

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 CCC 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.

WORKS CITED

- ADE Ad Hoc Committee on Staffing. *Education in the Balance: A Report on the Academic Workforce in English*. Modern Language Association and Association of Departments of English, 10 Dec. 2008. PDF file.
- American Association of Community Colleges. "2011 Fact Sheet." *American Association of Community Colleges*. AACC, 2011. Web. 14 June 2011.
- . "Community College Trends and Statistics." *American Association of Community Colleges*. AACC, 2011. Web. 14 June 2011.
- Andelora, Jeffrey T. "Re: Two-Year College and WPA." Message to author. 15 Nov. 2010. E-mail.
- Anthony, Jared. "Re: Two-Year College and WPA." Message to author. 5 Nov. 2010. E-mail.
- Brandor, Stephen. "Re: Two-Year College and WPA." Message to author. 15 Nov. 2010. E-mail.
- Choseed, Malkiel. "Re: Two-Year College and WPA." Message to author. 8 Nov. 2010. E-mail.
- Discounted Dreams: High Hopes and Harsh Realities at America's Community Colleges*. Narr. John Merrow. PBS, 2007. DVD.
- Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing*. CWP, NCTE, and NWP, 2011. Print.
- Hammer, Brad. "From the Editor: Contingency and Its Implications for Teaching and Learning." *Forum: Newsletter for Issues about Part-Time and Contingent Faculty* 14.2 (Spr. 2011): A1–A4. Print.
- Hassel, Holly. "Re: Two-Year College and WPA." Message to author. 8 Nov. 2010. E-mail.
- Hassel, Holly and Joanne Giordano. "Creating Shared Values: Development of Writing Programs at Multi-Campus, Two-Year Institutions." CCCC Convention, Atlanta. 8 Apr. 2011. Panel presentation.
- National Center for Education Statistics. "Fast Facts." *IES National Center for Education Statistics*. U.S. Dept. of Education and Institute of Educational Sciences, 2010. Web. 27 June 2011.
- Nist, Elizabeth A. and Helon H. Raines. "Two-Year Colleges *Explaining and Claiming our Majority*." *Resituating Writing*. Eds. Joseph Janangelo and Kristine Hansen. Portsmouth: Boynton/Cook, 1995. 59–70. Print.
- Janangelo, Joseph. "Issue Brief: Writing Programs." *National Council of Teachers of English*. NCTE, 1998–2011. Web. 7 June 2011.
- Klausner, Jeffrey. "CWPA Thoughts." Message to author. 1 Nov. 2010. E-mail.
- . "Mapping the Terrain: The Two-Year College Writing Program Administrator." *Teaching English in the Two-Year College* 35.3 (2008): 238–251. Print.

- . “Not Just a Matter of Fairness: Adjunct Faculty and Writing Programs in Two-Year Colleges.” *Teaching English in the Two-Year College* 37. 4 (2010): 363–371. Print.
- Lipka, Sara. “Community Colleges Must Focus on Quality of Learning, Report Says.” *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. The Chronicle of Higher Education, 11 Nov. 2010. Web. 16 Nov. 2010.
- Long, Katherine. “UW Regents Approve Biggest-Ever Tuition Increase.” *Seattle-times.com*. The Seattle Times Co., 30 June 2011. Web. 30 June 2011.
- Long, Katherine. “Why Straight-A’s May Not Get You Into UW This Year.” *Seattle-times.com*. The Seattle Times Co., 2 Apr. 2011. Web. 2 Apr. 2011.
- Millward, Jody, Lois Powers, and Rebecca Crump, Eds. “TYCA Two-Year College Facts and Data Report: 2005.” *National Council of Teachers of English*. TYCA Research Committee, Sept. 2005. Web. 2 Jan. 2011.
- MLA Committee on Community Colleges. “A Community College Teaching Career.” *Modern Language Association*. MLA, 2006. Web. 27 June 2011.
- Raines, Helon Howell. “Is There a Writing Program in This College? Two Hundred and Thirty-Six Two-Year Schools Respond.” *College Composition and Communication* 41.2 (1990): 151–165. Print.
- Roberts, Leslie. “An Analysis of the National TYCA Research Initiative Survey Section IV: Writing Across the Curriculum and Writing Centers in Two-Year College English Programs.” *Teaching English in the Two-Year College* 36.2 (2008): 138–152. Print.
- Snelgrove, Erin. “76 Class Offerings Fall Victim to Budget Ax at YVCC.” *Yakima-herald.com*. *Yakima Herald-Republic*, 20 June 2011. Web. 20 June 2011.
- Sullivan, Patrick. “An Analysis of the National TYCA Research Initiative Survey, Section II: Assessment Practices in Two-Year College English Programs.” *Teaching English in the Two-Year College* 36.1 (2008): 7–26. Print.
- Taylor, Tim. “Writing Program Administration at the Two-Year College: Ghosts in the Machine.” *WPA: Writing Program Administration* 32.3 (2009): 120–139. Web. 7 June 2011.
- Tinberg, Howard and Jean-Paul Nadau. *The Community College Writer: Exceeding Expectations*. NCTE/CCCC and Southern Illinois University Press, 2011. Print.
- Tinberg, Howard and Patrick Sullivan, eds. *What is College-Level Writing?* Urbana: NCTE, 2006. Print.

