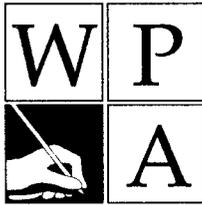


Writing Program Administration

Journal of the

Council of Writing Program Administrators

Volume 35
Number 2
Spring 2012



Writing Program Administration

Journal of the
Council of Writing Program Administrators

Managing Editor

Alice Horning Oakland University

Co-Editor

Debra Frank Dew University of Colorado at Colorado Springs

Assistant Editors

Elizabeth Allan Oakland University

Gregory Giberson Oakland University

Lori Ostergaard Oakland University

Book Review Editor

Edward M. White University of Arizona

Editorial Assistants

Janae Greene Oakland University

Jason Carabelli University of South Florida

Editorial Board

Anne Beaufort University of Washington, Tacoma

Russel K. Durst University of Cincinnati

Norbert Elliot New Jersey Institute of Technology

Patricia Freitag Ericsson Washington State University

Gregory R. Glau Northern Arizona University

Eli Goldblatt Temple University

Richard H. Haswell Texas A & M University, Corpus Christi

Brian Huot Kent State University

Asao B. Inoue California State University, Fresno

Carrie Leverenz Texas Christian University

Paul Kei Matsuda Arizona State University

Rita Malencyk Eastern Connecticut University

Mark McBeth John Jay College of Criminal Justice / CUNY

Charles Paine University of New Mexico

E. Shelley Reid George Mason University

Rochelle (Shelley) Rodrigo Mesa Community College

Shirley K Rose Arizona State University

Ellen Schendel Grand Valley State University

Martha A. Townsend University of Missouri

Elizabeth Vander Lei Calvin College

Scott Warnock Drexel University

WPA: Writing Program Administration is published twice per year—fall/winter and spring—by the Council of Writing Program Administrators. Production and printing of *WPA: Writing Program Administration* is managed by Parlor Press.

Council of Writing Program Administrators

Executive Board

The Council of Writing Program Administrators is a national association of college and university faculty who serve or have served as directors of first-year composition or writing programs, coordinators of writing centers and writing workshops, chairpersons and members of writing-program-related committees, or in similar administrative capacities. The Council of Writing Program Administrators is an affiliate of the Association of American Colleges and the Modern Language Association.

President

Duane Roen Arizona State University

Vice President

Rita Malenczyk Eastern Connecticut State University

Secretary

Keith Rhodes Grand Valley State University

Treasurer

Charles Lowe Grand Valley State University

Past President

Linda Adler-Kassner University of California, Santa Barbara

Executive Committee

Peter Adams Community College of Baltimore County

Darsie Bowden DePaul University

Doug Downs Montana State University

Kelly Kinney Binghamton University, State University of New York

Barbara Lutz University of Delaware

Mark McBeth..... John Jay College, City University of New York

Chuck Paine University of New Mexico

E. Shelley Reid George Mason University

Kate Ryan University of Montana

Megan Schoen..... Co-Chair, WPA-GO, Purdue University

Journal Editors

Alice Horning Oakland University

Debra Frank Dew University of Colorado at Colorado Springs

Web Developer

Charles Lowe Grand Valley State University

Consultant Evaluator Service Director

Charles Schuster University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

Authors' Guide

WPA: Writing Program Administration publishes articles and essays concerning the organization, administration, practices, and aims of college and university writing programs. Possible topics include

- Writing Faculty Education, Training, and Professional Development
- Writing Program Creation and Design
- The Development of Rhetoric and Writing Curricula
- Writing Assessment within Programmatic Contexts
- Advocacy and Institutional Critique and Change
- Writing Programs and Their Extra-Institutional Relationships with Writing's Publics
- Technology and the Delivery of Writing Instruction within Programmatic Contexts
- WPA and Writing Program Histories and Contexts
- WAC / ECAC / WID and Their Intersections with Writing Programs
- 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.

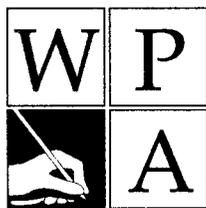
Addresses

Address articles and editorial correspondence to Alice Horning, Editor, WPA, Department of Writing and Rhetoric, 378 O'Dowd Hall, Oakland University, Rochester, MI 48309. Email: journal@wpacouncil.org. Address advertising and production questions to journal@wpacouncil.org. Address book reviews to Ed White, emwhite@u.arizona.edu.

Subscriptions

WPA: Writing Program Administration is published twice per year—fall/winter and spring—by the Council of Writing Program Administrators.

Members of the Council of Writing Program Administrators receive subscription to the journal as a part of their membership. Join here: <<http://wpacouncil.org/join-renew>>. Active members have access to online versions of current and past issues through the WPA website: <<http://wpacouncil.org/journalarchives>>. Also see information about Library Subscriptions: <<http://wpacouncil.org/library-membership>>.



Writing Program Administration

Journal of the
Council of Writing Program Administrators
Volume 35.2 (Spring 2012)

Contents

From the Editors.....	7
Pausing in the Whirlwind: A Campus Place-Based Curriculum in a Multimodal Foundation Communication Course	11
Barbara J. Blakely and Susan B. Pagnac	
Cultivating Sensibility in Writing Program Administration	38
Matthew Heard	
Writing Placement That Supports Teaching and Learning.....	55
Emily Isaacs and Catherine Keohane	
Just Comp.....	85
Don J. Kraemer	
Professional Identity in a Contingent-Labor Profession: Expertise, Autonomy, Community in Composition Teaching.....	108
Ann M. Penrose	
Uncommon Conversations: How Nearly Three Decades of Paying Attention Allows One WAC/WID Program to Thrive.....	127
Martha A. Townsend, Martha D. Patton, and Jo Ann Vogt	
On the Crossroads and at the Heart: A Conversation with the 2012 WPA Summer Conference Local Host about the Place of the Writing Program at the University of New Mexico.....	160
Shirley K Rose and Chuck Paine	

WPA Symposium Response

Composition, Commonplaces, and Who Cares? 179
Melissa Ianetta

Kitchen Cooks, Plate Twirlers, and Posers; or, the I's Have It 184
Rita Malenczyk

Different Paths to the Same Goal:

A Response to Barbara Cambridge 190
Randall McClure and Dayna V. Goldstein

Review Essay: Enhancing Learning and Thinking

in Higher Education 196
Sherry Rankins-Robertson, Tiffany Bourelle, and Duane
Roen

Contributors 207

Announcements 212

From the Editors

Putting together each issue of this journal is an interesting kind of work in a number of ways. There is a great deal of satisfaction in seeing pieces go from original submission to published article. While our readings, comments, reviewer feedback and revising create a lot of work for writers, editors and reviewers, the result is the high quality articles, reviews and exchanges you are finding in each issue. While it is easy to get lost in the details of editing and also in the dialogue among writers, editors and reviewers, the articles themselves often convey more than their overt and explicit message.

In the current issue and all the issues we have published since we began editing the journal, one overriding theme is that CWPA is what business scholars call a “learning organization.” This phrase, made popular by Peter Senge in his book *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization* (New York: Bantam Doubleday Dell, 1990) describes organizations that are open to change. In addition, though, the phrase has come to describe organizations where continuous learning is a key feature. On-going learning is certainly a feature of CWPA as an organization. But it has struck me in editing the journal that we are not only good at on-going learning, but especially good at learning from one another and from our shared experience and developing expertise.

Naturally, the WPA listserv is an especially good example of this focus on change and continuous, shared learning. The list is one of the first things I learned about at WPA “bootcamp” (that is the summer workshop) from Marty Townsend and Doug Hesse, my workshop leaders. While I only occasionally post comments or questions to the list, I have benefited constantly from the information, ideas, insights and experiences shared there. Marty’s introduction of the listserv at the workshop came to mind as I read her piece (with Marty Patton and Jo Ann Vogt) in this issue on the history and development of the WAC program at Missouri. Continuous learning, openness to change and shared expertise are hallmarks of who we are. We hope that this issue of *WPA: Writing Program Administration* continues to support these features of the organization.

COMINGS AND GOINGS

We are sorry to wave a good-bye to Jim Nugent whose time is consumed with his own research and writing projects; we have very much appreciated his careful copy editing and technical support. We hope an occasional question from the managing editor, two doors down the hall, won't be too much of an imposition. We are happy to welcome Carrie Leverenz to the editorial board. She has already reviewed two articles and we look forward to her assistance with new articles. We also welcome Betsy Allan of Oakland University, who will join us as an assistant editor. And we are grateful for ad hoc reviews by Darsie Bowden, Helen Foster, Joe Janangelo, and Carrie Leverenz.

ARTICLES IN THIS ISSUE

In "Pausing in the Whirlwind," Barbara J. Blakely and Susan B. Pagnac discuss their development of a campus place-based first-year curriculum that asks students to research and write about their campus mission, history, art, and architecture. This place-based approach to the first-year communication course helps students to locate themselves and their goals within the university community and aids their transition to college.

Matthew Heard reconceptualizes sensibility as the faculty of focused, attuned, "feeling out" of local contingencies and complexities that WPAs have already learned to adopt in order to negotiate the identity of writing in our different environments. Cultivating our sensibility to an ethos of writing would mean using our positions of vulnerability to reflect back the ways that writing shapes the values and practices that become naturalized in our local situations.

Emily Isaacs and Catherine Keohane in "Writing Placement that Supports Teaching and Learning" explore the development of a different kind of placement system at Montclair State University. Their system offers an important alternative to a number of other options for placement that readers may find quite useful.

Don Kraemer sees the proper content of first-year composition (FYC) or writing as the study of, and practice in, symbolic action for civic purposes (i.e., social justice). The cases we make for a particular curricular design should keep in dialogic contact both the obligations we have (a) to treat other people with dignity and (b) to choose for ourselves how to live well—a way of making a case that ought to be the chief aim of FYC.

Ann M. Penrose explores three factors that have historically defined professions: (1) a specialized and dynamic knowledge base or body of expertise; (2) a distinctive array of rights and privileges accorded to members, and (3)

an internal social structure based on shared goals and values. She offers an instructive model of the composition professional as a basis for articulating our professional values as we continue to advocate for improving the material conditions of employment.

In “Uncommon Conversations,” Marty Townsend, Marty Patton and Jo Ann Vogt review the history of their exemplary Writing Across the Curriculum program at the University of Missouri. The many features of this highly successful program and the many lessons they have learned and shared from it are a perfect example of the ways in which we all continue to learn from one another.

In “On the Crossroads and at the Heart,” Shirley Rose interviews Chuck Paine, host of the 2012 CWPA national conference in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Through their conversation, Shirley and Chuck explore the different ways that the history, “location” and “place” that is Albuquerque impacts UNM writing programs and other aspects of the university and surrounding community. Readers will gain insights about the host, city, institution, and surrounding community in preparation for attending the summer conference.

WPAs RESPOND TO “A SYMPOSIUM ON MENTORING THE WORK OF WPAs”

In response to our Fall Symposium on mentoring the work of WPAs—written by Joyce Olewski Inman, Kathryn Johnson Gindlesparger, Darci L. Thoune, Collie Fulford, and Tim McCormack—we received two provocative pieces from Melissa Ianetta and Rita Malenczyk. Ianetta’s response interrogates the commonplaces that are woven throughout each of the Fall Symposium essays, and suggests that the field may have “much to gain from thinking through more carefully the role of our utopic ideals in program building and the commonplaces that we use to express” those often unattainable ideals. While Ianetta focuses on the commonplaces, Malenczyk responds to three themes that she sees echoing throughout these five essays, which she identifies as the “three ‘I’s”: identity, instinct, and imperfection. In a response that eloquently traces the influence of each of these “I’s” on our work as writing program administrators, Malenczyk concludes with a plea for common sense and hope, advising new WPAs that they should keep “working, watching, listening...Talk to each other. Get over the imperfections. Keep self-flagellation to a minimum . . . and do the best you can.” We hope that this conversation about mentoring will continue in both formal and informal forums, and that we will continue to talk to each other about our hopes, our fears, and our expectations for WPA work.

WPAs IN DIALOGUE

Randall McClure and Dayna Goldstein offer a thoughtful and provocative response to Barbara Cambridge's piece in Fall issue, which was the text of her talk at the summer conference in Baton Rouge.

REVIEW

In "Enhancing Learning and Thinking in Higher Education," Sherry Rankins-Roberston, Tiffany Bouelle, and Duane Roen review several books that address the teaching, learning, and assessment of critical thinking skills in higher education. Finding flaws with some of the more popular arguments which suggest the failure of colleges and universities to teach critical thinking, they argue that discussions of student learning need to be steeped more thoroughly in disciplinary theory and practice.



Pausing in the Whirlwind: A Campus Place-Based Curriculum in a Multimodal Foundation Communication Course

Barbara J. Blakely and Susan B. Pagnac

[P]lace is pause; each pause in movement makes it possible for location to be transformed into place.

—Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place*

ABSTRACT

A campus place-based first-year curriculum operationalizes campus place, not as a neutral backdrop that students pass through on their way to a vocation, but as a purposeful assemblage of physical, verbal, and natural artifacts that play an important role in students' adjustment process and in their higher education journey. The curriculum described here is based on David Gruenewald's observation that "place is profoundly pedagogical" (621); it activates the campus itself pedagogically, providing students opportunities for pausing, exploring, researching, and sharing place-based discoveries in multiple modes in our Communication Across the Curriculum program. Now the standard curriculum in our first-level course, it successfully addresses two issues of interest to WPAs: establishing a stable-but-generative curriculum that provides consistency across many sections while allowing innovation and choice for students and instructors. This curriculum promotes and enhances students' understanding of their new campus-as-place—its mission, history, art, architecture—through multimodal communication assignments. A place-based curriculum both assists students in their transition to the university and helps them to identify their goals in the context of the university's—and their own—past, present, and future by allowing meaningful communication projects.

INTRODUCTION

In summer 2010—just before the fall semester in which we piloted the campus place-based curriculum we describe in this article—a new sculpture appeared on our campus. *Whirlwind*, by artists Andrea Myklebust and Stanton Sears, is a wholly fitting visual metaphor for the writing program curriculum we describe in this article. Iowa State University’s extensive Art on Campus program captures the meaning of the sculpture—the impact of the university experience on students:

Whirlwind is an elongated cyclone swirling with imagery and activities prevalent at the Memorial Union. Students may picture themselves at the base of the columnar sculpture where a tiny Iowa landscape, a specific reference to Grant Wood, is shown on a bubble-shaped patch of land. The students can imagine the history, energy, and enthusiasm of campus life sweeping them into a towering tornado. (Art on Campus, “*Whirlwind*”)

For campus pedestrians without ready access to the online fact sheet, the artists themselves state the work’s meaning on the sculpture’s base: “Going to college should pick a person up and set him or her down in a new place with new ideas and a deeper understanding of the world” (“Traditions”).

Place was the topic of a recent thread on the WPA listserv as one writer asked for assistance in locating a “theory of place” for an Honors first-year writing course he was planning. Amidst the suggestions of readings—many from literature and environmentalism—one comment seemed to sum up our field’s interest in place: “I wish I were teaching this course”! (Brueggemann “Theories”). Certainly, “place” can mean everything from a patch of land in our backyards, to the neighborhood or rural acres from which we come, to the vanishing tall-grass prairie, to an urban environment, to online cyber-communities—and that flexibility alone makes place a fascinating and productive curricular concept for WPAs. In this article, we focus on a particular place—the university campus—and its curricular benefit for its particular students and their instructors. In our work with new first-year students and (not incidentally) the new TAs who teach ISU-Comm Foundation courses at Iowa State University, a land grant university (enrolling nearly 29,000 in 2010, the year we piloted this curriculum), our objective was two-fold as we embarked on this project:

1. to develop a consistent, coherent, relevant curriculum for the first in a two-course sequence of foundation communication courses

(approximately 80 sections of which are offered each year), one with no lack of rich material readily accessible for students; and

2. to accomplish the objectives of this course with a stable-yet-generative curricular framework that allows room for both instructor and student innovation and choice as new students grapple with the successive approximations of academic discourse David Bartholomae calls “inventing the university” (134).

Important to our thinking about this curriculum is Larry Beason’s assertion that “a sense of place” is important for its ability to engender “[p]lace attachment, or a feeling of rootedness . . . a powerful human need that helps people connect and ‘be themselves’” (150). Beason cites sociologists Lee Cuba and David Hummon who reiterate that a sense of place “involve[s] a sense of shared interests and values . . . bringing a sense of belonging and order to one’s sociospatial world” (qtd. in Beason 150). While Beason notes that such a feeling of rootedness is important for its affective value in an instructor’s pedagogy, this study links curricular place-conscious work in the foundation communication class to the same feelings of attachment, belonging, and order to positive results for first-year students as well. Synthesizing scholarship from several disciplines—that of campus planners, architects, landscape designers, environmental educators, specialists in student development and in higher education, environmental psychologists, compositionists, and social psychologists—we develop a “theory of place” (as sought in the WPA listserv) that supports a stable and consistent, yet generative, first-year curriculum that is exciting and beneficial for new students and permits a successful inaugural teaching experience for new TAs in communication programs.

Specifically, a campus place-based foundational communication curriculum operationalizes campus place not as a generic, neutral backdrop that students pass through on their way to a vocation, but as a purposeful and rich assemblage of physical, verbal, and natural artifacts that play an important role in students’ adjustment process and in their higher education journey. The writing program curriculum described here takes as its primary principle place-based educator Thomas Gruenewald’s observation that “place is profoundly pedagogical” (“Foundations” 621); it activates the campus itself pedagogically, providing students opportunities for pausing, exploring, researching, and sharing place-based discoveries and insights in multiple twenty-first-century communication modes. Now the standard curriculum in the first of our two-level foundation communication series at Iowa State University, it contextualizes the whirlwind of changes and chal-

lenges new university students experience—characterized by one scholar as the ongoing balance of tranquility and activity (Griffith 645). This equipoise, this trope of stability balanced with transformation, is described by campus architect Richard Dober in the last decade of the twentieth century, and the notion is remarkably consonant with the function and characteristics of the curriculum itself: “Intellectually, higher education depends on balancing the forces of continuity and change, a fundamental in defining . . . a campus architecture rooted in reality and imagination (34). This echoes the sentiment, expressed sixty years earlier, of landscape architect Ernest E. Walker: “Gathered here are the forces that . . . fit new thoughts to new conditions” (qtd. in Dober 35). The campus place-based curriculum is also stable yet generative, in ways that we believe make it useful and exciting for WPAs.

The stability we sought in creating this curriculum is a response to practical realities faced by many WPAs of large (and not-so-large) writing programs. One is the benefit of consistency and coherence among many sections of the same course. While this doesn’t require a lockstep approach to curricula, it does mean that Iowa State University’s Communication Across the Curriculum (CAC) program (called ISUComm) at the foundation courses level has stated objectives and standard assignments/projects for achieving those objectives (some of which are listed below). While there are multiple ways of achieving the goals, with a significant staff of TA and non-tenure-track faculty instructing these two courses, it is important to create a curriculum that works with a standard, rhetorical, genre-based text and which can be adopted (and adapted) relatively easily by instructors. *Stability* in this context also means that course content—what Johnathon Mauk calls the “material-discursive where” (379)—is readily accessible, from the physical campus with signage and beckoning places for pausing and noticing; to an Art on Campus program that provides plentiful artifacts to visit, online material to read for further information, and guided educational tours; to library archives that provide both online and physically accessible information about campus history, people, and architecture; to many programs and organizations that embody the university’s land grant mission.

Balanced with these components that provide curricular stability, the campus place-based curriculum is also generative because it offers countless opportunities for students and instructors both to augment and tailor it in various ways. For example, with this curriculum, students are able to investigate the heritage behind the buildings at Iowa State University. Two alumni—Carrie Chapman Catt, an instrumental player in the fight for women’s suffrage, and George Washington Carver, a groundbreaking African American scientist, have buildings named for them on our campus.

In the course of investigating these buildings, students could expand their learning beyond the physical places to the people behind them and the vital contributions these alumni made to society. The campus place-based curriculum's generative possibilities are also demonstrated in its having been adapted for two learning communities on our campus. Learning community sections of the first-level course are themed around specific majors. For the BEST/Genetics (biology, engineering, science, and technology) and Animal Science/Pre-Veterinary Medicine learning communities, the instructors modified this curriculum to focus on aspects of campus most interesting and useful to those students, with input from professors in the other academic areas. In both cases, the generative nature of our curriculum allows for a more specialized focus on particular majors and areas of study—and their attendant resources—on our campus.

The campus place-based curriculum we designed for the foundation courses at our land-grant university capitalizes on the progressive multimodal pedagogy (written, oral, visual, and electronic modes) of our CAC program, ISUComm. Developed in the 1990s and adopted by the university faculty senate ten years ago, ISUComm is unique in its application of five rhetorical concepts—context, substance, organization, style, and delivery—to written, oral, visual, and electronic communication modes, in ways that allow instructors and students to readily call upon the affordances of one mode while working primarily in another and to repurpose a project from one mode to another. For instance, a written project can become a visual project (brochure, poster, video) with an oral (presentation) component supported by the electronic mode (e.g., presentation slides). Our university is a residential campus, we have a significant international enrollment, and we offer our two foundation courses only in face-to-face formats, including conducting classes in a computer lab one day a week.

The synergy of the two initiatives, ISUComm and the campus place-based curriculum for the foundation courses described here, turns on students' understanding of their new campus-as-place—its mission, history, appearance, emphases, and initiatives—through meaningful multimodal communication assignments. The curriculum is designed to assist students in their critically important transition to post-secondary education; help them to identify their goals in the context of the university's and their own past, present, and future; and allow them both the valuable “learning to communicate” and “communicating to learn” practice that ISUComm promotes. Nancy Sommers and Laura Saltz use the metaphor of the threshold to describe the challenging transition new university students experience. They note, “[s]tudents are asked as freshmen to leave something behind and to locate themselves in the realms of uncertainty and ambiguity” (like the

action of a whirlwind), and they further note the “central role writing plays in helping students make the transition *to college*” (125; 127).

WHAT IS CAMPUS PLACE?

With competition for student enrollment, the term “campus place” easily brings to mind visions of glossy marketing materials full of stunning campus vistas laid out with historically and architecturally impressive buildings. Rhetorically, these images have tremendous iconic power in our culture to attract students to a place that visually so clearly says “higher education.” It can also conjure less positive but no less culturally resonant images of wildly partying students seemingly focused more on next weekend’s party than on their classes. Therefore, we differentiate from the outset our approach to the campus-as-place from these other readily recognizable concepts of campus: the “campus-as-brand” and the “campus-as-holding-pen.”

Campus-as-brand focuses on making a favorable if somewhat hazy impression on prospective students and their parents: “Families tend to come away from a campus tour with a strong instinct about the school, colored in large part by whether it matches the look and feel of the campus of their dreams . . . whether it truly has that storybook look and feel” (Geller and Corning). The homepages of all our campuses reveal that effort is necessarily devoted to developing an attractive, unified, and recognizable campus look—a “brand”—for recruitment purposes. In his study, Ernest Boyer found that “it was the buildings, the trees, the walkways, the well-kept lawns—that overwhelmingly won out. The appearance of the campus is, by far, the most influential characteristic during campus visits . . .” (17).

On the other end of the visually iconic continuum from “that storybook look and feel” is what we might call a holding-pen view of the campus. Made graphically unforgettable in the 1978 movie *Animal House*, this image is articulated a bit more genteelly by Sir John Daniels, vice chancellor of Britain’s Open University, when he described the campus as a place where students are sequestered while they work through a messy maturation process: “a protected environment where young people can come to terms with life, love, liquor and learning—while sparing the rest of the community the sight of these often unsightly processes” (qtd. in Burgan 2).

The conceptualization of campus place on which our foundation course curriculum is based is neither campus-as-brand nor campus-as-holding-pen. Rather, it is one informed by the work of campus planners, architects, landscape designers, environmental educators, and specialists in student development and in higher education, environmental psychologists, and social psychologists. Dober’s description of a campus as a physical and

organizational embodiment of an institution's mission—its approach, in other words, to the ongoing balance of tradition with change—describes the thematic core of our curriculum: stability and transformation. Campuses are “large groups of buildings and landscapes constructed over time and intended to be mutable environments responding to social and cultural needs” (Dober 166–67). Campuses are planned and designed to embody educational purpose and institutional mission and values in various ways (e.g., organizationally, in bricks and mortar); they are both a visible and symbolic link between the past, present, and future—of the institution, of knowledge, and of the students. A campus place-based curriculum spotlights and takes advantage of this link and of the central role of students' communication work within it.

William F. Sturmer, in one of the earliest articles delineating the connection between campus place and educational process, argues that the campus-as-place, the totality of its physical environment

simultaneously reflects and shapes, is both a response to and a cause of, the values and practices of an educational institution . . . The design and construction of the physical aspects of the university should complement and strengthen the mission of the university to stimulate students in the effective use of learning opportunities. (98 – 99)

Thus, while the stirring first impressions of a breathtaking, history-steeped campus may be the basis for a visiting first-year student's initial reaction, “it is through a deeper level of reaction to the qualities of the surroundings that campuses become places of substance, meaning, and beauty” (Reeve and Kassabaum 1). It is this deeper level that a campus place-based curriculum plumbs.

WHY CAMPUS PLACE? TRANSITION AND IDENTITY

An attractive campus today is too often thought of simply as a strategy for student admissions and retention, not as something central to the educational mission.

—David Schuyler, “Frederick Law Olmsted and the Origins of Modern Campus Design”

The transition to being a successful university student is seen as a movement toward more generative and adaptive ways of understanding and being in the world, a process that happens on many levels and through many means beyond time spent in classrooms. The transition to and subsequent experience at the university is not just a time of limbo or a four-year layover on the road to the “real world.” Students are not just marking time while on

the way to someplace else; to view it in these reductionist terms overlooks the significant person-place relationship—what Irish poet Seamus Heaney aptly described as “the marriage between the geography of the mind and geographical places” (qtd. in Gruenewald, “Foundations” 626). Place is a central influence in our experiences and developing sense of self. However, rich, place-conscious opportunities—particularly as an instantiated part of the curriculum—can be overlooked. David Orr, a professor of environmental studies, asserts that “other than as a collection of buildings where learning is supposed to occur, place has no particular standing in contemporary education” (126). Place, says educational theorist Paul Temple, “is the largely unacknowledged independent variable in understanding how higher education institutions work” (“From Space to Place” 209). And educational theorist Michael Peters agrees: “modern educational theory has all but ignored questions of space, of geography, of architecture” (qtd. in Usher 53).

Discussions about campus place tend to be dominated by focus on recruitment and student engagement, leaving out the role that the first-year/foundational curriculum can play in making meaningful the link among the university mission statement, the physical campus, the institution’s history and trajectory, and how the student belongs. Yet scholars in student development, environmental and social psychology, architecture and design, and higher education tell us that campus arrangement, landscape, and architecture contribute significantly to the articulation and achievement of educational purposes. A campus “convey[s] visually a sense of purpose, place, order and quality” (Griffith 645). Moreover, a campus is a particular kind of place—as Thomas Gaines says in his book about campus designs: “the college campus has an ambience all its own . . . there is a there there” (x). Frederick Law Olmsted, the preeminent landscape architect and city planner of the second half of the nineteenth century, designer of several campus landscapes, believed passionately that place is an educational force (Schuyler 8). Olmsted was emphatic that attention paid to the campus-as-place was integral to students’ experience, that physical surroundings were fundamentally important to students’ education and to the kind of people they could become (Schuyler 2).

However, defining this ambience—the ineffable “there-ness” of campus visits—what C. Carney Strange, professor of higher education and student affairs, calls “the distinctive values and impressions we intuit from the very air we breathe in the setting” (299)—is both an exciting and a challenging endeavor, one that necessarily extends beyond the campus visit and the first week of orientation activities. Sam J. Fugazzotto, a specialist in educational leadership and policy, is perhaps more concrete (pun intended) when he notes that the effectiveness of an institution depends on its “structures

and cultures,” and that through mission statements and use of space, those structures and cultures become tangible (285). In our curriculum, this view of “effectiveness” and “tangibility” is useful in students’ perceptions of their work in the foundation communication class—the very beginning of their work at the university. Basing student work in campus place (art, architecture, landscape, history, and programs) we “ground[ed] learning in local phenomena and students’ lived experience” (Smith 586) in an effort to make their learning both tangible and effective: contributing to the adjustment process, creating interest and excitement about Iowa State University’s mission and its potential in their lives, and building knowledge of and skills in the rhetorical bases of written, oral, visual, and electronic communication.

As environmental scholars point out, we are often unaware of the significance of our places, both natural and built, and thus, our students’ new geographies, both external and mental, might go unremarked. Although literature professor Lawrence Buell notes our tendency not to see and articulate the value of “all that is to be noticed and expressed” in our environments, significantly, he also sees this stunted awareness as possibility—an “enabling ground condition as it becomes activated in the work of composition and critical reading” (22). Curriculum theorist Gillian Judson notes that neglect of place in education is “due in part to its ‘invisibility’: ‘the everyday,’ by its very nature, is difficult to grasp. Its very ‘normality,’ its very taken-for-grantedness,’ ‘all-around-us-ness,’ makes it elusive to pin down, to take stock of” (234). Yet Judson reiterates that research shows that “school spaces matter to students as they contribute to identity formation and sense of belonging in schools” (242).

An important component in this identity formation and sense of belonging, we find, is providing students an effective and tangible curricular context from which to grapple with questions most new college students are implicitly asking. Bioregionalist Robert Thayer lists these as “Who am I?” “Where am I?” and “What do I do?” (qtd. in Brooke and McIntosh 136). A fourth, related question students can productively explore in their first-year communication work is posed by Strange: “What is it like to be here?” (299). Strange argues that all aspects of the campus environment—constructed and organizational—are important to student adjustment, success, and literally and figuratively, finding their place in the institution and in their futures. Inasmuch as a campus is consciously designed to both reflect and influence student learning, and since, as social psychologists tell us, identity (one’s subjective sense of self) is clearly shaped by our “relationships to the various physical settings that define and structure day-to-day life” (Proshansky, Fabian, and Kaminoff 58), we are particularly encour-

aged by the potential of a campus place-based curriculum to counteract some of what Johnathon Mauk refers to as the “apparent placelessness” of many new college students (370). These students, who increasingly see college in entirely instrumental terms—a way to a job and a paycheck—can benefit from curricular work that “accounts for and engages the spatial and material conditions that constitute the everyday lives of students” (370).

Our campus-as-place curriculum creates a meaningful “material-discursive where” (Mauk 379) from which work in foundation communication classes connects students in deliberate ways to their university experience as a series of opportunities to pause in and notice their present, and to contemplate and begin preparing for their futures. This material-discursive where is especially important as it relates to relocation—the life-event new students are experiencing as they begin their time at the university. The going-to-college relocation is a voluntary one, a “conscious discontinuity” in environmental psychology terms (Twigger-Ross and Uzzell 218). The campus has been chosen as part of a new stage in life, but it is a relocation nonetheless. This singular fact offers an opportunity for work in foundation communication courses: while this conscious discontinuity is daunting and alienating, it also represents the development of new place attachment and new identity development.

In their work, environmental psychologists Kenny Chow and Mick Healey found that this particular relocation represented a significant moment: “Not only did the decision to move from home represent self-concept change but it also fostered the opportunity to develop new identities. Through seeing new places and different people and experiencing new situations a new perspective on life was acquired . . .” (366). In part, this relocation is negotiated through processes that environmental psychologists refer to as adjustment and familiarization, through which students “read” the campus in ways that connect it to their desires and needs (368). Similarly, Louis Attinasi, a professor of educational leadership and cultural studies, has studied student adjustment to this relocation and identifies common responses to the new campus place. Students overwhelmingly describe a perception of “bigness” in the physical, social, and academic “geographies” they are navigating (262). Resolving the new campus place into meaningful, logical spaces means everything from daily way-finding to connecting oneself to the larger trajectory the university represents in a marriage of physical and mental geographies referred to above.

HOW: PAUSING, MAPPING, RESEARCHING, SHARING THE CAMPUS PLACE

To be at all—to exist in any way—is to be somewhere, and to be somewhere is to be in some kind of place. Place is as requisite as the air we breathe, the ground on which we stand, the bodies we have. We are surrounded by places. We walk over and through them. We live in places, relate to others in them, die in them. Nothing we do is unplaced. How could it be otherwise? How could we fail to recognize this primal fact?

—Edward Casey, *The Fate of Place: A Philosophical History*

Students need time and opportunity in the form of meaningful communication work to assist their sense-making (familiarization and adjustment) processes. This academic space now contextualizes their writing, thinking, and living. Their new campus place is both literally and figuratively Buell's "enabling ground" (22) upon which students can begin to build their understanding about their connection to the stream of academic and local campus tradition and values which are ripe for activation in the first year or two of a student's transition to college. Architect Frances Halsband is eloquent about a campus place as enabling ground for this understanding. University campuses, she says,

have been carefully designed over decades, even centuries. They are places that speak to us of continuing care, thoughtful decision-making, reverence for tradition and ritual, and a harmony of nature, landscape, and architectural design. . . . Walking through the gates, we walk into the world of our future. (4)

To assist in adjustment to the university as well as to their entry into the educational trajectory the university represents, we asked our students to be cognizant of not only instantiations of care, decision-making, tradition, landscape, and architectural design, but of how these depict the nature and purpose of the institution, in this case, of Iowa State University and how this was meaningful to them as students at this particular institution.

Our study consisted of eight pilot sections of the first in the two-course sequence in the ISUComm Foundation Courses. Six graduate teaching assistants (TAs) were the instructors: two PhD TAs, experienced both with teaching and with the principles and pedagogy of ISUComm, taught four of the classes; the other four TAs were MA students, new to the English Department and were mentored closely by (and team-taught one day a week with) the experienced instructors. Since the goal was for the campus place-based curriculum to become the standard first-course fare in our

foundation courses, we were eager to know if it was readily useable by new TAs, who also are unlikely to be familiar with the ISU campus. A human subjects application submitted to the Institutional Review Board at Iowa State University's Office for Responsible Research was approved and nearly 100 students participated in the study, consenting to have their work in the course used as data and responding to some short follow-up questions at the end of the semester. The primary investigator and first author did not teach any of the classes or reveal to the six instructors who in their classes were participants in the study. In addition, the primary investigator was never aware of how a participant's paper/project was graded or responded to; she examined each submission only as an artifact of how the student engaged with the assignment and the campus place-based curriculum overall. The secondary investigator and second author (one of the two PhD TAs) taught two of the classes, mentored two new TAs, but learned who the student participants were only after the semester was over and final grades for all eight sections had been submitted, in accordance with our IRB form. The other PhD TA was centrally involved in planning the semester, creating materials, and mentoring two of the four new TAs. He did not examine data.

Envisioning the campus place-based curriculum metaphorically as a pebble tossed into a pond by a whirlwind of change, rippling outward from the center, we began the semester where our students were (and where they had just come from), with who they were and what they were experiencing at that particular time in their lives. They were, as Sommers and Saltz describe, on a threshold of leaving some things behind and adopting new ways of being and learning. Gradually, as the semester progressed, students explored more about their new campus place. Because the Iowa State University campus is very large, and adjustment to a relocation (moving from home to the university) typically presents challenges to students, we deliberately began the semester acknowledging the conscious discontinuity students experience when they move to the university by asking them to write about where they were from, allowing them to make that place attachment a starting point as they began navigating their new campus place.

As the descriptions of the communication projects below show, the assignments reflect common first-level course genres: letters, profiles, public documents, analysis and interpretation, and research. Several texts could complement this campus place-based curriculum inasmuch as the assignments are strongly rhetorically- and genre-based. Consonant with the Council of Writing Program Administrators' Outcomes Statement, ISU-Comm's mission is, in part, to "cultivate a full range of communication competencies: from critical reading practices to comprehensive research

methods; from clear prose to effective oral presentation; from the systematic analysis of textual, verbal, and visual media to the development, design, and delivery of well-reasoned arguments” (“Vision, Mission, and Means”).

To realize this principle, ISUComm articulates several goals for our first-level Foundation Course, goals that are common in writing programs and consistent with the WPA Outcomes. Among them are that students learn to

- adapt their writing to specific purposes and audiences, and situational contexts
- integrate and document a range of informational sources, from personal interviews to print and electronic publications
- practice varied organizational strategies and transitional devices
- match expression to situation and audience, avoiding errors that distract or confuse
- develop strategies to revise their own writing
- develop basic oral presentation skills, focusing on meaningful information, clear organization, and engaging delivery
- analyze visual communication, such as art on campus
- use visuals effectively (e.g., imported, scanned, or digital pictures) and integrating them with written texts
- use word processing skills, including making headings, attachments, tables, etc.
- choose one or more suitable media for delivering a piece of communication to its intended audience. (“English 150/250 Course Descriptions, 2011–2012”)

Students submitted their work to their instructors online, as is increasingly common in our foundation courses. Our department uses Moodle, an open source course management system, and instructors have separate Moodle course sites for their students. It is a secure, password-protected site that students register for and access with their own chosen ID and password. Moodle sites are used in our program mostly as online syllabus and announcement sites as well as handout and assignment repositories. Students were free to upload several kinds of files, including Word, PowerPoint, Keynote, and Pages files, and they could choose to receive an email back from the system confirming their uploads. Students could also access their papers online after they were graded; students received marginal, terminal, and rubric feedback on their papers as well as an overall grade on each paper.

Where I'm From: Conscious Discontinuity and Home

In the first assignment, “Where I’m From,” students wrote a short essay describing their home or where they were from. Combining physical and emotional descriptions, students considered what “home” and “being from somewhere” meant to them at the beginning of the semester. Many students chose to write about their hometowns while others focused on the actual family dwelling. Some international students wrote about their home country in contrast to the U.S. However they chose to define “home,” we wanted students to have the opportunity to connect, deliberately, the ideas and feelings they had about the place with the physical place itself; in other words, to work for the first time with the notion of place as not just a neutral backdrop for their life events, but as an influence on those events, providing meaning itself. Examination of these “Where I’m From” essays revealed that students focused heavily on themes of safety, security, comfort, memories, and community when describing their physical home places.

One student wrote, “Home is where I feel comforted, loved, and needed. Home is not just four walls and a roof, but it is the surrounding community or the ‘support beams.’” Another student explained that “Home is a place where you can feel safe and welcome . . . and a sense of community.” Finally, another student indicated how deeply s/he felt about his/her home: “In my heart, home is a place which is full of memories of the years behind me.” The opportunity to look back and consider how they felt about their homes allowed students to explore their feelings of “conscious discontinuity”: each of these students had chosen to leave home and come to Iowa State University for college, yet they struggled with feelings of homesickness and longing for a familiar environment. In a time in their lives when they were just beginning to build new communities on the Iowa State University campus, it was clear that our students were simultaneously looking back to the familiar communities and connections of home.

Deep Mapping and Letter Writing

“Sharing Experiences,” a two-part assignment, asked students first to visually represent campus as they experienced it via a deep mapping exercise. As a follow-up, students complemented their deep map with a letter to a friend or family member, in which they described the experience of the new campus place. “Deep maps” (a term first used by William Least Heat-Moon in the title of his book *PrairieErth (A Deep Map): An Epic History of the Tallgrass Prairie Country*) depict the emotional and daily relationships people form with place. Of the many portions of campus that students

experienced daily—dorm rooms, dining halls, classroom buildings, sections of campus landscape, a piece of art, the student union, the library, a campus bench—we asked them to render those they found the most salient at that early point in the semester in the form of a deep map. By imagining that they were creating this map for their family and friends back home, students needed to consider how to visually represent campus in a way that showed what aspects of the place created an impression on them early in their first semester.

Significantly, landscape architect James Corner declares that mapping is an act of agency; maps are not “transparent, neutral or passive devices of spatial measurement and depiction . . . but imaginative, operational instruments” (250). Thus, we were able to use mapping both as metaphor and strategy: students had to pause and see their new campus place, not just hurry through it. And mapping began the resolution of students’ conscious discontinuity by assisting in a visual and personal way with students’ adjustment to and familiarization with their chosen parts of campus. These maps were necessarily highly personalized for each student and his/her experience with campus to that point (two weeks or so into the semester). Indeed, as Attinasi notes, such maps function precisely because of “the identification of significant objects in the environment, the establishment of the connectedness of the objects to one another and to the observer, and the assignment of meaning, whether emotional or practical, to the objects and their relationships” (268).

Our students’ deep maps reveal these functions—more than mere way-finding, but the establishment of emotional and practical attachments. Students depicted the main landmarks on campus to them at the time—from dorm rooms, to the building a major is housed in, to the closest US Bank ATM. Although our campanile is often thought of as the iconic center of the campus, several of our students didn’t include it on their deep maps at all but instead drew their dorm rooms and recreation and dining facilities because these represented more “central” locations in these new students’ campus experiences. Indeed, a few students’ deep mapping represented their daily campus place as a circular route: from their dorm, past Lake LaVerne, to a classroom building, to a dining hall, and so on. On the other hand, some students deep mapped their campus place as extensions of the buildings that house their major. In one case, the building that houses agronomy and agricultural majors was the literal center of the map (apparently this student’s dominating campus place at this early point). Other places on campus—his dorm, other classroom buildings, the student union, other important landmarks—are depicted as clearly peripheral to the agronomy and agriculture hall and his major. These deep maps reveal the marrying of

external and internal geographies in visual form. The newly forming connections between familiar places on campus are rendered in personal ways that show each student's own developing place attachment.

