likewise, complexity theory is only referred to once and network theory not at all. Yet, *Rhetorics and Technologies* is deeply ecological in its approach and agenda. For example, Marilyn M. Cooper’s “Being Linked to the Matrix: Biology, Technology, and Writing” extends her consideration of ecology and writing well beyond its early critique of cognitive process models. Cooper theorizes writing as an “embodied interaction with other beings and environments. As a result, writing is as much a biological as a cultural practice” (18). For Cooper, writing describes “linguistic and technological practices, practices that function to elaborate cognitive ecologies” (18). “Writing in this sense,” she pronounces, “is what makes us human” (18). In developing this position, Cooper articulates three observations about writing as “a biological/cultural, linguistic/technological practice”: words and writing technologies are experienced as part of our brains and bodies; writing is always an ongoing process of interaction with other beings and objects; and “writing is a complex system organized by dense interactions of writers and their worlds” (19–20). Cooper’s is a dynamic ecology that brings not just complex ecology to bear upon writing, but by way of Latour’s concept of nature and Andy Clark’s refutation of posthumanism in *Natural Born Cyborg: Minds*,

Technologies, and the Future of Human Intelligence, also tacitly grounds her ecology within fundamental tenants of posthumanism. As Cooper puts it, “understanding writing as a complex system in which human interactions elaborate cognitive ecologies allows us to understand words and tools . . . as mediating our active engagement with our environment rather than asserting our control over it” (29). She continues: “Far from alienating us from the world and our own natures, words and tools connect us inextricably to others and to our environment and make us what we are, the animal who writes” (29).

Alongside of Collin Gifford Brooke’s landmark book *Lingua Fracta: Towards a Rhetoric of New Media* and Jenny Edbauer’s “Unframing Models of Public Distribution: From Rhetorical Situation to Rhetorical Ecology,” Cooper’s article is one of the most informative and interesting recent contributions to ecological thinking in writing studies, as is M. Jimmie Killingsworth’s contribution “Appeals to the Body in Eco-Rhetoric and Techno-Rhetoric.” Like Cooper, Killingsworth has been invested in ecological methodologies longer than most in the field. His book, co-authored with Jacqueline S. Palmer, *Ecospeak: Rhetoric and Environmental Politics* was one of the first to examine the environmental and ecological rhetoric. In his contribution to this collection, Killingsworth argues that “*Techno-rhetoric*—the study, practice, and teaching of electronic literacies, as in the fields of new media studies and computers and composition—may draw upon the same terminology as the rhetoric of place and environmental communication, or *eco-rhetoric*, but the aims of the two discourses still remain distinct” (77). But, as Killingsworth goes on to explain, we really are well-beyond simple dichotomies between “luddite and cyborg rhetoric” (77). Killingsworth proposes a complex systematic relationship between earth, organism, and machine. In his model, “the difference between eco- and techno-rhetoric frequently involves which part of the continuum one chooses for a focus” (78). Killingsworth is clear, too, that his model represents discourse, not organic or mechanistic life and that there cannot be a clear binary distinction between the earth-oriented machine-oriented approaches. Yet, Killingsworth is clear that despite the baggage of romanticist approaches, eco-rhetoric can provide a more thorough view of the spectrum, whereas techno-rhetoric “in spite of its greater likelihood to claim an affinity with postmodernism, too frequently turns out to be some version of Cartesian modernism in a terminological masquerade, weakly appealing to a posthumanist paradigm, environmental awareness, and embodiment” (78).

Grounded in a techno-autobiography, Killingsworth explores the concept of technology as prosthetic, as extensions to which the body is harnessed. Like Lev Manovich’s “Visual Technologies as Cognitive Prostheses:

A Short History of the Externalization of the Mind,” and other selections in Marquard Smith and Joanne Morra’s collection *The Prosthetic Impulse: From a Posthuman Present to a Biocultural Future*, Killingsworth works to understand distinctions between locating identity within a specific body and what it might mean to characterize technologies as external to those identities. Killingsworth argues that the discourses of techno-rhetoric often overlook many of the material consequences of computer-based technologies. Killingsworth emphasizes the need to account for bodies within techno-rhetorics and research regarding cyberspace and computer technologies. He carefully shows how some of the most prominent techno-rhetoricians fail to account for the body as central to brain-computer interfaces. For Killingsworth, techno-rhetoric independent of eco-rhetoric breeds forgetfulness of the presence of spatial, ecological, and bodily presence.