Accompanying the deep map, students identified one of these special places on campus and wrote a letter to a younger friend or relative describing that place in ways that connected it to their current experiences and more distant futures—to, as student development specialist C. Carney Strange says, “understand and communicate to others what it’s like to be here” (299). In these letters, students began to write from the position of a campus “material-discursive where” (Mauk 379) and began to transfer some of the comfortable feelings about home to their new campus place.

In these letters, many students wrote about the security, comfort, and community of particular locations on campus—finding a smaller piece of the bigger whole to connect to as part of the familiarization and adjustment process. Of an attractive and secluded courtyard on campus, one student wrote, “This courtyard is much more than a courtyard to me. It is a place I can come to on campus that gives me a sense of belonging, clarity, and tranquility. I adore the landscape and the history behind this courtyard . . . the closeness, the security, the sense of belonging.” Another student explains,

When I first arrived at Iowa State I thought it was so big and really didn't know how I would find everything . . . A place on campus that I love is the Campanile. It is located in the center of campus and is surrounded by large fields of grass The Campanile is a comfortable place I can go study. I like to lay down my comfy blanket in the damp grass, sprawl out, and study.

These two students connect feelings of home—security, belonging, comfort—to specific places on campus to help them ameliorate the “conscious discontinuity” (Twigger-Ross and Uzzell 218) of coming to college.

Campus Program or Organization

Building on students' growing comfort with campus, in the third project, “Exploring a Campus Program or Organization,” students extended their exploration beyond the personal and physical to learn about some of the campus programs and organizations. Expanding the notion of campus place beyond the physical to a community and organizational level, this assignment emphasized the specific context of Iowa State University by exploring how its mission statement and land-grant status obligations are made tangible in programs and organizations. Students chose from among several organizations or programs, including ISU's Art on Campus Program; ISU's Lectures Program; Live Green!, the campus recycling and

environmental initiative; the Aldo Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture; the university botanical gardens; the university archives; multicultural student organizations; the Iowa Water Center, part of ISU's Agronomy Department; intramural sports; and the Virtual Reality Application Center, part of ISU's Human Computer Interaction Program. Central to this assignment was the requirement that students become familiar with an organization or program within the context of the university's land-grant heritage and resulting mission, that they examine the online public documents available on these organizations or programs to learn how each represents itself in relation to the larger university's work, and that they experience, in one way or another, the organization or program they wrote about.

Students were able to continue the process of resolving complex campus geographies into smaller, more meaningful territories by linking an otherwise abstract mission statement to everyday programs, practices, and sites. Fugazzoto notes, the tangibility of connecting "structures and cultures" to mission statements (285), and this can be a valuable meaning-making process for students. In particular, our students were able to see the land-grant heritage of ISU, which emphasizes making knowledge available for all in practical ways, instantiated in campus programs and organizations.

A key ideal in the land-grant mission is public accessibility. Through ISU's Art on Campus program, students began to notice, and then to really look at and think about, some of the many pieces of art on this public university campus. One student wrote, "[o]ne of the first things you notice when you step on to Iowa State campus is the art, lots of art . . . The goal of all this over the years is, and has been, to reflect the mission of Iowa State University through public art available to all." Another student wrote about the connections between the university's "green" program and how it makes tangible the school's land-grant mission:

From the mission statement of Iowa State University, I have learned that the two missions—"create knowledge through world-class scholarship in teaching, research, and creative endeavors" and "apply knowledge to improve the quality of life for current and future generations"—are trying to make Iowa and the world a better place. Live Green! is absolutely supporting this statement.

These comments reveal students doing more than simply passing through their campus place in quotidian routines of attending class and returning to dorms; they are developing substantive appreciations of and attendant connections with their campus place in a way that helps them answer some of those probing, identity-formation questions: Where am I, and how do my surroundings suggest values and goals worth attaining and tell stories

of how others have attained them? Instead of functioning as a neutral backdrop against which four years of classes simply transpire, students have an opportunity to understand the campus as itself part of the curriculum, part of the educational experience, and in this case, of land-grant ideals. By learning more, sharing what they learned, and taking part in some of the events on campus, students began to see themselves as part of the campus community.

Understanding Campus Art or Architecture

In “Understanding Campus Art or Architecture,” students took another scaffolded step in familiarizing themselves with their campus-as-place by analyzing a building or piece of art on campus. In particular, students worked with the ideas that a campus “express[es] the mission of [the] university in built form” (Edwards 3) and “communicate[s] an institution’s purpose, presence and domain” (Dober 3). Students chose one of several buildings or any piece of art on campus, all of which are relatively easy for students to gather information about because of the rich historical/archival, architectural, and visual art materials available online via Iowa State’s University’s website. Students were also encouraged to visit the university archives to view documents and other physical artifacts in addition to spending considerable time with their chosen building or piece of art.

Student projects revealed their tangible discovery that campus places carry within their history and physical design an ongoing link between past, present, and future—one dependent on advancement of knowledge while at the same time preserving what is valuable in the past. Once they began investigating the history of campus through its buildings and its selection and placement of art, students became more aware of how an individual campus place visually and organizationally expresses its approach to stability and change—the sought-after balance that says so much about an educational institution. Student work by this point in the semester was no longer limited to description and personal reaction (although these remained significant parts of the communication in this first-level course); it now added analytical elements addressing why a building or a piece of art is appropriate and meaningful for Iowa State University, how it fits into this place’s history and contributes to the institution’s educational mission, and how it signifies, however subtly and aesthetically, the educational opportunities the campus place offers for students.

For instance, Beardshear Hall, the main administration building, is one of the oldest and most storied buildings on the campus, standing in the place of the first administration building, Old Main, that was destroyed

by fire at the turn of the nineteenth century. It has a beautiful oculus in the dome, marble columns, and a suspended staircase and is clearly “one of Iowa State University’s cultural spaces where architecture, art, and architectural ornament have created a significant and beautiful sense of place” (Art on Campus, “Beardshear Hall”). One of our students, while taking in all of the gold-leaf and stained-glass grandeur, was drawn to art embedded in the floor and walked over every day: “To me the compass [in the floor of Beardshear Hall] feels almost like it is directing students where to go in their lives while providing them the tools to get there.” Of a newer piece of art now at the entrance to one of the oldest buildings on campus, named for the Morrill Act out of which the land-grant institutions were formed, another student wrote, “The work of art was placed in the entrance of Morrill Hall in order to represent a connection between the old and the new, not only of Morrill Hall, but of Iowa State in general.” This art piece is aptly called *Transformations*.

Another student forged a stronger connection to his chosen major as a result of feeling more acclimated both to his main classroom building and the library’s nooks and crannies:

[P]robably the most important [environment] that influenced me in an educational way is the electrical engineering building, Coover Hall. This building is where my major is mainly focused at and is the building that I will be spending most of my time during my Iowa State University career. Just by the technology and how the building’s [interior] architecture is set up influences me to work harder in my studies. Another physical environment is the university’s library, Parks Library. When I am in this building I like to go all the way in the back where the single cubbyholes are and just buckle down and focus on my work with no distractions.

Several times throughout the campus place-based semester, students commented that they had walked by a particular building or piece of art daily but had not really looked at it and probably would not have taken time to find out more about it. They also commented that this act of pausing and of looking below the surface of glossy campus photos to Iowa State University’s history and ideals was a valuable communication project because each student was able to find something that was meaningful or interesting to him/her. The following student expresses the thrill of actually holding some of the university’s history in his hands, leaving no doubt it made an important impression on him:

What was cool in this course was learning the history of the campus and its original buildings. The most interesting thing I did for this course was go to the archives and read about Old Main in books written in it. I like history so I found this really cool, especially when I got to look at the original Accessions book from 1879.

For these students, the curriculum's "pause in movement ma[de] it possible for location to be transformed into place" (Tuan 6). The realization that the university expresses its mission through the "continuing care, thoughtful decision-making, reverence for tradition and ritual, and a harmony of nature, landscape, and architectural design" that Halsband describes was an important one to these students. It elevated campus place—and their time in it—from generic backdrop or "placelessness" (Mauk 370) to the "enabling ground" that Buell says offers stronger learning opportunities (22).

Visual Communication

The earlier description of our CAC program, ISUComm, shows how it permits rhetorically informed movement across the four communication modes. With their third and fourth assignments completed (both primarily written, with at least one image integrated in each), students next produced visual communication by repurposing information from their Profile of a Campus Program or Organization or Understanding Campus Art or Architecture essays. Students' communication exigency thus became to visually represent "what it's like to be here" (Strange 299). Although analysis of visual communication is not uncommon in first-year programs, ISUComm asks students also to produce visual communication as part of the development of their twenty-first century literacies ("The NCTE Definition"). The experience of producing visual communication sharpens students' ability to read visual texts intelligently and with attention to why certain design decisions were made over others. Students repurposed again when they turned their visual communication into a slide show presentation in which they explained to their classmates not only what they had learned about the particular feature of campus place on which they had focused but also their rhetorical choices (context, substance, organization, style, and delivery) in creating their visual and oral communication projects.

Semester Portfolio: Final Reflections

ISUComm Foundation Courses students begin a communication portfolio (print or electronic) in their first foundation communication class, and they are encouraged to add to it over their four years at the university. In assembling these portfolios, students include such artifacts as examples of

their work in each of the four modes as well as how they have advanced in synthesizing the modes. They also both reflect on and project their progress in the present course and explain what they will continue to attend to in upcoming communication work at the university. In some of the reflection questions, we asked if or how the campus place-based work had worked for these one hundred students, and students wrote about how their adjustment and familiarization processes were aided by the place-based curriculum, helping them to feel both more comfortable in and more meaningfully connected to their campus place. Students wrote about how the campus became a part of their experiences as they developed new place attachment, and they expressed surprise that there was so much to learn that was interesting but would never have been discovered by them without a curricular pause in the whirlwind of their transition to the university. Examining the Iowa State University mission statement, understanding the land-grant mission, as well as accessing the information online about campus art, architecture, landscape, and history of their university, were profoundly important to the positive reactions of the students. For example, a first-year student wrote:

I never thought before starting school that my English Composition course would not only expand my communication skills but familiarize me with the campus. Before coming to Iowa State University I knew little about the school and what it stands for. Now I have new insight through this course and have learned about many different buildings, arts, organizations, and even the ISU mission. Because of this course I feel more connected with ISU. I'm able to appreciate the history and the environment.

Another first-year student's reflection on the semester's work was similar: "Because of doing these assignments, I know more about ISU's arts, buildings' history, and organizations' and programs' functions. It helps me know more places in ISU other than my dorm." For these two first-year students, a campus place-based curriculum helped them develop a sense of place on a large campus.

Moreover, the campus place-based curriculum helps not just first-year students; we also saw reflective comments from sophomores indicating the pedagogical and personal efficacy of the curriculum:

Even though this was not my first semester at ISU . . . I still feel more "located" in the ISU place than I did before participating in the class. The place-based focus of our section was just the twist I needed to inspire me to succeed in this class. . . .

Another sophomore student explained,

[. . .] I have to say although it's the second year for me at ISU, I didn't find my "place" here until I did the assignments for this course. . . . After finishing those assignments, I know much better about our campus and feel that I belong to the ISU community now.

Both of these students—neither new to Iowa State University—felt more positively about their campus after we moved place to the center of the curriculum in their foundation communication class. Comments like these remind us of those students, on all our campuses, who do not stay after the first year—who, for one reason or another, do not succeed in marrying their internal geography to the external geography of the campus and negotiate its cognitive, social, and physical terrains. This is the focus of the following student's reflection:

This class has forced me to learn about the campus. You see, I'm somewhat of a loner when it comes to new places. I'm a transfer student from two other colleges, and this class as a "place based" class has definitely made me get out of my comfort zone to get to know my college a little. When I was at the University of [X], I didn't have a class like this. I really only went to (and even then didn't learn about) the buildings that I had classes in. I ended up coming back to my home state and going for a completely different major. Had I taken a class like this at the University of [X], I think I would be in a different place right now. This class has made me feel more a part of the campus (something that the University of [X] never did), and will do a lot for other students. Not only did it force me to get to know the history of some important buildings on campus, but it also made me broaden my view from a narrow "these are where my classes are at" focus. I recommend keeping the place-based class!

As the cross-disciplinary literature suggests, a curriculum that assists students form place attachment can also assist them in recognizing something about their identities and aspirations, as the following student comment reveals:

I always noticed all of the unique paintings and art décor throughout campus, but I never took the time to really examine them and dig deeper. Through studying this program I have learned that all of these different beautiful places are there for a purpose and were put there by specific people that love and appreciate art as much as I do. I hope to visit all of the museums here on campus eventually, and maybe possibly one day have a piece of my own on display.

Finally, to return to Beason's point about the value of instructors also developing their sense of place and to track the extent to which the campus place-based curriculum was workable for new TAs (one of our objectives as WPAs), we invited informal reactions from two of the four MA TA instructors a year after their pilot experience. The two MA TAs were new to ISU and to the Midwest (one from the western United States and the other an international TA from China). Both felt that the campus place-based curriculum was an asset in their own transition to and ability to form place attachment with their new campus place. Working through the assignments with their students had the salutary effect, in many cases, of permitting students from the Midwest to be the authority in their communication work—a turn of events that Bartholomae and others see as important for building confidence in student writers and in writing to an authentic audience. The TA new to the Midwest from a western state observed:

the seemingly huge challenge [of learning about ISU's campus as a reflection of its mission] was a gift to us all. Not only did we, my students and I, learn together, but exploring Iowa State University's campus, traditions, history, and culture together fostered a close class community. Through assignments dealing with the campus mission, values, culture, landscape, programs, and architecture, we moved beyond observing this place called Iowa State University that we inhabited—we began analyzing, understanding, appreciating, and living more fully, more presently, on this campus and its surrounding spaces and places.

The reflections of the international TA from China are especially poignant and are even more promising in what they suggest for the potential of place-conscious curricula like this one to be satisfying and successful for international TAs. Furthermore, her own feelings of conscious discontinuity became something she realized she shared with her first-year students:

The place-based work pulled me closer to our campus, and it also strengthened my sense of Iowa State University identity. The internal overwhelming-ness I experienced at the beginning of last fall is still fresh in my memory. It was the 13th day after I came to this country for the first time that I found myself standing in front of a class. I knew I was in the right place, but somehow I felt a bit strange because the blond hair and blue eyes constantly reminded me of my unfamiliarity of the campus, the city and the country. It was the truth, though silly, that for the first month when I was here, I tried to avoid walking on campus without a companion because otherwise I would feel like I was on someone else's territory. But as I realized

that my students shared exactly the same feelings as mine, based on their assignment #1, I became more comfortable considering myself as one of the Iowa State University people. Perhaps, this was the main reason why I found their papers for the first assignment (about their home) emotionally appealing.

CONCLUSION

In an interesting way, our students face something of the same task as successful campus places: when they walk through Frances Halsband's gates to their future, they, like campuses, are balanced between stability and change—they are themselves a link between past, present, and future. They are embarking on what feels like a whirlwind ride of transition to college, but the time taken to pause and understand their place in a more substantive way, after the campus orientation tours are over, can mean making personal educational sense out of the experience and beginning to see how to project themselves into the trajectory represented by the university. Along the way, and not incidentally, the campus place-based educator is rewarded, as students are rewarded, with the pleasure of discovering the beautiful, the awe-inspiring, the surprising, and the intriguing about their campus—what Thomas Gaines surely meant by discovering that “there is a there there” (x).

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The authors thank Thomas Lindsley, PhD student in Rhetoric and Professional Communication, for invaluable assistance with materials, mentoring, and instruction of ISUComm Foundation Courses campus place-based sections; Breanna Kreimeyer, PhD student in Rhetoric and Professional Communication, for adapting this curriculum for science learning communities; Lindsay Kurtz, Rebecca Lee, Sarah Pike, and Manman Qian—MA students in the Department of English—for instruction of ISUComm Foundation Courses campus place-based sections; Tanya Zanish-Belcher, Head of Special Collections and University Archives at ISU's Parks Library; the Art on Campus program at Iowa State University, directed by Lynette Pohlman, Director and Chief Curator, University Museums; and of course, the students who participated in the eight sections of the course and shared their work with us. We acknowledge Don Payne, former Director of ISUComm, whose interest in the history and beauty of our campus was inspirational. Finally, we are deeply indebted to Michael Mendelson, University Professor of English at ISU and the first Director of ISUComm, for

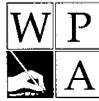
his vision of this unique CAC program and tireless efforts to bring it into existence.

WORKS CITED

- Art on Campus. "Beardshear Hall." Iowa State University. Web. June 2011. <http://www.museums.iastate.edu/AOCFactSheetsPDF/BeardshearHall.pdf>.
- . "Whirlwind." Iowa State University, 2011. Web. June 2011. www.museums.iastate.edu/AOCFactSheetsPDF/2011/Whirlwind.pdf.
- Attinasi, Louis C. "Getting In: Mexican Americans' Perceptions of University Attendance and the Implications for Freshman Year Persistence." *Journal of Higher Education* 60.3 (1989): 247–77. Print.
- Bartholomae, David. "Inventing the University." *When a Writer Can't Write: Studies in Writer's Block and Other Composing-Related Problems*. Ed. Mike Rose. New York: Guilford, 1985. 134–65. Print.
- Beason, Larry. "Fostering Quality through Sense of Place." *WPA: Writing Program Administration* 34.1 (2010): 149–52. Print.
- Boyer, Ernest. *College: The Undergraduate Experience in America*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1997. Print.
- Brooke, Robert, and Jason McIntosh. "Deep Maps: Teaching Rhetorical Engagement through Place-Conscious Education." *The Locations of Composition*. Ed. Christopher J. Keller and Christian R. Weisser. Albany: State U of New York P, 2007. 131–49. Print.
- Buell, Lawrence. *Writing for an Endangered World: Literature, Culture, and Environment in the U.S. and Beyond*. Harvard UP, 2001. Print.
- Burgan, Mary. *What Ever Happened to the Faculty? Drift and Decision in Higher Education*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2006. Print.
- Casey, Edward. *The Fate of Place: A Philosophical History*. Berkeley: U of California P, 1997. Print.
- Chow, Kenny, and Mick Healey. "Place Attachment and Place Identity: First-Year Undergraduates Making the Transition from Home to University." *Journal of Environmental Psychology* 28 (2008): 362–72. Print.
- Corner, James. "The Agency of Mapping: Speculation, Critique and Invention." *Mappings*. Ed. Denis Cosgrove. London: Reaktion Books, 1999. Print.
- Council of Writing Program Administrators. "WPA Outcomes Statement for First-Year Composition." Web. October 2011.
- Dober, Richard P. *Campus Architecture: Building in the Groves of Academe*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1996. Print.
- Edwards, Brian. *University Architecture*. London: Spon, 2000. Print.
- "English 150/250 Course Descriptions (2009-2011)." *ISUComm*. Iowa State University, 1996–2011. Web. December 2011.
- Fugazzotto, Sam J. "Mission Statements, Physical Space, and Strategy in Higher Education." *Innovative Higher Education* 34 (2009): 285–98. Print.
- Gaines, Thomas. *The Campus as a Work of Art*. New York: Praeger, 1981. Print.

- Geller, Joseph T. and Robert M. Corning. "Designing a Unified Campus: When Landscape and Other Site Designers Get Creative, a Campus's Character Can Shine." *University Business* (May 2007). Web. August 2010.
- Griffith, Janice C. "Open Space Preservation: An Imperative for Quality Campus Environments." *The Journal of Higher Education* 65.6 6 (1994): 645–69. Print.
- Gruenewald, David. "Foundations of Place: A Multidisciplinary Framework for Place-Conscious Education." *American Educational Research Journal* 40.3 (2003): 619–54. Web. July 26, 2009.
- . "Accountability and Collaboration: Institutional Barriers and Strategic Pathways for Place-Based Education." *Ethics, Place and Environment* 8.3 (2005): 261–83. Web. July 30, 2009.
- Halsband, Frances. "Campuses in Place." *Places* 17.1 (2005): 1–8. Print.
- Judson, Gillian. "Curriculum Spaces: Situating Educational Research, Theory, and Practice." *The Journal of Educational Thought* 40.3 (2006): 229–45. Print.
- Least Heat-Moon, William. *PrairieErth (A Deep Map): An Epic History of the Tall-grass Prairie Country*. New York: Mariner Books, 1999.
- Mauk, Jonathan. "Location, Location, Location: The 'Real' (E)states of Being, Writing, and Thinking in Composition." *College English* 65.4 (March 2003): 368–88. Print.
- "The NCTE Definition of 21st Century Literacies." NCTE, 2008. Web. June 2010.
- Orr, David. *Ecological Literacy: Education and the Transition to a Postmodern World*. Albany: State U of New York P, 1992. Print.
- Proshansky, Harold M., Abbe K. Fabian, and Robert Kaminoff. "Place-Identity: Physical World Socialization of the Self." *Journal of Environmental Psychology* 3 (1983): 57–83. Print.
- Reeve, John R., and Douglas G. Kassabaum. "A Sense of Place Masterplan: Linking Mission and Place." *APPA Proceedings*. 1997. Web. June 15, 2011.
- Schuyler, David. "Frederick Law Olmsted and the Origins of Modern Campus Design." *Planning for Higher Education* 25 (1996–97): 1–10. Print.
- Smith, Gregory. "Place-Based Education: Learning to Be Where We Are." *Phi Delta Kappan* 83.8 (2002): 584–94. Print.
- Sommers, Nancy, and Laura Saltz. "The Novice as Expert: Writing the Freshman Year." *College Composition and Communication* 56.1 (2004): 124–49. Print.
- Strange, C. Carney. "Dynamics of Campus Environments." *Student Services: A Handbook for the Profession*. Ed. Susan R. Komives, Dudley B. Woodard, and Associates. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2003. 297–316. Print.
- Sturmer, William F. "Environmental Code: Creating a Sense of Place." *Journal of Higher Education* 43.2 (1972): 97–109. Print.
- Temple, Paul. "From Space to Place: University Performance and its Built Environment." *Higher Education Policy* 22.2 (2009): 209–23. Print.
- . "Learning Spaces for the 21st Century: A Review of the Literature." *Higher Education Academy* (July 2007): 1–84. Web. June 2010.
- Thayer, Robert. *Gray World, Green Heart: Technology, Nature, and the Sustainable Landscape*. New York: Wiley, 1996. Print.

- “Theories of Place.” Writing Program Administration List. Arizona State University, Sept. 30, 2011. Web. Oct. 3, 2011.
- “Traditions, Myths, and Stories.” Iowa State Memorial Union. Iowa State University. 2011. Web. June 2011.
- Tuan, Yi-Fu. *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1977. Print.
- Twigger-Ross, Clare L., and David L Uzzell. “Place and Identity Processes.” *Journal of Environmental Psychology* 16 (1996): 205–20. Print.
- Usher, Robin. “Putting Space Back on the Map: Globalisation, Place and Identity.” *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 34.1 (2002): 41–55. Print.
- “Vision, Mission, and Means.” *ISUComm*. Iowa State University, 1999–2011. Web. June 2011.



Cultivating Sensibility in Writing Program Administration

Matthew Heard

ABSTRACT

*Taking up the characteristics of susceptibility that writing scholars have used to describe the unique position of the writing program administrator—characteristics such as vulnerability, suspicion, vigilance, and ethical awareness—this paper explores the potential advantages of reframing WPA work through the concept of sensibility. Sensibility best describes the faculty of focused, attuned, “feeling out” of local contingencies and complexities that WPAs have already learned to adopt in order to negotiate the identity of writing in our different environments. Our common sensibility to conflicts that reshape writing as it filters through the academy gives WPAs a unique opportunity to see writing as an **ethos**—as a living habit that affects all of our thoughts and practices. Cultivating our sensibility to this **ethos** of writing would mean using our positions of vulnerability to reflect back the ways that writing shapes the values and practices that become naturalized in our local situations. Among the most important advantages of this conceptual shift is the opportunity to reposition WPA work at the intellectual center of composition scholarship: by becoming sensible to how writing filters into our lived habits, WPAs can contribute vitally to the project of describing and exploring writing in its greater complexity.*

In this essay, I will explore the possibility that WPAs can help the field of composition studies to develop a writing *sensibility*, a term which I will use here to describe a disposition of ready awareness to how writers negotiate the daily conflicts and tensions that shift and shape the influence of writing on our lives. Sensibility, I argue, is different in kind than other theoretical and methodological habits of action that scholars have adopted. The term itself describes a constant, focused attention to the decisions that we make and the consequences that these decisions generate. By posturing writers to attune to the relevance of their impressions, sensibility offers a provoca-

tive and appealing way to pursue the study of writing in the context of calls for “ethical awareness” (Leverenz 111) and “suspicion” on the part of WPAs (Janangelo 117). In addition to other terms that WPAs have offered to describe our roles—vulnerability (Qualley and Chiseri-Strater 172), disappointment (Micciche 434), wariness (Janangelo 124), and compromise (Schneider and Marback 13)—sensibility helps make evident an important strain in writing scholarship that has tried to come to terms with the vantage point of the WPA role, positioned as it is between “competing ideologies and interests [that] further complicate the WPA’s professional life” (Brown 157). I turn to sensibility as a concept that can help WPAs address the “life” of administration that Brown describes, a “life” that implicates not only the practices of writing instruction we adopt, but also the way that we live out our commitments to writing in our habits of thought and action.

My focus centers on the insights into the nature of writing that WPAs are able to *feel* through our embattled engagements with writing as it moves through us and into our programs. Part of this insight concerns ethical awareness and action: I build on Brown’s and Leverenz’s earlier attention to ethics in writing program administration by suggesting that recognizing our common *sensibility* to the daily contingencies that shape and shift writing helps WPAs to intervene in our local situations with greater awareness of the specific values of writing we put into practice. At the same time, I wish to add another layer of complexity to this argument about ethics by contending that cultivation of this sensibility towards writing positions WPAs to speak out to our colleagues in the field of composition studies about the material and other constraints that shape writing into a lived practice, a compromise between our ideals and the realities of what our students, institutions, and communities need. WPAs have a unique window into the scenes of conflict and contingency where writing becomes a lived habit. By refocusing attention on our common sensibility to this scene of conflict, WPAs can begin to see our very susceptibility to the contingencies of our local circumstances as a strength of our identities. The reality of WPA work is that we are constantly provoked to focus on the complexities of writing as it shapes our lives. I propose that WPAs frame these provocations as opportunities to reflect back the cultural and social values that complicate writing in our local settings. In this way, WPAs can begin to model an intensified awareness of writing as a lived habit, an *ethos* that leaves its imprint on all aspects of our identities.

With this specific argument in mind, I look at what WPAs can do to “unpack” this stance of sensitivity, both by understanding its theoretical and philosophical dimensions more clearly and by taking specific initiatives

to cultivate this sensibility as a positive stance towards action in the field of composition studies.¹ I explore what sensibility means and how adopting a posture of sensibility might alter the ways in which WPAs conceive of our own identities as scholars, teachers, and administrators. This change in conceptualization offers specific, strategic advantages to WPAs, and I describe some of these advantages below before ending with a more pragmatic discussion of how WPAs might begin to cultivate sensibility in practice. In all of these sections, I am interested in pursuing questions of ethical and embodied action that motivate this study: how can WPAs begin to see our susceptibilities and vulnerabilities as opportunities, both in the ways that we take action in our local settings and in the ways we contribute to the larger, ongoing conversation about what writing means and what consequences it has for how we see and act in the world around us?

DEFINING SENSIBILITY

Sensibility, I should acknowledge from the start, is not a term that we see often in composition studies or in WPA scholarship. While we have often used “sensitivity” to describe a heightened awareness to social interactions such as listening and preserving silence (see, for instance, Anson 21, 25), sensibility defines a more nuanced habit of awareness that has been used less frequently in our scholarship. By definition, sensibility is a faculty of attuned perception to our sensual impressions, and is distinguished in this way from other faculties of cognition or willpower (OED).² In contrast to theory, which has been privileged in composition studies and in the academy in general (see Miller 209), sensibility describes a more physical, immediate, and intimate awareness of how we are positioned in our environments. To develop this awareness requires becoming more attuned to “the alterity and singularity of each event” that affects us (Smith 94). Sensibility is a posture—it describes readiness and adjustment rather than knowledge and belief. From this definition, sensibility takes shape as a special quality of an embodied, lived-out attunement to our own susceptibilities and vulnerabilities. Where cognition and willpower act out on the world around us, sensibility heightens our senses to the ways that the world and its others act upon us.

Within the field of composition studies, sensibility is a unique attunement to the costs and consequences of writing that is different from both theoretical savvy and methodological knowledge. Sensibility shows up rarely in composition scholarship, but its revisionary potential as an alternative posture towards writing has been explored recently in Helen Foster’s *Networked Process*. Foster uses sensibility to describe the stance of post-pro-

cess theorists who have become “disaffected” by the field’s commitment to process methods (5). As she argues, this sensibility cannot be “translated” into a publishing focus: it does not manifest itself in “tangible scholarship” because it is a disposition, a lived habit of feeling out writing in new ways (5). Composition studies to date has reacted negatively towards this idea of sensibility, as Foster describes (29-30). But I will argue here that WPAs have strong reasons to reinvest in sensibility—not as an aesthetics of taste or an avoidance of theory, as it has been defined in the past, but as a positive and relevant way to foster an intimate awareness of the conflicts and tensions that reflect a much more complicated *ethos* of writing than our field often recognizes.

Defined as a living awareness of outside pressures and tensions that press upon us, sensibility postures WPAs to take in new insights about the identity of writing in our culture that other scholars are not positioned to see. Sensibility is unique in that it does not bend us towards theories, logics, or other ideas formed prior to experience, but rather inclines us towards more immediate impressions that these logics and far-reaching theories might miss. In this way, the idea of becoming sensible to writing describes an attentiveness to how we *feel* about the situations in which we find ourselves, drawing out the affective and emotional aspects of our decisions that are missed by other habits of our field, habits which Laura Micciche argues have “feminize[d] emotion, constructing it as an ‘irrational’ discourse and so an unworthy one for the practice of theory” (Micciche 438; see also Beason 149-150). Cultivating sensibility thus offers WPAs an important opportunity to contribute to composition studies by offering up a different perspective of the local, contingent ways that writing impresses itself upon our lives: when we reflect back the tensions that push and pull writing into shape in our local situations, WPAs contribute an account of writing that is at once theoretically-invested and at the same time sensitive to the costs and consequences of the values we put into practice.

But describing what sensibility means and how it defines a different posture of attentiveness for WPAs is only half of the argument I want to make for why sensibility is important to WPAs and could become more vital to composition studies in general. In addition to asking what sensibility does for us, we also must ask what we are supposed to be attentive *to*. Addressing this second question, I suggest that our senses can draw us to the traces of a writing *ethos*, a place of identity and familiarity that writing creates. As *ethos*, writing becomes a force of being that not only shapes our communicative abilities, but also more profoundly impacts the way we see the world, interrelate with others, and find personal and social meaning. This concept of *ethos* helps us to perceive the wide-reaching impact of writing on the very

values, beliefs, and expectations that influence our various practices of composing. I draw this idea of writing as an *ethos*, a living habit of being, from philosopher Carlo Sini, who describes writing in *The Ethics of Writing* as an “event” that conditions every aspect of our habits, thoughts, and actions (9). Sini argues that writing is not merely a skill that assists in reasonable discourse, but a more primary force of influence which shifts how we learn to see the questions of our lives as meaningful and relevant. As a technology that supports abstraction, generalization, and reason, writing makes possible an entirely different civilization from that which characterized pre-alphabetic societies, Sini argues: writing shifts our habits of thought and action towards logical methods and away from what Sini calls the impressions of a lived, experiential, sensual wisdom (12, 57). Thus, the practices that we have developed to fill out this *ethos* do not merely reflect better methods of writing instruction, they also reflect a deeper commitment to a kind of living, a kind of wisdom, that influences all aspects of our lives.

If Sini is right about the force of writing as an “event” in our lives, his argument has profound implications for WPA work through the posture of sensibility I have been describing. First, Sini’s theory of writing calls our attention to the fact that to study writing is to explore larger questions of what it means to be human. If we explore the possibility that our larger cultural commitments to this *ethos* of writing are embedded in every aspect of our habits of communicating and our patterns of thinking, then becoming sensible to these habits opens us up to more fundamental questions about how we have learned to see the world through writing. Second, the only way to “see” this *ethos* of writing that Sini describes is to trace its boundaries in our local, contingent practices. Sini suggests that to act ethically in the face of writing, one must “dare think even against oneself, and finally against *thought*, exposing oneself to the circle thereby entailed” (32). We can understand what Sini means by thinking “against ourselves” if we recognize that our encounters with contingencies often pull us out of our habitual patterns of thought and action: indeed, such disruptions to our writing habits may be the only way to open our eyes to the shaping power of this larger *ethos* on our very practices of living. To begin sensing how we are living out certain ethical and epistemological commitments through our habits of writing, we must become highly attentive to the tensions and conflicts that constrain the ways we put writing to work.

Together, the concepts of sensibility and of the *ethos* of writing set apart a unique identity for the study of writing that takes its shape through constant, embodied attunement to the habits and values we are inclined to adopt rather than through a specific theoretical or methodological orientation. Sini describes this action as “drifting” in the current of our own

practices: as we drift, we learn to be more aware of where these currents pull us, of what obstacles alter our course, and of the limits of our own abilities to shift and alter our position in the stream (146). Conceived in more practical terms, sensibility postures WPAs to feel the push and pull of the different constituencies that affect us, to watch the consequences generated by our decisions, to become impressionable to our own limitations, and to maintain a constant, careful, and self-aware commitment to acting in the most ethical way possible at each moment. Sensibility, then, takes on a doubly important role: in addition to drawing our attention to habits and conventions we might otherwise ignore, sensibility also expands the significance of these habits as traces of the identity writing carves out for us in our unique spaces. This posture takes on characteristics of “suspiciousness” towards the boundaries of our abilities, as Janangelo recommends (121); it also takes up the adaptive, phronetic attentiveness to our ethical horizons described by Leverenz (113). By witnessing the actual conditions that affect writing in our local settings, we provide a vital and missing account of the “structural,” institutional, and cultural constraints that writing-as-*ethos* generates (Schneider and Marback 16). Such a change in stance may not immediately alter the material and political constraints that affect WPA work, but it can, I believe, at least position WPAs to attune more consciously to the ways that our material, political, and other constraints affect the ways that the *ethos* of writing is put into practice through us and around us.

CONCEPTUAL DIFFERENCES

To this point, I have attempted simply to define what sensibility means and to argue that embracing this posture might help WPAs gain ground in repositioning our work within composition scholarship. Here, let me elaborate on some of these advantages that cultivating a sensibility might offer to WPAs and to the field of composition studies in general. I believe that these advantages might be framed within two general categories: the first concerns sensibility towards our responsibilities as administrators, and the second concerns the ways that sensibility changes our disposition towards the larger study of writing that defines our field.

Administrative Advantages

Addressing the administrative work of WPAs first, I believe that engaging with the idea of writing-as-*ethos* can turn some of the qualities of WPA work that we have seen as liabilities into positive attributes of a posture of sensibility. As I have acknowledged above, WPAs already describe our

work in terms such as vulnerability, sensitivity, awareness, and suspicion. Sensibility provides a way to collect these qualities of our embodied positionality under a single name and at the same time invest each quality with rich theoretical and practical implications. Defined through sensibility, our disappointments, vulnerabilities, and intuitions all posture us to *witness* the personal and interpersonal costs of writing as it shapes academic values.³ Our attunement to conflict in this way draws our attention to the *ethos* of writing we are trying to change and to uncomfortable compromises which might otherwise remain unseen by those who stand safely outside of the daily negotiations that WPAs must navigate. Naming this susceptibility as a position of strength rather than weakness has positive repercussions for the kinds of action we take as WPAs and as scholars of writing. This change gives a common direction to our collective sense of contingency: it unites WPAs in the common mission of reflecting our own local and limited encounters with traces of a larger *ethos* that we must begin to describe if we are to push our habits of understanding writing beyond their current limits. Cultivating sensibility also directs our actions more consciously towards the local ethics of writing that affect the practices we choose to put into place. Reframed as an opportunity to witness the ways that writing constrains and limits our actions, this position of sensibility gives us new reasons to engage with tense situations that we might otherwise avoid. Our actions as WPAs take on new relevance and significance when we re-envision the constant adjustments we have to make not as weaknesses but as ways to keep us attuned to the consequences of our decisions.

To illustrate how this idea of sensibility might affect our administrative habits as WPAs, let me turn to an example from my own experiences with the administrative responsibility of TA education that I believe foregrounds one space where sensibility can help change our habits for the better. In the writing program that I began to administer several years ago, TAs had been accustomed to seeing their roles as defending a version of academic writing that they were not free to challenge or explore. When I took over administration of the program, I wanted instructors to see themselves as participants in the ongoing conversation about what “gets counted” as writing (Nicotra W260). I began in my pedagogy course to challenge TAs with open-ended debates about writing, including conversations about whether or not writing can be taught (Kent; Kastman-Breuch) and about how writing positions us to respond to one another as “others” (Davis; Butler). TAs complained immediately that the course was not addressing their real needs for pedagogical direction and training. Yet, I did not hear these complaints initially because I was so focused on a vision of TAs emerging, phoenix-like, from the ashes of their old habits of thinking and rising to success as

critically-aware teachers and scholars of writing. While I was, in principle, sensitive to the kinds of insights that I knew the TAs needed to develop in order to invest in writing instruction as an intellectual activity, I was not, in practice, *sensible* to the feelings of disappointment and anxiety that pushed back against the vision of writing I had idealized.

While I have tried in successive semesters to live out my commitment to the intellectual responsibilities of writing instruction with increased sensitivity to the more immediate needs of TAs in our program, my narrative is not one of clear success. I still struggle to maintain a balance between provoking TAs to expand their understanding of writing and listening to the needs and expectations that TAs bring to the table as they share their own accounts of the *ethos* of writing that affects them. One of the hard realities that faces me as I work to cultivate this sensibility I have described is how difficult it is to act in ways that change the *ethos* of writing that undergirds the needs and values for writing in my local setting. Schneider and Marback describe a pattern in which WPAs improvise new solutions for action in their local situations only to find that “the order they reestablish is the old order. They do nothing to produce structural change”(17). I find this pattern very hard to shake in my experiences with TA education, where I work to make sure that instructors know how to complicate and question writing only to watch as they return everyday to an “order” of composition instruction that offers few opportunities to diverge from expected goals and outcomes. This *ethos* which influences the horizon of action in our writing programs also strongly influences the decisions that instructors can make, and simply out-theorizing this position is not an option for WPAs or instructors going forward. I acknowledge this challenge not because I see little hope of acting against it, but because I believe the difficulty of producing change points to our need to feel out different possibilities for action. Sini suggests that to act ethically is to develop a *readiness* for action (150), which is different in kind than other logics that would lead us to press our visions of change into existence no matter the situation or circumstance. Since sensibility offers one way to attune ourselves to the local conditions in which small changes might be possible, cultivating sensibility within my own writing program gives me hope that instructors will be able to sense their own limitations and be more ready to take advantage of opportunities that present themselves, limited and local as these opportunities might be.

Disciplinary Advantages

I have been describing how cultivating a sensibility towards writing might provide advantages in the administrative side of WPA work, but I want to

move on here to describe how sensibility might also help us look beyond our attempts to engage writing in practice. Our focus on writing as an *ethos* which filters into every aspect of our identities opens up the study of writing to basic, foundational questions about what we believe is true, good, right, and meaningful. If WPAs can begin to envision the tensions that always surround us as provocations to feel the pressures of how our society and culture values writing, then we can find an outwardly-focused dimension to this idea of sensibility in addition to the inward-focus I have described above. Our impressions of writing in this way become not only provocations to change our practices, but also sites where writing takes on significance as a *habit of living*. By attuning us to the boundaries of our practices—the ways in which our ideals and desires for writing meet with resistance and conflict—developing a sensibility can become one way for WPAs to account for the power and force of larger societal needs for writing. This kind of embodied, ethically-aware action may be the only way to push back against the habits of writing in our culture that have settled in as comfortable and natural ways to go about answering why we write. Outside of taking on this posture of sensibility, we risk tuning out the kinds of small, embodied changes that may ultimately work to shift and alter how we see the world through writing.

This last argument is important to WPAs because it refigures our role as part of the very center of what it means to study writing: acting from the position of scholars invested in our own limitations, WPAs can use our experiences to reflect back the compromises that are always required as we attempt to put our idealized versions of “radical” change in composition studies into practice. Again, let me provide an example that illustrates the form that this outward reflection might take, this time drawn from Donna Qualley’s and Elizabeth Chiseri-Strater’s essay on WPA vulnerabilities. Chiseri-Strater writes about her experience with a TA who (mis) handled two instances of plagiarism in her class by failing the offending students, despite the different contingencies in their cases which might have prompted a more careful consideration of each student’s individual choices. This result, writes Chiseri-Strater, makes her feel uncertain about her responsibilities as a WPA and prompts her to reconsider whether or not she acted in the best way by allowing the TA to make her own decisions (172-73). She later revisits this scene with Qualley as an opportunity to understand the material conditions that affect the “knowledge and rhetorical agency” dispersed unequally between instructors, students, and WPAs (183). Qualifying the experience of vulnerability that “keeps us positioned as learners continually having to renegotiate our positions” (172), Chiseri-Strater and Qualley ultimately go on to argue that WPAs must be atten-

tive to the experience and knowledge that affect how different members of the writing community learn to use their vulnerability productively (184).

One way that sensibility might augment this revision of vulnerability is by adding another layer of complexity to how we envision the costs of aligning our writing habits with a larger societal need for productivity. Chiseri-Strater and Qualley rightly focus on the “response-ability” that TA and WPA hold differently in this setting (179), but sensibility also helps us to see constraints on response-ability, which reflect back larger commitments that our field has made to keep response-ability, vulnerability, and other self-reflective actions securely within a framework of producing better writing instruction. In addition to the ethical strain felt by Chiseri-Strater as she ponders her own vulnerability, a number of other concerns might emerge as traces of the *ethos* of writing that shows its influence through this situation. For one, we might think about the lingering sense of guilt that Chiseri-Strater makes visible: how does our sense that we are not doing enough to develop knowledge and agency in our instructors reflect a larger expectation that our goal is ultimately to help instructors and students see writing as a source of power, authority, and increased productivity? This conflict also draws out larger questions of the identity we are calling on student instructors to assume: does response-ability really matter if it is only a means of making TAs and the students they teach more able producers of writing? Are we really valuing the subjectivity of instructors when we channel their actions into better methods of achieving goals that they themselves have not helped to create? Each of these conjectures generates its own problems, and I do not mean for either suggestion to be the final word on the issues of vulnerability and response-ability that Qualley and Chiseri-Strater introduce. At the same time, I believe that feeling out the larger implications of our actions helps us to ask the ethical question that Leverenz poses—“what makes this job so tough?” (113). Through this act of attending to the tensions that make the WPA position *so tough*, we do not merely learn to do our jobs better. More importantly, we confront the traces of the *ethos* we occupy as WPAs.

Our field has long been sensitive to the problems of trying to produce change from the inside of systems that constrain our practices, and framing WPA work through sensibility offers a valuable way to intervene in these tensions between theory and practice by reminding us that we cannot know what writing means as an *ethos* of human action unless we are intimately engaged with its specific, local effects. This shift in posture gives us new opportunities to take a stronger role in composition studies, a field that has sometimes seen WPA work as “invisible” (Micciche 434) or as limited only to the domains of writing instruction and practice. Rallying around the

idea that we can become more sensible to the *ethos* of writing we encounter daily, WPAs can take a more active and confident role in speaking out about how writing shapes the very ways that we are accustomed to think and act. With the recognition that our positions are also places of embodied action, we also find ourselves with a greater responsibility to balance on the razor's edge between theory and practice. When we identify with a posture of sensibility, we assume the delicate and burdensome task of studying writing while simultaneously studying how we are inclined to study and practice writing. Acting in this way is risky, since it means engaging in conflict and compromise that may at times disappoint one or all of the different interests we represent. Yet, it is a burden worth the risks. As we develop this ability to reflect the tensions that stretch our values of writing in real, consequential ways, we work towards a more attuned articulation of the influence of writing as it travels through our lives.

CULTIVATING SENSIBILITY

In this final section, I want to contribute several ideas that may begin to help WPAs think about sensibility as a posture that we can and should begin to cultivate in ways that impact our capacities to act in our local situations. I make this statement with the reminder that sensibility is more than a theory to be adopted: it is a decision about what kinds of identity we want to assume. Because assuming a different identity is not a matter of gaining the right knowledge or aligning ourselves with the right values, what I can offer here in the way of encouraging the development of sensibility is ultimately no more than a sketch of initiatives that will inevitably produce different consequences in each of our settings. As a habit of living, sensibility cannot be engaged by following a set of rules or principles. These caveats aside, however, I do believe that there are several spheres of action in which our interventions are worth pursuing, and I will offer several suggestions here as starting places for engaging the kinds of movements and gestures that might help us take up the sensible posture of what Sini calls “thinking against oneself” (32).

Through Recognition and Naming

In their essay on WPA identity, Schneider and Marback write that our work as WPAs always requires more from us than “doing what the research says” and often “results in something other than the research describes” (9). As I have shown above, we have attempted to define this “something other” of intellectual work in WPA scholarship through terms such as susceptibility, vulnerability, and ethical awareness. But while these terms have remained

fragmented in our scholarship, I propose that we harness them together under the common name of sensibility and, in this way, focus our common attention on how each of these unique qualities contributes differently to the posture we must assume in order to feel the impressions of writing in our local settings. By identifying WPA work with sensibility, we provide what Kenneth Burke calls “perspective by incongruity” (133): sensibility becomes a marker that stands out from other WPA identities in its “incongruity,” and thus serves as a point of convergence and divergence as we compare our individual practices to the definition of sensibility we establish (and, over time, refine). Naming sensibility in this way provides the kind of “distance” from our habits that, Janangelo suggests, can promote new ways of seeing (123-24). Specifically, WPAs who rename our role through sensibility can begin to look at practices we encounter daily—practices such as TA education, curriculum development, and assessment—as sites where our unique attentiveness to the *ethos* of writing is most needed.

Collective recognition of this identity also cultivates the posture of awareness I have described above by presenting an alternative to the label of “middle management” that has been applied problematically to writing program administration. Marc Bousquet, in “Composition as Management Science,” critiques the WPA role for its complicity with economic logics of the university (494). Other writers, such as Peter Elbow, have also worried over the “business model” approach to administration, noting that WPAs are pressured to treat TAs and other instructors as resources to be managed (160). I do not want to lessen the bite of these critiques, for I believe that Bousquet’s call to look carefully at the background of “organized academic labor” that supports our work contains hard truths that WPAs need to face and engage (494). At the same time, identifying our work with sensibility reminds us that we are always in the center of competing tensions that do not have to be resolved in favor of the economic logics that Bousquet and other scholars describe. If we sometimes must compromise in ways that make writing more efficient and productive, we also face endless opportunities to push the shape of writing in different directions. Our interventions can help make this scene of compromise and conflict more visible as part of the conditions that affect how writing ultimately filters through our environments. Changing this perspective is one way to recognize one another as scholars who are uniquely prepared to feel the ways that writing is pressed and pulled into shape in our local settings. When we see one another as co-conspirators in the ongoing pursuit of epistemological and ontological questions of writing, we create tension against the still-present narrative in composition studies that positions the WPA as a worker who merely moves resources around.

Through Self-advocacy

Of course, even as WPAs actively resist the label of “management” that has been applied to us, we may encounter resistance, especially from those who are uncomfortable with WPA work leaving the safe spaces of writing instruction. For these reasons, I argue that we must begin opening up the complexity of our actions to those with whom we are interacting (and to whom we are responsible). We need to expose the deliberative nature of our work as a hotbed for intellectual activity, highlighting the profound theoretical and practical significance of the decisions we make. Pursuing this objective involves retraining audiences in the academy that have come to rely on the productivity of WPA work but have not acknowledged the ethical, moral, and other complexities that WPAs must navigate in order to make even the smallest adjustments to how writing is practiced in our local settings.

As a number of other scholars have already addressed the need to make WPA work more visible to the academy, let me constrain my comments here to how I believe our interactions with other teachers, colleagues, and administrators can help WPAs cultivate sensibility in ways that can augment this goal of visibility.⁴ Beginning with teachers and students first, I will suggest that the cultivation of sensibility should be shared among all students and instructors in our writing programs. Instructors and students need to be able to see their study of writing as part of something bigger—part of how they learn to live and not simply how they learn to communicate more effectively. This initiative may involve curricular changes: we should consider, for instance, providing more space for students and teachers to describe the conflicts and contingencies that pull them away from their comfortable and familiar habits of writing. Such a curricular change might mean helping writers find room to feel out pressures on their writing that we as administrators cannot see. I also think that cultivating sensibility must change our posture towards instructor training and orientation. In my own experiences with TA education, I have started to begin each program-sponsored event by providing a broad overview of the conflicts that surround assessment, textbook selection, and other issues that I address in these sessions. Foregrounding my own decision-making as a WPA provides some space for instructors to see the tensions and conflicts that constrain our actions, and this is one small way that I have attempted to make myself and the instructors in my program more sensible to the *ethos* of writing in our local setting. I imagine that other WPAs can offer much deeper accounts of practices that they use to cultivate sensibility in their local spaces. The most important commitment we can make going

forward is to share the limits of what we are able to see with one other and with our communities, publicizing our perspectives in ways that can help us and those around us to better confront the complexities of writing in our environments.

Through Public Intervention

This last point about public action leads me to a final way that WPAs can begin to cultivate our sensibility to writing, which is through avenues of publication. I recognize the irony of admonishing WPAs to publish our experiences more widely when lack of publishing opportunities has been a frequent complaint in our scholarship. But I believe that acknowledging our sensibility to conflicts and tensions as a source of intimate engagement with the complexities of writing gives us new ways to frame the insights of our work within the field of composition studies. As we share our struggles to take limited, embodied action in our local situations, we are contributing to the larger picture of writing as an *ethos* that affects our habits of thinking as a culture and society. Whatever our different workloads and institutional settings, each of us in the WPA community has a vital role to play in describing how this *ethos* of writing takes shape as it moves through our positions and into our communities of instructors and students. The wider field of composition studies needs our perspectives, and footholds for this intellectual work already exist. They have been chiseled out in calls for a “questioning attitude” (Worsham 103); for listening to “those who offer new perspectives on problems in our teaching and research” (Lindemann 528); and for revising “what gets counted as ‘writing’” (Nicotra W260). These opportunities will not land at our feet: we face hard work, risky work, in repositioning our perspectives as contributions to a different, embodied way of accounting for the complexity of writing. We will have to be sharply attuned to our own limits as we move forward, learning how to frame our experiences in ways that address the beliefs and values of our colleagues who do not share our positions or responsibilities. But we do not face this work alone: we can help one another recognize our positions as sources of insight and perception, and we can carve out new footholds for others to contribute alternative perspectives. By constructing a network of sensibility that begins with WPAs and spreads outward into our communities, we can slowly engage composition studies in new habits of writing that may, over time, reshape the *ethos* of writing in our culture.

CONCLUSION

At the end of his article on suspicion, Joe Janangelo urges WPAs to question our roles by asking, “What do we feel secure about and what might we rethink?” (135). The stories we tell, he goes on to say, should “seek to be superseded” (136); that is, WPA work needs to be not just vigilant but ever-vigilant; not just vulnerable but always-vulnerable. I have intended here to suggest why adopting a posture of sensibility and cultivating this posture might help WPAs begin to think of our work in ways that turn these ever-and-always positions of risk into something other than liabilities. I have argued that sensibility offers WPAs the opportunity to pursue vital connections between the work we do in our local settings and the work we do to advance the study of writing in our field and in our communities. Of course, sensibility promises nothing. While this faculty positions us to feel out the ways that writing affects our lives, it does not lend itself to conclusions that sweep across our field like the winds of change we once hoped for. Sensibility is much more limited in its focus, requiring us to drift in the current of our own habits with a conscious sense of our own limitations. But these risks should not stop us from exploring sensibility together as a position from which our actions as WPAs can take on new significance. While we cannot craft universal meaning out of our isolated experiences alone, we can, collectively, contribute the kinds of “evolving” and “splintering” stories of our own encounters with the *ethos* of writing that, as Janangelo says, can help us “keep developing our capacities for intellectual suppleness” (134, 137). My hope is that such suppleness, refined through a posture of sensibility, will not merely help WPAs become better at administering writing, but will also position us to feel out better ways of making the spaces we inhabit more livable for ourselves and others.⁵

NOTES

1. I borrow the term “unpack” from Janangelo and intend to inflect the term here with Janangelo’s sense of the kinds of actions WPAs need to take in order to “move beyond declaration and revelation to unpack the investments and processes” of our work and scholarship (133).

2. The term “sensibility” is used in this way, though not specifically defined, in Moskovitz and Petit (89, 90). I intend to separate sensibility as a unique “faculty” from its connotation with fashion, taste, and *belles lettres* as described, for instance, by Thomas Miller in *The Evolution of College English* (100).

3. The action of “witnessing” here should resonate with every quality that Kelly Oliver attributes to the deliberate act of *bearing witness*, including attending

to “blind spots that close off the possibility of response-ability and openness to otherness and difference” (19, 20).

4. On the topic of WPA visibility, see Keith Rhodes’ recent argument for WPA “branding” (58).

5. My sincere thanks to the editors and readers at *WPA: Writing Program Administration* for important contributions to the idea of sensibility described in this essay. Thanks also to Kyle Jensen, who introduced me to Carlo Sini’s work with the *ethos* of writing.

WORKS CITED

- Anson, Chris. “The Intelligent Design of Writing Programs: Reliance on Belief or a Future of Evidence.” *WPA: Writing Program Administration* 32.1 (2008): 11-36. Print.
- Beason, Larry. “Fostering Quality through Sense of Place.” *WPA: Writing Program Administration* 34.1 (2010): 149-52. Print.
- Bousquet, Marc. “Composition as Management Science: Toward a University Without a WPA.” *Journal of Advanced Composition* 22.3 (2002): 493-526. Print.
- Breuch, Lee-Ann M. Kastman. “Post-Process ‘Pedagogy’: A Philosophical Exercise.” *Journal of Advanced Composition* 22.1 (2002): 119-50. Print.
- Brown, Stuart C. “Applying Ethics: A Decision-Making Heuristic for Writing Program Administrators.” *The Writing Program Administrator’s Resource: A Guide to Reflective Institutional Practice*. Ed. Stuart Brown and Theresa Enos. Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2002. 155-64. Print.
- Burke, Kenneth. *Permanence and Change: An Anatomy of Purpose*. New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1965. Print.
- Butler, Judith. *Giving an Account of Oneself*. New York: Fordham UP, 2005. Print.
- Davis, Diane. “Finitude’s Clamor; Or, Notes toward a Communitarian Literacy.” *College Composition and Communication* 53.1 (2001): 119-45. Print.
- Elbow, Peter. “What Is Real College Writing? Let the Disagreement Never End.” *WPA: Writing Program Administration* 34.2 (2011): 153-61. Print.
- Foster, Helen. *Networked Process: Dissolving Boundaries of Process and Post-Process*. West Lafayette: Parlor Press, 2008. Print.
- Janangelo, Joseph. “Notes on Comp: When “WPA” Work Hints at Suspicion.” *WPA: Writing Program Administration* 34.1 (2010): 117-40. Print.
- Kent, Thomas. “Principled Pedagogy: A Reply to Lee-Ann M. Kastman Breuch.” *Journal of Advanced Composition* 22.2 (2002): 428-33. Print.
- Leverenz, Carrie. “Theorizing Ethical Issues in Writing Program Administration.” *The Writing Program Administrator as Theorist: Making Knowledge Work*. Ed. Shirley Rose and Irwin Weiser. Portsmouth: Boynton/Cook, 2002. 103-15. Print.
- Lindemann, Erika. “How Well Are We Listening? Lessons from the Founding of NCTE and CCCC.” *College Composition and Communication* 62.3 (2011): 504-39. Print.

- Micciche, Laura. "More Than a Feeling: Disappointment and WPA Work." *College English* 64.4 (2002): 432-58. Print.
- Miller, Thomas. *The Evolution of College English: Literacy Studies from the Puritans to the Postmoderns*. Pittsburgh: Pittsburgh UP, 2010. Print.
- Moskovitz, Cary, and Michael Petit. "Insiders and Outsiders: Redrawing the Boundaries of the Writing Program." *WPA: Writing Program Administration* 31.1/2 (2007): 86-103. Print.
- Nicotra, Jodie. "'Folksonomy' and the Restructuring of Writing Space." *College Composition and Communication* 61.1 (2009): W259-W276. Print.
- Oliver, Kelly. *Witnessing: Beyond Recognition*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2001. Print.
- Qualley, Donna and Elizabeth Chiseri-Strater. "Split at the Root: The Vulnerable Writing Program Administrator." *WPA: Writing Program Administration* 31.1/2 (2007): 171-84. Print.
- Rhodes, Keith. "You Are What You Sell: Branding the Way to Composition's Better Future." *WPA: Writing Program Administration* 33.3 (2010): 58-77. Print.
- Schneider, Barbara and Richard Marback. "Judging WPAs by What They Say They Do: An Argument for Revising 'Evaluating the Intellectual Work of Writing Administration'." *WPA: Writing Program Administration* 27.3 (2004): 7-22. Print.
- Sini, Carlo. *The Ethics of Writing*. Trans. Sylvia Benso. Albany: SUNY P, 2009. Print.
- Smith, Daniel. "Intensifying Phronesis: Heidegger, Aristotle, and Rhetorical Culture." *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 36.1 (2003): 77-102. Print.
- Worsham, Lynn. "Coming to Terms: Theory, Writing, Politics." *Rhetoric and Composition as Intellectual Work*. Ed. Gary Olson. Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 2002. 101-14. Print.



Writing Placement That Supports Teaching and Learning

Emily Isaacs and Catherine Keohane

ABSTRACT

This article describes the development of a curriculum-based, expert-reader placement system called Placement and Teaching Together (PTT). The essay presents data and analysis of the PTT system as implemented and evaluated at one university for three years. In contrast to other placement methods such as standardized tests or Directed Self-Placement (DSP), PTT combines placement, teaching, and direct assessment of student writing by integrating the placement instrument into regular semester coursework and requiring students to produce writing similar to that expected in first-year writing classes. Including discussion of PTT's shortcomings and strengths (from teacher, student, and administrator perspectives), the study is rooted in analysis of several surveys, grade data, and other administrative documents, a review of the literature on writing placement with particular comparison to DSP, and self-reflection by the primary administrators of this approach to writing assessment.

Placing students in appropriate first-year writing classes has long been an issue for writing programs and their students, and recent years have seen at least three major trends which have created new challenges and possibilities for first-year writing placement.¹ From outside the field we see the rising relevance of the national testing establishment which offers tests that are designed for placement, as well as admissions tests which are frequently being advocated for use as placement vehicles by budget-strapped institutions (Huot, O'Neill and Moore; Isaacs and Molloy; O'Neill, Moore and Huot; Peckham, "Online Challenge"). These tests provide increased efficiency at the cost of decreased construct representation – that is, the test instruments do not closely approximate the writing that students are asked to do in their college writing classes. From within the field we see the appealing Directed Self-Placement (DSP) movement which is exactly what

the SATs and the like are not: deliberately subjective, putting each student into the driver's seat.

With significantly less attention afforded to it, we observe a third movement that strives to return the acts of students writing and faculty reading to the enterprise of placement. Best represented by William Smith, Brian Huot, Irvin Peckham, Theresa Freda Nicolay, Richard Haswell and Susan Wyche-Smith, among others, this movement offers a curriculum-based, expert-reader approach to placement. We call our version of such an approach Placement and Teaching Together (PTT) to emphasize its connection to curriculum, its embedding of assessment within teaching, and its aligning of assessment with curriculum. Unlike DSP, this approach relies on assessment by teachers, yet it significantly improves upon traditional practices of teacher placement that use an impromptu essay and objective test in two essential ways. First, PTT asks expert readers to make judgments based on their context knowledge—their knowledge of the writing courses offered at a given university. Second, PTT requires students to do work similar to that expected in first-year writing classes: writing produced and revised outside of a testing situation, under conditions that reflect the environments in which complex writing acts emerge, and in response to readings. In short, by combining reading, writing, discussion, and other activities that are guided and reviewed by teachers, our version of PTT does not merely introduce or mimic the work expected of students in first-year writing courses, it is that work.

PTT, like DSP, is a local, affordable measure that writing faculty can turn to in response to the weaknesses of the assessments offered by the testing establishment, as dominated by the two non-profit corporations, the College Board (CB) and ACT. The College Board and ACT each offer two different kinds of assessments that are used for placement: Accuplacer (CB) and Compass (ACT) are tests that are designed for placement; the SAT in Critical Reading and Writing (CB) and the ACT test (ACT) are admissions tests that these companies have relatively recently studied and re-labeled for use in placement (ACT; College Board). While these admissions and placement tests do offer data collection and organization, and therefore the potential for accumulative analysis and national and other comparisons,² they provide little value for placement that is based on the local context and curriculum.

Nevertheless, these tests are well positioned to reach practical and fiscally-minded college administrators who are educated by a psychometrician mindset to value reliability – producing “perfectly consistent scores” (Huot and Neal 429) – almost as much as efficiency, and who may pressure writing program administrators to adopt them for placement. Indeed, adoption

of the SATs and similar assessments is popular; fully 75% of the schools Emily Isaacs and Melinda Knight examine in their 2010 study of a diverse range of 4-year colleges and universities use the SAT or ACT test, or a combination of these, to determine placement in what might be called “off-label” use, that is, in ways for which the tests were never designed. These findings suggest that now even more schools are relying on teacherless, objective tests than in 1994 when Brian Huot found that half of 1100 colleges and universities surveyed were using procedures that did not include teachers reading student writing (“Survey”).

Placement by objective national tests and other measures like DSP has risen in part in response to fiscal, practical, and theoretical problems with what had been the standard for many years: the local, one-shot summer placement essay administered and scored by writing faculty. Daniel Royer and Roger Gilles in fact developed a DSP system to replace the summer placement program they ran at Grand Valley State, and of which they had grown weary and dissatisfied. Certainly, DSP is an appealing antidote to domination by educational “measurement experts” (White, “Language” 189) from outside the field of Writing Studies. DSP is not a panacea, however; not only is it impossible to implement at many institutions for practical, administrative, and theoretical reasons (Isaacs and Molloy; Peckham, “Online Challenge”), but it also has some drawbacks (as noted by Gere, Aull, Green, and Porter; Harrington; Nicolay; Neal and Huot; O’Neill, Moore and Huot; Bedore and Rossen-Knill; Lewiecki-Wilson, and Tassoni). Of particular concern to us, echoing Michael Neal and Brian Huot (250-1), is that while DSP brings students into the picture, in many implementations it also involves the practical erasure of teachers whose experience with what students do in writing classes seems of great value. In contrast, following William Smith’s Expert Reader approach at the University of Pittsburgh, PTT privileges teacher knowledge and “local discourse community calibration” (182).

In this essay we offer an approach for placement that is in the PTT model, and we share our research assessing both its effectiveness and its impact on teachers and students. Briefly, in our placement program, students in College Writing I: Intellectual Prose (CW I) and our basic writing course, Introduction to Writing (BW), have a common first assignment, developed by a faculty committee, which is sent to them over the summer (see appendix for an example). Students read several articles on an issue and draft an initial essay before classes start; they then discuss the issue with their teacher and classmates at the first meeting before producing a second draft that is submitted to instructors for feedback *and* for placement review. Then, in their regular process of teaching writing through providing com-

mentary on drafts, instructors also identify students they believe may benefit from being placed in the other course and submit these students' essays for evaluation. The placement process continues with two and, as necessary, three readings of these essays by expert readers, a placement decision, and, when students desire, an appeal process which allows for submission of additional writing and consultation with Writing Program administrators.

Our PTT approach does triple duty. On a practical level, we evaluate and place all students with few additional costs because the vast majority of assessments are completed as part of teachers' regular work of responding to student writing. More importantly, unlike traditional one-shot diagnostics, PTT enables writing instruction consistent with the field's valuing of revision and with this particular writing program's emphasis on revision. Finally, it functions as faculty development. A common writing assignment developed and tested by veteran faculty familiar with BW and CW I provides the opportunity for negotiation of core program values. Moreover, in writing programs such as ours that are large and experience significant staff turnover, this shared writing assignment and assessment experience allows transmission of these values to new teachers. In sum, by introducing students to the work of our writing courses, our placement procedure does not just place students, but it allows us to "value what we know" (Broad) and to broadcast our philosophy to our students, to new teachers in the program, and to our university community.

As we detail later, our research finds that PTT has significant merit for students and teachers, although there are also drawbacks. Broadly, teachers value this experience as authentic and valid, resulting in improved placement, though they are also concerned about disruptions to their usual procedures and to the partial loss of autonomy that this approach entails. However, student success in this program is strong, as demonstrated by grade data and several student surveys. A significant majority of students believe they were placed correctly through our approach, and even students who were provisionally placed in the standard course and then moved "down" to basic writing were favorable overall in their response. That student response is so favorable – particularly given that many of our students have been schooled by New Jersey state assessments and a culture that tends to trust the objectivity of large testing establishments like the College Board—is especially heartening.

PLACEMENT: THE NEGLECTED ASSESSMENT

Before detailing our procedure and our assessment of it, it is useful to consider the field's struggles to find appropriate and valid ways to place

students as well as our Writing Program's path to PTT. In comparison to classroom assessment (grading), program assessment, and exit assessment, placement has been of limited scholarly interest and discussion (Harrington; Huot, O'Neill, and Moore; Smith) until the recent scholarly zeal for DSP which itself has received little critical examination (Gere et al. 155). Nonetheless, as a practical matter, placement is ever present for writing program administrators and students. In 1955, William Baker surveyed the placement practices at the country's Big Ten universities and found that most used an impromptu essay and an objective writing test administered during orientation that evaluated "spelling, punctuation, capitalization, sentence structure, and usage" (351); he notes that "[a]lthough the survey did not indicate which method of placement (objective test or theme) was given most weight, it seems reasonable to assume that the objective test is used chiefly because the procedure for grading themes is very time-consuming and costly" (352).

The first responses to the obvious shortcomings of objective measurement via multiple-choice tests focused on two improvements: local placement and real writing. Thus, from the 70s into the 90s, colleges and universities nationwide developed local writing placement tests for orientation week. Students crowded into lecture halls with bluebooks, ready to write short impromptu essays that were evaluated by writing instructors who were normed by anchor papers and rubrics (Huot, O'Neill and Moore; Peckham, "Turning Placement"; White, "Opening"). Using double-blind readings and frequent recalibrations to ensure high inter-rater reliability, readers produced highly reliable scores in fairly short order, allowing students to register for appropriate classes before the semester began. Reflecting on the development of this program in California, Edward White reminds us of the importance of establishing local experts in writing as capable and worthy of making decisions about writing assessment:

[Doing so] meant that the large testing firms that had established dominance over writing assessment were no longer to be the only players in this high-stakes game and that the political powers that normally determined the policies and goals of education had been reduced, at least temporarily, to funding agencies for faculty managers. For once, English faculty were able to define their own work and take charge of its implementation in the political sphere. ("Opening" 309)

Critiques of mass, in-house tests capitalize on the familiar image of hundreds of newly admitted students crowding into gymnasiums to write a quick essay between an Accuplacer-directed math assessment and an uli-

mate Frisbee party at the quad – not exactly ideal conditions for writing. But this criticism must be taken in the context of the educational testing establishment’s near stranglehold on assessment in 1971 when White and his colleagues were facing down higher education administrators, and today when we are in a similar position. Now, as then, many of us have reason to mourn for the days of five hundred students in a room writing as we face placement by nationalized, objective, multiple-choice-dominated assessments. Close to sixty years after Baker’s report, the central problems of time and money remain at the heart of the challenges that colleges and universities face as they attempt to evaluate students for best placement in writing classes. In the context of these challenges, writing faculty still need to make the case for the value of their expertise.

The popular new kid on the block featured to save us from placement via these admissions instruments is Directed Self-Placement. What perhaps all can agree on is that DSP strikes chords. Within Writing Studies it has rapidly gained popularity and near-unanimous praise, very much in keeping with what Huot and Neal describe as the typical course for new assessment technologies: “The dominant discourse of writing assessment is that new technologies necessarily are better than the old, and that the progress represented by the technology generally benefits society” (419). (Notably, DSP is increasingly linked to web-based wizards, another new technology [Jones].) DSP, first developed (and abandoned) at Colgate in the 1990s (Howard; Harrington), and more widely known by Royer and Gilles’s *College Composition and Communication* article and subsequent edited book collection, is a methodology for placement that provides students with a series of questions as well as some individual and institutional data (e.g., objective test scores and course descriptions) intended to enable them to make informed choices about what writing course to enroll in. DSP is promoted as having the benefits of the very best local assessment, in that it is locally designed and controlled, and none of the disadvantages: it is not time-consuming (for students, program administrators, or expert readers); it does not occupy too much space in the semester curricula or summer orientations (in some cases completed online, before classes begin); and it is not displeasing. Indeed, the pleasingness of DSP is what most captivates us and, we imagine, others as well:

Directed self-placement possesses what computer programmers call elegance, what philosophers might call the shine of Ockham’s razor. It has a pleasing feel about it with influence stretching in every direction: from a simple brochure at the hub, its vectors point to students, local high school teachers, and administrators. Its simplicity recommends it over the unreliability of test scores. Its honesty calls

out to students and lures them in the right direction. Its focus is on the future and each student's self-determined advance. (Royer and Gilles, "Directed" 61)

Yet, while Royer and Gilles's description is seductive, it is important to recognize that DSP in its basic implementation is often devoid of current writing: students don't have to write essays, and teachers don't have to read them.

Certainly many implementations of DSP do include a supplemental element of writing, from Royer and Gilles's own first-day diagnostic to more elaborate pieces of writing such as Cynthia Lewiecki-Wilson and colleagues' "Writer's Profile" (Royer and Gilles, "Directed" 58; Lewiecki et al., 170).³ Nevertheless, writing still appears secondary, and this decentralization or deemphasizing of writing concerns us for the message it sends to students. Concluding her argument urging more attention to placement with a call for considerations of validity, Susanmarie Harrington notes that "[p]art of the validity of a placement examination . . . lies in what it communicates to students and teachers about writing. As we contemplate assessment as a tool, we should consider what our choice of tool, in our context, will communicate to students about the nature of college writing" (25), a focus on message underlined by Lewiecki-Wilson and her colleagues, Jeff Sommers and John Paul Tassoni (168). One view is that placement is a precursor to the main event – coursework – and should be dispensed with quickly and painlessly. DSP does that, though, for that matter, so do objective admissions tests. There is merit in this view, but for the fact that it may inadvertently communicate to students that their actual writing doesn't really matter much.

Our other concern with DSP is with its fundamental premise of assuming students know best, and that they can, recalling Royer and Gilles's words above, be "lure[d]. . . in the right direction" ("Directed" 61). We venture to articulate this concern, cognizant of our field's history and tradition of honoring students' knowledge. Our concern isn't a schoolmarmish rejection of student abilities, but a genuine question as to how individuals on the cusp of entering a new discourse community can possibly be in a good position to assess their abilities to write to the values of this new community. As Anne Ruggles Gere and colleagues suggest, DSP can focus attention on the past – how students performed in high school, in high school genres and competencies – and not on college writing which, we would join them in noting, is quite different. Moreover, as Lewiecki-Wilson, Sommers, and Tassoni aptly observe, DSP requires entering students "to know thoroughly the curriculum and assumptions informing each course—a clear impossibility for them" (168). While DSP programs may allow students to read

selections of student work and sometimes to meet with advisers, a nod to our concern, the burden nevertheless remains on the students.

In the context of advocating against using standardized tests for placement, Patricia Lynne notes that, historically, writing faculty have too quickly and frequently given away control of writing assessment to educational measurement experts (169), and she argues that “writing professionals have expertise more appropriate for evaluating written literacy than do educational measurement professionals,” an opinion we echo. With DSP, writing faculty discount their own expertise again, albeit in favor of student-authors, not educational measurement experts. For us, the placement assessment should meet what Norbert Elliot and others argue for: construct validity – the assessment must be as close as possible to what the course actually assesses, and it should also support student learning; as Elliot ably explains, good assessment “authentically supports student learning, the most significant consequence for anyone assessing writing in an academic community” (27).

We believe PTT can meet this requirement and has merit for writing faculty looking to resist the imposition of objective-measurement assessments for placement but not ready to give up on either faculty assessment of student writing *or* assessing all students. It speaks to faculty who wish to answer Alice Robertson’s call to “develop[] their own placement procedures that accurately reflect their own writing classes” (62) but without the expense of Stony Brook’s model, which Robertson describes as “a mini version of [their] writing courses” (57): a one-hour-long summer class that mimics the size and activities of the regular semester and concludes with an in-class diagnostic essay. Another variation of PTT is the On-line Challenge, developed by Irvin Peckham at Louisiana State University (LSU) from a model pioneered by Les Perelman at MIT, which is a hybrid of direct writing assessment and self placement and, with a nod toward cost concerns, is geared toward reviewing the work of a limited number of students. In this method, the placement experience occurs entirely online, utilizing the iMoat platform (see Perelman), in advance of the first day of classes.

As Peckham details, the On-line Challenge invites students to submit an essay in response to assigned readings if they wish to question their placement, with successful challenges leading to course exemptions. The challenge assignment imitates the final assignment in the first-semester course, increasing construct validity. Compared to LSU’s previous model of a diagnostic written in the first week of class, which had a lower construct validity, Peckham notes the following improvements: completed over the summer, it limits the first-week chaos; completed online, it addresses logistical and time issues; completed by only those students who question their

placement and are willing to put in the effort to read some articles and write an essay, it limits the number of students whose placement needs to be re-evaluated, putting less strain on faculty and LSU's budget ("Online Placement"). In the four years Peckham discusses in his 2009 article, between two and ten percent of students participated in the challenge. For forty-two percent of these participants, a different placement was recommended, indicating that their initial placement was indeed incorrect (533). While this percentage is likely high because those self-selecting students who chose to participate were motivated by the chance to place out of a course, it nevertheless suggests that many of the other ninety percent of LSU students may also have been misplaced.

We share Robertson's and Peckham's interest in validity, in what Peckham calls "get[ting] closer to assessing writing abilities that match the writing tasks we set in our first-year writing program" ("Online Placement" 518). Yet, interested in evaluating the majority of our students *and* concerned with those who are misplaced both "up" and "down," we seek to incorporate this work into the semester curricula, as Nicolay does in another version of PTT. That is, we seek a method that, as Nicolay aptly puts it, "contextualize[s]" and "embed[s]" placement within our writing program (42). While not having a remedial class allows St. John Fisher College, as Nicolay reports, to determine whether students need extra help based on a three-week first unit, such a method is less feasible for larger institutions and those with remedial courses. Nevertheless, our PTT approach incorporates similar embedding by having our placement assignment be—rather than just imitate—a college writing assignment. Furthermore, our PTT program enables us to evaluate virtually⁴ all of our students and to identify those who will likely struggle significantly in or not pass our college writing course without a basic writing experience first.

OUR PATH TO PLACEMENT AND TEACHING TOGETHER (PTT)

Montclair State University (MSU), a comprehensive public university with an incoming first-year student population of about 2000, has a sequence of two required writing courses (College Writing I and College Writing II) and a developmental course (Introduction to Writing [BW]). While all three courses share a focus on the writing process, the developmental course emphasizes helping students, in the words of the common handbook, achieve "basic competency in entry-level academic writing" and reading so as to better prepare them to grapple with "contemporary intellectual, social, and cultural issues that face citizens in our multicultural, international society" and to develop "strong argumentative" prose in subsequent

writing classes (“Writing at Montclair” 15, 17). Like many other institutions, MSU had been using placement methods that did not accurately measure students’ abilities with respect to the type of work required in our first-year writing courses. Prior to 2007, MSU used a combination of SAT scores and an in-house test. This in-house test involved a short impromptu essay along with a multiple-choice sentence-sense assessment and a reading comprehension assessment. Using this method, 13 percent of students were placed into BW on average.

Then, faced with tightening budgets and rapidly growing enrollment, in fall 2007 MSU began exclusively using the readily available SAT Critical Reading and Writing scores to determine placement. Students with an SAT Writing score of 410 were placed into CW I, while students with scores of 400 or below were placed into BW, resulting in placement of 9.5 percent of students into our basic writing course. While inexpensive and “easy,” this switch simply replaced one invalid method with another even more invalid method, as has been detailed elsewhere by Emily Isaacs and Sean Molloy. To summarize their findings briefly, it was estimated that between 12 and 18 percent of students were misplaced by the SATs (531), providing evidence that SAT scores alone were inadequate in judging a student’s preparedness for the work of CW I. As one student who fell on the basic writing side of the SAT cutoff noted in a later end-of-semester survey: “People like me who have terrible hand writing are doomed to get lower scores on the written part of the SAT because the reviewers of the SATs won’t be bothered wasting an hour to try and grade one essay.” We all intuitively know that impromptu writing tests that are combined with objective multiple-choice measures fail to accurately assess many students, but, as many WPAs have found, it is difficult to challenge the efficiency and authority of major standardized tests.

Our in-house research on the effectiveness of placement by the SATs prompted a move to a PTT approach. In short, many students were taking BW unnecessarily, and even more were struggling in CW I. As a result, the WPA developed and refined the placement process summarized earlier in which all students enrolled in CW I and BW are now required to participate. This procedure, we believe, addresses many of the most significant problems of other methods by involving the kind of writing tasks required of students in the courses and, more importantly, by integrating the placement “diagnostic” into the first unit of the semester. That is, rather than being an independent, timed diagnostic or an essay completed in isolation over the summer, the document used to confirm placement serves as one of the course’s regular assignments; in this way, it does not “waste” time as some feel first-day diagnostics do (see Peckham, “Online Placement” 519)

nor does it rely on students taking the initiative to participate as does LSU's On-Line Challenge. Another improvement is that it allows all writing faculty to become involved—not just a select group of expert readers. As one faculty member commented, “I have encountered placement errors in other institutions and felt left out of the process. . . . It is important for professors to feel that their input is valued in matters of placement.”

Our path to PTT has not always been pleasing, however. After much discussion and administrative wrangling, in fall 2008 the WPA piloted a placement “confirmation” process that asked CW I and BW instructors to assign students a brief reading and writing exercise, due the second day of class (for more information, see Isaacs and Molloy 532-34). This exercise served as an early draft of the students' first unit essay that was then revised following an additional reading assignment and a class meeting with discussion and other activities to support revision. Instructors were asked to evaluate their students' first drafts for placement purposes and to forward any questionable placements to the writing program for further review. As is the case in placement processes involving a diagnostic essay (Huot; Haswell and Wyche; Smith), each submission was reviewed by an expert reader: an experienced instructor, familiar with the program and its courses. In cases where the expert reader disagreed with the classroom instructor's assessment, a second expert reader reviewed the submission.

It is worth noting that in this process inter-reader reliability (and here we include classroom instructors and expert readers) was relatively low—around 70%. On one hand, this figure reflects a significantly high portion of regular instructors (approximately 20%) being new to the institution in 2008. On the other hand, it is the result of all instructors having been put into the position of “nominators” and encouraged to submit borderline students for secondary review even if they suspected these students were probably in the right class. Yet, in keeping with Smith's findings that value “the role of expertise,” specifically “course taught expertise” over standard measures of inter-rater reliability (189), this tilt toward re-evaluation was pedagogically and programmatically right, and worth the “cost” to inter-rater reliability because it succeeded in identifying students misplaced by SAT scores alone.

The pilot program was our first effort to develop a placement method that more than replicates the type of writing typically completed in first-year writing classes as in Robertson's and Peckham's models, but “embeds” placement within our courses, to borrow Nicolay's term. Yet, this integration was not without difficulty. As faculty responses to a 2008 survey revealed, more than half of our 75 instructors reported finding it difficult to assess placement based on one draft. Nevertheless, the majority of instruc-

tors recognized that, in the words of one, “[w]hile it is difficult to schedule an essay due on the second day of class, I think that it is important to assess [students’] abilities.” Other instructors questioned the reliability of placement being determined by responses to individual instructors’ assignments rather than a standard prompt, a concern that was justified. In addition to raising questions of validity, the lack of standardization in writing prompts made students’ transition from one class to another more difficult than if the assignment had been standard across the program.

Accordingly, in revising the procedure for fall 2009, we implemented a common first assignment, developed by a committee of veteran instructors and pre-tested the previous summer with various populations, for all students in CW I and BW. This shift addressed several of the concerns raised about the pilot program: first, since all students were responding to the same assignment, it was easier to evaluate writing skills reliably; the burden on both instructors and students was eased as, second, individual instructors were relieved of the task of developing assignments for one unit; and, third, those students whose placement was changed could take their draft to their new class and not have to do a lot to catch up. As a further improvement, our new process gave students more time to work on this important assignment by sending it to them via e-mail in August. This e-mail directed students enrolled in CW I and BW to a website containing links to three articles on higher education and a writing prompt. Students were asked to bring a draft of their response to the first class meeting. Unlike the model of a one-shot diagnostic essay and in a tweaking of the pilot version, students were then directed to revise their draft, drawing upon the first day’s discussion, peer review, or other in-class activities, and their reading of a fourth article. Students then submitted this revised draft on the second day of class for placement evaluation and instructor feedback.