Both Cooper and Killingsworth make clear that if we are to forward any serious theoretical work relating to digital technologies and writing, we cannot ignore ecological methodologies in such work. While Cooper and Killingsworth’s contributions to *Rhetorics and Technologies* directly bring ecological methodologies to their consideration of technology, we should read the remaining nine contributions to the collection as equally invested in ecological approaches, no matter the degree to which they address or ignore the ecological dimensions of their work and of concepts of technology. Geoffrey Sirc’s “Serial Composition,” for example, is not about ecology, but is, nevertheless, deeply ecological. Sirc explores the relationships between a handful of events that have historical roots in 1963 and can be read as influencing and anticipating concepts of contemporary literacy.

HISTORY

To responsibly address ecological aspects of writing, technology, or any object of inquiry, methodologies should account for historical contexts as well as spatial contexts. Sustainability, for example, requires understanding historical context in order to account for the three convergent aspects of sustainable thinking: social, economic, and environmental. A number of the selections in *Rhetorics and Technologies*, as well as many in *Webbing Cyberfeminist Practice* and *Technological Ecologies and Sustainability* situate their claims within historical contexts. In fact, historical approaches and spatial approaches to inquiry have deeply influenced one another, and within writing studies such influences become evident in research designed to express the historical contexts of various technological developments. In *Rhetorics and Technologies*, for example, Johndan Johnson-Eilola’s “Among Texts” examines what it means to “read texts” that occupy tangled and

problematic spaces. Johnson-Eilola's concept of reading is postmodern, accounting for the ability to read any text by "tracing and retracing the slipping, contradictory networks of connections, disconnections, presences, absences, and assemblages that occupy problematic spaces (both conceptually and physically)" (33). Johnson-Eilola's historical sketches of the advent of various texts is insightful and interesting, as is his consideration of how texts are not only read as artifacts, but as spimes and the ways in which spimes have permeated the cultural history of technology. Whether familiar or unfamiliar with cyberpunk author Bruce Sterling's idea of spimes, devices that track and record their own history of use and interaction, or his notion of gizmos, cunning and complex devices, readers will appreciate Johnson-Eilola's adaption of Sterling's proposed devices as a way of describing historical and ecological interactions of the kinds of texts that can be read.

While Johnson-Eilola's "Among Texts" provides an exciting way to consider how the technologies of texts have become interactively dynamic, or ecologically more complex, from historical perspectives, Dennis Baron, in *A Better Pencil: Readers, Writers, and the Digital Revolution*, presents one of the most savvy and interesting accounts of the connections between the histories of technologies, texts, and their readers and writers. As Baron explains it, *A Better Pencil* "looks at our use of computers as writing tools in light of the history of communication technology, a history of how we love, fear, and actually use our writing machines" (x). Baron initiates his historical inquiry in the heart of rhetorical studies, looking to *Phaedrus* to initiate his history of writing technologies and their relationship to communication. Baron's history is about not only the concepts of technology we develop, but how concepts of writing and concepts of technology intermingle in a complex, often indistinguishable relationship. Baron's history takes on the technophobia and techno-pessimism that has accompanied every technological advent related to writing, including writing itself. Baron provides a wealth of historical examples of technological developments and the resistance that has accompanied each.

Baron's history is not a nostalgic longing for the good old days of early writing technologies; it is a contextualization of how various concepts of writing technologies and responses to the digital age are, in fact, historically familiar reactions. Baron, of course, is a defender of technological development, and though he writes in positive support of various writing technologies—particularly digital technologies—Baron's historical account does not overlook the dangers that increased complexity in writing systems also risks. As he puts it, "technologies let us recreate the world and also lie about it" (116).

Those familiar with Baron's essay "From Pencils to Pixels: The Stages of Literacy Technologies" will recognize *A Better Pencil* as an elaboration of his original essay, and those who follow Baron's blog about language and technology *The Web of Language* will recognize Baron's familiar comforting, yet critical, writing style. Many may also recognize a familiar historical narrative. But ensconced in the familiar territory of Baron's work, what emerges is an important dialogue not just of history, writing, technology, or techno-pessimism, but of how these facets function in complex relationships to contribute to concepts of what technology might be. When read in dialogue with other considerations of writing and technology, *A Better Pencil* should be understood as more than a historical narrative, but an acknowledgement of the fact that the concepts of technology that drive our thinking about writing can never be read independently of complex ecologies. As Baron explains:

Maybe the most significant thing that we can learn from putting today's digital reading and writing in the context of five thousand years of literacy history, using past results to predict future performance, is that the digitized text permeating our lives today is the next stage, not the last stage, in the saga of human communication, and that it's impossible to tell from what we're doing now exactly where it is that we will be going with our words tomorrow. (246)

Baron's claim here, of course, is also a statement about sustainability, not necessarily material sustainability, but conceptual sustainability and the inevitable fluctuations that will arise as writing technologies evolve. His is a claim about the ecology of what comes next. Perhaps this is the overarching web these four books form, as well. These are all studies not only about the condition of technology and writing, but a deeply needed call regarding what comes next and what we as writing specialists, technology specialists, and writing technology specialists need to anticipate and what we can't anticipate. Computers and composition has been situated with rhetoric and composition as a sub-specialty, as a kind of inquiry that some in the field might engage. Likewise, whether through ecomposition or other avenues, ecological approaches to writing have also been situated as sub-specialties. Yet, what these four books make evident is that whether cast by the disciplinary identifier rhetoric and composition, composition studies, or writing studies, the study of writing cannot be separated from the study of technology. We see in these books (and other emerging conversations) the inseparability of writing and the concept of writing from the spatial, ecological, and technological. Beyond the biscuits and port, one of the other things that I most recall from that Arthurian literature seminar is the concept expressed

by Perceval, Ector, and others (most vocally in the 1981 film *Excalibur*) that “the land is Arthur; Arthur is the land.” The inseparability and the relational echoes for me in these books and is evocative of McLuhan’s famous message and medium principle: writing and technology are symbiotic. Composition studies must continue to account for such relationships, the spatiality of them, and the possibilities of what comes next.

NOTES

1. The Afikoman is a half-piece of matzoh that is eaten in the Passover Seder to signify the end of the festival meal. The custom of “stealing” the Afikoman is derived from a passage in the Gemara in which Rabbi Eliezer suggests that participants in the Seder should “grab” the Afikoman in order to encourage children to stay awake until the end of the Seder. It is now customary for children to steal and hide the Afikoman during the Seder and then exchange it for a ransom in order that the Seder may be concluded.

2. I acknowledge that this is a difficult line to walk. On the one hand I acknowledge that I cannot/should not have a voice here anymore than, say, vocal pro-life men really have in making institutional claims about women’s bodies. On the other hand, the issues at hand are not solely feminist issues; they have far-reaching global concerns.

3. Like the editors and authors of this collection, I am operating within established, masculinist forms of academic production and assessment here, and a certain degree of analysis, ranking, and categorization must inevitably occur, both in their texts and mine.

4. This is not to say that feminism needs to get its shit together and stop developing multiple approaches to what appears to be a singular project. Rather, my comparison is intended to follow the tenor of the review in total as I work to bring the richness of these four books together in conversation, to enunciate the importance of the ecological in the technological and vice versa. Within the frame of feminism such an enunciation seems to be particularly critical and similar to the calls for allegiance between feminisms that critique “science” and “technology” and ecological feminisms, an allegiance that gains particular strength within posthumanisms. For example, Nina Lykke and Rosi Braidotti, in the “Postface” to their 1996 collection *Between Monsters, Goddesses and Cyborgs: Feminist Confrontations with Science, Medicine and Cyberspace* take up such a position, looking to ecological feminism to provide more possibilities for feminist science and technology studies, to see hybridity between cyberfeminism and ecofeminism (though they don’t use these terms expressly).

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Review Essay

Second Language Writers in College Composition Programs: Toward Awareness, Knowledge and Action

Tanita Saenkhum and Paul Kei Matsuda

Ferris, Dana R. *Teaching College Writing to Diverse Student Populations*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan P, 2009. 169 pages.

Leki, Ilona. *Undergraduates in a Second Language: Challenges and Complexities of Academic Literacy Development*. New York: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2007. 332 pages.

Roberge, Mark, Meryl Siegal, and Linda Harklau. *Generation 1.5 in College Composition: Teaching Academic Writing to U.S.-Educated Learners of ESL*. New York: Routledge, 2009. 288 pages.

The presence of second language writers—including both international and resident students—has become an undeniable reality in writing programs across North America. While they share many characteristics with so-called native-English users, they also bring various differences that pose unique challenges for WPAs. Further complicating the situation is the growing diversity within the second language writer population in terms of their educational pathways, level of English proficiency, native languages, and first language literacy. The three books under review here provide writing teachers and WPAs with important insights and practical suggestions for addressing the growing diversity among second language writers.