In addition to providing comments as part of the regular, typical program of writing instruction, instructors evaluated essays for placement based on their experience teaching writing and with the support of guidelines provided in an hour-long training session in which a rubric and anchor papers were introduced. As in the pilot version, submissions were reviewed by an expert reader, with any disagreements going to a second expert reader (for 2010, this plan was revised so that all submissions were reviewed by two or, as needed, three expert readers, leaving classroom teachers as nominators). The appeal process remained in place, a form of “self-determined advance,” a modification of DSP (see Isaacs and Molloy 533), and there was also a “boost” system wherein students who performed exceptionally well in BW could be evaluated for exemption from CW I at the end of the semester.

GRADE DATA: HOW WELL DID THE PROCEDURE WORK?

Although grade data is not definitive evidence of the success or failure of a placement method, it does warrant some attention. Notably, in our program we have a high degree of grade alignment across sections. It's a high priority for the program, and both new and returning faculty meet regularly to develop and support our abilities to grade consistently and in accordance with the program's developed grading procedures which are explicated in our shared handbook and on the program website. Faculty evaluations of student papers are regularly reviewed by peer observers, and end-of-semester grades are also examined for consistency. Grading is not an individual act in our program. Accordingly, a brief discussion of our analysis of grade data from the collective 4140 students who enrolled in BW or CW I in the fall semesters of 2009 and 2010 provides some evidence for the appropriateness and value of our PTT approach and affirms the generally positive impressions we gathered from reviewing student and faculty surveys over three years as we discuss later.

We recognize that, even while instructors' grade consistency is valued and monitored program-wide, many factors impact student performance, such as total course load, illness, family stress, and having to work, among many others. Nevertheless, looking at how these students performed, in various groupings and in comparison to average grade performance of all students enrolled in the same classes, is useful for evaluating our approach. Important populations for close scrutiny are the students who were submitted by their instructors for placement review. Looking first at the 2009 cohort, we see that of the 182 students submitted for evaluation, just half were determined to be appropriately placed, with the other half judged to need a course other than that in which they had been tentatively placed by the SATs: eight percent (14 students) provisionally placed in BW were moved to CW I, and 42 percent of those students provisionally placed in CW I (76 students) were identified as needing BW. Of these 76 students are seventeen whom we call "the unmovables": students whose placement should have been in BW but who, for various reasons, could not be moved and so ended up taking CW I, conveniently providing us with a useful group to study. Turning to the 2010 cohort, close to 45 percent of students submitted for review were determined to need a different placement, with 5 percent (16 students) moved from BW to CW I, and 39 percent (128 students) of those in CW I determined to need BW. Once again, we find a group of "unmovables," in this case 13 students.

Admittedly, some of our special populations are very small (such as those who stayed in BW or those who moved to CW I), and we have only

WPA 35.2 (Spring 2012)

two years of grade data at present. While we realize the limits of our data, it is heartening to see that the numbers largely fall in expected ranges. As the table below illustrates, those students whose placement in BW was confirmed as appropriate by PTT generally did well, with their final course grades typically being above or close to the average of all students who took basic writing (with the exception of fall 10), and, then, the subsequent semester, again better than average in CW I. This success is to be expected since these students were identified by their instructors as being among the strongest in their particular sections of BW. Next, students who were moved to BW performed similarly to the general population of BW students, suggesting their new placement was appropriate.

Table 1. Comparative Grade Data for PTT 2009 and 2010 Cohorts*

		BW Average Grade Fall	CW I Average Grade Fall	CW I Average Grade Spring	CW II Average Grade Spring
Reassigned to Intro to Writing	2009	2.39 (n=55)		2.68 (n=36)	
	2010	2.12 (n=105)		2.18 (n=73)	
Intro to Writing Placement confirmed	2009	2.73 (n=6)		2.78 (n=5)	
	2010	2.03 (n=9)		2.06 (n=5)	
Reassigned to CW I	2009		2.17 (n=13)		2.38 (n=10)
	2010		2.53 (n=15)		2.75 (n=9)
CW I Placement confirmed	2009		2.2 (n= 83)		2.35 (n=62)
	2010		1.98 (n=180)		2.41 (n=125)
“Unmovables”	2009		1.85 (n=17)		1.95 (n=12)
	2010		1.52 (n=14)		1.88 (n=5)
General Population	2009	2.32 (n=232)	2.54 (n=1951)	2.12 (n=386)	2.51 (n=1806)
	2010	2.13 (n=255)	2.36 (n=1815)	2.04 (n=420)	2.39 (n=1738)

*Table reports grade data for students who took either BW and CW I or CW I and CW II in consecutive semesters beginning in Fall 2009 or Fall 2010. Grade data does not include students who withdrew or students who took their second writing course (CW I or CW II) in a later semester.

Moreover, these students who were moved to BW were more successful than the “unmovables,” who present a comparison group of sorts—modeling what may have been the fate of the students reassigned to BW if their provisional placement had not been changed. By a significant margin, the “unmovables” fared the worst of all populations. In both years, their average grades in both CW I and our second-semester course, College Writing II (CW II), were below the 2.0 GPA needed to maintain academic standing at MSU. While certainly outside factors and distractions affect how individual students do in a particular course during a particular semester, it seems apparent, as our faculty reviewers believed, that these students were not ready to succeed in CW I.

Turning to those students moved to CW I by PTT, we find they fared quite similarly to or even better than those CW I students recommended for placement review but determined to be ready to stay in CW I—in both that course and the subsequent CW II—suggesting their change in placement was appropriate. Those students whose placement in CW I was confirmed performed below average, as would be expected for students whose writing was identified as being among the weakest in their sections. Overall, the grade data suggests the success of the approach and also provides further evidence that SAT scores alone—which ranged widely for the population of students moved in both 2009 and 2010—were inadequate in judging individual students’ preparedness for the work of CW I.

HARD TO PLEASE

While grade data suggests that students’ final placement was appropriate, supporting the validity of the assessment, we wondered if our students and faculty were happy with our new process, recalling Royer and Gilles’s remarks about the pleasing nature of DSP, and furthermore, we wondered if in fact happiness matters in placement. To ascertain perspective on the placement process, including participants’ emotional responses, we developed anonymous surveys which were deployed near the end of the fall 2009 and 2010 semesters and tailored to specific general and special populations: a selection of students enrolled in BW and CW I; and students whose placement had changed as a result of the placement process; additionally, faculty teaching BW and/or CW I were surveyed early in fall 2009 for immediate reactions and again at the end of the fall 2009 and 2010 semesters.⁵

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS

Overall, students judged their placement as appropriate, with the CW I general population feeling most confident: 97%/96% (the first score indi-

cates data from 2009, the second from 2010) believed their placement was either “educationally appropriate” or “probably educationally appropriate”; 78%/89% of those moved to CW I from BW felt similarly. While the BW students surveyed were less confident about their placement, still the majority felt they had been placed in the right class: 68%/73% of students whose provisional placement was confirmed and 71%/73% of students who were moved into BW felt that their placement was at least “probably educationally appropriate.” Although these numbers pleased *us*, we recognize that feeling as though their placement was appropriate does not necessarily correlate with the *students’* feeling pleased. To determine whether our PTT approach was too burdensome or disruptive, our surveys asked questions about the placement process itself. Once again, all students placed in CW I were more positive than BW students in their assessments. In response to the question “How did you feel about final placement being determined after the semester started?” 91%/86% of the general CW I population responded that it did not bother them, a feeling shared by a smaller majority of students who initially placed into BW (65%/56%).

In explaining their feelings, many CW I students expressed confidence in their writing, as did these representative respondents:

- “I felt prepared for the material and I was academically qualified to place into this class.”
- “It did not bother me because I knew that the class [CW I] was the best place for me.”

While such students demonstrated that the placement process validated their own sense of themselves as writers, others talked more about the importance of the process itself:

- “It didn’t bother me because I felt like it is part of college and we should do all of the work required.”
- “The placement procedure was a great idea [because] it allows those who are not prepared a chance instead of allowing them to fail for being on a harder level.”

In great majority, students accepted the decisions made by their new university as appropriate, as is further evidenced by these comments:

- “It didn’t bother me because if there was a mistake with me being in the wrong class I’d rather know and change my class [than] to waste time and money in a class that I do not belong in.”

- “The assigned essay was short and required as the first graded assignment for the class. I would have had to have written it regardless of the placement process.”
- “I thought it was a great idea because then if they can tell that you will do bad in the class you were signed up for, you could be put into a class that is more helpful in your case.”

In these comments we hear students valuing the new process with an appreciation for faculty expertise over College Board assessments that some may find surprising.

In response to the same question, students in BW acknowledged that the course was valuable and appropriate to them, with no less than 68%/73%, as noted above, saying that the placement was at least “probably educationally appropriate” for them. Yet, these responses do not mean that students were pleased. Indeed, 84%/83% of the respondents who had moved to BW reported that they felt concerned and/or upset when they learned their placement had changed. These results were not welcome news, we must acknowledge, and it is perhaps this finding that makes DSP and other methods which place students before classes start most appealing. In both years, a significant minority of students moved to BW expressed the belief that their writing skills were sufficient for CW I, with some noting that they just had not done their best on the placement assignment. Specifically, 29%/45% of the students who were moved to BW as a result of the placement process indicated that being placed in BW conflicted with their sense of themselves as writers while only 13%/12% of students who were originally placed in BW held this viewpoint. More generally, 73/66% of the CW I general population and 68/69% of the BW general population characterized their writing skills as average. Under DSP, we can assume that all of these students would probably elect to take CW I immediately. Students’ positive perception of their writing may in fact help explain why between 75% and 85% of students in Gere and colleagues’ study rejected the DSP-generated advice to take basic writing (162).⁶ From the WPA’s previous research we can surmise that many of these students would pass their classes, but their success rates in college, as determined by grades in subsequent writing courses and overall GPAs, would be significantly lower than their peers who took BW (Isaacs and Molloy 532); despite their view of their writing, it seems likely that many would have fared as poorly as the “unmovables” discussed earlier.

A second concern, expressed by 26%/15% of students who were moved to BW, centered on the practical consequences of having to take an addi-

tional course. These students worried about the costs and emphasized that BW would slow them down in completing their majors:

- “Change it. Do it based entirely on SAT scores. Now I’m a step behind everyone else. . . . Now I will have to take that class over again next semester.”
- “I don’t think schools should place people behind because it only slows them down on what they are really here for. People have majors where writing courses aren’t even needed. They shouldn’t place you in a course based on an essay. They should let everyone in [CW I] if they choose it. It’s just inappropriate.”

These latter comments raise the question of student dissatisfaction with placement into basic writing more generally, of seeing it as being held back, an issue that is familiar to many writing faculty.

Yet, most BW students, the majority of whom were placed in BW by both the SATs and PTT, are often matter of fact in their discussion of how they felt about their placement and the placement process:

- “It didn’t bother me because I knew I wasn’t a strong writer and that I need improvement and needed to take baby steps in order to improve and further develop my writing skills.”
- “I knew it was for the better and it would help me in the long run.”
- “I have been out of school for almost 2 years; therefore, my writing skill weren’t very good. I had forgotten many things such as grammar and punctuation. I felt this class helped me get back on track.”
- “My High School didn’t prepare me in writing so I felt I needed this placement.”

Notably, 45%/21% of students placed into BW by SAT scores expressed the idea that they needed the course (compared to 6%/8% of those placed into BW by PTT). What we see, then, is that our process intensifies some students’ sense of being stigmatized by basic writing placement, especially those whose placement changes. However, as the comments quoted in the previous paragraph demonstrate, it’s also clear that most of these students were bothered by the *fact* of their specific placement, rather than by the process that determined placement. Consider this response from a student moved to BW in 2010 who offers criticism of basic writing and not of the process: “I don’t think you should have this class. Eventually we all have to take [CW I] & [CW II] and it is a waste of a semester unless the student wishes to take the course to build knowledge.”

A smaller group of those students moved into BW took a middle ground (13%/3%), expressing tempered disappointment: “In a way I was upset but in another way I knew I needed it, so I’m happy with learning, there is nothing wrong with taking a class that will give you more knowledge.” Or, “I felt like I was stupid and couldn’t do what everyone else could. But I realized that it helped me out in the long run.” We see this group as similar to the majority of the students we come to know in the BW classes that we teach at Montclair State. Primarily first-generation college attendees, these students are anxious about the financial aspects of college as well as about their success in their intended programs of study, but finding themselves in a large university with many different degree programs and types of students, they typically do not have a fixed view of what educational coursework is best. For better or worse, they are inclined to trust us and our judgment on such matters as placement. As one BW student observed about the placement process, “I understand that the University had my best interest in mind and wanted to ensure I was properly placed.”

If not yet equipped to decide with authority what educational coursework is most appropriate for them, students are in a strong position to express their feelings about the way the placement assignment was delivered. What we found was that a significant minority of students really disliked the timeframe: they didn’t like writing when they were in “summer mode” and felt they had a right to be free of academic responsibilities. In addition, although explanatory emails were sent to students through data from the registrar and admissions, as well as directly from instructors, one third or more of our students claimed not to know that the assignment would be used to determine placement in 2009, and this reported awareness did not increase significantly in 2010 despite improvements in outreach and what we would have expected with institutionalization and student chatter. In the general CW I population, 27%/32% of students indicated they were unaware that the essay would be used for placement, while in the BW population 50%/29% indicated such lack of awareness. Such data may speak to the possibility that first-year students are simply not in a position to grasp a lot of the information that is presented to them, much less the implications of that information, a problem shared by DSP which relies primarily on student decision-making, and by methods like Peckham’s Online Challenge which ask students to take the initiative to participate. Certainly with PTT we need to acknowledge that there is some student stress with this approach – but whether this stress is greater than that of students placed in basic writing by other means is not a question our research is able to answer.

FACULTY PERCEPTIONS: BETTER PLACEMENT BUT NOT PARTICULARLY PLEASED

The majority of faculty teaching CW I (61%/82%) and BW (67%/85%) found that PTT improved student placement. We see the increase in these numbers as reflective of our success in reviewing and moving more provisionally misplaced students in 2010 than in 2009. Although the percentages of CW I and BW faculty perceiving placement as being improved are roughly equal for each year, the effects of placement were felt more by BW faculty, as is typically the case with any placement method. In both years, CW I instructors were less likely to have students move into their sections: 70%/63% of respondents to our CW I faculty survey reported that no students had been transferred to their sections. In contrast, no BW instructors reported having fewer than two students move to their sections, with 56%/72% having four or more new students as a result of the placement process.

Yet, while they agreed that placement was improved through the process, faculty, especially CW I instructors, were less pleased by the process itself, particularly in the first year of full implementation. Perhaps because they worked with fewer students whose placement had changed, in 2009 CW I faculty were less sure that the benefits of the placement procedure outweighed the challenges (50 percent compared to 66 percent for BW faculty), although in 2010 66 percent believed the benefits outweighed the challenges. In 2009, faculty found the 24-hour turn-around time to submit essay drafts for review stressful, a problem that was relieved by extending this window to 48 hours in 2010. Some faculty were concerned that they were not able to judge writing skills accurately based on one early draft, and still others voiced concern with how the assignment fit in with how they had developed *their* course – suggesting a more diverse set of objectives and outcomes for BW and CW I than we expected and ultimately would hope for. These challenges reported by faculty were helpful in making clear to us that we need to take full advantage of the faculty development aspect of PTT, and to continue to engage the core FYW faculty in the design and testing of each year's assignment. Both students *and instructors* should perceive the placement assignment as being representative of the work of the course. Further, by developing and requiring a common assignment, veteran faculty are also able to model and collaboratively troubleshoot implementation of a program's pedagogical principles, bringing newer and less experienced faculty more quickly and fully aboard.

While a common assignment can model the work of the course for faculty and build greater consistency across the program, it is also connected

to a final *displeased* theme that we noticed in our faculty surveys: disappointment over the partial loss of autonomy that accompanies a common assignment. As survey data reveals, this loss was felt especially keenly by some instructors: while 44%/43% of BW faculty believed that the common assignment made course planning easier, 34%/19% of CW I faculty found it made course planning harder. As answers to subsequent questions show, these responses in part reflect our instructors' relative, but decreasing, discomfort with common assignments and, more particularly with the specific fall 2009 assignment on the value of higher education which was ultimately too challenging and perhaps too dry. Although we believe it is impossible to ever make *all* faculty truly delighted with an assignment they didn't individually develop, we seem to have successfully addressed these problems with a new assignment in 2010 (see appendix). Notably, in both years BW faculty were more accepting of a common assignment, none expressing a dislike of common assignments, though two instructors expressed a preference for designing their own assignments. The BW faculty's greater acceptance is no doubt in part because they are a smaller group, more experienced with collaboration and common texts. Yet, encouragingly, CW I faculty display a growing acceptance of this aspect of our procedure: while in 2009 37 percent of CW I faculty respondents preferred to design their own assignments, this percentage dropped noticeably, to 13 percent, in 2010; similarly, while in 2009 eight percent disliked common assignments, in 2010 only three percent indicated such an opinion.

Although in both years the criticism of common assignments was expressed by a minority of faculty, we interpret its expression as indicative of the high value that faculty place on the freedom and control that our program, and many other programs, have historically granted first-year writing faculty. Unlike our counterparts in secondary schools and in many introductory college science disciplines, it is not unusual for college writing faculty to individually determine topics, readings, assignments, and many other aspects of instruction, albeit within some guidelines. Furthermore, a common assignment may compete with instructors' sense of themselves. As one instructor helping test assignments for fall 2010 remarked, "My assignments are an extension of me as a teacher. This method of using a generic prompt suggests that we are interchangeable as teachers, in a way, doesn't it?" Even though our placement system values faculty as initial and expert readers, a common placement assignment, like many other program-wide assessment instruments, threatens this individualization—with respect to the first assignment most obviously, but perhaps in other less obvious ways as well. Such comments raise a question for future consideration and research as to what extent teacher individualization is desirable for student

learning. Based on the fall 2008 pilot in which an instructor-designed placement instrument resulted in an uneven level of difficulty, for now we can say that individualization is not especially desirable for placement, or perhaps for a university-required course in first-year writing. Indeed, it may be that PTT is particularly appropriate for writing programs like ours which see value in adopting a degree of standardization in our instruction *and* assessment.

REFINEMENTS

After three years, our curriculum-based, expert-reader approach to placement is still a work in progress, and faculty and student comments continue to offer us insights into how the approach should be further refined. In 2010, we were happy to give instructors additional time to submit cases for placement review, and in 2011, we have added an online submission system, making it easier for instructors and readers. In addition, though we suspect we will achieve varying responses to future assignments from faculty and students alike, we will continue to develop and pre-test more thoroughly each year's common assignment. As noted, faculty are used to having a high level of control over reading and assignment choices, and a common placement essay takes away the privilege and pleasure of individual choice, though with institutionalization of this method, our faculty seem to mind less. Even so, it is important for any program contemplating in-house placement to not only pre-test the assessment, but also post-test it, and then demonstrate some flexibility and willingness to revise based on community responses.

Another significant challenge for in-house placement is communication. For example, although we felt that the Writing Program's summer email to students made clear that the first assignment was mandatory and would be used for placement, our survey research demonstrated that these points need to be better stressed. Starting in 2010, we now ensure that instructors include standard language about this assignment's purpose on their course syllabi. In addition, following David Blakesley's suggestions for implementing a new placement system in "Directed Self-Placement in the University," we have worked to communicate better with allied departments, in Admissions, Assessment, and New Student Experience. Further, our university has recently adopted a common summer reading program for incoming students, and both the book program itself and our plans to use this text for placement have been widely distributed. We remain hopeful for increased communication, though it is true that we had anticipated better results from our 2010 surveys and were disappointed – and surprised – by

so many students still reporting ignorance of the placement function of the assignment. We suspect that in our first three years, other departments on campus may have resisted the new placement method and imagined we would go back to the cleanness of the SAT or Accuplacer. In further conversations with allied programs, we have made clear, however, that we are in the messy business of reading student writing for the long haul, and this growing community acceptance has led to useful—and continuing—conversations about how to best inform and support our students.

BIAS

A more complex problem that our research raises is whether or not our method has indeed enabled adequate identification of students whose provisional placement was inappropriate. To review, from early research, the WPA estimated that between 12 and 18 percent of students were misplaced by the SATs alone (Isaacs and Molloy 531); however, in 2009, only 7.7 percent of students had instructors who suggested they were in the wrong class, and only half of these were judged by the expert readers and administrators as actually needing movement; in total, we moved only 3.8 percent of our total population in 2009. In our analysis of these disparate findings, we came to several conclusions, some of which were actionable.

First, we believed our faculty needed more training and support in identifying students who may be misplaced. Since our early faculty surveys conveyed some resistance to the placement process, we wondered whether that resistance inspired incomplete participation. What is more, we found an occasional comment that suggested many CW I faculty saw BW as a punishment, and so we speculated that these individual points of view may have led some faculty to “protect” their students by not submitting them for further review. While we appreciate individual instructors’ desire to work with underprepared students in our mainstream course, not submitting them for review in effect means that such students would lose the benefits in place to help BW students, including a smaller class and increased support from the writing center. These concerns about faculty identification and participation led to the development of a more robust initial training session and support materials for faculty as well as to the requirement that faculty submit at least one student per section in 2010. While in 2009 13 percent of faculty did not submit any students’ work for review, in 2010 we not only had full participation but the majority of faculty submitted more than the minimum required (87 percent of CW I faculty submitted two or more students’ work per section, as did 58 percent of BW faculty).

Second, problems with bias were not only displayed by teachers but also may have been built into the expert-reader system itself. That is, after reflecting on our research we came to suspect that our expert-reader system, from readers to administrators, was not blind enough. Our scoring and administrative materials for the 2008 pilot and 2009 allowed expert readers and the two of us to see SAT data and initial placement information. Although in theory we had asked expert readers and ourselves simply to read and place students into one class or another, these early forms presented individual students *from BW* or *from CW I*. In other words, although we intended to replicate Smith and Huot's system of two choices, the visibility of this information may have unintentionally discouraged placement that was out of sync with what the SATs would determine. Although administrators and expert readers did not complete any particular surveys on this issue, we find a ring of truth in this instructor's comment: "I felt very uncomfortable having a placement exam in a class that students had already placed into. Who knows why they might have written a poor second placement exam. . . . They already placed into the course, so let's help them through it. . . ." We intended for the assignment alone to serve as the placement instrument; however, the power of the SATs and our effectively giving that information to readers (and administrators) at the moment they were judging student writing, appear to have worked together to discourage placement "against" the SATs, suggesting that the provisional nature of the initial placement needs to be stressed to faculty as well as students.

In addition, as administrators, we realize that a climate that sought to limit the number of basic writing classes made us politically cautious about moving students (see Isaacs and Molloy 525). Of course, it is impossible to fully blind the process; classroom instructors are unavoidably aware of the provisional placement and likely ready to see their students as members of their classroom community. Yet it is possible to build in more "blindness" for expert readers and administrators. To do so, we revised the forms for 2010 so that students' initial placement was hidden from expert readers and administrators. Readers and administrators were now asked to judge whether students should be in CW I or BW, not whether they should *stay in* or *be moved to* a specific course.

We have also taken greater advantage of PTT's function as faculty development. While it is obvious that new faculty need information about our students and courses, returning instructors are being provided with more information about the aims of our BW course as well, so that no one feels as though referring a student who had provisionally placed in CW I for placement review—or more accurately, changing that student's placement to BW—is a punishment. After doing so, we were pleased *not* to see

any comments in the 2010 post-test assessments that echoed this example from the 2008 pilot: “I did not want to *banish* a student to [BW] simply because they might not have performed at their best on one particular day, or because they had never written a critical essay and did not entirely comprehend what was expected of them” (emphasis added). While DSPers seek to “lure” students in “the right direction,” we have learned that the PTT approach requires that program leaders help faculty understand the value of our different writing courses. In short, we needed to convince faculty that, while the process may present some challenges, its goal of ensuring that all students are provided with the coursework in writing that will help them to best succeed in their academic careers is worth it, regardless of how small or large the number of provisionally misplaced students is.

Data from our 2010 refinements is encouraging. Most importantly, compared to 2009, we reviewed more students’ work (331 vs. 182) and identified and moved more misplaced students (131 vs. 73). Faculty development and greater “blindness” were clearly valuable to the integrity and consistency of our work. In 2010, 15.4 percent of students had instructors who suggested that they might be in the wrong class (up from 7.7 percent in 2009), and PTT identified fully 6.6 percent (up from 3.8 percent) of students who were in need of an alternative class from that recommended by the SATs. (It is worth noting that these numbers do not necessarily reflect increased numbers of students in BW but a return to the historical 13% average.) Although complete data is not yet available for study, we continue to monitor the progress of our students as they go forward in their writing and general education courses.

By integrating the work of placement into our curriculum, PTT has enabled us to provide appropriate writing instruction to a larger number of students than by using SAT scores alone. PTT allows students to participate in the placement process by producing writing but without burdening them with difficult choices for which they cannot yet be adequately prepared. Moreover, by asking faculty to evaluate this writing, PTT allows us to support and value our teachers’ expertise without further straining the university’s budget. As we have discovered, in-house placement through the PTT approach is hard though interesting work: in all this reading of papers and reviewing of data collected on the assessment process itself, we learn more and more about our faculty, our curricula, and our students. Thus, it is heartening that faculty acknowledge the necessity of the procedure, even if they did not initially cheer our adoption of it. As one BW faculty wrote, “I think it’s better to do the assessment than not, and I am in awe of the dept’s committee (and admins) who handled all the chaos.” In the end, we have had to reconcile ourselves with this chaotic, fluid nature of our assess-

ment, which by its thoroughness reveals important teaching and learning challenges that we would have never known about it if we left placement to students, the College Board, or even a one-shot summer writing exam. We have come to realize that the point is not to please everyone but to make informed, contextualized judgments based on students' actual writing rather than on standardized test scores or their self-assessment. And while doing our combined best to help students succeed is hard, in its own way it is also pleasing—or better yet, satisfying.

APPENDIX: COMMON PLACEMENT ASSIGNMENT FOR FALL 2010
[designed and tested by veteran first-year writing faculty]

Do Objects Make Us?

For the first day of your writing class you will need to read the three linked articles and compose a 2-3 page essay in which you reference two of the three articles to discuss how material objects may contribute to creating a self-image.

Articles

- Cave, Damien. "On Sale at Old Navy: Cool Clothes for Identical Zombies!" *Salon.com*. Salon Media Group, 22 Nov. 2000. Web. 7 June 2010.
- Miller, Laura. "We Are What We Buy." *Salon.com*. Salon Media Group, 3 June 2000. Web. 7 June 2010.
- Walker, Rob. "iPad Envy." *New York Times*. New York Times, 5 April 2010. Web. 30 June 2010.

Overview: Paul McCartney wrote the memorable words, "Money can't buy me love," and yet judging by the rate of spending on non-essential consumer goods in this country (and elsewhere), it seems like money does buy something. And that something may go beyond the use value or pleasure of an object. As the assigned articles suggest, the choices we make in the objects we buy (clothing, cars, cosmetics, sports equipment, food, communication devices, for example), the establishments we frequent (restaurants, coffee houses, salons, grocery stores, gyms, and so forth), and our entertainment options (in music, film, television, art, literature, and the like) are the subject of much debate.

Essay Question: Write a 2-3 page essay in which you consider how objects either do or do not help form, alter, or enforce the image that individuals

project to the people around them. Draw on two of the three assigned readings and reflect on your own experience to write this essay.

To construct a successful argument, you will need to have a strong central claim and to use the sources provided carefully, which is to say that you need to engage with the writers and their ideas rather than just summarizing them. In addition to referring to two of the three assigned readings, you are encouraged to draw upon your own experiences, insights, and observations.

Requirements

Length: The draft must be 2 to 3 pages long (typed and double-spaced).

Style: MLA – a full description of MLA style can be found in a writing handbook or online at <dianahacker.com/writersref>.

Sources: You must appropriately use your choice of two of the provided articles.

Academic Honesty: You are expected to write this paper alone and without consulting and using additional sources that you have not fully and appropriately cited. For help in understanding what academic honesty entails, please see: <http://www.montclair.edu/writing/firstyearwriting/academicintegrity.html>.

Further Instructions

1. Bring a hard copy of your essay (and the readings) to your first writing class.
2. Save a copy of your essay in an electronic form and place that you can access once you have begun school because you will be continuing to revise your essay after the first day of class. In college writing classes students are regularly asked to revise their essays, often several times.
3. Students who are interested in receiving feedback on their essays-in-progress are encouraged to visit the Center for Writing Excellence, open all summer and during the fall semester. Please see the website for hours and to make an appointment: <http://www.montclair.edu/cwe/>.

NOTES

1. The authors would like to thank Norbert Elliot and the *WPA* reviewers for their comments on earlier versions of this essay.

2. See Mattern and Packham, College Board researchers, for a discussion of some use of cross-institutional data.

3. Royer and Gilles (“Directed”) use the first-day exercise as a “back-up,” asking teachers to offer non-binding advice concerning students’ placement choices. How much writing is incorporated depends on the local context; as Lewiecki-Wilson, Jeff Sommers, and John Paul Tassoni note, special local conditions allow them to use a process they acknowledge “might be unwieldy and too time intensive for other institutions” (166). Some placement methods, like that described by Bedore and Rossen-Knill, aim to “synthesize” DSP with writing, though they too grant that this is feasible only because they are able to limit the number of students participating (58). Our version of PTT stands out because, as the first assignment, all students must participate.

4. As Smith rightly notes, there are often a few students who start the semester late, “presumably . . . extending their vacations” (201) and thereby miss the assessment.

5. In 2009 and 2010 we surveyed a selection of BW and CW I sections, with 40/52 BW and 99/145 CW I students participating (the first score indicates data from 2009, the second from 2010); this pool reflected 17%/19% of students enrolled in BW and 5%/8% of students enrolled in CW I. Of the special populations, 31/40 students (52%/35%) whose placement changed to BW participated in our survey, while 9/9 students (64%/56%) who moved to CW I responded. In Fall 2009, 10 instructors taught BW; of these, all responded to the initial survey and 9 (90%) responded to the end-of-semester survey. Of the 56 instructors who taught CW I, 42 (75%) responded to the initial survey and 38 (68%) to the end-of-semester survey. In Fall 2010, seven of eight BW instructors (88%) responded to our survey, as did 32 of 50 CW I instructors (64%).

6. Notably, Gere and colleagues, in their very careful and admirable study of the validity of a ten-year DSP program at the University of Michigan, suggest several reasons why students may discount the DSP advice, among those being: the greater influence of adviser and peer advice, and practical challenges with the DSP assessment’s timing with respect to course registration (162-63).

WORKS CITED

- ACT, Inc. “Advising and Placement Services and Solutions.” *ACT.org*. ACT, Inc., n.d. Web. 12 Nov 2010.
- Baker, William D. “Big Ten English Placement Procedures.” *English Journal* 44.6 (1955): 351-2. *Academic Search Premier*. Web. 3 March 2010.
- Bedore, Pamela, and Deborah F. Rossen-Knill. “Informed Self-Placement: Is a Choice Offered a Choice Received?” *WPA: Writing Program Administration* 28.1-2 (2004): 55-78. Print.
- Blakesley, David. “Directed Self-Placement in the University.” *WPA: Writing Program Administration* 25.3 (2002): 9-40. Print.

- Broad, Bob. *What We Really Value: Beyond Rubrics in Teaching and Assessing Writing*. Logan, UT: Utah State UP, 2003. Print.
- College Board. "SAT® on Campus." *CollegeBoard.com*. College Board, n.d. Web. 12 Nov. 2010.
- Elliot, Norbert, Vladimir Briller, and Kamal Joshi. "Portfolio Assessment: Quantification and Community." *Journal of Writing Assessment* 3.1 (2007): 5-30. Print.
- Gere, Anne Ruggles, Laura Aull, Timothy Green, and Anne Porter. "Assessing the Validity of Directed Self-Placement at a Large University." *Assessing Writing* 15:3 (2010): 154-76. *ScienceDirect*. Web. 27 July 2011.
- Harrington, Susanmarie. "Learning to Ride the Waves: Making Decisions about Placement Testing." *WPA: Writing Program Administration* 28.3 (2005): 9-29. Print.
- Haswell, Richard, and Susan Wyche-Smith. "Adventuring into Writing Assessment." *College Composition and Communication* 45.2 (1994): 220-36. Print.
- Howard, Rebecca Moore. "Assumptions and Applications of Student Self-Assessment." *Self Assessment and Development in Writing: A Collaborative Inquiry*. Ed. Jane Bowman Smith and Kathleen Blake Yancey. Cresskill: Hampton P, 2000. 35-58. Print.
- Huot, Brian. "A Survey of College and University Writing Placement Practices." *WPA: Journal of Writing Program Administration* 17.3 (1994): 49-65. *WPA-Council.org*. Web. 20 April 2010.
- Huot, Brian, and Michael Neal. "Writing Assessment: A Techno-History." *Handbook of Writing Research*. Ed. Charles A. MacArthur, Steve Graham, and Jill Fitzgerald. New York: Guilford P, 2006. 417-432. Print.
- Huot, Brian, Peggy O'Neill, and Cindy Moore. "A Usable Past for Writing Assessment." *College English* 72.5 (2010): 495-517. Print.
- Isaacs, Emily, and Melinda Knight. "How Writing Is Done." Conference on College Composition and Communication Annual Convention. Kentucky International Convention Center, Louisville. 20 March 2010. Address.
- Isaacs, Emily, and Sean Molloy. "SATs for Writing Placement: A Critique and Counterproposal." *College English* 72.5 (2010): 518-38. Print.
- Jones, Ed. "Self-Placement at a Distance: Challenge and Opportunities." *WPA: Writing Program Administration* 32.1/2 (2008): 57-75. *Education Research Complete*. EBSCO. Web. 6 Apr. 2010.
- Lewiecki-Wilson, Cynthia, Jeff Sommers, and John Paul Tassoni. "Rhetoric and the Writer's Profile: Problematising Directed Self-Placement." *Assessing Writing* 7 (2000): 165-83. *ScienceDirect*. Web. 20 Sept. 2010.
- Lynne, Patricia. *Coming to a Theory of Terms: Writing Assessment*. Logan: Utah State UP, 2009. Print.
- Mattern, Krista, and Sheryl Packham. "Predictive Validity of ACCUPLACER Scores for Course Placement: A Meta-Analysis." *College Board.com*. Dec. 2009. Web. 24 Sept. 2010.
- Neal, Michael, and Brian Huot. "Responding to Directed Self-Placement." Royer and Gilles 243-55. Print.

- Nicolay, Theresa Freda. "Placement and Instruction in Context: Situating Writing Within a First-Year Program." *WPA: Writing Program Administration* 25.3 (2002): 41-59. Print.
- O'Neill, Peggy, Cindy Moore, and Brian Huot. *A Guide to College Writing Assessment*. Logan: Utah State UP, 2009. Print.
- Peckham, Irvin. "Online Challenge versus Offline ACT." *College Composition and Communication* 61.4 (2010): 718-45. Print.
- . "Online Placement in First-Year Writing." *College Composition and Communication* 60.3 (2009): 517-40. Print.
- . "Turning Placement into Practice." *WPA: Writing Program Administration* 29.3 (2006): 65-84. Print.
- Perelman, Leslie C. "Online Writing Assessment: Making Evaluation Real and Relevant." Conference on College Composition and Communication presentation, updated slides. *Mit.edu*. Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 19 June 2002. Web. 20 July 2010.
- Robertson, Alice. "Teach, Not Test: A Look at a New Writing Placement Procedure." *WPA: Writing Program Administration* 18.1/2 (1994): 56-63. Print.
- Royer, Daniel, and Roger Gilles. "Directed Self-Placement: An Attitude of Orientation." *College Composition and Communication* 50.1 (1998): 54-70. Print.
- . *Directed Self-Placement: Principles and Practices*. Cresskill: Hampton P, 2003. Print.
- Smith, William L. "The Importance of Teacher Knowledge in College Composition Placement Testing." *Assessing Writing: A Critical Sourcebook*. Ed. Brian Huot and Peggy O'Neill. New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2009. 179-202. Print.
- White, Edward. "Language and Reality in Writing Assessment." *College Composition and Communication* 41.2 (May 1990): 187-200. Print.
- . "The Opening of the Modern Era of Writing Assessment: A Narrative." *College English* 63.3 (2001): 306-20. Print.
- "Writing at Montclair." *A Writer's Reference for Montclair State University*. By Diana Hacker and Nancy Sommers. 7th ed. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2011. Montclair-1 - Montclair-27. Print.



Just Comp

Don J. Kraemer

ABSTRACT

I make the argument that the proper content of FYC is the study of, and practice in, symbolic action for civic purposes (i.e., social justice). The many worthy objectives that some mistake as “approaches” to FYC—such as helping students see themselves as writers or coming to terms with difficulty or learning the genres of the university or studying Writing Studies’ findings as course content or even mastering situated procedural knowledge—are better understood as values that are constructed as in conflict, so that FYC’s mission can be discussed as a deeper collaboration. This mission is almost, but not quite, expressed in the WPA Outcomes. These outcomes—like all facts and evidence—have to be argued. That is, a case has to be made for them, and any such case will have to be built on the value-laden principles that situate the facts. Such cases will, at their best, keep in dialogic contact both the obligations we have (a) to treat other people with dignity and (b) to choose for ourselves how to live well—a way of making a case that ought to be the chief aim of FYC.

THE CHIEF VALUE OF FYC: WHO NEEDS IT AND WHY

This essay responds to a fundamental question—a question posed recently on the WPA listserv by Richard Haswell: “How do you answer the argument, which I have heard from juniors and seniors who have put off taking required FYC, that obviously they didn’t need it and the proof is their good standing as juniors and seniors?” (9 March 2011)

A key word here is “need”—key not just because it directs our attention toward interpretive questions of what is more or less important but also because it calls into question *whose* needs. If juniors and seniors of good standing do not need FYC, “obviously,” to fulfill the literacy demands of their majors, of the university, then what might we mean by insisting there

are other needs held by society, and thereby by them and us? What public need does FYC address? How is this need coherently reconciled with what is best for “us,” whether “us” be students who want quick advancement toward the degrees that confer significant benefits or compositionists who seek the personally rewarding, program-enriching resources that greater stature promises? Implicit in the ambiguity of need are, I think, two sides of justice—justice as both moral obligation and ethical preference. It is this ambiguity, recast as a productive interdependence between public and private needs, that FYC already exploits and would do well to more explicitly exploit, as a respectful response to the skepticism of stakeholders like Haswell’s students.

In developing such a response, I wish to begin by considering the WPA Outcomes. It would save a lot of trouble if pointing students toward the Outcomes were all it took to appease their skepticism, but the Outcomes do not speak for themselves—not even to insiders. Consider, for example, Elizabeth Wardle’s allusion to the Outcomes:

FYC is not, then, achieving its official goal of preparing students to write the genres of the academy. FYC teachers in this study assigned genres that were limited to the FYC course and that did not mirror the rhetorical situations to which genres in other disciplinary activity systems respond—or even appear to consciously bridge to them. (“Mutt Genres” 778; see also 767)

In the context of Wardle’s article, FYC’s failure seems to be peculiar to two classes that (a) were not taught as “boundary practice” (776)—i.e., as rhetorical practices in one context whose utility in another context might require adjustments to different audience expectations, generic conventions, and kairotic exigencies—and (b) “did not mirror the rhetorical situations to which genres in other disciplinary activity systems respond” (778). In the event that rhetorical knowledge is not taught as situated and adjustable, then FYC would seem bound for failure, but that failure seems avoidable in the not-uncommon event that FYC *is* taught as boundary practice (and, better, not just as boundary practice but also as genuine rhetorical activity within the boundary of FYC, a classroom community marked by inquiry, debate, revision).

The question of whether FYC fails to “mirror” other rhetorical situations is not at issue in the Outcomes; it is not an “official goal.” The outcomes (I argue) do nothing like require FYC work to “*mirror* the rhetorical situations to which genres in other disciplinary activity systems respond” (or to have another context “*reflected* in the FYC argument assignment” [Wardle, “Mutt” 776; emphasis added]). Such positivistic predication is, on the con-

trary, what the outcomes (like the theory that informs them) seem designed to help students move beyond. What the outcomes do recommend, under “Rhetorical Knowledge,” is that by the end of FYC students should “[r]espond to the needs of different audiences, [r]espond appropriately to different kinds of rhetorical situations, [u]se conventions of format and structure appropriate to the rhetorical situation, . . . [u]nderstand how genres shape reading and writing, [and w]rite in several genres” (“WPA Outcomes Statement” 1). If taught as boundary practice, such generic know-how will not be mistaken for *the* genres of the university, of the workplace, and of everywhere else. Quite the contrary: it will be (some of) the means by which other genres are approached, learned, evaluated, and perhaps changed. The closest the Outcomes get to what Wardle calls the “official goal” is in their recommendation that “[f]aculty in *all programs and departments can build on this preparation* by helping students learn [t]he main features of writing in their fields[, t]he main uses of writing in their fields[, and t]he expectations of readers in their fields” (1; emphasis added). Clearly not at issue, this recommendation is not for FYC but rather for how non-FYC structures and faculty can “build on” what FYC has begun. The difference between what is taught in FYC and what is practiced elsewhere, then, can be fairly regarded, by funding parties and other stakeholders, as FYC’s main strength, not its weakness; its main justification and reason for being, not its disqualification.

Or so I claim, and I so claim because while the WPA Outcomes are evidence, are facts, they are not an argument for what to do in FYC until a value-laden, principled account elaborates them as aligned with/in the service of the dialectical tension between public and private needs. Wardle and others can make a different case. But the cases we make will be written out of our convictions, not despite them. They will situate the facts and knowledge they make arguments for, not report the facts and knowledge they follow from. Our different analyses will be designed to add to the value of what we do not only to the lives of those we serve but to our own. It is this deeper collaboration between moral obligation and ethical preference I am advocating. Whether we tout templates or intuition, inventive forms or disciplinary content, process or product, lit or comp, socially received constructivism or personally cobbled integrity, we are doing so within an axiological framework in critical support of the tensions between what our society and each one of our students need. I doubt any one of us would force a student to use templates (such as those in *They Say/I Say*) if those templates blocked her or interfered negatively with her purposes, style, inventiveness, while I imagine all of us are interested in whom templates help, how they help, and to what ends (see Yeh; Delpit). We could say,

fairly enough, that what the template-example illustrates is that what matters is whatever helps this or that student writer, but more justly we could frame the two values implicit in the template example—resource opportunity (access to the templates that literacy-rich students have internalized) and welfare opportunity (the self-realization of one’s literacy resources and talents in accordance with one’s well-being and ambitions)—as precious values that are in conflict.

NEED: WHAT THE OUTCOMES IMPLY

One public version of how we compositionists define “need” is implicit in the Outcomes, which recommend in effect rhetoric: a situated procedural rhetoric that, despite some recent red herrings, is widely held to be transferable. Although Downs and Wardle (whose 2007 article, “Teaching about Writing, Righting Misconceptions,” has done so much to get Writing about Writing into our disciplinary conversation) were initially perceived (by Libby Miles among others) as dismissing “the importance of teaching situated procedural knowledge at the first-year level” (Miles et al. 504), they have since made it clear they believe in such knowledge and its transferability, asserting—correctly, I believe—that the “point of contention, then, is only *which* situation(s) to teach” (Downs, “Responses” 173).¹ Dan Fraizer’s 2010 literature review on the transferability of genre knowledge shows that this point of contention remains. The question at issue is which aspects of genre should be explicitly taught. Why this question is importantly at issue is our belief that genre influences “how we think about a topic and how we communicate and relate to each other in specific social situations” (“First Steps” 37). In underscoring “*how we communicate and relate to each other*,” I am committing to the social-justice project as that significantly influential aspect of any genre that the Outcomes say should be most emphasized and taught.

Before I explain why this commitment *is* the point of contention, let me explain the social-justice commitment in generic analysis of “how we communicate and relate to each other.” I take these terms as contractual: i.e., as what we promise one another. In “Inventing the University,” David Bartholomae interprets a student placement-exam as having “established the contract by which we may be spoken to as equals” (637). In the FYC curriculum I imagine, every assignment and paper represents a contract between the writer and reader as free and equal citizens (even if the classroom is conspicuously a place where free and equal relations are suspended). As such, equality is not just a mode of address; it is the problem the writer-reader contract addresses. Here is Bartholomae’s student-writer’s “contract”:

“In whatever form creativity takes, whether it be music, art, or science, it is an important aspect of *our* lives because it enables *us* to be individuals” (637). *Our* lives, enables *us*—in such generalization, the writer “invites” the errors of inclusiveness, as Kenneth Burke puts it, “for justice is the *universalization* of a standard” (*Rhetoric* 280).

This standard is evident in Bartholomae’s parenthetical comment, which calls the error in the student’s contract: “(For me to break that contract, to argue that *my* life is not represented in that essay, is one way for me to begin as a teacher with that student in that essay.)” (637-38). Bartholomae’s point, as I read it in context and as I amplify it for FYC, is not that the student stick to his life—stuck in what he knows. The point is more disturbing: the student is to keep writing toward that inclusiveness none of us can know—i.e., toward what would be a universal claim that justly represents everyone, that is, that makes the case that within this category of creativity our identities should be understood as equal and hence deserving of equal treatment. Generally, then, I am saying that there are underlying questions of justice when we ask what follows from a writer’s experience, opinion, syntax; when we compare stronger and weaker arguments; when we apply the values that inform our concepts of effectiveness, validity, and desirability. To bring these questions to the fore is FYC’s commitment to justice.

It is this very commitment I claim we share that is the point of contention among us. Regarding which situations to teach, Downs and Wardle say the situations we *need* to teach are those which allow the study of writing itself and not of, say, intelligent design (567-68), and in 2009 Wardle wrote that what students in her four-year study “*did need* was the ability to understand why and how texts changed across their classrooms and the knowledge of what to do to learn how to produce texts appropriate to those classrooms” (Wardle, “Continuing the Dialogue” 181; emphasis added). But if vast numbers of other students—juniors and seniors of good standing—already know how to produce “appropriate” texts by sizing up the rhetorical situation—what the teacher wants, in what form, for what purposes, and so on—why mandate rhetorical busywork *they* do not need?

There is traction to be gained, I believe, in shifting the emphasis from the production of “appropriate” texts to critical awareness of why and how texts are appropriate—to why they change and when they *should*. I believe that it is this latter focus in particular that *we* believe is needed. It may be difficult, in fact, to imagine ourselves *not* committed to this version of general education, a version in which rhetoric is, as James Boyd White puts it, “the central art by which culture and community are established, maintained and transformed. This kind of rhetoric—I call it ‘constitutive rhetoric’—has justice as its ultimate subject . . .” (qtd. Crosswhite 306 n.9). A

similar view can be found in Robert Yagelski's "A Thousand Writers Writing," winner of *English Education's* 2010 Janet Emig Award for Exemplary Scholarship:

If the overriding purpose of formal education is to enable us to imagine and create just and sustainable communities that contribute to our individual and collective well-being, as I believe it should be, then teaching writing cannot be defined exclusively by the widely accepted but limited goals of producing effective communicators and academically successful learners for the existing consumer-oriented culture and for workplaces defined by economic globalization. . . . Rather, writing instruction, like schooling in general, should ultimately be about creating a better world. (8)

I see this loftily prescriptive commitment to justice overridingly expressed—as an absolute norm by which we orient what we do—in the Writing-about-Writing movement:

Our experiences [Downs' and Wardle's] suggest that some of our criteria for student success in writing courses—such as recognizing the conversational nature of research writing or gaining confidence in and perspective on one's writing abilities and processes—are positively impacted by the writing studies pedagogy. The question is whether and for whom such gains will count as "improved writing." (Downs and Wardle 576)

This interest not only in whether our practices do any good but also in *for whom*—who benefits, how so, in whose eyes, to what ends—attests to the democratic model of constitutive rhetoric guiding those practices. If the improvements are unfairly distributed or do not count for some students, in their own eyes, as improvements, or are not regarded as improvements by the communities these students subsequently seek to join and affect, we will want to know. Wardle's recent work expresses this same desire:

Analysis of academic genres need not be unreflective or slavish; genre analysis in FYC *should* do what all good analysis does: take stock of the genre, how it works and does not work, whom it serves and does not serve, and so forth. (Wardle, "Mutt Genres" 783; emphasis added)²

In this intensive focus on service—"whom it serves and does not serve"—is no less than our obligation to constituting ourselves, analytically, as free and equal citizens doing the work of democracy by academic means.

It is my contention that something significant for WPAs follows from this normative commitment—the implicit hierarchy or hierarchical imper-

ative in our shared *shoulds*—which needs to be more explicitly acknowledged. Doing the work of democracy by academic-discursive means needs to be more explicitly acknowledged because our disagreements over, for example, what sorts of texts to assign and how to engage them can be more ethically engaged, and taken further, if we coordinate means and ends. On the question of what reading to assign, Wardle concedes that “first-year students cannot be expected to care that they might be reading seminal works in writing studies,” for “they have no *need* to be exposed to a broad sampling of all the kinds of work we do as writing studies scholars.” Her “first concern,” then, “is choosing texts that will help the students understand something more about themselves as readers and writers, texts with which the students can connect” (“Continuing the Dialogue” 178; emphasis added). It is agreed that the texts we assign should connect with students. But on what terms should those connections be made, to what ends?

The answer lies in FYC’s mission, as a general education course in the service of deliberative symbolic action for democratically civic ends, to involve students in the ethical arguments that inquire into justice, as elaborated below. That a writer might successfully report facts she has beautifully synthesized or make claims she insightfully elaborates will *not* suffice—does not exempt that writer from FYC—because such rhetoric pays insufficient respect to an audience’s justifications in claiming other facts or interpreting the same facts differently or wondering how *they* are affected by the writer’s claims.

FYC’S MISSION ELABORATED

An implicit commitment to justice underwrites the WPA Outcomes because rhetoric’s origins in justice continue to inform the theory that underwrites the Outcomes (Kennedy 18-19; Richards 19). Extending traditional rhetoric, the New Rhetoric’s aim, as Chaïm Perelman and Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca claim, is to help develop “the justification of the possibility of a human community in the sphere of action when this justification cannot be based on a reality or objective truth” (*The New Rhetoric* 514). Three major implications for FYC emerge from this commitment to rhetoric, implications that are intimately inter-related: one, how justification “in the sphere of action” enlarges the scope of justice; two, how this enlarged sense of justice implicates the ethics of decision-making, deliberating, and inquiring; and three, how such acts are supported not by value-independent facts (“reality or objective truth”) but by the values that situate them.

One, whereas justice has been understood to protect the due one is owed, or deserves, attempting to respect how different each one of us is

expands the scope of justice. To put this in a way that emphasizes the advantage this expansion of justice holds for the deliberative democracy FYC educates its students to understand, value, and improve: while thinking about justice can emphasize its forensic aspect (focusing on what happened, which affects mainly the parties in question), something bigger can happen when we emphasize its deliberative aspect. Focusing on the deliberative (on what shall be done about, say, benefits for adjunct faculty) affects all of us personally (not least WPAs), by making more present the fit between how our preferences will affect others and whether equal treatment for all will suit us. Not uncommonly, feeling personally affected intensifies exigency, stimulating us to take deliberation more seriously.

Two, such deliberation's ethical obligations toward others is adumbrated in the New Rhetoric's commitment to an expanded sense of justice:

[T]he central guiding principle of argumentation is the idea of justice, which is at the heart of the very concepts of reason and argumentation. . . . [P]eople make conflicting claims on each other's being-in-the-world, an uncovering of entities; however, each of these disclosures is in some respects different from all the others. And yet these disclosures make claims on each other. These claims often need to be reconciled with the idea of justice: that beings of the same kind be treated in the same way. Argumentation is the attempt to reconcile the claims of different disclosures of the world in a way that is fair and just. (Crosswhite, *The Rhetoric of Reason* 36)

This is a different way of thinking about justice—thinking, that is, about how to reconcile “the claims of different disclosures of the world,” disclosures that are different not just epistemologically but affectively. We want different lives and imagine different ways of leading those lives well. Thinking of justice this way allows us to elaborate the two different kinds of needs addressed by justice (and, therefore, by FYC). In his 2011 book, *Justice for Hedgehogs*, Ronald Dworkin distinguishes between “ethics, which is the study of how to live well, and morality, which is the study of how we must treat other people” (13). Morality involves commandments, rules, and laws; ethics involves the question of what it means to each of us to fulfill his or her life. Dworkin offers this analogy: “Morality, broadly understood, defines the lanes that separate swimmers. It stipulates when one must cross lanes to help and what constitutes forbidden lane-crossing harm. Ethics governs how one must swim in one's own lane to have swum well” (371). This analogy has the virtue of raising questions about access to resources and about the historical, cultural, regional, able-bodied variability of value, questions that complicate rather than eliminate the pathos of what “to have

swum well” will mean to any one of us, of how it will appeal. If we consider whether to help a swimmer struggling in the lane next to us (or many lanes over, or whose cries from another pool are barely audible to us, perhaps but reported to us), our consideration must reflect “the proper respect for the importance of other people’s lives,” but it will also assess “what the cost of that help would mean to you, not what it might mean to someone with different ambitions” (Dworkin 277). One’s competitive ambitions as a swimmer, the purposes swimming serves in one’s life (meditative, therapeutic, imaginative subversively and submersibly), the threat to one’s own safety posed by helping someone in the water, etc.—these are personal “facts” (i.e., something it is important to know about ourselves and for others to know about us). These facts are concrete and singular, not generalizable. And more: they are facts we protect, and develop, as *our* needs.

Three, insofar as such facts are consubstantial with our needs, the facts by themselves will not constitute good arguments—all the more so if we subscribe to the “high demands” deliberative democracy makes on its citizens, as Patricia Roberts-Miller describes these and as envisioned by the WPA Outcomes:

Deliberative democracy makes high demands of citizens. We must treat one another with empathy, attentiveness, and trust; we must take the time to invent and continually reinvent our ideas in the light of informed disagreement; we must care enough about our own views to try to persuade others of them, but not so much that we are unwilling to change them; we must listen with care to people who tell us we are wrong; we must behave with grace when other views prevail; we must argue with passion but without rancor, with commitment but without intransigence. (*Deliberate Conflict* 187)

These ideals, which Roberts-Miller adopts for the FYC classroom, are meant to contrast with “the dominant approaches to argumentation [that] continue to assume that participating in public argument means stating one’s opinion on policy issues and listing one’s reasons” (Roberts-Miller 227; see also Phelps 136). Genres in which it is conventional to list one’s reasons cannot be dialectical and respectful—that is to say, appropriate for FYC; they cannot be appropriate for FYC because even the most unimpeachable scientific facts cannot prove our value judgments for those whose understanding of the facts, with respect to what claim those facts are to have on “the possibility of a human community in the sphere of action” (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca 514), is based on, or carefully composed of, different value judgments. These value judgments must be argued; a case must be made for what we take to be evidence, a case in which we take

responsibility for what the evidence says to us and for how our principled convictions affect others (see Dworkin 418; Cohen 20, 232, 268).

This claim about value judgments applies, I believe, to WPA work: any writing program's norms are always in dialogue with what they mean to us—to how each one of us (not administrators but *this* administrator) negotiates what she owes, and is owed by, her colleagues. We might, for example, have to decide how to advise a colleague whether what would seem a norm removed from cost-benefit analysis—the rhetoric of situated, procedural knowledge, say—is the right thing to teach to a student whose utterance seems to call for a different, perhaps more personal, response (e.g., Tobin 204-5). Notice that this conflict of principled values, which we may construct as between institutional and personal or as between public and private, is not necessarily an antithesis. Rather, values may “work best for us when we conceptualize them so that they [show] conflict as a deeper collaboration” (Dworkin 120). Conceptualizing a conflict between what a norm commands us to do (e.g., ensuring that a writing program has coherence *as a program*) and how we prefer to perform that norm (e.g., unilaterally or collaboratively) is a way of coming to better terms: better terms with what it means to treat others with respect while pursuing our idea of what it means to live well.

This loose outcome of collaborative conflict is my argument's chief implication for administrative practice, and it is this very possibility that has been evident, if barely, in arguments over which genres and situations to privilege in FYC. If immersion in discursive justice is emphasized as what everyone needs from FYC, that emphasis may be taken to imply that other disciplines cannot be counted on to address this necessary work. (I am explicitly saying that they cannot be so counted on to do this work, for it is FYC's mission, not theirs.) But if framing different values so that they conflict can help advance the inquiry, then this conflict betters our relations within the discipline and with other disciplines, betters our efforts with our students, and betters our personal needs. One important instance of such framing follows: “As Russell has pointed out,” Wardle writes, referring to David Russell's “The Ethics of Teaching Ethics,” a “tendency exists on the part of instructors trained in the humanities to position non-humanities disciplines as somehow less ethical and less concerned with the ‘public good’ than humanities disciplines” (“Mutt Genres” 783). In my reading of Wardle's purpose, most salient is the given-ness of “public good” (a good removed from any cost-benefit analysis), next the ethical reminder that such disciplinarily parochial judgments should not be made lightly, and last—unmarked but telling—a displacement of what is more at issue: i.e., not so much which genres and situations should be taught as the quality of the

ethical activity going on in them (and which their formal conventions and communicative channels influence).

It helps to note that in the article Wardle cites, Russell himself (whose focus is not on FYC but on “professional communication courses for non-English majors” [“Ethics” 84]) claims ethics as one of our core values: “[A]ll teachers—and all professions and all institutions and indeed all human beings—have a responsibility to promote ethical behavior” (85). To be sure, this responsibility is very general, but it takes shape within the basic conflict within professions “between the interests of an individual and the common good” (Russell 91). While such conflict is sometimes resolved by violence or the threat of force, it is usually “resolved by the very human, very rhetorical exercise of power through persuasion and negotiation . . . [by] nonviolent means of conflict resolution, the nonviolent exercise of power” (91). FYC is surely a site of conflict: “If we teach writing as more than mere recording of value-neutral facts,” then “ethical issues will inevitably arise” (104; see also 85-86). Russell’s version of rhetoric is congenial not only for its reinforcement of rhetoric’s commitment to the unforced force of the better argument; it also honors the interdependence of morality and ethics that FYC aspires to. To join an organization or profession, Russell writes, is “to participate in its service to society and reap the rewards, material and immaterial, that society offers for that service[;] this is a crucial way that individuals serve society as well as themselves, a way they become empowered” (92). As part of the preparatory process, FYC does not exist to serve either society or the individual. Rather, the empowerment it ideally enables is complexly dialectic, which suggests another way to respond to—and begin inquiry with—students like Haswell’s: All discourse is situated, even disciplinary discourse, which means any instance of it is an argument that serves some interests rather than others, or that serves some interests better than it serves others, and as such, whatever else it does, that argument embodies questions of justice.

The sections that follow are intended as illustrations of how such an understanding might affect whether to select a text (one I happen to admire), whether to emphasize a genre (one I happen to favor), and whether to adopt a curriculum (one I happen to find congenial). All three cases will be constructed as in conflict with the model of justice I have proposed—a construction designed to clarify our *stasis*, that point at which we have decided we need to agree to disagree.

A TEXT

Stuart Greene's "Argument as Conversation," the essay privileged to open Elizabeth Wardle and Douglas Downs' 2011 textbook, *Writing about Writing: A College Reader*, introduces and develops one of our foundational metaphors, "the metaphor of conversation" (qtd. Wardle and Downs 10), and it does so for a purpose few of us would disown: i.e., so that college students might begin contemplating research as a form of inquiry responsible for paying attention to what others have said, for responding to (not merely reproducing) what others have said, and for responding in such a way to what others have said that the exchange becomes more and more like collaborative inquiry, less and less like zero-sum debate (see also Brodkey 236; Clark). Greene's presentation of this foundational metaphor is patient, coherent, and clear—an exemplary expository summary.

Whether the presentation is exemplary inquiry is less certain. In the editorial apparatus "Applying and Exploring Ideas," Wardle and Downs ask, "Does Greene's article itself represent a 'conversation'? If so, with whom? How does he frame his argument? Would you say, in short, that Greene practices what he preaches in 'Argument as Conversation?'" (21). I take these questions to imply that it may indeed be questionable whether Greene practices what he preaches. Fair enough. I would say that Greene's essay resembles that kind of conversation in which one party has been asked by a second party to provide information and explanation that that second party seeks. Greene's thesis from the outset is that writing—especially researched writing—is more social than strictly personal in nature. This thesis is sustained. It is whether this thesis is *inquired* into—argued in the way we most wish to imagine and practice argumentation—that I find harder to discern. Inquiry into this thesis may not have been Greene's purpose, but should it have been? How we answer this prescriptive question brings us a step closer toward the disciplinary values over which we have agreed to disagree.

Consider Greene's use of Kenneth Burke, whose canonical "parlor" metaphor Greene calls "[p]erhaps the most eloquent statement of writing as conversation":

Imagine that you enter a parlor. You come late. When you arrive, others have long preceded you, and they are engaged in a heated discussion, a discussion too heated for them to pause and tell you exactly what it is about. In fact the discussion had already begun long before any of them got there, so that no one present is qualified to retrace for you all the steps that had gone before. You listen for a while, until you decide that you have caught the tenor of the argument; then you put in your oar. Someone answers; you answer him;

another comes to your defense; another aligns himself against you, to either the embarrassment or gratification of your opponent, depending on the quality of your ally's assistance. However, the discussion is interminable. The hour grows late, you must depart. And you do depart, with the discussion still vigorously in progress. (qtd. Wardle and Downs 11)

This passage raises many questions, some of which follow: Why a “parlor” scene and why not something else somewhere else? How do reflection and revision fit in here (is retreat to a quiet corner possible, for example)? Does the presumptive fact that the interlocutors are all male have anything to do with why the discussion is “heated”—or with how heated, how adversarial? Must the action presented be necessarily defensive and competitively emotional (“another aligns himself *against* you,” “your *ally*'s assistance,” “another comes to your *defense*,” “to either the embarrassment or gratification of your *opponent*”)? Why bother with such discourse? If the vibe is bad, why not just “unfriend” such interlocutors? If this statement is meant for students *as students*, how does *deciding* to enter *this* conversation and then continuing it correspond with academic writing as they have experienced it and will come to know it? Is this statement a description of how writing is or a plea for how writing should be? And in either case, does it apply to *all* writing? That is, is all writing like this, or should all writing be?

Of these and other questions that could be asked, Greene addresses only the last two: “As this passage *describes*, every *argument* you make is connected to other arguments” (11; emphasis added). Burke's metaphor is taken to describe argument; the features of conversation that are salient for argument are procedural; these procedures include some generalizable moves: identifying the questions and topics, determining the *stasis*, inventing and assessing kinds of evidence, weighing and responding to objections, considering stakes and consequences and contingencies (12). As representative of the procedural rhetorical knowledge we have earned the right to deliver to students, these moves count as legitimate disciplinary content.

But what if Burke's metaphor is read less as a description than as a plea to see intellectual inquiry as dialectically impassioned, and more to the point, what if we ask ourselves what principled desire this passage represents for us? If it is desirable to perceive argument as conversation, students (it is then hoped) might be less likely to see it as an arcane discipline that would just as soon exclude them and more likely to see it as an everyday and conventional (if not also natural) process they are already equipped to pursue. There are, however, many conventions students are not in pursuit of, let alone required to study. Why, then, should they join in argumentation, and why should we require them to join it—perhaps before they feel

ready, perhaps after they have grounds for cynicism? The answer to both questions, I submit, is the same, and it is also the answer to who we are as a discipline: the fairness principle upon which social justice depends. On this view, the question is not whether we are teaching students to be Good Writers *or* Good Citizens; we are teaching, rather, the study of, and immersion in, powerful symbolic action for civic ends (for some concrete curricula, see Kraemer). It is presumed that students should join the conversation they study: morally, to fulfill obligations; ethically, to add value to their interests. And it is our self-expectation that we should move them into it (with care, with respect, with attention) to demonstrate that a hearing is not only possible but rewarding; that responsiveness is not only possible but rewarding; that this requirement can, and must, honor both the duties they face as citizen writers (there are obligations to fulfill) and the desires and preferences they face as individual writers (there is value to add to their interests).

Given the mission peculiar to FYC and given contingencies such as ten-week quarters, I would not only hesitate to assign Greene; I would hesitate to assign textbooks like *Writing about Writing* itself (which I *have* used in an upper-division writing class for majors, and would use there again). But for a program, the question of what to assign—of whether anything is mandated—is one I would insist on having with my colleagues. For writing programs to be more committed to the questions of justice they already implicitly embrace, they might begin by extending to their colleagues the deliberative respect our discipline recommends extending to students: i.e., inviting, even requiring, *their* responses to curricular mandates in light of *their* ethical interests. The next two sections represent an approach to the normative framework I'd advocate.

A GENRE

Insofar as judicial decisions affecting public policy are a genre, let us consider whether the ethical activity in this genre merits curricular priority. The set of texts I'll analyze comes from the U.S. Supreme Court case *District of Columbia et al. v. Heller*, a case decided on June 26, 2008, in which by a 5-4 vote the Court overturned D.C.'s handgun ban and its restrictions on other firearms, ruling on 2nd Amendment grounds that the ban violated the individual's right to possess handguns and the right, inside one's home, to keep all firearms functional, i.e., ready to use: assembled, loaded, and unlocked. Whether this case was decided correctly is not the focus here (nor could I say). The focus, rather, is on the quality of the rhetorical activity it makes available for FYC students.

In his study of the Supreme Court's rhetoric, Clarke Rountree concludes that the "Supreme Court employs a 'chaste rhetoric that pretends not to be rhetorical' and characterizes its own motives in deciding cases as severely circumscribed by the law" (*Judging the Supreme Court* 3). On this reading, so decisive is the law that there is little room for judgment. Rountree writes that "[d]issenting opinions," for example,

typically reconstruct majority opinions to show that they are not following the law—a serious threat to a majority's ability to present its motives as proper. Majority opinions usually *explain* dissenters' opinions, typically while maintaining a decorum that finds them "sadly mistaken" rather than "stupid," "malicious," or "motivated by personal interests." (Rountree 9; emphasis added)

There is in such legal rhetoric, besides a supercilious civility, the laws of a positivistic universe: textual meaning, for example, is so secure that prior texts contain the conclusions readers must reach. How to weigh the historical record, which rights apply and how—all is sufficiently given in advance, as long as the recipient is neither ignorant nor obstinate.

Rountree's analysis seems to me mainly well founded—with a notable exception. That exception is the interest-balancing rhetoric deployed by Justice Breyer, which goes beyond this parameter and about which more below. The Court's normal rhetoric, however, does seem to hew to a conception of the law that resembles what Edward Schiappa calls "real" definitions; that is, such rhetoric does not so much ask how people use *X* and for what range of purposes as it inquires into *X's essence* (*Defining Reality* 6). In the case of constitutional law, this inquiry is frequently into the essence of what the founders intended. Justice Stevens' claim is typical: "Specifically, there is no indication that the Framers of the Amendment *intended* to enshrine the common-law right of self-defense in the Constitution" (Stevens 2; emphasis added). What the Framers intended long ago is the law today's justices try to demonstrate that they are following and that the other side is not. "In this dissent," Justice Stevens wrote,

I shall first explain why our decision in *Miller* was faithful to the text of the Second Amendment and the purposes revealed in its drafting history. I shall then comment on the post-ratification history of the Amendment, which makes abundantly clear that the Amendment should not be interpreted as limiting the authority of Congress to regulate the use or possession of firearms for purely civilian purposes. (5)

It is possible to be "faithful to the text" and to the purposes its "drafting history" reveals; meaning is revealed, not constructed. The "post-ratifica-

tion history” is not interpreted; rather, this history is what “*makes abundantly clear*” how what *has to be interpreted* should be interpreted. Justice Scalia’s majority opinion makes the same move, ridiculing how the dissent “flatly misreads” the historical record, “ignoring the historical reality that the Second Amendment was not intended to lay down a ‘novel principl[e]’ but rather codified a right ‘inherited from our English ancestors’” (30, 26).

This rhetoric of essence can be constructed as not just different from but in conflict with Justice Breyer’s rhetoric of “*usage*,” a kind of inquiry that emphasizes less what *X* truly is than how people have used *X*, and might continue to use *X*—in which circumstances, for what reasons (Schiappa 6-7). “[H]istorical evidence,” Justice Breyer asserts,

is the *beginning*, rather than the *end*, of any constitutional inquiry. . . . [T]o answer the questions that are raised (that is, to see whether the statute is unconstitutional) requires us to focus on practicalities, the statute’s rationale, the problems that called it into being, its relation to those objectives—in a word, the details. There are no purely logical or conceptual answers to such questions. (Breyer 7-8)

To be sure, like his colleagues, Justice Breyer believes it is the “historical evidence [that] demonstrates,” and, also like his colleagues, he honors the *stasis*: “to see whether the statute is unconstitutional.” Where he departs from his colleagues (and for our purposes, usefully) is in his commitment to “practical wisdom,” as he calls it (12), where the “ultimate question is whether the statute imposes burdens that, when viewed in light of the statute’s legitimate objectives, are disproportionate” (13-14). Disproportionate for whom? His answer:

Given the purposes for which the Framers enacted the Second Amendment, how should it be applied to modern-day circumstances that they could not have anticipated? Assume, for argument’s sake, that the Framers did intend the Amendment to offer a degree of self-defense protection. Does that mean that the Framers also intended to guarantee a right to possess a loaded gun near swimming pools, parks, and playgrounds? That they would not have cared about the children who might pick up a loaded gun on their parents’ bedside table? That they (who certainly showed concern for the risk of fire, see *supra*, at 5–7) would have lacked concern for the risk of accidental deaths or suicides that readily accessible loaded handguns in urban areas might bring? Unless we believe that they intended future generations to ignore such matters, answering questions such as the questions in this case requires judgment—judicial judgment exercised

within a framework for constitutional analysis that guides that judgment and which makes its exercise transparent. (43; see also Breyer, *Active Liberty* 115)

Justice Breyer's moves within the genre of judicial review are more just, I am arguing, than are the moves made by Scalia and Stevens. I am not arguing, then, for *a* particular genre but rather for pedagogical immersion in the kind of analysis Justice Breyer calls for, the kind of analysis FYC at its best makes possible: facts are not decisive but are decided, argued for, the implications of how they are acted on assessed for whom they will affect and how, with what further consequences for who we are and where (for a sample writing assignment, see Appendix).

If interest-balancing rhetoric like Justice Breyer's is exemplary analytic practice, more exemplary is figuring it as in conflict with, not merely different from, his interlocutors'. Consider Justice Scalia's rhetoric of essence, which argues that such balancing of interests has already taken place—by “*the people*”:

A constitutional guarantee subject to future judges' assessments of its usefulness is no constitutional guarantee at all. Constitutional rights are enshrined with the scope they were understood to have when the people adopted them, whether or not future legislatures or (yes) even future judges think that scope too broad. . . . The Second Amendment is no different. Like the First, it is the very *product* of an interest-balancing by the people—which JUSTICE BREYER would now conduct for them anew. And whatever else it leaves to future evaluation, it surely elevates above all other interests the right of law-abiding, responsible citizens to use arms in defense of hearth and home. (62-63)

We might note that to “elevate” whatever right the Second Amendment guarantees is not to render that right untouchable, that to leave “interest-balancing” for “future evaluation” is to admit touchability, that “the people” then and “the people” now are not necessarily conceptually or empirically synonymous, that protecting what was decided by some people in another time and place may mean failure to protect what others in another time and place—according to their own interpretive lights—want. We might note other issues.

But what we would note is not at issue. This pedagogical question is not for us to decide but for us to do our best to keep FYC students immersed in—and inquiring into and arguing accordingly, whether it be for or against natural law, respect for precedent and regional traditions, the sanctity of individual choice. Even if the principles we've withdrawn from

a cost-benefit analysis are deemed too expensive by students, we value (by responding to) their decisions because we know that the efficient cause of that transfer which is needed equally by all, however that need is determined, is people, not principles.

IN CONCLUSION, A CURRICULUM

The curriculum I will examine, very briefly, is Linda Brodkey's, as laid out in *Writing Permitted in Designated Areas Only*—and for two reasons: one, Brodkey's exemplary commitment to civil rights continues to inform pedagogies that openly put civil rights and difference into collaborative conflict in order to enlarge our understanding of both rhetoric and justice (see Heilker and Yergeau; Lewiecki-Wilson), and two, it can be instructive, to say the least, to frame a conflict between like-minded commitments, like-minded with respect to argumentation, justice, and especially the implications a commitment to argumentation and justice has for collaboration.³ I say "to say the least" because no less than the deeper collaboration I have been arguing for is at issue.

The end of Brodkey's curriculum is helping students become more-responsible citizens; the means toward this end is educating students in the socio-cultural construction of self so that students are

fully apprised that writers who take upon themselves the privilege of presenting a world in words are responsible for their representations. In the reading and writing assignments we are attempting to represent students to themselves as writers formed in social relations, that is, as writers who *have a vested interest* in particular discursive representations and who recognize that in the context of the course, at least, the highest value is placed on complicated rather than simplified representations of human subjectivity. (203; emphasis added)

The stress is placed on doing justice to the complexity of "human subjectivity," especially that of student writers, "who have a vested interest in particular discursive representations." This emphasis on "knowing who we are" is aligned with Brodkey's desire that instruction in critical literacy inculcate "a more expansive, ontological view of rhetorical invention" (203, 232).

For the sake of our stasis, however, I choose to "oppose" Brodkey's big-picture ontology, hoping that such opposition will bring into more compelling relief details of our mutually acknowledged justice project. To wit, whereas she concludes that it is in "articulating the possibilities of difference that we are likely to welcome the complexities of multicultural representations as part of a human project to resist identities that are not in our own best interests" (203), I would lean into "our own best interests,"

amplifying the ambiguity of “our own” (as with “vested interest,” above): whether “our” is everyone’s or mine, whether the possessive intimations in “own” preclude collective norms, whether the first-person plural preferences admit of obligations to third parties. Put another way, I would risk reducing Brodkey’s curriculum to an answer—telling students like Haswell’s that they must learn that the construction of both the subjectivity of writers and those whom they would represent *should* be complicated—and then ask if we study this, what follows, and what if we were to re-figure *representation* as *representative*, as a delegate: for whom does one’s writing serve as a representative, whom is addressed on that figure’s behalf, and whom thereby excluded or marginalized? How does the representation of self in one’s writing serve as a delegate for others, doing the representative work it should?

Justice would seem to require that this dialectic among representatives has to be local, but that does not mean, if it is to be dialectical, it does not also have to be normative.

APPENDIX

PAPER #2: WHAT IS “X”? A Paper on Definitional Frameworks

Stimuli do not possess an absolute meaning . . . different frameworks of interpretation will lead to different conclusions as to what reality is.—Kenneth Burke

Your overall objective in Paper #2 is to analyze how the different ways of defining the “stimuli” in the documentary *Lake of Fire* function to serve particular interests.

In forming your essay, consider the following *suggested* moves. The moves you actually make in your essay may turn out to be different from these, but these should help you think about the assignment:

—Get the audience involved in the problem. Because the topic of abortion is generally problematic, you should probably create a more-specific sense of the problem as you see it.

—Use what “They Say” about abortion to set up what “You Say”; the “they” must include at least two distinct “They’s” from *Lake of Fire*. You may also, if it suits your purposes, grab a “They” from Schiappa’s “Analyzing Argumentative Discourse from a Rhetorical Perspective: Defining ‘Person’ and ‘Human Life’ in Constitutional Disputes over Abortion,” as well as from other sources (including but not limited to family and friends). In this part of the essay, it would make sense to use lots of “quotation sandwiches” (see *They Say/I Say*);

—Analyze what is at stake for these various “They’s,” using questions such as What are Their purposes in defining “X”? and What interests and values are advanced by these competing definitions? In this part of the essay, you will need to demonstrate the connections between their words and the claims you are making about their words;

—In light of these differences, clarify what is at stake for you (this is your “I Say”). You might make what is at stake clearer by reflecting further on what it might mean to your life if you were to identify with one set of interests vs. the others. Or you might explain why you would draw the lines around the issue differently than have the sets of interest you’ve articulated.

—You might end the paper (which should be at least three pages long, titled, typed, and double spaced; be sure to save an electronic copy) by discussing what uncertainty you may still have. What important questions have yet to be addressed? What remains problematic? Or if your opinion is firm, you then might wonder why others who are reasonably conscientious and intelligent do not see things as you do. On an issue like abortion, is it possible for people to listen fairly to those who disagree with them? Is it possible to see views you strongly disagree with as rational, just, and humane? What do You Say?

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Grateful acknowledgment goes to Debra Dew and to WPA’s two anonymous readers, whose principled concern that the everyday work of WPAs be honored helped make this essay less ethereal and more practical. The abstractness that remains owes to my stubbornness, not theirs.

NOTES

1. See also Beaufort; Bergmann and Zepernick; Fishman and Reiff; Reid 51; Thaiss and Zawacki; Wardle, “Continuing” 181; Wardle, “Mutt Genres” 766, 771; Wardle, “Understanding.”

2. See also Brodkey 161, 165; Fraizer 37-38; Rickert 18, 61, 186, 204.

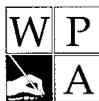
3. For argumentation, see in Brodkey 160, 187, 201-2, 238-41, 244; for justice, see 161, 165-66, 229, 234, 236, 240, 242-43; for collaboration, see 211-12 and below; other “fellow travelers” might include Bartholomae and Petrosky; Beaufort; Bizzell and Herzberg; Clark; Glau and Jacobsen; Slevin.

WORKS CITED

- Bartholomae, David. "Inventing the University." *Cross-Talk in Comp Theory: A Reader*, 2nd ed. Ed. Victor Villanueva. Urbana, IL: NCTE, 2003. 623-53. Print.
- Bartholomae, David, and Anthony R. Petrosky. *Facts, Artifacts, and Counterfacts: Theory and Method for a Reading and Writing Course*. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook, 1986. Print.
- Beaufort, Anne. *College Writing and Beyond: A New Framework for University Writing Instruction*. Logan: Utah State UP, 2007. Print.
- Bergmann, Linda S., and Janet Zepernick. "Disciplinary and Transfer: Students' Perceptions of Learning to Write." *WPA: Writing Program Administration* 31 (Fall/Winter 2007): 124-49. Web. 29 June 2009.
- Bizzell, Patricia, and Bruce Herzberg. *Negotiating Difference: Cultural Case Studies for Composition*. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 1995. Print.
- Breyer, Stephen. *Active Liberty: Interpreting Our Democratic Constitution*. New York: Knopf, 2005. Print.
- . "Dissenting." District of Columbia, Et Al., Petitioners v. Dick Anthony Heller. 554 U.S. ____ (2008). Web. 20 March 2010. <<http://www.law.cornell.edu/supct/pdf/07-29OP.ZD1>>.
- Brodkey, Linda. *Writing Permitted in Designated Areas Only*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1996. Print.
- Burke, Kenneth. *A Rhetoric of Motives*. 1950. Berkeley: U of California P, 1969. Print.
- Clark, Gregory. "Departmental Syllabus: Experience in Writing." *Strategies for Teaching First-Year Composition*. Eds. Duane Roen, Veronica Pantoja, Lauren Yena, Susan K. Miller, and Eric Waggoner. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English, 2002. 102-113. Print.
- Cohen, G.A. *Rescuing Justice And Equality*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2008. Print.
- Crosswhite, James. *The Rhetoric of Reason: Writing and the Attractions of Argument*. Madison: The U of Wisconsin P, 1996. Print.
- Delpit, Lisa. *Other People's Children: Cultural Conflict in the Classroom*. New York: The New Press, 1995. Print.
- Downs, Douglas. "Response to Miles et al." *College Composition and Communication* 60.1 (2008): 171-75. Web. 4 May 2010.
- Downs, Douglas, and Elizabeth Wardle. "Teaching about Writing, Righting Misconceptions: (Re)Envisioning 'First-Year Composition' as 'Introduction to Writing Studies.'" *College Composition and Communication* 58.4 (2007): 552-84. Print.
- Dworkin, Ronald. *Justice for Hedgehogs*. The Belknap Press of Harvard UP, 2011. Print.
- Fishman, Jenn, and Mary Jo Reiff. "Taking the High Road: Teaching for Transfer in an FYC Program." *Composition Forum* 18 (2008): 1-16. Web. 2 September 2010.
- Fraizer, Dan. "First Steps Beyond First Year: Coaching Transfer after FYC." *WPA: Writing Program Administration* 33.3 (2010): 34-57. Print.