In *Teaching College Writing to Diverse Student Populations*, Dana Ferris provides an understanding of a diverse array of second language writers who enroll in college composition classrooms. The first part (Chapters 1–2) presents definitions and descriptions of second language writers and the rationale for categorizing these students into three subgroups based on

their characteristics: international students, late-arriving resident students, and early-arriving resident students. Part II (Chapters 3–5) considers practical and pedagogical implications of a division of different groups of second language writers. At the program level, Ferris addresses such topics as curriculum design, placement practices, assessment, and teacher preparation. She also discusses specific course design considerations, such as needs analysis, material selection, specific language instruction, and classroom assessment and grading practices. The concluding section (Chapter 6 and Postscript) provides some innovative program and instructional models as well as suggestions for future research. The insights provided by this book are compelling because Ferris speaks not only from her research expertise but also from her years of experience in working with a diverse array of second language writers in the writing classroom.

Moving beyond the context of the first-year composition program, Ilona Leki's *Undergraduates in a Second Language: Challenges and Complexities of Academic Literacy Development* relates stories of the literacy development of second language writers throughout their college careers. This book is based on a longitudinal study of four focal students—Ben, Yang, Jan, and Yuko (pseudonyms)—beginning with their first-year ESL writing classes and continuing onto their specific disciplines—engineering, nursing, business, and social work—and eventually to the students' graduation and the start of their careers. After the first chapter, which presents the study's procedures, context, participants, and key findings, the book details each student's story in four different chapters (Chapters 2–5) with a focus on several common issues: students' backgrounds (e.g., immigration status, age, length of time in the United States, and English proficiency), literacy experiences, "socioacademic relations" (vii), and ideologies in education. The final three chapters discuss specific issues related to literacy development pathways, such as the role of general-education courses and major courses. These chapters also consider the role of writing courses in preparing each student for his or her specific discipline and future career. This book makes a compelling case that students' failures, successes, and struggles "cannot be understood without reference to [their] social context" (259), in which peers and professors play key roles. The experiences of these students also remind us that learning and writing in a second language requires more time and effort than in a first language. (This point may seem obvious to some, but apparently not to all writing teachers.)

While the first two books focus on both international and resident second language writers, *Generation 1.5 in College Composition: Teaching Academic Writing to U.S.-Educated Learners of ESL*, edited by Mark Roberge, Meryl Siegal, and Linda Harklau, takes a closer look at various

issues surrounding resident second language writers. Part I (Chapters 1–5) lays a foundation by discussing the complexity of issues related to resident second language writers from various perspectives. A chapter by Roberge describes historical, sociopolitical, and economic backgrounds of resident second language writers and how teachers might address their needs in the writing classroom. The next two chapters look into the situation of changing demographics of students in U.S. higher education and address related issues, including the diversity of resident second language writers and their access to college and retention (Harklau and Siegal) as well as their settlement patterns, needs in K-12 schools, and transition to college (Louie). Paul Kei Matsuda and Aya Matsuda trace the history of resident second language writers back to the 1950s and explain why college TESOL remained silent on the issue of resident students and how the term “generation 1.5” has masked the historical presence of the very population it was supposed to describe. Sarah Benesch challenges the modernist assumption behind the term “generation 1.5” that tends to uphold the dominant language ideology in teaching and assessment.

Part II (Chapters 6–10) presents studies of resident second language writers’ transition from high school to college and their writing experiences at community colleges. Harriett Allison investigates reading and writing experiences of a group of resident second language writers and finds that literacy tasks assigned in school were “determined by what will be assessed on high stakes standardized tests” (83) rather than realistic literacy activities relevant to students’ academic goals. Jan Frodesen’s longitudinal study of academic writing development of a late arriving resident student demonstrates the complexity of students’ linguistic identity and the challenges of determining appropriate placement into different types of writing courses. Cathryn Crosby examines reading and writing difficulties of two resident second language writers in a first-year composition course and discusses the strategies the students used to overcome the challenges in completing writing assignments. Jennifer A. Mott-Smith reports experiences of five resident second language students with a writing proficiency exam and its impact on the standard English ideology they had internalized. Genevieve Patthey, Joan Thomas-Spiegel, and Paul Dillon document how community colleges in California have addressed the needs of resident second language writers in composition courses.