- Glau, Gregory R., and Craig B. Jacobsen. *Scenarios for Writing: Issues, Analysis, and Response*. New York: McGraw Hill, 2001. Print.
- Graff, Gerald, and Cathy Birkenstein. *They Say/I Say: The Moves That Matter in Academic Writing*. New York: W. W. Norton, 2006. Print.
- Heilker, Paul, and Melanie Yergeau. "Autism and Rhetoric." *College English*, 73.5 (2011): 485-97. Print.
- Kennedy, George A. *Classical Rhetoric and Its Christian and Secular Tradition from Ancient to Modern Times*. Chapel Hill: The U of North Carolina P, 1980. Print.
- Kraemer, Don J. "The Economy of Explicit Instruction," *Journal of Basic Writing* 26 (2007): 4-25. Print.
- . "On Whether to Convert to Psychoanalytic Pedagogy," *Journal of Basic Writing* 29.2 (2010): 5-30. Print.
- . "Servant Class: Basic Writers and Service Learning," *Journal of Basic Writing* 24 (2005): 92-109. Print.
- Lewiecki-Wilson, Cynthia. "Rethinking Rhetoric through Mental Disabilities." *Rhetoric Review* 22.2 (2003): 156-67. Print.
- Miles, Libby, et al. "Thinking Vertically: Commenting on Douglas Downs and Elizabeth Wardle's 'Teaching about Writing, Righting Misconceptions.'" *College Composition and Communication* 59.3 (2008): 503-11. Web. 4 May 2010.
- Perelman, Chaïm, and Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca. *The New Rhetoric: A Treatise on Argumentation*. Trans. John Wilkinson and Purcell Weaver. Notre Dame: U of Notre Dame P, 1969. Print.
- Phelps, Louise Wetherbee. "When 'Basic Skills' Are Really Basic and Really Skills." *Constructing Rhetorical Education*. Ed. Marie Secor and Davida Charney. Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 1992. 116-39. Print.
- Reid, E. Shelley. "Solving Writing Problems: Reframing What Writing Teachers Know and Do." *WPA 2010 Conference Proceedings* (2011): 49-52. PDF File.
- Richards, Jennifer. *Rhetoric*. London: Routledge, 2008. Print.
- Rickert, Thomas. *Acts of Enjoyment: Rhetoric, Zizek, and the Return of the Subject*. Pittsburgh, PA: U of Pittsburgh P, 2007. Print.
- Roberts-Miller, Patricia. *Deliberate Conflict: Argument, Political Theory, and Composition Classes*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 2004. Print.
- Rountree, Clarke. *Judging the Supreme Court: Constructions of Motives in Bush v. Gore*. East Lansing: Michigan State UP, 2007. Print.
- Scalia, A. "Opinion of the Court." District of Columbia, Et Al., Petitioners v. Dick Anthony Heller. 554 U.S.____(2008). Web. 20 March 2010. <<http://www.law.cornell.edu/supct/pdf/07-29OP.ZO>>.
- Schiappa, Edward. *Defining Reality: Definitions and the Politics of Meaning*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 2003. Print.
- Slevin, James F. "Depoliticizing and Politicizing Composition Studies." *The Politics of Writing Instruction*. Ed. Richard Bullock and John Trimbur. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook, 1991. 1-21. Print.
- Stevens, J. "Dissenting." District of Columbia, Et Al., Petitioners v. Dick Anthony Heller. 554 U.S.____(2008). Web. 20 March 2010. <<http://www.law.cornell.edu/supct/pdf/07-29OP.ZD>>.

- Thaiss, Chris, and Terry Myers Zawacki. *Engaged Writers and Dynamic Disciplines: Research on the Academic Writing Life*. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook, 2006. Print.
- Tobin, Lad. "Self-Disclosure as a Strategic Teaching Tool: What I Do—and Don't—Tell My Students." *College English* 73.2 (2010): 196-206. Print.
- Toobin, Jeffrey. "After Stevens: What Will the Supreme Court Be Like Without Its Liberal Leader?" *The New Yorker* (March 22, 2010): 38-47. Print.
- Wardle, Elizabeth. "Continuing the Dialogue: Follow-up Comments on 'Teaching about Writing, Righting Misconceptions.'" *College Composition and Communication* 60.1 (2008): 175-81. Web. 4 May 2010.
- . "'Mutt Genres' and the Goal of FYC: Can We Help Students Write the Genres of the University?" *College Composition and Communication* 60.4 (2009): 765-89. Print.
- . "Understanding Transfer from FYC: Preliminary Results of a Longitudinal Study." *WPA: Writing Program Administration* 31.1 (2007): 65-85. Web. 29 August 2010.
- Wardle, Elizabeth, and Doug Downs. *Writing about Writing: A College Reader*. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2011. Print.
- "WPA Outcomes Statement for First-Year Composition." Council of Writing Program Administrators. 2008. Web. 6 May 2009.
- Yagelski, Robert P. "A Thousand Writers Writing: Seeking Change through the Radical Practice of Writing as a Way of Being." *English Education* 42.1 (October 2009): 6-28. Print.
- Yeh, Stuart. "Empowering Education: Teaching Argumentative Writing to Cultural Minority Middle-School Students." *Research in the Teaching of English* 33 (1998): 49-83. Print.



Professional Identity in a Contingent-Labor Profession: Expertise, Autonomy, Community in Composition Teaching

Ann M. Penrose

ABSTRACT

This paper argues that the challenges to professional identity implicit in contingent employment are significantly complicated by the substance and structure of composition teaching as a profession. Drawing on the literature from a range of fields, I explore three factors that have historically defined professions: (1) a specialized and dynamic knowledge base or body of expertise; (2) a distinctive array of rights and privileges accorded to members, and (3) an internal social structure based on shared goals and values. These factors provide a framework for understanding the often disabling tensions inherent in our program cultures, where composition instructors frequently find themselves at odds with the profession they work in. This analysis ultimately yields an instructive model of the composition professional, which I propose as a basis for articulating our professional values as we continue to advocate for improving the material conditions of employment.

I'm not sure I understand who qualifies as 'the composition profession.' As a full time but NTT [non-tenure-track] faculty member, does that include me?

This comment—from a university faculty member who had been teaching composition for five years or more—was prompted by the survey question, “In your experience, what primary topics or issues does the composition profession seem to be interested in?”²¹ Imagine asking this question of a chemist or attorney or physician or indeed of a teacher in any other field. Consider how odd it would be if the dentist you’d been seeing for the past five years told you she’s really not sure if she’s a dentist or not. Yet, this seems a perfectly valid response for a writing instructor.

We are well aware of the factors that would make it natural for non-tenure-track (NTT) faculty to wonder if they are truly members of the academic community. Despite the best efforts of WPAs and department heads, the material conditions of NTT teaching—from low pay, short-term contracts and shared offices to the lack of recognition from tenure-track “colleagues” passing in the hall—clearly create the impression that NTT faculty are not members of the professional communities in which they work.² This impression is no doubt deepened by our continuing pursuit of a disciplinary identity for writing studies and the corresponding emphasis on advanced degrees in the field, credentials that most composition instructors do not share. For we know that the majority of faculty teaching FYC are not “underemployed” PhDs waiting for the market to change but individuals who graduated from master’s programs with the goal of teaching undergraduates. The CCCC’s 2008 survey of programs indicates that roughly two-thirds of writing instructors hold degrees other than the PhD (Gere), and these degrees are typically in fields other than rhetoric and composition. Thus, though many FYC faculty have made long-term commitments to the teaching of writing, most are not members of the established profession as represented in our disciplinary discussions, a fact that has not escaped the author of my epigraph and an irony that has been frequently observed.

It is worth exploring how a profession so constituted maintains itself as a coherent community, as well as how its members define themselves as professionals. The concept of professional identity is particularly intriguing in our field, where staffing practices intersect with disciplinary indeterminacy to create a teaching community comprising professionals with widely varying preparation, knowledge, philosophical commitments, and disciplinary allegiances. Given the rapid rate of change in the professional knowledge base over the past forty years and the wide range of curricular goals embraced by the field (see, for example, Connors; Fulkerson; MacDonald; Selfe; Hesse), the staff of a composition program may include faculty with allegiances to critical pedagogy and cultural critique, literature-based composition, rhetorical models focused on generic skills, rhetorical models focused on discourse communities, service learning models, ethnography models, multimodal composing, and many others. These categories are not mutually exclusive and rarely appear in “pure” form, but they do represent distinct curricular goals and values, and only some combinations can comfortably co-exist in practice.

But of course “in practice” is where NTT faculty work—to a degree strikingly different from tenure-line faculty as a group. The diversity of perspectives that we value in theory and entertain in our disciplinary scholar-

ship becomes complicated in the applied contexts of FYC programs, where contingent faculty are often hired to further others' agendas rather than their own. Can faculty see themselves as professionals if they must adhere to curricular goals defined by others? Does an instructor who formed her professional identity during the "belles-tristic prose" age, but who now finds herself teaching a curriculum focused on cultural critique, feel a sense of shared values and expertise? What professional community does she belong to? What does "professional" mean when one has neither the signifying position nor the signifying credential of the profession?

In what follows, I first examine the significance of professional identity and then look to the research base on this topic for insight into how identities are constituted. From this scholarship I extract three defining dimensions—expertise, autonomy, community—which I use as a framework for understanding the often disabling tensions inherent in our program cultures, where composition instructors frequently find themselves at odds with the profession they work in. This framework ultimately yields an instructive model of the composition professional, which I will propose as a basis for articulating our values as a professional community.

THE ROLE OF PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY

In the context of low salaries and high workload, a faculty member's sense of professional identity may seem a frivolous concern. Membership in a professional community may be desirable, but a livable wage would certainly seem to matter more. But educational history suggests that the significance of this construct goes beyond matters of self-respect and job satisfaction. Research on professional identity among K-12 educators demonstrates a relationship between coherent professional communities and the quality of student learning. In a five-year study of 25 middle and high school English programs, for example, Langer found that teachers in schools with the highest levels of student achievement belonged to strong and varied professional networks that supported their professional knowledge and interests, provided feedback from varied perspectives, and instilled a sense of community (416). In striking contrast, professional communities were "virtually absent" from the "typical" or lower-achieving schools in this study (421), where researchers saw little collaboration or sharing of ideas and where teachers seemed unaware of how their own ineffective practices compared with those of other teachers or approaches. The most successful schools in Langer's study were characterized by a "pervading sense of professional identity":

Teachers in the effective programs are proud to be educators; they think of themselves as professionals and carry their professional selves with them wherever they go. They are in touch with the larger world and the concerns of others with regard to education. They consider themselves spokespersons for the profession. (Langer 426)

This image of the teacher as member of a professional community also contrasts markedly with the image of educators as autonomous agents in the classroom. A pronounced stage in the recent history of education, what Hargreaves calls “the age of the autonomous professional” arose in the 1960s as Western societies began to question traditional methods of knowledge transmission and to recognize pedagogy as value-laden—and thus pedagogical techniques as ideological decisions (Hargreaves 159). Such questioning of existing practice necessitated strong protections for teacher autonomy and individual decision-making. As a consequence, though this period coincided with the development of education as a graduate profession and an increasing recognition of the value of continuing professional development, innovative approaches tended to be individualized and rarely enjoyed widespread implementation. Hargreaves argues that the age of professional autonomy inhibited innovation by isolating individuals from the ideas and practices of others.

By the mid-1980s, this image of teacher professionalism had become largely unsustainable as many teachers found that their insulated personal knowledge and experiences could not adequately prepare them for “the accelerating pace of change” in curricular demands and student needs (Hargreaves and Fullan 51). At the same time, advances in the empirical knowledge base about learning and teaching were challenging the idea that pedagogy was simply a matter of ideology (Hargreaves 163). Hargreaves saw teachers responding to these challenges by drawing on each other’s varied expertise in a collaborative model he characterizes as the “age of the collegial professional” (162), and he sees this collegial network expanding in the 21st century to include parents and others outside the school system as integral collaborators and co-learners.

Despite this trend toward collaborative professionalism, however, some teachers still define themselves primarily in terms of their autonomy (Hargreaves 162), and current social pressures toward deprofessionalization of education threaten “to return teaching to an amateur, . . . almost premodern craft, where existing skills and knowledge are passed on practically from expert to novice but where practice can at best only be reproduced, not improved” (168). Langer similarly notes the tradition of “privacy and non-interference” in education (399) as a countervailing factor amidst the development of professional knowledge-building communities. Gerald Graff has

critiqued this tradition of professional isolation in higher education as well, noting that we rarely know what goes on in colleagues' classrooms at the university level, a habit he sees as contributing to the compartmentalization of education and a corresponding lack of coherence in student learning.

The contrast between the image of educator as collaborative community member and that of isolated autonomous individual suggests that professional identities are not simply a matter of assigned status or recognition but self-images that influence behavior—determining, for example, where we seek our professional knowledge and to whom we consider ourselves accountable. But both these images oversimplify; neither provides an adequate representation of the nature of college teaching in general or of composition teaching in particular. A more integrated analysis of professional identity is needed if we are to examine our own situation productively, and a large body of scholarship exists to support such an analysis.

DIMENSIONS OF PROFESSIONALISM

Researchers in sociology, education, history, rhetoric, sociolinguistics, and other fields have posited a number of interacting factors constituting membership in a profession. Synthesizing across a range of studies in these literatures, three primary dimensions emerge: professions tend to be defined by (1) a specialized and dynamic knowledge base or body of expertise, (2) a distinctive array of rights and privileges accorded to members, and (3) an internal social structure based on shared goals and values. Discussions of contingent teaching in higher education tend to foreground challenges in the second category, i.e., the withholding of rights and “privileges” such as job security and the accompanying threats to academic freedom; but as the tension between composition's disciplinary and teaching identities illustrates, the three dimensions are closely interrelated.

Professional as Expert

Historically, professions have been defined most notably by the specialized knowledge or expertise that members possess, knowledge that is valued by the surrounding society and deemed inaccessible to non-members (Edwards and Nicholl 120). The development of the modern professions in the 19th century has been interpreted as a response to the increasing complexity of modern life and also as a reaction against the cultural privileging of wealth in the age of industrialization (Geisler). In contrast to industry, the professions—including teachers, architects, social workers, nurses, dentists, geologists, historians, economists and others—were created not to generate wealth for shareholders but to provide a public good such as health

or knowledge (Geisler 71; see also Siegrist). Members were credentialed on the basis of this expertise, and professional associations developed mechanisms for providing the requisite training and certification. Significantly, expertise is assumed to be dynamic rather than static: true professionals do not simply possess a body of knowledge but engage in continuing professional development and actively contribute to the community's knowledge base (Burn; Day, et al.).

Studying the language of professional economists, sociolinguist Britt-Louise Gunnarsson describes this "cognitive layer" as a professional community's "way of viewing reality" (100). The community's distinctive language or terminology represents a lens through which members "view reality in a professionally relevant way" (100), reminiscent of Burke's terministic screens. From this perspective, a profession's common knowledge base influences what members do or do not notice or attend to in the world around them. This analysis of professional expertise thus highlights not only the basic content knowledge of a profession but, in the language of discourse community theories, the distinctive worldview that members hold (Bizzell).

Under this definition, the expertise of composition teaching is difficult to describe. New composition instructors may find it hard to identify a common worldview that characterizes their profession, given the programmatic diversity noted earlier. As Leverenz has noted, WPAs have "a powerful influence on how others define and teach writing" by virtue of their role in establishing curricula (38). Even programs founded on the WPA Outcomes Statement may espouse worldviews quite different from one another, with some focused on civic engagement and empowerment, others on self-discovery and personal knowledge, others on participation and socialization in the academic community, still others on cultural critique of the academy and other social structures. As a field we place high value on all of these agendas, but our courses usually foreground one of them, and M.A.-holding composition instructors are far more likely to be introduced to the profession through a specific curriculum than through the broader knowledge base in which all of them are grounded. Despite our efforts to introduce GTAs to the breadth of composition studies in comp theory courses, the immediacy and specificity of the teaching experience exert a strong influence on new teachers' perceptions of the field. TA preparation programs associated with divergent curricula naturally convey divergent visions of the field and its values; indeed, Haswell's recent review of sourcebooks for new composition teachers demonstrates little unanimity in the vision of the field projected by five popular collections.

In practical terms, different worldviews lead to concrete differences in course content and methods. Courses with these varied priorities place different values on primary research, secondary sources, and personal experience as forms of evidence, with consequent differences in what research methods are taught and how evidence is presented, documented and relied upon. Our common knowledge of writing development, process pedagogy and student-centered methods will serve us well in any of these curricula, but each of them also requires additional, substantive expertise to teach responsibly. If our claim to teach academic discourse is to be credible, for example, we must develop some knowledge of disciplinary patterns of knowledge-making across the academy. If we aim to engage students in cultural critique or ethnographic inquiry, then we need to have substantive knowledge of the philosophies and methodologies grounding these approaches. To teach a writing studies curriculum, such as that proposed by Downs and Wardle (575), we must know that literature.

These disparate approaches and the various bodies of knowledge they draw upon make up the continually expanding and evolving knowledge base of the composition profession. Though it perhaps poses challenges for those who would define a national credential for writing teachers (Lamos), this curricular diversity is not in and of itself a problem; indeed, it constitutes the richness and responsiveness of our collective work. But when this diversity intersects with our training and hiring practices, fractured and reductive views of the profession may result. That is, while I see the field's knowledge base as varied, evolving, and responsive to context, a contingent faculty member moving from one writing curriculum to another may instead see the goals, and thus the knowledge base, of the profession as haphazard and idiosyncratic. Such a perception may have important implications for the development of professional identity. Faculty who see the profession's knowledge base as idiosyncratic are not likely to see their own knowledge validated. When there is a mismatch between faculty members' own sense of expertise and what the profession seems to value, one or the other may have to give. At the extremes, faculty members may question their identity as professionals and wonder if they belong, or they may question the legitimacy or coherence of the profession and choose not to belong. Even faculty occupying a middle ground—those who have confidence in their own professional knowledge and also respect the program they're working in—may find that the two are not in sync and therefore see themselves as teaching outside their profession. Under any of these scenarios the faculty member is distanced from the professional community and unlikely to see him- or herself as contributing to it, making it difficult to sustain an image of oneself as expert.

Professional as Autonomous Agent

As the field's disciplinary struggles illustrate, professional structures imply power relations (Hilferty; Hargreaves and Fullan). The recognition of expertise is intertwined with a second marker of professionalization: the rights and status accorded to members by the broader society. In Gunnarsson's terms, "the cognitive establishment of the field takes place at the same time as the professions fight for their place in society and for the strengthening of their group in relation to other groups" (101). Geisler's history asserts a causal relationship in that professions were granted autonomy on the basis of their specialized knowledge (72). Because professionals had knowledge others didn't, they were granted authority not only to ply their craft but also to develop and maintain their own standards of performance and ethics and to regulate and monitor each other's work. In education, "forms of autonomy and discretionary decision-making ... have been the traditional keystones of teachers' professionalism" (Day et al. 251).

Scholarship on the sociology of professions highlights the socio-economic impact of professionalization, with some viewing the resulting monopolies as "a malevolent force in civil society," exacerbating socioeconomic inequities (Sciulli 917). Current views tend to place this dimension in the context of more positive attributes, such as a profession's "general orientation toward the common good" (Sciulli 921), members' exclusive knowledge, and systems of workplace ethics. Business management researchers Krishnaveni and Anitha, for example, note that because professionals' specialized expertise gives them "influence and power over those for whom they provide service," they are therefore obligated to act ethically (150).

The abrogation of these professionalizing rights and responsibilities is a common theme in discussions of contingent employment in higher education. The AAUP's 2006 Contingent Faculty Index emphasizes the challenge to faculty autonomy implicit in these precarious positions:

Institutions are asking teachers and researchers to commit to them, their mission, and their students without providing an institutional commitment to their faculty employees in return. Carried to its extreme, this paradigm forces all faculty into a situation where the free interplay of teaching and research is constrained, where individuals must focus on the work valued by the institution simply to remain employed. (Curtis and Jacobo 16)

In composition in particular, the applied nature of our work and its organization in multi-section programs bring these issues into sharp relief. Though most FYC programs value and invite participation in the develop-

ment of curriculum and policy, the tenuous status of NTT faculty, and in some cases their limited exposure to the field's knowledge base, mitigate against such participation, even if the work load allowed time for it.

An equally troubling consequence familiar to WPAs is that the concept of professional development can be corrupted under this power structure. Ideally, individual members' ongoing professional development supports continual growth for a field or program, as members keep up with current knowledge in the discipline and share their developing knowledge and expertise. But under the conditions of contingent employment, "professional development" can easily be interpreted as a euphemism for brainwashing or remediation, deepening the skepticism with which such activities are often viewed in university culture. Under this interpretation, professional development activities are intended to regulate and regularize and thus present a clear challenge to an experienced faculty member's autonomy and professional identity.

Educational researchers have described a similar de-professionalizing effect among teachers charged with implementing externally imposed mandates in a variety of institutional contexts (e.g., see Leathwood on further education colleges in the UK; Vahasantanen and Etelapelto on vocational education in Finland; Lasky on secondary schools in Canada; Langer on secondary schools in the US). Teachers interviewed by Lasky, for example, experienced "increased guilt, frustration, and inefficacious vulnerability because they saw themselves being less effective as teachers" when implementing curricular and assessment practices that conflicted with their "beliefs about how to teach, what should be taught, and how student knowledge should be assessed" (911-12). The position of contingent faculty in composition programs is clearly analogous. It's no wonder that professional development "opportunities" may be perceived as coercive rather than supportive under these circumstances. Even as academic professions seek to protect their autonomy in the face of shrinking university budgets, increasing public oversight, corporate sponsorship and other influences, the mechanisms of professionalization *within* the field of composition may be interpreted as an attempt by some members to restrict the autonomy of other members. In this representation, the "malevolent force" of the profession resides not in its influence over non-members but its power over those within. The community's professional right to self-determination is seen as a hegemonic exercise.

Professional as Community Member

Implicit in the above discussions, a third defining element is a profession's internal social structure and cohesiveness, including its attitudes, norms, and group identity as distinguished from other groups (e.g., Gunnarsson 100-01). Geisler reports that some social commentators felt the professions were able to maintain their focus on the public good in part because they consisted of small, collegial, social units where such common purpose could be reached and sustained (71). Sociologist David Sciulli sees the "presence of a collegial form of organization, and thus evidence of ongoing deliberation," as unique to professions, contrasted with the bureaucratic, democratic, or patron-client forms of organization in other social units (937). In Sciulli's analysis, this ongoing interchange among members is essential to a profession, for to fulfill their societal responsibilities professionals "have no alternative other than to ceaselessly scan their environments for any changes in their knowledge base or in client needs that bear on the positional interests of anyone in their entrenched position of power" (936). These collegial relationships are thus integral to the development of expertise and the maintenance of professional credibility.

Cohesiveness and collegiality figure prominently in the research on professional identity in the field of education. As noted earlier, the professional teacher networks in Langer's study provided not only knowledge but feedback and support. Studying teacher mentors, Burn highlights the importance of "an identity which depends not merely on *existing* knowledge, but on the capacity to generate *new* professional knowledge; an identity which includes a role as learner, not merely one as an 'expert' teacher" (460). The "learner" role is a participatory role, implying an interactive social network as opposed to a loose collection of isolated experts. Both of these elements, continued learning and collegiality, routinely appear as essential components of professionalism in this research base (see, for example, Krishnaveni & Anitha; Day et al.; Beijgaard et al.).

When Thomas Miller wrote in *College English* in 2006 that most English classes are taught by "part-timers and temps who are denied the standing of professionals" (151), he was invoking this third dimension of professionalism. In direct contrast to Sciulli's marker of ongoing deliberation, Miller noted that if these instructors are represented in the pages of *College English*, "they are more likely to appear as objects than as agents of deliberation" (151). *College English's* 2011 special issue on contingent faculty suggests some progress toward broader inclusion, though its "specialness" perhaps underscores Miller's point. Several contributors to the *CE* issue call for more recognition of scholarship authored by contingent faculty (Bilia

388; Arnold 423-24), a theme that has also been prominent in discussions of two-year college faculty in particular (Alford). Andelora, for example, attributes the marginalization of two-year college faculty to their “lack of participation in research, theorizing, and knowledge building” (310). Such comments underscore the social nature of professional expertise, the interplay of expertise and community membership as elements of professional identity. That is, it is not simply accumulation of knowledge or even production of scholarship that marks one as a professional but *participation* in the community’s knowledge building and self-definition.

Our national organizations have long emphasized the importance of other forms of professional participation and connection, priorities highlighted in all our national policy statements (NCTE Working Group; McDonald and Schell). Despite their low representation in the profession’s journals, Andelora acknowledges that two-year college faculty have had “considerable success in forming a national presence within the discipline” with the establishment of TYCA, *TETYC*, and increased representation in NCTE, MLA, and CCCC (311-12). Such developments support community cohesiveness at the national level by promoting group identity and creating venues for collegial exchange, both features associated with this third vector of professionalism. At the local level, individual WPAs cultivate this vector by promoting participation in collegial activities such as reading groups, peer workshops, textbook reviews, and curriculum committees (Hassel and Giordano 422; Carpenter 162-63).

As important as these activities may be, however, we know that the practical realities of contingent employment inhibit participation in these critical forms of collegial interchange. Indeed, even basic social connections among local colleagues are difficult to form when faculty teach at odd hours and distribute their time among multiple institutions. The fact that so many contingent faculty nevertheless do make time to serve on committees and attend conferences testifies to their extraordinary personal commitment, not the professional structure of their positions. Bilia points out that because such activities are not part of the job description for contingent faculty in most institutions, these efforts frequently go unacknowledged (388), a pattern also observed by Doe et al. (438). As with the roles of expert and autonomous agent, identity as community member is often frustrated.

In sum, being a professional includes engagement with a distinctive and dynamic knowledge base, meaningful participation in community decision-making, and continuous interchange with others as colleague, mentor, co-learner—all of which require investments of time and energy that few writing instructors can afford.

CONCLUSIONS: ARTICULATING OUR VALUES AS A PROFESSION

The problems described here are not news to you. Examining them through this historical frame helps us see how the conditions of contingent employment interact with the nature of our discipline and with our program-based organizational structure to undermine our professionalism from within—by cultivating representations of knowledge as static, curriculum as competitive, programmatic coherence as oppression, professional development as indoctrination. How are composition instructors, and composition programs, to maintain coherent professional identities when these traditional sources of professional validation are so disrupted? What are the practical implications of this analysis?

First and most obviously, the role of material conditions in shaping professional identity cannot be overstated. How one views oneself is powerfully influenced by local circumstance, including the physical setting and institutional context and the structural relations these symbolize (see, for example, Jacobe 380-81; Hebb 382-83). We form identities through an ongoing process of interpretation in which our personal knowledge, attitudes, and values interact with the cultural assumptions and expectations implicit in our “workplace landscape” (Reynolds). Teacher educators Coldron and Smith characterize identity formation as “partly given and partly achieved” (711), stating that “[a]n individual teacher’s professional identity ... is, on the one hand, determined biographically, through his or her own choices, and, on the other, socially ‘given’” (714). Thus, though we play an active role in constructing our professional identities, we cannot simply claim this status for ourselves. The time and energy that WPAs, and our professional associations, devote to transforming the landscapes of composition workplaces is effort well placed.

But the concept of professional identity becomes more useful as we move beyond these familiar critiques to envision the new composition landscapes, as Sue Doe and colleagues rightly urge us to do (Doe et al. 446). The present analysis offers a framework for articulating our values as a professional community as we look forward. That is, it helps us think about what we are aiming to achieve besides material improvements in salary and working conditions, as we continue to advocate for improving those conditions.

From the Wyoming Resolution to Doe et al.’s “Discourse of the Firetenders,” the field has called for fair pay, stable contracts, a voice in governance, and other “essential features of [faculty] work, such as the right to grievance and the right to academic freedom” (Doe et al. 445). It is useful to recognize that this set of goals foregrounds the representation of professional as autonomous agent. This is the representation foregrounded in dis-

cussions of the tension between individual and program as well (e.g., Dean 383-84; Bilia 387-88). Angela Bilia's characterization highlights the effect of this tension on professional identity: "you never fully experience accomplishment as a professional when you are constantly treated as an apprentice who needs supervision and direction from those on top" (388). If we define professional *only* as autonomous agent, we cannot resolve this tension. Under this partial definition, individual faculty are either respected as professionals (allowed to teach without oversight) or not (required to undergo professional development and assessment). From this perspective, the solution is obvious: if we want to treat faculty as professionals, we should remove the oversight, thereby restoring autonomy by releasing the individual from the influence of the community.

But if our professional values extend beyond autonomy to include expertise and community, our goals are quite different. The literature reviewed here reminds us that professions are dynamic social groups. Being a professional is not a matter of being free from community decisions but being part of them; not just of acquiring the profession's knowledge but of contributing to it; not of working in isolation but of engaging with colleagues. Clearly we are aiming not for one of these identities—expert, autonomous agent, community member—but for all of them. This understanding of professionalism as active and collaborative is what grounds the best practices in the field, for example, those in which contingent faculty participate in curriculum development (Brunk-Chavez), help design annual evaluation processes (Moneyhun), join reading circles and discussion groups (Hassel and Giordano 422-23), or collaborate on scholarship (Arnold 423-24). Such practices suggest that the kinds of relationships we value as a profession are those in which faculty do not operate as independent contractors but develop expertise and judgment in collaboration with others and apply these talents to common goals. We will measure our progress not just by the rights we secure but by the knowledge-building communities we cultivate.

Understanding professionalism as collaborative provides useful perspective on the question of expertise, for it shifts attention from knowledge as static to knowledge as responsive and evolving. Recent discussion of expertise has centered on whether contingent faculty have it or not, with Nagelhout and Staggers claiming that "the vast majority of contingent faculty members ... do not have the training or the expertise to make large-scale curricular decisions for a writing program" (417) and most other contributors to the *College English* special issue arguing instead that contingent faculty "are credentialed professionals who frequently spend years at the same institution gathering invaluable expertise with students" (Singh-Corcoran and Brady 419). These positions recall the longstanding debate over the

relative value of disciplinary and experiential knowledge (North) but overlook the dynamic and situated nature of both types of knowledge, central to the definition of professionalism advanced here. As Sciulli describes, professionals “ceaselessly scan their environments” (936) to see what new needs there are and what new knowledge is needed. Composition experts are identified not by the possession of a finite body of knowledge but by a rhetorical understanding that motivates them to assess, apply, and adapt their knowledge and develop new expertise as needed to meet teaching challenges in varied contexts. The current effort to establish a disciplinary identity for writing studies is important, I would argue, not because it aims to specify a static body of content knowledge but because it seeks to communicate the basic principles that ground our work—specifically, the principle that writing is substantive and situated (Downs and Wardle); for it is this understanding of writing that motivates the ceaseless scan for new professional knowledge in the field.

Though most WPAs take this collaborative vision of professionalism for granted, I would argue that many new teachers do not, due in part to a necessary preoccupation with the work of the classroom and the narrower professional image reflected in that immediate context, and also due to the inherently individualistic culture of academia. Embracing a culture of professionalism in our field will require changed perceptions as well as circumstances. It is important, for example, to help TAs understand their TA experience as a beginning rather than an end point, especially at the master’s level where the majority of composition faculty are prepared. Explicitly discussing the nature of professional activity in our teaching practica may help graduate students to notice the collaborative knowledge-building and decision-making going on around them and to recognize these behaviors as the essence of professional life.

One practical occasion for such a discussion is in talking with master’s-level TAs about entering the job market. For example, we can use this definitional frame to examine posted positions and help TAs formulate CVs and application letters:

1. What kinds of expertise does the position require? How do this program’s curricular goals resemble and differ from those of courses you’ve taught before? What kinds of pertinent expertise do you have to contribute? What else will you need to teach well in the new program, and how will you expand your knowledge and skills in those directions?

2. What experience do you have as an autonomous decision-maker in a professional context? What kinds of planning have you done, decisions have you made, judgments have you been responsible for? How have you helped shape our curriculum? How have you made our curriculum your own?
3. How are you participating as a member of the composition community? How have you been involved locally, e.g., via workshops and staff meetings, consultations with colleagues, informal planning groups? How have you been involved with the broader profession, e.g., via journals, online forums, conferences, research projects, professional memberships?

Such an analysis helps TAs recognize the range of skills they are developing even as it prompts them to think beyond their individual credentials to their role in the profession.

This model provides an apt professional vision for composition faculty as well, more robust than the teaching-research-service model by which our institutions define us. Under the standard categories of faculty responsibility, the majority of composition faculty are implicitly defined by what they are *not* expected to do (research, service)—by the ways in which they are not expected to contribute. Instead, the current analysis offers a basis for describing what a composition professional does, whether his or her position includes extensive research responsibilities or none. This analysis of professional identity yields an image of professionals as experts developing knowledge and exercising judgment in a communal enterprise. From this perspective, our organization in programs is at the core of our identity as a profession, for it's our interaction with those colleagues and our contribution to those communal goals that define us individually as composition specialists. To fully understand composition teaching as a profession, it will be essential, then, to replace our partial and individualistic models with a more historically grounded understanding of professional as collaborative and contributing. As we continue to work toward material conditions that will enable all composition faculty to so engage, this image may help us understand what we're aiming for.

NOTES

1. The survey study is reported separately (in preparation).
2. It is well documented that roughly two-thirds of college and university faculty are in full- or part-time positions off the tenure track (Curtis and Jacobe 5; JBL 2). When graduate assistants are included in the mix, full-time tenured or

tenure-track faculty represent only 24.4% of instructional staff in higher education (AAUP 7). The most recent MLA/ADE statistical portrait indicates that 60% of English faculty in four-year institutions and 80% in two-year colleges were in non-tenure-track positions in 2003-04 (Laurence 2, 15). A 2008 survey of CCCC membership (Gere) showed that approximately 58% of writing class sections in the responding institutions were taught by contingent faculty. The nature and implications of these employment patterns have been well examined (Bousquet; Harris; Horner; Schell; Schell and Stock; Worthen).

WORKS CITED

- AAUP. "AAUP Annual Report on the Economic Status of the Profession." *Academe* 97.2 (Mar-Apr 2011): 4-87. Print.
- Alford, Barry. "Introduction." *The Politics of Writing in the Two-Year College*. Ed. Barry Alford and Keith Kroll. Portsmouth: Boynton/Cook Heinemann, 2001. v-viii. Print.
- Andelora, Jeff. "The Teacher/Scholar: Reconstructing Our Professional Identity in Two-Year Colleges." *TETYC*, March 2005: 307-322. Print.
- Arnold, Lisa. Contributions to "Forum on the Profession." Arnold, et al. 423-24.
- Arnold, Lisa, et al. "Forum on the Profession." *College English* 73.4 (2011): 409-427. Print.
- Beijaard, Douwe, Paulien C. Meijer, Nico Verloop. "Reconsidering Research on Teachers' Professional Identity." *Teaching and Teacher Education* 20 (2004): 107-28. Print.
- Bilia, Angela. Contributions to "Forum on Identity." Bilia, et al. 387-8.
- Bilia, Angela, et al. "Forum on Identity." *College English* 73.4 (2011): 379-95. Print.
- Bizzell, Patricia. "William Perry and Liberal Education." *College English* 46.5 (1984): 447-454. Print.
- Bousquet, Marc. *How the University Works*. New York: NYU P, 2008. Print.
- Brunk-Chavez, Beth. "Embracing Our Expertise Through Faculty and Instructional Development." *WPA: Writing Program Administration* 34.1 (2010):152-55. Print.
- Burn, Katharine. "Professional Knowledge and Identity in a Contested Discipline: Challenges for Student Teachers and Teacher Educators." *Oxford Review of Education* 33.4 (2007): 445-67. Print.
- Carpenter, William J. "Professional Development for Writing Program Staff." *The Longman Sourcebook for Writing Program Administrators*. Eds. Irene Ward and William J. Carpenter. New York: Pearson Longman, 2008. 156-65. Print.
- Coldron, John, and Robin Smith. "Active Location in Teachers' Construction of Their Professional Identities." *J. Curriculum Studies* 31.6 (1999): 711-26. Print.
- Connors, Robert J. "Mechanical Correctness as a Focus in Composition Instruction." *College Composition and Communication* 36.1 (1985): 61-72. Print.
- Curtis, John W., and Monica F. Jacobs. *AAUP Contingent Faculty Index*. 2006. American Association of University Professors. Web. 9 June 2010.

- Day, Christopher, Maria Assuncao Flores, and Isabel Viana. "Effects of National Policies on Teachers' Sense of *Professionalism*: Findings from an Empirical Study in Portugal and in England." *European Journal of Teacher Education* 30.3 (2007): 249-65. Print.
- Dean, Christopher. Contributions to "Forum on Identity." Bilia, et al. 383-84.
- Doe, Sue, et al. "Discourse of the Firetenders: Considering Contingent Faculty through the Lens of Activity Theory." *College English* 73.4 (2011): 428-49. Print.
- Downs, Douglas, and Elizabeth Wardle. "Teaching about Writing, Righting Misconceptions: (Re)Envisioning 'First-Year Composition' as 'Introduction to Writing Studies.'" *College Composition and Communication* 58.4 (2007): 552-84. Print.
- Edwards, Richard, and Katherine Nicoll. "Expertise, competence and reflection in the rhetoric of professional development." *British Educational Research Journal* 32.1 (2006): 115-31. Print.
- Fulkerson, Richard. "Composition at the Turn of the Twenty-First Century." *College Composition and Communication* 56 (2005): 654-87. Print.
- Geisler, Cheryl. *Academic Literacy and the Nature of Expertise: Reading, Writing, and Knowing in Academic Philosophy*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1994. Print.
- Gere, Anne Ruggles. *Initial Report on Survey of CCCC Members*. Conference on College Composition and Communication: Squire Office of Policy Research. 12 January 2009. Web. 9 June 2010.
- Graff, Gerald. *Clueless in Academe*. New Haven: Yale UP, 2003. Print.
- Gunnarsson, Britt-Louise. "On the Sociohistorical Construction of Scientific Discourse." *The Construction of Professional Discourse*. Eds. Britt-Louise Gunnarsson, P. Linell, and B. Nordberg. London: Longman, 1997. 99-126. Print.
- Hargreaves, Andy. "Four Ages of Professionalism and Professional Learning." *Teachers and Teaching: History and Practice* 6.2 (2000): 151-82. Print.
- Hargreaves, Andy, and Michael Fullan. "Mentoring in the New Millennium." *Theory into Practice* 39.1 (2000): 50-56. Print.
- Harris, Joseph. "Meet the New Boss, Same as the Old Boss: Class Consciousness in Composition." *College Composition and Communication* 52.1 (2000): 43-68. Print.
- Hassel, Holly, and Joanne Baird Giordano. Contributions to "Forum on the Profession." Arnold et al. 422-23.
- Haswell, Richard. "Hieroglyphic World: A Review of Five Background readers for Novice Writing Teachers." *WPA: Writing Program Administration* 33.3 (2010): 104-15. Print.
- Hebb, Judith. Contributions to "Forum on Identity." Bilia, et al. 382-83.
- Hesse, Doug. "Response to Cynthia L. Selfe's 'The Movement of Air, the Breath of Meaning: Aurality and Multimodal Composing.'" *CCC* 61.3 (2010): 602-05.
- Hilferty, Fiona. "Contesting the Curriculum: An Examination of Professionalism as Defined and Enacted by Australian History Teachers." *Curriculum Inquiry* 37.3 (2007): 239-261. Print.

- Horner, Bruce. *Terms of Work for Composition: A Materialist Critique*. Albany: SUNY P, 2000. Print.
- Jacobe, Monica. Contributions to "Forum on Identity." Bilia, et al. 380-81.
- JBL Associates, Inc. *Reversing Course: The Troubled State of Academic Staffing and a Path Forward*. October 2008. American Federation of Teachers. Web. 9 June 2010.
- Krishnaveni, R. and J. Anitha. "Educator's professional characteristics." *Quality Assurance in Education* 15.2 (2007):149-61. Print.
- Lamos, Steve. "Credentialing College Writing Teachers: WPAs and Labor Reform." *WPA: Writing Program Administration* 35.1 (2011): 45-72. Print.
- Langer, Judith. "Excellence in English in Middle and High School: How Teachers' Professional Lives Support Student Achievement." *American Educational Research Journal*. 37.2 (2000): 397-439. Print.
- Lasky, Sue. "A Sociocultural Approach to Understanding Teacher Identity, Agency and Professional Vulnerability in a Context of Secondary School Reform." *Teaching and Teacher Education* 21 (2005): 899-916. Print.
- Laurence, David. "Demography of the Faculty: A Statistical Portrait of English and Foreign Languages." The Modern Language Association of America and The Association of Departments of English. 10 December 2008. Web. 9 June 2010. <http://www.mla.org/pdf/demography_fac2.pdf>.
- Leathwood, Carole. "'Treat Me as a Human Being—Don't Look at Me as a Woman': Femininities and Professional Identities in Further Education." *Gender and Education* 17.4 (2005): 387-409. Print.
- Leverenz, Carrie. "Remediating Writing Program Administration." *WPA: Writing Program Administration* 32.1 (2008): 37-56. Print.
- MacDonald, Susan Peck. "The Erasure of Language." *CCC* 58.4 (2007): 585-625. Print.
- McDonald, James C., and Eileen E. Schell. *College English* 73.4 (2011):360-78. Print.
- Miller, Thomas. "What Should English Be ... Doing?" *College English* 69.2 (2006): 150-55. Print.
- Moneyhun, Clyde. "Performance Evaluation as Faculty Development." *WPA: Writing Program Administration* 34.1 (2010):161-65. Print.
- Nagelhout, Ed, and Julie Staggers. Contributions to "Forum on the Profession." Arnold et al. 417-18.
- [NCTE Working Group] NCTE College Section Working Group on the Status and Working Conditions of Contingent Faculty. "Statement on the Status and Working Conditions of Contingent Faculty." *College English* 73.4 (2011): 356-59. Print.
- North, Stephen M. *The Making of Knowledge in Composition: Portrait of an Emerging Field*. Upper Montclair: Boynton/Cook: 1987. Print.
- Reynolds, Cecilia. "Cultural Scripts for Teachers: Identities and their Relation to Workplace Landscapes." *Changing Research and Practice: Teachers' Professionalism, Identities and Knowledge*. Ed. Michael Kompf, W. Richard Bond, Don Dworet and R. Terrance Boak. London: The Falmer Press, 1996. 69-77. Print.

- Schell, Eileen E. *Gypsy Academics and Mother-Teachers: Gender, Contingent Labor, and Writing Instruction*. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook Heinemann, 1998. Print.
- Schell, Eileen E. and Patricia Lambert Stock, eds. *Moving a Mountain: Transforming the Role of Contingent Faculty in Composition Studies and Higher Education*. Urbana: National Council of Teachers of English, 2001. Print.
- Sciulli, David. "Continental Sociology of Professions Today: Conceptual Contributions." *Current Sociology* 53.6 (2005): 915-42. Print.
- Selfe, Cynthia L. "The Movement of Air, the Breath of Meaning: Aurality and Multimodal Composing." *CCC* 60.4 (2009): 616-63. Print.
- Siegrist, H. "Professionalization/Professions in History." *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences*. Ed. Neil J. Smelser and Paul B. Baltes. New York: Elsevier, 2001. 12154-12160. Print.
- Singh-Corcoran, Natalie, and Laura Brady. Contribution to "Forum on the Profession." Arnold et al. 419.
- Vahasantanen, Katja and Anneli Etelapelto. "Vocational Teachers in the Face of a Major Educational Reform: Individual Ways of Negotiating Professional Identities." *Journal of Education and Work* 22.1 (2009): 15-33. Print.
- Worthen, Helena. "The Problem of Majority Contingent Faculty in the Community Colleges." In Barry Alford and Keith Kroll, eds. *The Politics of Writing in the Two-Year College*. Portsmouth: Boynton/Cook Heinemann, 2001: 42-60. Print.



Uncommon Conversations: How Nearly Three Decades of Paying Attention Allows One WAC/WID Program to Thrive

Martha A. Townsend, Martha D. Patton, and Jo Ann Vogt

ABSTRACT

*The former director, assistant director, and coordinator of student services of an internationally renowned WAC/WID program, who together spent forty-four years working with the program, reflect on the program's evolution during their tenure. Responding to Rose and Weiser's edited collection *The Writing Program Administrator as Researcher: Inquiry in Action and Reflection* which calls for programmatic histories, archives, and stories as a means of documenting intellectual work, the authors trace the program's periods of growth, stability, instability, and recovery. They contend that "paying attention" to the faculty who taught the university's required writing intensive courses led to "uncommon conversations" about teaching and learning, conversations which, in turn, account for the program's continued vitality and viability some twenty-eight years after its founding. The article offers an overview of circumstances that apply to many WAC/WID programs and suggests recommendations for continued programmatic improvement for the field in general.*

David Russell notes that writing-across-the-curriculum (WAC) programs tend to have short life spans.¹ He claims that, even when individual professors use WAC principles, academic institutions fundamentally resist WAC (295). For the most part, we agree that institutional factors often trump other factors and can kill good programs in little time. Nonetheless, we concur with Susan McLeod et al. that some WAC programs do work, and some programs last for a long time. Our WAC program, the University of Missouri's Campus Writing Program (CWP), is thriving after nearly three decades, beating the institutional odds, thanks to a combination of luck,

leadership, and administrative support that allowed us to pay attention to the things that matter.²

The occasion for this retrospective is that our collective forty-four years with CWP came to an end a short while back. We three—formerly the director, assistant director, and coordinator of student services—have since embarked on new paths.³ What the long-term future of Missouri's program holds is unknown, except that the program will be different and the three of us who have the longest history with it are no longer associated with it and with one another in the ways that we formerly were. During our tenure, CWP grew into its maturity, achieving both national and international acclaim. We hope CWP will earn further acclaim; undoubtedly, it will continue to change in ways beyond what it already has since our departures.

In these pages, we reflect on the conditions that worked both for and against our program, conditions that also affect many other WAC programs. In doing so, we offer a partial program history, a biography of sorts, of the University of Missouri Campus Writing Program from 1983 through 2007, the years we were most closely associated with it, and then a brief update of the program since we left.⁴ We agree with Shirley Rose and Irwin Weiser who argue that WPAs should document their programs' histories through research, reflection, archival material, and stories as a means of illustrating intellectual work, establishing programmatic identity, and ultimately improving programs. Our years with CWP were formative for us and for the program. We believe the lessons we learned and the insights we gained can be applied to other WAC programs. We hope, then, that this essay will serve as one model and will inspire other WPAs to undertake similar reflections aimed at helping shape WAC's future by understanding its past.

We note straightaway that we are not the program's birth parents and that those who were presented us with a healthy offspring clamoring for action. (We will return to CWP's progenitors shortly.) But, even if we were not the birth parents, neither were we frail aunts on the sideline. In 1991, Marty Townsend came to MU and adopted the program wholeheartedly, including the tutors and the person in charge of them, Jo Ann Vogt. Townsend proceeded to make requests that other directors might not have dared to make. She asked for positions, lots of them. She hired a number of people to work with her and Vogt to further develop the program, including Marty Patton, who was completing a dissertation on writing in the sciences. Townsend sought funding for other positions as well, and with those new hires, CWP created a sort of extended family and with it the potential for rich, multi-layered dialogue. Through that dialogue, each staff member was allowed the time and space to pay attention to what mattered most.

That is, staff members became “apprentices of listening rather than masters of discourse,” as Krista Ratcliffe, nodding to Gemma Fiumara, calls upon us to do in writing programs. If we were “writing consultants,” we approached new questions dialogically, suspending disciplinary expertise enough to engage fully in what Ratcliffe calls “rhetorical listening” (203).

Sue McLeod and Eric Miraglia, paraphrasing Michael Fullan, who studies educational change, have noted that successful programs tend to have support at both ends, top-down and bottom-up (20), and this was true for our program as well, both in its infancy and later on. This support is critical. We add another dimension and suggest that support, whether top-down or bottom-up, is more vigorous when it moves from endorsement to engagement, from passive approval of requirements to active intellectual engagement with open-ended questions. Our writing program was most vulnerable when “support,” especially top-down support, was little more than bureaucratic endorsement of a curricular requirement. Our program was most dynamic when support, especially bottom-up support, entailed engaged, substantive, interdisciplinary conversation. Put another way, we extend from the classroom to the program itself John Bean’s wise counsel to stimulate problem-based, active learning.⁵ Because we had sufficient staff to engage one-to-one with faculty, we could initiate genuine, solution-seeking conversations. Rather than tell faculty what criteria they should use in designing assignments, we framed questions and helped them to discover their own best solutions. That approach is time-consuming, but it results in a kind of faculty investment that may be impossible to generate any other way.

Russell rightly suggests that this kind of substantive conversation is not fostered by the institutional structure and reward system of most U.S. universities. These conversations are possible, as McLeod insists, but when they do come about, they are uncommon and tend to develop in the margins of the institutional structure. These conversations need to be modeled by energetic leaders, sustained by faculty and staff who are genuinely interested in cross-disciplinary collaborations, and protected from predatory administrators who may be wary of the seeming slowness of results and the cost attached. These conversations can happen only when WAC programs are supported at a level that allows staff to devote attention to individual classes, faculty, assignments, and the processes related to them. From its infancy, CWP had that kind of support as the following historical outline details.

1983-1986: PROGRAM CONCEPTION AND BIRTH

As David Russell has noted, many WAC programs born in the 1970s and 1980s came about partly as a response to a perceived literacy crisis (275-6). This view was certainly the case at MU in the early 1980s, when a perceived literacy crisis led faculty from several colleges to express their concerns to Arts and Science dean Milton Glick.

In response, Glick took three notable steps. He commissioned a visit by University of Iowa Rhetoric professor Richard Lloyd-Jones, whose April 1983 report confirmed that increased attention and resources for composition were needed. Next, Glick invited English department faculty to help draft the charge for a Task Force on English Composition. And finally, along with then-provost Ronald Bunn, he created a campus-wide task force, chaired by English professor Winifred Bryan Horner, to study the state of composition at the University.

Among the task force members was former Rhodes Scholar and founder of MU's writing center, Douglas Hunt. As Hunt recalls it, the dean may have had only a dim idea of what the solution to the perceived crisis should be, but he had a very clear idea of what the solution should *not* be: more English composition. In the dean's view, according to Hunt, if the problem with writing was inadequate outcomes from one or two semesters of freshman composition, the solution was not to be found in offering even more. Moreover, the dean, a chemist, suspected that there were effective writers outside the English department who might have something to say about writing, and he made sure that the task force included faculty from an array of disciplines.⁶ (See Appendix A.) The default assumption for the dean and most task force members from outside English was that "good writing" was roughly "error-free writing" and that something must be wrong with instruction in English composition if students were not producing error-free writing in their content courses. Flawed as this thinking was, it led to a robust interdisciplinary conversation about writing, one that Horner facilitated with remarkable grace and spirit.⁷

In the fall of 1983, the Task Force on English Composition began a lively, year-long conversation with many questions about the teaching of grammar and correctness. Hunt tells us that the shift to questions about discipline-based writing came about indirectly, largely as a result of the informal conversations that task force members had about their own research. They were intrigued by one another's research problems and writing processes, and they began to entertain the possibility of designing writing assignments for their own students that would require explanations about research problems. As they talked through their own research and

writing processes, task force members abandoned band-aid solutions about teaching students to write correctly and began to explore the complexity of reasoning and writing about research problems, problems that varied significantly from one discipline to another. Through this grass-roots process, the task force moved to a “solution” that involved writing instruction in courses beyond English composition, courses to be taught by faculty in the disciplines who might be willing to take some pedagogical risks by engaging in “writing-intensive” (WI) teaching.

It was not self-evident, however, that what might be an ideal “solution” in theory would work in practice. One task force member feared that too few faculty would offer WI classes to sustain a program, a fear that prompted discussion of various rewards and incentives for faculty, as well as methods for funding such a program. To succeed, the task force would have to undertake an intensive public relations campaign, involving presentations to scores of departments. It would also have to resolve questions about WI course requirements, WI course proposal review processes, and faculty development workshop procedures. By the end of 1985, three faculty members had volunteered to pilot WI courses; the task force, slightly reconfigured and enlarged, became the first Campus Writing Board; and Hunt was named the program’s founding director. The 1985-86 academic year was historic in several other respects. Hunt and the Board hashed out the *Guidelines for WI Courses*, modeled on guidelines adopted by Indiana University in 1979 with one notable addition. Hunt, inspired by his Rhodes scholarship study at Oxford and steeped in reading about college students’ intellectual development, made a case for including a guideline that echoed William Perry: at least one writing assignment should pose a question about which reasonable people could disagree. With minor adjustments, CWP’s guidelines have served the program for nearly three decades. (See Appendix B.)

Meanwhile, persuaded that a WAC program was worth supporting, Glick provided substantial seed money from his own College of Arts and Science budget and convinced the provost to help as well. Notably, in this era when it was common for institutions to seek external funding for new WAC programs, MU assumed budgetary responsibility by reallocating monies internally. By “taxing” some departments a portion of their graduate program funding and giving those monies to CWP, an “intentional symbiosis” was created: departments could “earn back” what they had “contributed” by offering large-enrollment WI courses to which their own graduate students could then be assigned as teaching assistants for the WI faculty instructor. Faculty who had no other way to support graduate students, and departments that had no other way to fund graduate programs,

thus had a carrot to entice them to offer WI courses. A further benefit of this symbiosis was that graduate students across the disciplines could acquire new exposure to writing practices in their own fields.

The carrot helped, but a stick was also needed, and that eventually arrived in the form of a university-wide WI graduation requirement. In 1986, however, MU had no university-wide curricular requirements of any kind. All nine undergraduate colleges determined requirements independently. The challenge for Hunt and the Writing Board was to lobby faculty in one department meeting after another, gradually persuading faculty in all disciplines about the virtues of sharing responsibility for student writing.

Given the time-consuming nature of these faculty conversations, Hunt needed help. Help arrived in the form of Ray Smith, then a doctoral student in English at MU, and John Peterson, an accomplished, hands-on administrative assistant. Smith, a Renaissance scholar with a wit and sense of humor close to that of the great bard, made a huge impact on the faculty with whom he talked. In Smith's words, Hunt was father, mother, and midwife of the program, while, in Hunt's words, Smith was a man of many talents, just one of which was the power of persuasion. John Peterson, the intellectual equal of Hunt and Smith—a man who, for instance, read about chaos theory for recreation—proved an invaluable asset. He served as sounding board for what Hunt and Smith often referred to as their “hare-brained schemes” and explained the program practically and theoretically in terms faculty who called or dropped in could understand. Peterson recalls that after Hunt and Smith would visit departments, faculty would be “surprised and excited.” The revolutionary WAC approach “changed people” and “made [him] want to go work in the morning.”⁸ One of Peterson's lasting contributions was laying the foundation for CWP's meticulous record-keeping system, the basis of what has become perhaps the world's most comprehensive archive of WI materials. Files were kept on each course, including assignments, grading criteria, and related memos; lists were maintained of who attended workshops; budget data were tracked; correspondence was organized and preserved. Peterson's efforts make it possible even now to trace the program's history back through its first “friendly and helpful” contacts with departments and with individual faculty striving to design the assignments envisioned by the *WI Guidelines*.⁹

The collective energy and intelligence of the early program staff and Writing Board members was palpable. By the end of the campaign, faculty agreed to take a college-by-college vote on establishing a WI requirement. All nine colleges endorsed the idea. Engineering requested the single exception, to be allowed a one-year “bye” before implementation to plan for the integration of the new requirement into its already tight curriculum.

In the meantime, in the basement of the English department, Smith had spotted another wit nearly his match—linguistics graduate student Jo Ann Vogt, whom he hired as a tutor in the newly established WI Tutorial Services (WITS). As a tutor, she would draw not only repeat student visitors, but also reticent faculty who would come back for more of her kind but spot-on help. As both workshop facilitator and tutor, Vogt rarely gave advice; she simply posed the questions that most needed asking. As we discuss later, Vogt had two of the most needed and rare talents in academic institutions: the ability to be a good listener and inexhaustible intellectual curiosity, traits she regularly displayed in faculty workshops.

Notably, though, CWP's inaugural faculty workshop was held only after the first WI courses had been piloted. The Early and Middle Childhood educator, the political scientist, and the biologist who gamely offered the first WI courses in their respective departments had vastly different approaches to the use of writing in their teaching, even though they held in common certain principles. As presenters at the first workshops, they were able to provide workshop participants not one model but a powerful range of possibilities. Participants came with a variety of motives. Some had been intrigued by Hunt's, Smith's, and Peterson's arguments; some came because of the carrot of GTA support if they taught large-enough WI courses (the ratio was one instructor to every twenty students); some came because the graduation requirement "stick" meant that WI courses had to be offered so students could graduate. Some, perhaps, were lured by the \$200 stipend Hunt had promised, stipends that he planned to fund from his summer salary. (When made aware of this arrangement, the dean funded the stipends.)

Over the years, faculty workshops relied primarily on in-house presenters—CWP staff and MU faculty teaching WI courses. Early on, though, Indiana University biology professor Craig Nelson offered his unique perspective, clearly tying writing to critical thinking. Nelson no doubt helped to persuade many faculty—especially those in the sciences—that writing was the only tangible way to determine what their students were really learning. Participants rated the workshops highly and, while on average only half of them would ultimately offer formally designated WI courses, subsequent research showed that most non-WI faculty participants employed some of the principles that had been advocated. A campus culture for writing had begun to take root.

1986-1991: THE FIRST FIVE YEARS – YOUTH

By the fall of 1986, all undergraduate colleges at the University of Missouri had adopted the new two-course writing requirement—one semester

of composition followed by one WI course in the disciplines—to become effective for students entering in Fall, 1987. However, the new requirement meant that the old one- or two-semester composition system in English no longer existed, a change that did not occur without heated discussion in department meetings. Any changes to longstanding curricular requirements typically meet with faculty resistance, and this one was no exception. The previous freshman and sophomore composition courses were going to be eliminated or significantly reconfigured.¹⁰ However, despite concerns about whether the curriculum should be revised, English faculty realized that the department lacked the resources to meet the demands of the old curriculum. Seniors due to graduate, for example, often usurped the available seats in the required course, leaving insufficient room for the lower-division students who needed to be enrolled—one of the problems that led Lloyd-Jones to recommend a new plan for writing.

With the campus having endorsed the new writing requirement, the composition program in the fall of 1986 invited John Bean to conduct a workshop for English faculty and TAs to discover how the new composition course, to be offered in the freshman year, might articulate with the new WI courses. Over the next few years, the composition program experimented with several WAC-leaning composition texts, including Bean's and Ramage's *Form and Surprise in Composition: Writing and Thinking Across the Curriculum* and later Charles Bazerman's *The Informed Writer: Using Sources in the Disciplines*. In theory and text, if not always in practice, the freshman composition program paved the way for the emerging WAC program. By the time the first required credit-bearing WI courses were offered in January 1988, 2440 students had already taken 68 pilot courses over six semesters. Enough faculty had experimented with the new model of teaching that the director, board, and university were ready to declare full implementation.

Other campus reforms were in process during this same period. In the fall of 1989, faculty endorsed the campus's first unified general education plan (though with a lesser margin of support than the WI proposal). As part of this new "General Education Architecture," faculty approved a second WI requirement. In doing so, they not only reaffirmed the acceptance of the first but also placed an even greater degree of responsibility on discipline-based faculty to use writing. The first WI course thus became a lower-division course, to be taken by students in any discipline they wished and through which students were encouraged to experiment intellectually outside of their anticipated program of study. The new, second WI course was to be taken in the student's major at the upper-division level, where students would receive practice with the vocabulary and conventions of

a specialized discourse. The three-course writing requirement—first-year composition followed by two WI courses—still holds today.

If luck is part of the historical equation, MU was incredibly lucky to have had Hunt, Smith, and Peterson at the helm in the early years—men whose intellectual gymnastics moved one professor after another to see the virtues of sharing the responsibility for the teaching of writing. MU was also fortunate to have had passionately committed faculty members on the task force and early Campus Writing Boards who modeled for their peers a variety of approaches for the teaching of writing and who established a precedent for high standards of course review and certification.

The Writing Board acquired a reputation as a committee with integrity and clout, one to respect and emulate. Other entities such as the new General Education Program and the Honors College subsequently modeled their governance structures on the Writing Board, partly because of the standards and commitment of early Writing Board members. The structure and function of CWP's Board owes much to its predecessors at Indiana University and Beaver College, but its integrity and clout are owed to the deep investment of the faculty who served over the years. They saw maintaining the integrity of the WI designation as their mission, and they resisted any efforts by faculty, department chairs, or administrators to dilute the standards set out in the *Guidelines*.

Eventually, Hunt, Smith (after having been interim director for a year following Hunt), and Peterson moved on to other positions, and English professor Howard Hinkel was appointed interim director while MU conducted a national search for a new director. Having served many years as composition director for the English Department, Hinkel was well prepared to articulate the linkages between first-year composition and the WI courses. A superb stabilizer, Hinkel guided the fledgling program through one of many transitions.

1991-1996: THE SECOND FIVE YEARS – ADOLESCENCE

When she arrived in 1991, Marty Townsend brought to the position of director an additional set of talents. Her instincts were political and social as well as academic. She had an intuitive sense for networking within and beyond the university and understood that building and maintaining a high profile is necessary for program longevity. Having been mentored since graduate school days by Win Horner, she adopted the overarching goal of ensuring that the program not be seen merely as a service unit and undertook a research agenda befitting MU's Research I designation.

Arriving shortly after the adoption of the new General Education Architecture, Townsend was charged with developing the new second tier of WI courses. This new tier not only doubled the number of WI “seats” needed, it required many more departments to step up to the WI plate. Up until this time, departments could rely on students taking WI courses from whichever benevolent departments were choosing to offer them. Now, every department offering an undergraduate degree had to ensure that its majors would receive upper-division, discipline-specific writing instruction. The earlier 1986 college-by-college vote to have WI courses hadn’t required that every department offer them. The stakes thus became significantly higher.

As a condition of accepting her appointment, Townsend had requested that the university authorize a comprehensive self-study and external program review. Over the course of an entire year, two separate groups conducted interviews and surveys, collected and reviewed documents, and held a variety of meetings and forums to elicit feedback campus-wide. The institution’s self-study was then presented to external reviewers Ed White and Lynn Bloom, who visited for three days under the auspices of the WPA Consultant-Evaluator Service.¹¹ In short, the self-study and external review produced exactly what CWP needed: assurance that the university and the faculty were ready to move ahead with the new WI courses. The external review also resulted in the MU News Bureau issuing a press release with the header “MU Campus Writing Program Cited As One of Best in Nation,” a story that was picked up by many newspapers across the state. Not long after the departures of White and Bloom, Townsend crafted a three-page memo to Vice Provost Jo Behymer laying out what had been discovered and declaring (as much to herself as anyone) that MU was ready to begin implementing the new upper-division WI courses. With that implementation came lines for hiring Patton and others, along with substantial new resources for additional WI TAs and faculty development.

When the second WI requirement took effect in 1993, the job of the Writing Board both intensified and specialized. Board members were appointed jointly by the provost and the dean of Arts and Sciences for three-year terms, with one third of the members rotating off each year. While the eighteen-member Board debated policy (such as the acceptable upper limit for class size), the real work of reviewing courses and writing assignments took place in each of three six-member subcommittees (humanities, the natural and applied sciences, and education and social sciences). The subcommittees took seriously their charge to evaluate courses and frequently tabled proposals if they did not include writing assignments that fostered critical thinking and provide adequate grading criteria. While the subcommittees did use their power to legislate change, Board members

practiced what they preached by encouraging faculty to revise proposals for resubmission. They intentionally did not reject proposals out of hand, as is often the case in major grant competitions. In cases where WI course proposals did not meet the *WI Guidelines*, CWP staff were empowered to meet with the faculty proposers, to suggest the necessary revisions diplomatically. The Board thus provided the impetus for the conversations; the staff made sure the chats were “friendly and helpful,” ensuring that *WI Guidelines* were met without doing violence to the teacher’s course goals or autonomy.

In these years, subcommittees met three times each semester to review between three and fifteen proposals each time. Discussion was typically lively. Subcommittees approved courses for one semester only and each approval was tied to its particular instructor, so that an established WI course still had to be re-proposed each time it was offered. In later years, a modified update form simply asked what worked well and what changes were being considered; staff frequently facilitated the paperwork via e-mail dialogue. When subcommittees evaluated those later update forms, they relied heavily on input from CWP staff. Inevitably, we either had or got detailed, concrete knowledge about the courses via a web of interrelated conversations with the WI instructor, students, WI teaching assistants serving the course in question, and WITS tutors, as well as our own direct observations. Because of this “insider” knowledge, the decision to approve or reject an update was anything but *pro forma*.

From the beginning, all course approvals were coupled with the instructor, so that a new instructor taking over a previously approved WI course had to submit a new proposal. This move was a protection against the possibility of, say, a WI calculus course getting on the books and keeping its “WI” designation long after the original math professor had left and the WI pedagogy had fallen through the cracks. Practices like this made more work for WI faculty and for board members, but they also ensured that the “WI” on student transcripts had meaning.

Among the Board members who were the most articulate advocates of WI courses were mathematicians, engineers, and scientists. One mathematician, Dix Pettey, claimed he could imagine no other way to teach math, including his specialty, topology, except through writing. Another mathematician, Dennis Sentilles, taught introductory calculus courses; he, too, could imagine no other way to teach calculus except via extended analogies, including one of a film, in which each frame captured a different dimension of change over time. One of the first to pilot WI courses, biologist Miriam Golomb, still offers a WI course decades later. Biologist Gerald Summers and materials scientist Aaron Krawitz went on not only to serve as Board chairs, but also (much later) in CWP administrative roles.

Important as CWP staff and policy have been, MU faculty have always been the heart of the program. The list of faculty contributors numbers in the hundreds. One indicator of the range of faculty support over the years is the diversity of those who have chaired the Writing Board. They come from nineteen different disciplines and from eight of the university's fifteen undergraduate colleges and schools. (See Appendix C.)

HAVING TIME AND STAFF TO PAY ATTENTION

For most of its history, CWP was fortunate to have staff in sufficient numbers to do more than simply maintain the program. It was also blessed by having staff who believed that CWP made a difference in the intellectual lives of MU faculty and students and who therefore bent their talents toward helping CWP serve those constituents. One such staff member was Peterson's replacement, Trish Love, who had once been an MU honors student. As CWP's administrative associate and fiscal officer for fourteen years, she brought to every communication that went out of the office a standard of professionalism unparalleled in most departments.¹² A master of numbers as well as words, she tutored herself in the potential of electronic databases to resolve the record keeping demands of a program in its adolescent growth spurt. She created the databases that tracked the assignments, TA support, and enrollments of every WI course ever offered at MU.

One of the benefits of having personnel with diverse talents is that staff members can be interdependent and still play to their strengths. Townsend not only tolerated working with upper administration and outside agencies, she genuinely enjoyed it. Vogt and Patton were, in different ways, academic gypsies who thoroughly enjoyed pulling up to a variety of texts and engaging in conversation about the issues at hand, with students or faculty. By playing on her strengths, Townsend created a space that enabled Vogt and Patton to play on theirs. Too often, when funding is short and positions are limited, there is no one left to pay attention—to really pay attention—to the intellectual life of a WAC program. CWP staff did not notice everything that needed attention, but they had both time and data to pay close attention to a good many things. Again, pulling through Ratcliffe's lessons about rhetorical listening, we argue that paying attention matters, not only for purposes of accountability, but also to stimulate the interdisciplinary conversations that are at the heart of "problem-based programs."

During this time, CWP began the first of numerous explorations into what was happening with writing instruction in international settings. In 1994, MU provost and now chancellor Brady Deaton declared, "If MU is to become a truly great university, it must be an international university."

CWP wanted to do its part, so in 1995, when Townsend was invited to spend a month at Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu in Romania, she jumped at the opportunity. One outcome of that trip was Townsend's Romanian host coming to earn a Ph.D. in MU's English department. Nicoleta Raileanu returned to Romania to teach, subsequently emigrating with her family to Toronto where, among other things, she is involved with a WAC initiative at her new university. Collectively, Townsend, Patton, and Vogt visited twelve countries on WAC-related endeavors during their CWP tenure, with many of those trips resulting in exchange visits by faculty with whom they worked. CWP staff realized early on that paying attention to WAC outside the program leads to increased paying of attention inside as well.

1996-2001: THE THIRD FIVE YEARS—MATURITY

During these years, arguably CWP's most stable and productive, staff continued to build on strengths and to pay attention to WI faculty in a number of ways. Just as Hunt, Smith, and Peterson had listened closely to teachers talking about teaching, Townsend, Vogt, and Patton did as well. Some of these conversations were the predictable ones that every WAC WPA encounters: "How can I integrate writing in my course while also maintaining 'coverage' of all my material?" or "Can I assign two grades, one for content and another for writing?" But many of our conversations were truly open-ended and reciprocal, and they prompted both faculty and CWP staff to think about the problems at hand in novel ways. History professor Charles Timberlake, for example, eschewed the Writing Board's traditional concept of revision by arguing that his method of assigning weekly one-page themes constituted a more meaningful approach to revision in his course for his students. He didn't want students bogged down in rewriting short papers when, he argued, they could more productively move on to fresher topics while at the same time revising their ways of "thinking history" based on his feedback from the previous week's short paper. His argument persuaded Board members that the "alternative means to the same end" policy in the *WI Guidelines* was more than a gratuitous suggestion.

Likewise, as newer technologies began to take hold, faculty wanted to experiment with virtually all of them while, at the same time, maintaining the WI designation for their courses. The Board received—and enthusiastically approved—numerous technology-rich course proposals. Engineering, for example, calculated how many "words" their equations and graphs were equivalent to; MU's distance learning and nursing programs offered online courses; and several disciplines counted web page production and

blogs toward the *WI Guidelines*' word and page requirements. As was the Board's custom, each new proposal was discussed and debated, with members stretching their own understanding of what constituted "writing," often harkening to the longstanding "alternative means to the same end" policy. What mattered most to the Board was that substantive revision and critical thinking were involved, regardless of the medium. In our collective memory, no such thoughtfully proposed WI course was ever denied.

Experience taught us that faculty had few outlets for discussing their teaching. In fact, some faculty reported that such talk was actively discouraged in their departments, either because it took time away from research or because it demonstrated uncertainty about an activity that any respectable faculty member ought to be able to take for granted. Sensing a hunger for dialogue about teaching, CWP provided a variety of forums in which faculty could discuss designing assignments, commenting on student drafts, assigning grades, conducting peer review, and other teaching-related topics. Our semi-annual faculty workshops, ongoing norming sessions with WI faculty and TAs, and frequent one-to-one consultations gave faculty safe environments in which to talk about their successes as well as their struggles.

CWP's faculty workshops featured interactive sessions that encouraged cross-disciplinary dialogue. Seated together at round tables and focusing on real WI assignments and student writing, faculty from physics and engineering found that they had much in common with teachers from music and sociology. CWP staff opened each workshop with a mock norming session moderated by Vogt that raised many of the questions the remainder of the workshop attempted to answer. During this 90-minute foundational session (divided among individual work, small-group work, and whole-group discussion), participants analyzed a flawed WI writing assignment and then graded and commented on three responses, two from students and one staff-written ringer. This lively session helped faculty discover the critical role of good assignment design, the benefits and perils of using rubrics, and the wide variety of styles and formats that constitute "good writing" across the disciplines. Instead of offering pat answers, however, the session introduced faculty to the myriad possibilities of using writing to teach content. As a result, participants were typically eager to engage in remaining sessions that introduced a variety of individual assignments, sequenced assignments, rubrics, and commenting styles. The workshops often began conversations between CWP staff and individual faculty that have lasted as long as those faculty remain at MU.

The mock norming at the workshop also introduced faculty to another opportunity to talk about writing, teaching, and grading: norming ses-

sions with WI teachers, WI TAs, and CWP staff. Originally Smith, and later Vogt, assisted individual teachers and their TAs with grading in multiple sections of large-enrollment WI courses, to ensure that the process is as equitable as possible. In preparation for an upcoming norming session, teachers looked closely at their assignments with CWP staff. During the subsequent norming session with teachers and TAs, CWP staff focused on asking questions that caused faculty to articulate their standards. They helped faculty clarify abstract descriptions like “logically organized” by pointing to examples from sample student papers. Through diplomatic, focused questioning, staff brought to light the underlying causes of differences of opinion and often persuaded faculty to take a firm stand about what constitutes an exceptional response to the assignment versus a mediocre or inadequate one. More than anything, norming sessions were another opportunity for WI faculty to be actively listened to by CWP staff who took the time to ask questions that matter.

Sometimes interwoven with norming sessions, but more often standing alone, were one-to-one consultations with faculty about everything from alternatives for designing grading rubrics to dealing with the occasional surly student. Having first seen CWP staff “in action” at a faculty workshop, most teachers later viewed us as capable, willing allies. Over the years, for example, Vogt fielded questions from faculty baffled by an inexplicably bad set of student drafts; from teachers who were twenty minutes from a promised in-class peer review session but who found themselves with no plan, and from one eager instructor who called to ask—without preface—“JoNan, what’s my teaching philosophy?” That kind of trust and confidence cannot be bought. It has to be earned by a staff willing to meet teachers where they are and work with them without judgment or condescension.

For some time, MU had operated a Writing Center staffed by graduate students and used primarily by undergraduates in composition courses. When CWP came into being, a second Writing Center attached to CWP was created—WITS (WI Tutorial Services)—tailored to WI students, faculty, and classes. Through WITS, CWP provided yet another audience for teachers keen to talk about teaching. Originally designed and staffed by Smith, WITS was staffed by advanced graduate students and professional tutors from the disciplines. Smith, Vogt, and other WITS directors through the years made a concerted effort to hire tutors with varied backgrounds who would be comfortable talking with faculty from a variety of disciplines. Vogt herself was originally hired by Smith because she had a degree in zoology, was pursuing a degree in English language and linguistics, and along the way had dabbled in literature, animal science, and French. Like Vogt, WITS tutors were selected not only because of their wide-ranging

academic backgrounds but also because of their intellectual curiosity. One long-time WITS tutor, for instance, held a PhD in biology but was also schooled in James Joyce and was a film buff. Another was an engineer who had worked eight years in industry before coming to MU to pursue simultaneously an MBA and a law degree.

Not only did Smith and Vogt seek out potential tutors with wide and deep backgrounds, they tested candidates by conducting hands-on interviews based on actual WI assignments and student papers. Having given tutor applicants time to prepare in advance, WITS directors spent 90-120 minutes with each candidate, asking questions, offering advice, introducing WITS and CWP philosophy, and doing subtle training about WI courses and teachers. This process allowed WITS directors to judge a candidate's diagnostic abilities, tutoring strategies, and attitudes toward faculty and students. All were essential if tutors were to make positive contributions to the ongoing dialogue with faculty about teaching.

The process worked. Because WITS tutors were recognized by many faculty as competent, engaged participants in the WI process, they were frequently sought out for consultations about assignments. One beginning art teacher, for instance, never handed out a writing assignment without seeking feedback from his WITS tutor, a history PhD student with a background in art and art history plus several semesters' experience tutoring students in WI art classes. Another instructor, an experienced geography professor, invited her tutor to conduct an hour-long writing workshop in her classroom, a session so successful that it was repeated in subsequent semesters. The degree to which WI teachers interacted with WI tutors varied widely, but those who took the time to get to know their tutors usually came to view them as trusted colleagues and as additional sources of safe, reliable advice. Thus, WITS became an integral part of the CWP feedback loop upon which so many WI teachers came to depend. In due course, Vogt moved on to a larger role with WI faculty, especially in the Education and Social Sciences area; in turn, Andy White and Sally Foster directed WITS, bringing their own strengths to the tutoring operation while maintaining staff diversity and individual attention to courses and teachers.

The more that CWP staff learned about WI teaching practices through tutors and Writing Board members (always an invaluable source of information), the more ideas we could offer in workshops and one-on-one consultations. The process snowballed. The more that faculty were invited to consider new variations of old assignments, the more they were inspired to experiment in still other ways with assignment design, standards for peer review, and ways of providing formal and informal feedback. We needed—and were able—to supplement general rhetorical principles with

home-grown writing assignments addressing a range of discipline-specific problems, problems ranging from applications of Darcy's Law in civil engineering to complications of glycolysis in biochemistry. In a self-perpetuating process, then, we collected, reviewed, archived, and shared (with permission) hundreds of faculty documents, and we had hundreds of one-to-one conversations about these documents.

What distinguished CWP most, though, was not the collection and archiving of such documents, but the many opportunities to read, reflect on, and then talk about the ideas in them with the people at the heart of the writing program—the WI faculty. That is, we were fortunate to have the staff and time to be able to pay close attention to the people who make the program work. WITS provided one way to pay attention to WI assignments and the various ways in which students interpret them. The Writing Board provided another, giving CWP staff a reason to talk to faculty who were in the process of proposing new courses and recertifying old ones. Board members, too, had a chance to talk with each other as well as CWP staff and prospective WI teachers about assignments and writing-related issues.

Yet another mechanism for paying attention to WI faculty was conducting qualitative studies of writing. Beginning with her dissertation research, Marty Patton showed her talent for close observation in the WI classroom. Her collaboration with select WI teachers resulted in insights for the program and for the faculty who generously invited her into their classes and into dialogue with them and their students.¹³ In addition to Patton's WI classroom collaborations, Townsend invited a number of WI faculty to accompany her on site visits to other campuses where she was conducting faculty workshops. These WI teachers who spoke from "within the trenches" were always received as authoritative representatives for the writing-in-the-disciplines pedagogies we were advocating. Finally, we made conscientious efforts to assemble panels of WI faculty who presented on their work at professional conferences. Venues including CCCC and the national WAC conference featured MU WI faculty on multiple occasions. Several of those presentations led to further consultations at other schools and to publications by WI faculty independent of CWP staff.¹⁴ All of these opportunities to pay close attention gave us a chance to honor, even if inadequately, good teachers and good teaching. Moreover, these opportunities gave us a chance to keep alive the healthy self-consciousness needed for grass-roots accountability.

But none of these opportunities would have existed if we had not had an unusual degree of administrative and fiscal support, for it takes people and salaries to pay attention to scores of WI faculty. It takes time and staff

to read textbooks, to read drafts of assignments, to think about the intellectual problems in question, to attend classes, to notice unusual features, and to meet with faculty. CWP staff had private conversations with nearly every single professor after his or her first semester teaching a WI course, conversations that allowed us to learn from and build on their experiences and that allowed them to reflect on and revise their assignments and syllabi. For two decades, we had leadership in CWP to solicit these funds; we had an administration responsive to our needs; and we had a staff that earned the trust of many of the WI faculty.

We had the opportunity, then, to couple observation and reflection, two activities that John Dewey insists are necessary for thinking and that we suggest are necessary for an intellectually robust program. We make no claim that we did the best or the most that we could with the resources at our disposal; we simply claim that we had ample opportunities to observe and to reflect upon—to pay attention to—our WI faculty and their spectacular radiation of disciplinary ways of writing. Because of their focus on “traditional” research (as opposed to research on or attention to pedagogy), very few research institutions make similar opportunities available. But without them, it is hard to keep WAC theory connected to WAC practice and to allow WAC practice to continue to modify WAC theory.

Because our administration did support a cadre of WAC consultants, we had uncommon opportunities to pay attention to faculty and to have uncommon conversations about writing in particular situations—in genetics, in human development, in physics. We found that our loosely-scripted roles as WAC consultants enabled us to move back and forth among all four of the consulting models that Jeff Jablonski describes in *Academic Writing Consulting and WAC: Methods and Models for Guiding Cross-Curricular Literacy Work*. Together and independently, we functioned as workshop facilitators (workshop model), writing experts (service model), co-inquirers (reflective inquiry model), and researchers (discipline-based research model). How much we emphasized our own expertise and how much we deferred to that of faculty in the disciplines depended entirely on the problem at hand. With the same physics professor, we might on different occasions assume very different roles: expert, co-inquirer, or researcher. Common to all of the consulting roles, though, was a dialogic quality: we could ask questions that others might not think to ask and the faculty often answered our queries in ways we would never dream.

2001-2007: OUR LAST YEARS – A NEAR-DEATH EXPERIENCE, BUT REVIVED AND MOVING AHEAD

CWP's maturity meant not only bringing some of its work to fruition and receiving professional recognition for its accomplishments, but also experiencing problems that threatened its well being. Some problems may have been inevitable with an aging program; some may trace to us, in our CWP staff roles of wanting to be protective of the program we had nurtured; and some may trace to accelerating differences with higher administration. In any case, the problems peaked in 2005. Were it not for strong support from both WI and non-WI faculty, the Writing Board's persistence in its commitment to quality writing instruction, and the staff's conviction about the value of their work, CWP might have succumbed.

The maturing of anything, including writing programs, is not inherently bad, but it can be problematic if ignored or left unaddressed. So much had worked so well for so long that we CWP staff members may have become complacent when, in fact, some things were changing under our noses. For example, the proportion of new WI courses diminished relative to old WI courses; thus, the Writing Board was charged with less primary evaluation and more secondary, mediated evaluation. Board members tended to approve updates if CWP staff had good reports, so their discussions, while not rubber-stamping exactly, were less dynamic than they had been. Likewise, while CWP staff continued to have one-on-one conversations with newer WI faculty, we did not necessarily book appointments with professors like Jack Kultgen who had offered over twenty-five sections of his philosophy WI course over the decades. Our conversations continued but were, perhaps, less frequent and probing than they had been. Similarly, we had faith that our assessment program followed the best practices advocated by knowledgeable scholars in our field; in fact, CWP's multi-modal assessment program was cited by CCCC as instrumental in our receiving the organization's "Writing Program Certificate of Excellence" award in 2004. Still, we perhaps could have done more to assuage the concerns of some administrators who were responding to the increasingly assessment-driven academic culture when they urged us to adopt assessment measures that we believed inappropriate.

Moreover, some change may have been needed, simply because change stimulates new modes of problem solving. As Laura Brady argues in "A Greenhouse for Writing Program Change," change is beneficial for living, dynamic writing programs. Living in the WAC program we had helped create and seeing it through the lens of pride and investment, we may have lacked the perspective to anticipate necessary changes.