The final part (Chapters 11–16) concludes with pedagogical and curricular approaches to working with resident second language writers. The first three chapters in this section present descriptions of different curriculum designs that were developed in response to the particular needs of resident second language writers (Murie and Fitzpatrick; Holten; Reynolds,

Bae, and Wilson). Ann M. Johns, based on her years of experience working with resident second writers, encourages teachers to develop students' rhetorical flexibility, which she believes "enables them [students] to move from the familiar, assess an academic situation, and write successfully in the genre that each situation requires" (204). Mary J. Schleppegrell advocates the use of systematic functional linguistics (SFL), which emphasizes content and meaning over form, in working with resident second language writers' grammar issues. Sugie Goen-Salter, Patricia Porter, and Deborah Vandommelen discuss pedagogical principles and share writing activities successfully used with resident second language students at San Francisco State University.

Together, the three books provide insights into the backgrounds, characteristics and needs of increasingly diverse groups of second language writers as well as many of the key issues that need to be considered as WPAs respond to their presence. One of the most important issues highlighted by these publications is the implications of labels that are used to describe these students. There is no clear consensus on what terms to use in referring to these diverse students because no term can adequately capture the complexity of individual students' backgrounds, characteristics and needs. Terms, such as "generation 1.5," are useful in highlighting the presence of a population that has been overshadowed by other labels, but they can also cause confusion as people attach different meanings to the terms based on the particular population they are working with. It is also important to keep in mind that students may not identify with the terms that are used to label them. The complexity of labeling is especially problematic for WPAs because the labels that are used in course titles and descriptions have serious implications for placement practices (Costino and Hyon).

The question of teacher qualification is another important issue for WPAs who hire and train writing teachers. As these books make clear, second language writers' diverse characteristics and needs require writing teachers to develop a broader range of knowledge about the diverse student population, about language and writing, and about pedagogical strategies that are appropriate for all students. As Leki points out, however, second language writers' writing experience is affected by their language proficiency. Yet, many writing teachers today do not consider sentence-level language issues to be part of their teaching responsibility, even though the same teachers may include grammar as part of the assessment criteria. Thus, WPAs need to help all writing teachers develop the ability to facilitate students' language development as well as rhetorical proficiency while also resisting the dominant language ideology.

As the student population in writing programs continues to shift, it is important for WPAs to keep abreast of the demographic trends as well as ways to address the presence and needs of diverse groups of students. Ferris's book is particularly useful in understanding a range of student characteristics and needs as well as ways of addressing those needs in the writing classroom. Leki's work provides an intimate understanding of what it is like for students to be second language writers in institutions of U.S. higher education. Roberge et al. helps the readers understand various issues related to resident second language writers. While there may not be a single solution that works in all situations, these three books would certainly help teachers and WPAs understand the complexity of the issues involved in responding to the presence and needs of various groups of second language writers who form an integral part of the new norm in higher education.

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an's College, 1943–1963, is forthcoming from the University of Pittsburgh Press in Spring 2012. She is the incoming editor of *College English*.

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Darci L. Thoune is an assistant professor of English and the Freshman Writing Program Coordinator at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse (UW-L). She teaches undergraduate rhetoric and writing courses and a graduate-level composition pedagogy course for area high school English teachers. Her current scholarly interests include the scholarship of teaching and learning, cookbooks and women's technical writing, and writing assessment.

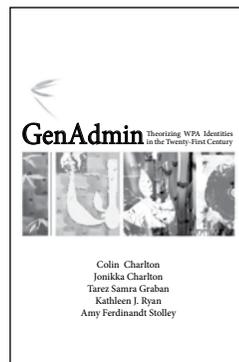
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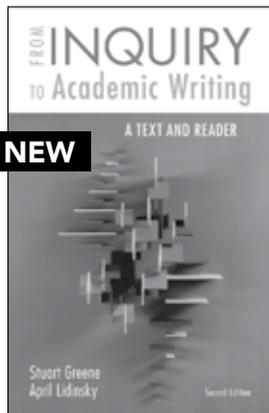
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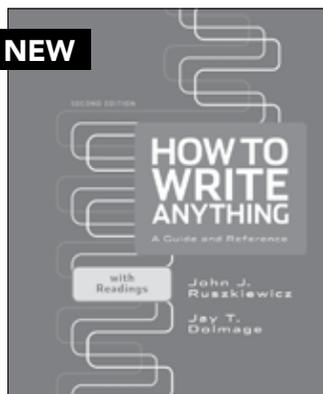
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