However, these problems were not the only ones or, arguably, even the primary ones leading to the crisis of 2005. The problems CWP encountered involved two factors beyond our control: a substantial reduction in the state of Missouri's fiscal support for higher education and new administrators to whom the Program reported. With regard to the first, the 2001 terrorist attacks on 9/11 led to the decline of financial markets everywhere. In Missouri as elsewhere, lower tax collections led to significantly reduced appropriations to higher education. In fiscal year 2002 alone, the University of Missouri's state appropriation declined by \$23 million. As this new dismal fiscal reality set in, virtually all entities on campus felt the pinch.

On one hand, CWP fared surprisingly well during the early period of retrenchment. Budgets across campus were slashed, but CWP's was kept intact—a remarkable sign of support from MU's senior administrators. As time went on, though, gradual adjustments allowed for recovery elsewhere on campus, but CWP's budget remained static and the program was expected to serve increasing numbers of new students with no new resources.

Concomitantly, new administrators were appointed to whom CWP reported. Part of their charge was to find ways to see the university through the fiscal challenges. Understandably, they sought ways to make current funding go further. If not a “do more with less” mandate, the expectation was to “do more with the same.” In the fall 2002 semester alone, for example, Townsend attended at least twelve meetings intended to produce a new funding plan for WI courses that would spread current dollars more widely. A new funding formula for distributing resources to WI courses was designed, but did not prove particularly effective. The program's static budget, which had been admirably generous in earlier years, made funding new WI courses for a larger number of students difficult.

It is impossible to claim, however, that the problems CWP faced were attributable solely to a need for creative fiscal solutions. Perhaps a shift in administrators' educational philosophy occurred, or perhaps a lesser degree of understanding about WAC in general came about. In any case, the program experienced noticeably diminished support as evidenced by the following:

- an independent focus-group study of CWP was commissioned, but the overwhelmingly positive findings were not discussed with us, nor disseminated.
- our long-requested second external review was put on hold pending outcome data that would tie improvement in student writing to WI classes.

- the successful and highly integrated Writing Intensive Tutorial Service was removed from CWP's aegis to another unit on campus.¹⁵
- CWP's offices were moved to a less central (albeit historically significant) location,
- low- or no-cost requests for individual and whole-staff development were denied
- CWP staff were told, indirectly, that we should not be engaged in research on writing, that the program should be a service unit only, and that research on writing should come out of the English Department.

Ironically, these and other difficulties were occurring at the same time that CWP was being increasingly recognized beyond our own campus. Perhaps most noteworthy was the program's receiving the 2004 CCC's Writing Program Certificate of Excellence, the first year that the profession's major national organization gave the award.¹⁶ Other external acknowledgments of CWP's success included:

- MU's inclusion in U.S. News and World Report's annual Best College for You "Programs to Look For – Writing in the Disciplines" category every year from 2003 (the first year this category appeared) henceforward to 2011.
- an invitation to host the 2004 national WAC conference, for which we selected an international theme; the success of that event led conference organizers to rename and reconstitute the conference henceforward as the international WAC conference.
- numerous international scholars found their way to CWP, to study methods for integrating writing instruction in the disciplines; faculty from South Africa, Costa Rica, Thailand, South Korea and other countries spent up to a semester with us doing research on our methods which they hoped to replicate at their home institutions.

In sum, CWP continued its work. WI courses were delivered; faculty workshops were held; one-on-one consultations were conducted. We paid attention, as usual. The program's "near death" experience could be seen as a series of instances wherein CWP's new administrators neglected to employ dean Glick's strategy of including faculty in decision-making processes. Whereas Glick and other subsequent administrators invited external reviewers' expert opinions and placed responsibility for program policy in the hands of the Writing Board faculty, more recent administrators declined to invite external reviewers and ignored recommendations from the Writing Board. In their own consultancies for other institutions' WAC

programs, CWP staff had often cited MU's remarkable degree of faculty ownership as a key reason for CWP's success. When faculty ownership was threatened and ignored, the program suffered.

Ultimately, faculty did prevail. As word of the problems reached campus, upper administration received emails, letters, and telephone calls. Local newspapers carried stories about the program's possible demise. And the Faculty Council mounted an inquiry that resulted in a unanimous resolution of support for the program. (See Appendix D). The College of Education and the School of Journalism passed similar unanimous resolutions supporting the program.

2007—2011 A SHORT UPDATE SINCE OUR DEPARTURES

Now, some five years later, WI courses are being offered in ever increasing numbers. One-on-one follow-up consultations remain a key feature of CWP work. The Writing Board is as active and influential as it has been at any time in the past. The fifty-first consecutive semi-annual faculty development workshop was recently held, with its usual robust attendance. Longtime WI teacher and former Writing Board chair Aaron Krawitz, newly retired from Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering, served a two-year term as interim director. English professor Jeff Rice succeeded him as director for a three-year term, bringing to CWP his considerable expertise with new media. Part of his legacy includes e-WAC, CWP's web-based newsletter; a CWP wiki; and *Artifacts*, a journal for student writing produced in WI classes. English Education professor Amy Lannin is newly named to a two-year term as director. Having directed Missouri's National Writing Project, she will surely forge important new relationships with the secondary education community. New hires replacing Patton and Vogt were quickly completed: Catherine Chmidling and Bonita Selting are now fully integrated into the ongoing activities, enabling the program to continue to pay attention to WI faculty and courses. And the program reports to a new administrator, one who, by every account, is listening and leading with the vigor CWP had been accustomed to. He and the Board continue to explore ways to identify a funding model that will sustain ever-larger WI course enrollments in what is still a difficult fiscal time for the university and state.

Under the new administrator, the university undertook a comprehensive review of the two-decade-old General Education Architecture, into which the original WI requirement had been incorporated and which gave rise to the second WI course. Interestingly, several key elements of the general education program have been eliminated or substantially revised, but the

WI requirement is unchanged. Throughout the campus-wide review process, faculty remained supportive of the place of WI instruction in MU's curriculum. It was, in fact, one of the least controversial aspects of the review.

A subtle but important shift is occurring in WAC programs nationally, away from labeled or designated courses, like our WI model, toward writing that is planfully embedded throughout a discipline, a degree program, or a department's whole curriculum. Often these new initiatives are tied to outcomes assessment that fosters discussion and decision-making within a group of faculty: "What is it we want our students to know and do with our degree when they have earned it? How can writing both help us get there and show that students have acquired the various skills we certify with our degree?" We find much to admire in this new development, which is a welcome evolution in WAC, not least since it harkens back to the liberal arts ideal for which the WI label has always been a somewhat artificial substitute. Even though MU's Geological Sciences Department has successfully adopted an embedded model for its WI curriculum, we nonetheless affirm the power of the WI model for many departments in our university, given the overwhelming faculty support it has developed, and for the local circumstances that WAC must always be sensitive to.

WHAT WE THINK WE HAVE LEARNED

Much of what we note about CWP illustrates points that others have made about writing program development, including the importance of both faculty and administration buy-in, the importance of rewards and incentives for faculty, and the importance of a strong, faculty-governed review process if WI-credit is mandatory. We also echo others' comments about the importance of ongoing conversation on both internal and external levels. For example, McLeod and Miraglia, citing Michael Fullan and Matt Miles, claim that the seventh lesson of program success is "connection with the wider environment," for "the best organizations learn externally as well as internally" (20). We affirm most of what we have read in WPA literature about program development.¹⁷

Some of what we wish to call particular attention to, though, are these interrelated issues:

1. We need to apply to faculty development what we advocate for classroom teaching: back-door, problem-based, discovery learning. As John Bean tells us, individuals who are engaged in real, open-ended problems tend to think more deeply about the issues.

This engagement was the case when the first task force members were allowed space for grass-roots discovery and given ownership in the results of their discovery. We notice that faculty development was a by-product of serving on the writing board, where faculty questioned, learned, and tutored each other in the process of critiquing proposals. We notice this in the power of Vogt's norming exercises. We notice this in Patton's interactions with science faculty. We notice this in the power of Townsend's philosophy of supervision.

2. We need to foster what Krista Ratcliffe calls "rhetorical listening," especially across disciplinary aisles, together with better recognition of individuals who do a lot of it. As Cheryl Glenn and Frank Farmer do, Ratcliffe notes that there is opportunity in silence and potential activity in listening. Unfortunately, the demands of teaching, research, and administration leave most tenure-track WPAs with little time to listen actively—to pay attention—to the intellectual activity in other disciplines.
3. We cannot emphasize strongly enough that #1 and #2 require substantial resources to support WAC personnel who can pay attention and who have time to listen rhetorically. Our university made that possible in ways that other institutions couldn't or didn't.
4. We affirm the value of keeping a detailed archive of WAC programs' work over time as a means of demonstrating the value of pedagogical work. The archival system established by John Peterson, and enhanced by Trish Love, keeps alive the contributions of hundreds of MU faculty and makes CWP's work visible now nearly thirty years later. Without these records, our efforts in this essay would be impossible.
5. We need to better articulate the degree to which the rights and responsibilities are out of kilter for those who engage in interdisciplinary work. That is, the WI faculty whose work we have recognized in this article are almost exclusively on tenure lines. Yet a substantial cadre of graduate students, professional staff, and adjunct faculty contributed to WAC here as well. Their work is embedded throughout CWP's history, but it is not as easily seen nor is it acknowledged to the degree it warrants.

While we call for better recognition of these issues, we also recognize the constructive power of change. As Laura Brady notes in "A Greenhouse

for Writing Program Change,” quoting E. Shelley Reid: “Although Reid focuses particularly on the need for curricular change as an ongoing condition, her points are clearly applicable to program administration generally” (31).

We also closely paraphrase Louise Wetherbee Phelps who, in Rose and Weiser’s collection, reflects on how she told the story of her own program’s tenth anniversary:

To articulate the program’s identity through the story we have told is not, we hope and believe, to singularize our own work as leaders but to understand all leaders’ symbolic work...as a collaboration with the rhetoric of an audience, as narrators of complementary, intertwining, and counter stories...We have tried to imagine an ethical practice of administration and its rhetoric in terms of continuities...We have tried to use the privilege of speech accorded past leaders to understand, express, celebrate, and perpetuate these continuities. (181-82)

Our hope is that our own history of one successful WAC program will serve as a resource for those currently building and sustaining WAC programs wherever they may be. Finally, we wish our new CWP colleagues, and the WI faculty they work with, ever more productive and uncommon conversations about using writing in their classrooms and with the students they teach.

Appendix A: 1983-84 Task Force on English Composition

Winifred Bryan Horner, English, Chair
Kenneth Benson, Sociology
Robert Breitenbach, Biological Sciences
Albert Devlin, English
Micki Flynn, English graduate student
Louanna Furbee, Anthropology
Richard Hocks, English
Doug Hunt, English
Robert Hunt, English graduate student
Jean Ispa, Human Development & Family Studies
Jack Lysen, Engineering
Timothy Materer, English
Ben Nelms, English Education
Donald Ranly, Journalism
Robert Robinson, Religious Studies
Joseph Silvosio, Accountancy
William Stringer, Agriculture
Theodore Tarkow, Classical Studies & Dean’s Office

APPENDIX B: WI GUIDELINES

The Campus Writing Board is looking for classes that use writing as a vehicle for learning, classes that require students to express, reformulate, or apply the concepts of an academic discipline. The emphasis on writing is not intended primarily to give students additional practice in basic composition skills but to encourage students to think more clearly and express their thoughts more precisely. The Board certifies as Writing Intensive courses that take a two-pronged approach to learning, with the students addressing the subject matter via written assignments and the professor attempting to improve the quality of students' performance by giving feedback and requiring revision.

The success of a Writing Intensive course depends far more on the teacher's professional commitment to this style of teaching than it does on adherence to any particular formula. Because of the importance of this commitment, the Campus Writing Board prefers to certify courses that are proposed by voluntary faculty participants, rather than courses that are selected for WI status by departments and then assigned to instructors.

The guidelines below are not inflexible, but they give applicants a picture of the sort of course the Board envisages. Alternative means to the same end will certainly be considered.

1. Writing Intensive courses should be designed and taught by faculty members, at a 20:1 student-to-faculty ratio. This recommendation precludes consideration of graduate students as primary instructors.

(See Guidelines 7 and 8 for classes larger than 20.) The Board prefers that WI courses be taught by MU tenure-line faculty. If asked to approve non-tenure-line faculty for WI teaching, the Board may ask for a letter from the sponsoring department's chair addressing (1) a rationale for this faculty member's WI teaching assignment, (2) the nature and duration of the WI proposer's academic appointment (adjunct, visiting professor, etc.), and (3) the faculty member's other teaching duties. Although such a letter will assist the Board in determining whether to grant WI status, it will not guarantee approval. The faculty member is expected to provide his or her own WI course proposal, including a syllabus, which reflects a personal understanding and commitment to WI

pedagogy. The faculty member should expect to work with Campus Writing Program staff throughout the course and to attend a CWP workshop prior to teaching the WI course.

2. Each course should include multiple assignments that are complex enough to require substantive revision for most students. Students should submit a draft or other preliminary writing, consider responses from a teacher (and, whenever possible, from other students), revise, and finally edit. The final versions of these assignments should total at least 2000 words (8 pages).

Writing Intensive courses usually include some assignments so demanding that only a few students will do a completely satisfactory job in a single draft. The first draft or preliminary writing then becomes a testing ground for the student's ideas and reasoning, and the professor's or peers, responses to the writing are an integral part of the instruction in the course. Clearly, the sort of revision the Board has in mind involves rethinking and rewriting, not merely the correcting of grammatical and stylistic errors.

3. Writing for the entire course should total at least 5000 words (20 pages). This writing may take many forms and includes the drafts or preliminary writing and final versions of the assignments in Guideline 2.

In allowing preliminary drafts to count toward the 5000-word total, the Board assumes that revision of these drafts will mean substantial rewriting for most students (see #2 above). When the professor's expectation is that the final draft will be merely a "cleaned-up" version of the preliminary draft, we ask that the words in the preliminary draft not be counted as part of the 5000-word total.

4. Each course should include at least one revised writing assignment addressing a question for which there is more than one acceptable interpretation, explanation, analysis, or evaluation.

A Writing Intensive course, because it exposes students to "live" questions in an academic discipline, provides an excellent opportunity to develop critical-thinking skills. The Campus Writing Board, therefore, encourages WI teachers to use assignments that require students to accept the burden of proof and to understand what types and amounts of evidence are necessary to proving an assertion in the discipline. The Board realizes that in many scien-

tific, technological, and quantitative fields, introductory students are in no position to challenge the axioms of the discipline or to take a stand on unsettled questions. In such fields, however, the Board encourages assignments that require students to explain the reasoning they use in solving a problem, to justify their answers by referring to expert opinion, or to articulate the distinction between elegant and inelegant approaches to a project (e.g., designs for an experiment to prove a given hypothesis).

5. Writing for the course should be distributed through the semester rather than concentrated at the end.

If writing is being used as a mode of instruction, then it is clearly not appropriate to have written assignments concentrated at the end of the semester. The best WI courses tend to contain a series of short papers distributed through the semester rather than one or two major projects. Some successful courses use only two papers but take these papers through a multistage revision process.

6. Written assignments should be a major component of the course grade.

In perhaps two-thirds of WI courses, out-of-class papers account for 70% or more of the semester grade. It is very unusual for papers in a WI course to account for less than 30% of the course grade.

7. Faculty members may use graduate teaching assistants to bring the student/faculty ratio down to a manageable level.

The Board prefers courses with a maximum student/faculty ratio of 20 to 1. Effective Fall 2003, the Board implemented a new funding system for WI courses with enrollments over 20. Departments will receive OTS funding, as a departmental transfer of funds, based on the total number of WI students enrolled. Under this OTS plan, the departmental allocation is \$110 per student beyond the first 20 students in a class. See the *Suggestions for Large Enrollment Courses* for additional information.

8. In classes employing graduate teaching assistants, professors should remain firmly in control not only of the writing assignments, but of the grading and marking of papers.

The most common practice in courses with enrollment below 50 is to have the professor read every major written assignment and either assign a grade or approve the GTA's grade. In such courses marking and commenting on papers is usually a responsibility shared by the graduate teaching assistant and the professor. As courses get larger, the professor's role becomes increasingly managerial: he or she may train GTAs in "standard-setting" sessions such as those featured in Campus Writing Program workshops and then entrust the actual grading to the graduate teaching assistants. In such circumstances, the Board needs to be assured that the GTAs assign essentially the same grade the professor would, for essentially the same reasons. Professors are, therefore, encouraged to read a large enough sample of the papers to verify the accuracy of the GTAs' evaluations. This sampling will also help the professor assess the effectiveness of the assignment and the need the class may have for additional instruction.

APPENDIX C: CAMPUS WRITING BOARD CHAIRS

1985-88	Robert Breitenbach, Biological Sciences
1988-89	Marilyn Coleman, Human Development & Family Studies
1989-90	Stuart Palonsky, Curriculum and Instruction
1990-91	David Roediger, History
1991-92	Doug Hunt, English
1992-93	Joseph Thorpe, Psychology
1993-94	Laurel Wilson, Textile & Apparel Management
1994-95	Gerald Summers, Biological Sciences
1995-96	Dix Pettey, Mathematical Sciences
1996-97	Kay Libbus, Nursing
1997-98	Aaron Krawitz, Mechanical & Aerospace Engineering
1998-00	Don Sievert, Philosophy
2000-01	Pat Okker, English
2001-02	Michael Kramer, Communication
2002-03	Craig Israelsen, Consumer & Family Economics
2003-04	Joan Hermsen, Sociology
2004-05	Nancy Knipping, Early Childhood and Elementary Education
2005-06	Stephanie Craft, Journalism
2006-08	Anne-Marie Foley, Service Learning
2008-10	Mary Beth Marrs, Business
2010-11	Judith Goodman, Communication Science and Disorders

APPENDIX D: MU FACULTY COUNCIL RESOLUTION
REGARDING THE CAMPUS WRITING PROGRAM

(adopted unanimously April 27, 2006)

Whereas effective writing is an essential skill required by all educated people regardless of their disciplines; AND

Whereas many courses and programs of study at MU did not historically provide adequate training in writing; AND

Whereas the Campus Writing Program, Writing Intensive (WI) courses, and Campus Writing Board were founded in 1985 by a vote of the faculty; AND

Whereas Provost Foster expressed to the Faculty Council Executive Committee on April 18th his support for the continuation of this program at the same level of funding; AND

Whereas Provost Foster expressed at this meeting his intent to designate an interim director of the program before the end of the current semester after consultation with the Campus Writing Board and other faculty; AND

Whereas Chancellor Deaton expressed his support for the continuation and enhancement of this program at the April 19th General Faculty Meeting, THEREFORE

Be it resolved the MU Faculty Council:

1. Expresses appreciation for work done by the campus writing staff, the Campus Writing Board and confidence in their work with the program.
2. Expresses appreciation for the support by Chancellor Deaton and Provost Foster for the Campus Writing Program.
3. Urges quick actions to replace the other three departing members of the writing staff.
4. Calls for the Provost to start in the fall a comprehensive review of the Campus Writing program.

NOTES

1. We dedicate this article to the memory of Milton Glick, who helped the program in its earliest stages. Glick was dean of MU's College of Arts and Science from 1983 to 1988; he died April 16, 2011, while serving as president of the University of Nevada at Reno.

2. We use "WAC/WID" in the title of our essay to signal that our program contains elements of both writing-across-the-curriculum and -in-the-disciplines

as they are generally known. For simplicity's sake, however, we use the shorter "WAC" throughout.

3. Jo Ann Vogt was hired in 1989, Marty Townsend in 1991, and Marty Patton in 1994. Patton and Townsend ended their CWP affiliations in 2006 and are in the University of Missouri English Department where both are firmly grounded in WAC/WID professionally and philosophically. Vogt stepped down in 2007 to become Director of Writing Tutorial Services and Associate Director of the Campus Writing Program at Indiana University, Bloomington.

4. We wish to thank everyone who helped fill in some of our historical gaps and to identify where these colleagues are now: Sharon Black is Executive Staff Assistant to the chair of the English Department at MU; Al Devlin, Tim Materer, and Doug Hunt have all retired from English at MU and all still live in Columbia; Win Horner, an emerita professor of English at MU as well as from Texas Christian University, lives in Columbia; Trish Love is retired from MU and works at Missouri State University; John Peterson works with Jo Ann Vogt at Indiana University's Campus Writing Program; Ray Smith is also at Indiana University.

5. Our program owes much to Bean's *Engaging Ideas: The Professor's Guide to Integrating Writing, Critical thinking, and Active Learning in the Classroom*. Since 1996, we have given a copy to each faculty member who attends our workshops, the content of which is based in large part on the concepts in the book.

6. One notable sign of Glick's support for the program is the article he wrote for *WPA: Writing Program Administration*. See "Writing Across the Curriculum: A Dean's Perspective," 11.3 (1988) 53-58.

7. One of Horner's favorite stories about chairing this large committee is that the only common time everyone could meet was 7:30 a.m., so in order to compensate for the early hour, she insisted that their coffee not be served in Styrofoam, but in real china cups.

8. Telephone interview, 11/13/07.

9. "Friendly and helpful" became the mantra for CWP staff's philosophy of interaction with all of our colleagues across campus. Anything else was not going to serve the program's long-term interests.

10. The composition program at the time required one semester of English 60, taken at the sophomore level, preceded *for some students* by one semester of English 1, taken at the freshman level.

11. A detailed description of the self-study and external review may be found in Townsend's "Integrating WAC Into General Education: An Assessment Case Study."

12. An often told (and completely true) story in CWP concerned Jo Ann giving Trish a document she had written so Trish could critique it. Trish's comment on returning the draft to Jo Ann was, "Nice title. Start over."

13. See <http://english.missouri.edu/graduate-and-doctoral-faculty/132-martha-d-patton.html> for citations.

14. WI faculty who collaborated in these off-campus workshops include Jean Allman, history; Elaine Backus, entomology; Greg Casey, political science; Benjamin Schwarz, environmental design; and Dennis Sentilles, mathematics. Faculty who presented at national conferences include Aaron Krawitz, engineering; April Langley, English; Kay Libbus, nursing; Joshua Millsbaugh, fisheries and wildlife; Mark Ryan, fisheries and wildlife; Pat Okker, English; and John Zemke, romance languages.

15. Wendy Strachan's history of her institution's developing a WI component relates an unfortunate story of administration's requiring the merger of the new WI requirement with an older teaching and learning unit on campus. The parallel between Simon Fraser University's and WITS' forced mergers is striking.

16. Indicative of the atmosphere of the time was our administrator's sole response on learning of the CCCC award: "Did that come with any money?"

17. Townsend's essay "WAC Program Vulnerability and What To Do About It: An Update and Brief Bibliographic Essay" elaborates on WAC program sustainability.

WORKS CITED

- Bazerman, Charles. *The Informed Writer: Using Sources in the Disciplines*. 3rd ed. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1989. Print.
- Bean, John C. *Engaging Ideas: The Professor's Guide To Integrating Writing, Critical Thinking, and Active Learning in the Classroom*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1996. Print.
- Bean, John C. and John D. Ramage. *Form and Surprise in Composition: Writing and Thinking Across the Curriculum*. New York: Macmillan, 1986. Print.
- Brady, L. "A Greenhouse for Writing Program Change." *WPA: Writing Program Administration* 29.3 (2006): 27-43. Print.
- Farmer, Frank. *Saying and Silence: Listening to Composition with Bakhtin*. Logan: Utah State UP, 2001. Print.
- Glenn, Cheryl. *Unspoken: A Rhetoric of Silence*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 2004. Print.
- Jablonski, Jeff. *Academic Writing Consulting and WAC: Methods and Models for Guiding Cross-Curricular Literacy Work*. Cresskill: Hampton P, 2006. Print.
- McLeod, Susan H. and Eric Miraglia. "Writing Across the Curriculum in a Time of Change." *WAC for the New Millennium: Strategies for Continuing Writing-Across-the-Curriculum*. Ed. Susan McLeod, Eric Miraglia, Margaret Soven, and Christopher Thaiss. Urbana: NCTE, 2001. 1-27. Print.
- Phelps, Louise Wetherbee. "Telling a Writing Program Its Own Story: A Tenth-Anniversary Speech." *The Writing Program Administrator as Researcher: Inquiry*

- in Action and Reflection*. Ed. Shirley K Rose and Irwin Weiser. Portsmouth: Boynton/Cook Heineman, 1999. 168-183. Print.
- Ratcliffe, Krista. "Rhetorical Listening: A Trope for Interpretive Invention and a Code of Cross-Cultural Conduct." *College Composition and Communication* 52.2 (1999): 195-224. Print.
- Rose, Shirley K, and Irwin Weiser. "The WPA as Researcher and Archivist." *The Writing Program Administrator as Researcher: Inquiry in Action and Reflection*. Ed. Shirley K Rose and Irwin Weiser. Portsmouth: Boynton/Cook Heineman, 1999. v-xi. Print.
- Russell, David. *Writing in the Academic Disciplines, 1870-1990: A Curricular History*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 1991. Print.
- Strachan, Wendy. *Writing-Intensive: Becoming W-Faculty in a New Writing Curriculum*. Logan: Utah State UP, 2008. Print.
- Townsend, Martha A. "Integrating WAC into General Education: An Assessment Case Study." *Assessing Writing Across the Curriculum: Diverse Approaches and Practices*. Ed. Kathleen Blake Yancey and Brian Huot. Greenwich: Ablex, 1997. 159-172. Print.
- . "WAC Program Vulnerability and What To Do About It: An Update and Brief Bibliographic Essay." *WAC Journal* 19 (2008): 45-61. Print.



On the Crossroads and at the Heart: A Conversation with the 2012 WPA Summer Conference Local Host about the Place of the Writing Program at the University of New Mexico

Shirley K Rose and Chuck Paine

The following interview is the second in a series featuring the writing programs of our local hosts for the WPA Summer Conferences. In this interview with Chuck Paine, the English Department's Associate Chair for Core Writing at the University of New Mexico, we explore the ways the writing program and the university reflect their geographical context in Albuquerque and the American Southwest.

SKR: Thanks for talking with me this morning, Chuck. This project started with the *WPA: Writing Program Administration* Editorial Board wanting to do something in the journal connected with the WPA summer conference locations. Doing profiles of the writing programs with which our conference local hosts work seemed like the perfect thing. With the 2012 WPA Summer Conference coming up in July, for which you are serving as Local Host, the writing program at the University of New Mexico is our featured program for this year's profile.

CP: Being a host is hard work, and it has some nice benefits.

SKR: Being Local Host is a huge amount of work and we thank you for it in advance! This conversation is intended to help people understand what's going on in your place. I'm very interested in looking at the ways writing programs are shaped by where they are organizationally placed within their institutions, by the types of institutions they're in, and by their institutions' geographical and cultural locations.

CP: When I was reading the questions you sent in advance, it just made me remember what I love about our field, which is as a scholar, as an individual, as an administrator, there is an interaction between oneself and the place. It's like Frederick Jackson Turner's Frontier Thesis that

there is a dialectic between the place and the person: the place changes the person, and the person changes the place. Ideally, each transforms the other. I don't think that's always true, say, for a Shakespearian, who is probably going to do his or her research agenda regardless of where he or she goes, right? As a WPA, I just think about how profoundly shaped I've been by coming to New Mexico and to UNM. When I left Duke University in 1994, I came here thinking I was a hot shot, you know. I was going to show these yokels what it was all about. Right? I figure a lot of newly minted PhDs sort of do that, and I was quickly humbled and realized the people here who may not have had the same background I did knew a lot, and I found myself being shaped by them. Rick Johnson-Sheehan, by the way, will say the same thing. He was shaped by UNM when he was here, from 1995 to 2004, when he went to Purdue. He'll tell you he was very much shaped by who we are, and I think that's really interesting. And what Michelle Kells is doing is shaped by place, but I'm jumping ahead.

SKR: That's ok. Say what you want to say we can back track!

CP: What Michelle Kells is doing here with her National Consortium on Writing Across Communities really is not just about the university community but the broader community. It's like Eli Goldblatt says in his book *Because We Live Here*. At that Baton Rouge WPA Conference, after a panel where we talked about writing programs going outside their traditional confines, Eli said, "Good things happen when writing programs get outside of English departments and get outside the universities. Exciting things happen." And we think so too. Right now, with our faculty shortage, we're just treading water more than we'd like to. But I think it is amazing we're sustaining things as well as we are, making so many of those community outreach things happen. And I should point out that it's our graduate students who are taking the lead on many of these projects.

SKR: But you have some things in place that can be picked up again when the human resources are there.

CP: Yes. I absolutely think so, and we have a dean who really who thinks that programs and departments should be responsive to where they are. At the University of New Mexico we are not a rich school. We cannot be a full service department. We've got to decide what we're going to specialize in. We all feel it should be defined by the interests of the taxpayers who fund us, by the students who come to us: 90% New Mexicans, well over half from Bernalillo County. We're a commuter school, although there are about 5000 on-campus students. So you asked a little about the demographics of New Mexico. What

people often say about New Mexico and UNM is that we already look like what America will look like in the coming decades. That's a very good argument for getting grants and other resources. We are a minority majority state. UNM is the only minority majority flagship university. We used to be, we may not be any more, the only minority majority university with a medical school. We are a Hispanic-serving institution. I believe we are the only flagship Hispanic-serving institution.

SKR: I was going to ask about that. There must not be very many HSIs that are also Research I—or what used to be called Research I institutions. I don't think that is the category anymore but that is the profile.

CP: Yes, that's right, and we are; so, former dean and provost Reed Dasenbrock used to say we need to pioneer access *and* excellence. Sometimes you think you're either doing one or the other. And the question is, can we do both? Can we be excellent and maintain Research I and the funding that brings, the kind of prestige that brings; but can we also serve the students? I'm talking about undergraduates here, that we need to serve and give them what they need to succeed, to persist, to be engaged. And can we develop? Sometimes, as you can imagine, there are conflicts. There are some professors in some places who say—not in the writing program, of course—who say “we just need to get better students.” To which I say, “Where are you going to get them?” It's like what [former Secretary of Defense Donald] Rumsfeld said about going to war with the army you've got, not the one you'd like to have. You have to respond to and serve and teach the students you have, not the students you'd like to have.

SKR: It just seems wrong for university administrators to say “Let's raise our admissions criteria. We can. We can maintain our size, not grow but just become more selective.” I can't sign on to that. That's just not what I want to do.

CP: I agree. We all hear a lot of people saying, let the community colleges deal with our underprepared students, but kicking things over to the two-year schools, I think, ends up hurting the most vulnerable people—first-generation students and, in a place like New Mexico, students from rural high schools with very small graduating classes who come to our big university and have a really tough time. Look, my kids, your kids, your grandchildren—students who come from language-rich and privileged backgrounds—they're going to succeed anywhere. Anyway, access and excellence is what we're trying to achieve. I'm not sure it has really been achieved anywhere; but because

of that, because we're Research I and have pretty liberal admissions standards, we have to try to do both, and that's not always easy.

SKR: I think that pretty much characterizes what we're trying to do here at ASU, too: access and excellence. Could I get a brief characterization of what your writing programs are?

CP: Right now my official title is Associate Chair of English for Core Writing. But, of course the part of our Rhetoric and Writing program that takes the most care and feeding is first year writing. By "rhetoric and writing" here, I mean everything from first-year writing to the Rhetoric and Writing MA and PhD. Again, I see the connections across Rhetoric and Writing as healthy for everybody. It makes the core writing stronger because you have teaching assistants and adjuncts who are invested in writing instruction. It also helps the person writing that dissertation and about to go on the job market because they can talk about what they've done in this program. They've put their shoulder to the wheel and they've participated—and they really *do* participate, maybe a little bit too much. Maybe we give our graduate students a little too much responsibility or too much work.

We do have a professional writing program right now and sometimes we have had a Director of Professional Writing—we don't right now. About a third of our English majors get a transcribed concentration in Professional Writing, which means they take a certain number of courses at the 400-level, from visual rhetoric to proposal writing, documentation, medical and scientific writing, writing for the Web, information design. Right now, I am really confident, even though we don't have a Director.

What I haven't told you about is a truly remarkable group of Lecturers we've had, long time Lecturers. Most of them are doing some kind of administrative or program-building work. I'm really confident that those courses are taught well by our Lecturers. Students really value their courses. We look at students' exit statements and they talk about these teachers and how important they were.

SKR: That's impressive—and affirming.

CP: We have five Lecturers who devote most of their time to helping us with professional writing concentration courses, with English 219 which is the professional/technical writing course in the writing and speaking core, and with intermediate composition. We also have incredible, wonderful adjuncts who teach some of those courses for us, people who are in fact professional writers, who are out there doing professional writing. One of our lecturers, Jim Burbank, runs the very

successful internship program in professional writing, and does a great job. It was handled for a long time by Scott Sanders, who had been in professional writing forever and was well respected in the field, and who retired just last year. I think that we're going to get a lot of help in this regard from two tenure-track and five lecturer hires we're searching for in Spring 2012. But, you know how job searches go, right, you sort of figure out *during* the search process, "Wow, this is going to be a really good fit" as you meet everyone.

SKR: You realize "that person can do something that we really need..."

CP: Or, "Gee, there really is nobody in the world..."

SKR: Or, "there's nobody doing what we're looking for . . ."

CP: Yes, exactly. . . .

SKR: ". . . so maybe we need to produce that." I think I've got a general idea of what the parts are for your writing program from your website. You talked a little bit already about the demographics of the students at UNM and how they reflect New Mexico. What about the teachers? How do the teachers' demographics reflect the geographical and cultural location of the writing program?

CP: I'm confident that the University of New Mexico is truly, sincerely dedicated to increasing the number of faculty-teachers from underrepresented groups in New Mexico. As you know it's not always that easy to find those placements, so currently while our student body roughly mirrors the state's demographics, that's unfortunately not true for faculty. Our president and our provost have set aside quite a lot of money for "targeted hires," if we can identify them, which is terrific. We're dedicated to getting a more diverse faculty. Frankly, we're like a lot of institutions. We're having a tough time attracting faculty from underrepresented groups.

SKR: It's hard to compete.

CP: Yeah, it is hard to compete. But New Mexicans spend more money per dollar earned on higher education than any other state in the country. We're not a wealthy state. We're always around 49th; Mississippi keeps us from being 50th. So my point is, New Mexican taxpayers are doing all they can to help us out, but we need to make do with what we have.

SKR: Let me ask another kind of question about the culture. We've been equating culture, that is the culture of New Mexico, with how that might be reflected in the student demographic and teacher demographic. But, let me ask about a different kind of culture. How does the fact that you're in the West show up? What makes your students and faculty Westerners?

CP: Well, you know, I was trying to be sort of politic about that because it made me think that there are lots of opportunities that we have begun to seize upon, that we need to keep pursuing. One of the things about the West is how much space there is here. New Mexico is the 5th largest state in the country. There's just a lot of space where nobody lives and so there is a lot that's rural. We have literally hundreds of high schools graduating classes under twenty.

SKR: That's what I grew up on.

CP: We have a large Native population, and we very much want to serve rural New Mexico, but it's not that easy to reach our rural areas. Through efforts like online education and branch campuses, we are ramping that up. But there's also other opportunities in terms of scholarship; Writing *the* West, nature writing. Again, this would be people who have interest in those things. It's not something we set out to find. But it presents wonderful opportunities that I hope we can take advantage of.

SKR: As its website announces, UNM is "New Mexico's Flagship University." Is there any way that you would say that this research university identity shows up in the writing program—in first year composition or in professional writing or in any other area?

CP: Public higher education in New Mexico is handled in a way that is I think unique—and also problematic. For instance, unlike higher education in Arizona, here every community college, and all seven of our universities are independent, each with its own board or regents and its own funding priorities. We have a higher education governmental department in the state government, but all these schools *compete* with one another for finances. We could do a better job of coordinating with one another. I'm talking about an opportunity here—we have an opportunity to work with New Mexico Tech, New Mexico State especially, and also our many community colleges. We're scattered all over the state. It is a four-hour drive to New Mexico State from Albuquerque, and we're in the center of the state. Then there's San Juan College at the other end, which is another three hours away. And so we have the opportunity to bring the writing faculties together and that's one of the ways that we can at least play a leadership role as a flagship university.

Through my work with the Council of Writing Program Administrators I've come to appreciate how important the two year schools are for writing instruction not only in New Mexico but across the country. The CWPA is doing some terrific things to be more inclusive of two-year schools. For instance, we've decided that at least one member

of the executive board should teach at a community college. TYCA Southwest is going to be in Las Cruces (near New Mexico State) next year. We plan to take a big contingent of faculty and graduate students down there and learn more about our community colleges. So I see any leadership role less a matter of leading the way for others to follow, and more a matter of working together, aligning, learning from each other, mutually benefitting each other and our communities.

SKR: I know Michelle Kells is maybe more involved in the National Consortium on Writing Across Communities than you are, but what can you tell me about it? I don't know much about this group and it sounds like a truly great thing. I'm especially struck by the statement from your website: "Seeks to guide curriculum development, stimulate resource sharing, cultivate networking and promote research in language practices in literacy education throughout the nation" and this last part, "Support local colleges and universities working to serve vulnerable communities within their spheres of influence." This group is really zeroing in on how writing across communities is very much directed at an outreach. That's how I'm reading it, as a statement of an outreach and an engagement mission.

CP: Right. But there's a key point to make about how Michelle Kells has conceived WAC and "outreach," which she's tried to convey in her term "writing across *communities*." "Outreach" has connotations of the university imparting its expert knowledge on the community as a kind of charity, whereas we want to emphasize the importance of learning from the community and having it influence what we do here. That's the vision, but we're of course trying to make that vision materialize here in a way that does justice to the loftier ambitions of the initiative.

And it's not just here at UNM. I don't know if you know this, but in 2012, in the days before the WPA Summer Conference (July 12 through 15), there is going to be the first ever Higher Education Literacy Summer in Santa Fe (50 miles from Albuquerque). It's a "summit" that Consortium members are invited to, not a conference per se. The summit takes place July 12 through 15th, so that when they finish the summit they can do some sightseeing of Northern New Mexico and then . . .

SKR: . . . they can come over to Albuquerque. That sounds great. Who are some of the people who are involved? That might help readers understand better what this work is about.

CP: Some of the people I know you will know are Eli Goldblatt, Linda Adler-Kassner, Linda Flower, David Jolliffe, Michelle Eodice, Jacqueline Jones Royster, Elenore Long, Anis Bawarshi, Juan Guerra, Chuck Schuster, Tiffany Rousculp (at Salt Lake Community College). And by the way, speaking of Salt Lake Community College, one of the more exciting projects coming out of UNM's Writing Across the Communities is a new community writing center at the main branch of the library downtown. It is modeled, in large part anyway, after the Salt Lake Community Writing Center. Tiffany came down and gave a workshop about that and that's going very well. It's being headed up by one of our fabulous graduate students, Brian Hendrickson, who has led the way with this. We always say, what we lack in faculty is more than made up for in energetic and dedicated graduate students.

SKR: Oh, that sounds terrific!

CP: It is. The list of people I remembered are just some of the national leaders. The complete list of affiliates is on the website (unm.edu/~wac/). But, you know, Michelle has been so great. It is because of the Writing Across Communities Initiative and its intellectual impetus that we are bringing really interesting people to UNM to speak. This April at the 2012 Writing the World Conference, keynote speakers will be Michelle Eodice and Paul Matsuda, who by the way is also keynoting at the 2012 WPA Summer Conference. Our graduate students think up and actualize some very interesting mini conferences where they invite people to speak about everything from sustainability to literacy issues to civil rights to working with writers. What Michelle Kells is so good at—and she's good at a lot of things—is energizing the graduate students to go out there and work their tails off and put something really great together under her intellectual leadership; and that's why I say what an amazing team of graduate students and faculty we have. I've never seen graduate students with such a sense of empowerment who are doing fabulous things. Again, this is terrific not just because it's important work to do but also because they can say when they're on the job market "this is what I did." So, that's another thing that's been absolutely fabulous about Writing Across Communities. We hope to have this intellectual pursuit manifest in more concrete, actual outreach programs here in New Mexico, which, because of the resource issues I've been telling you about, have been hard to materialize.

SKR: It sounds as though meanwhile you're building some infrastructure for it and developing the culture of the program.

CP: Yes. And we have graduate students who want to come here specifically to do that. So they get very involved.

SKR: Tell me about the Celebration of Student Writing. I saw the website devoted to it—really a blog that is devoted to the celebration of student writing (celebrationunm.wordpress.com/)—and that you’ve now had three or four celebrations.

CP: It’s three. Each one gets better, more exciting, more interesting, and more fun. This year I got there at the very beginning, and I was so engaged. It went on for three hours, and I didn’t make it to every booth because I was having fabulous conversations with our first-year writing students. And then 1 o’clock came, it was time to close down, and I was like, “Oh, my god, I am exhausted.”

SKR: How many student participants did you have?

CP: We started with 600 English 101 students the first year, then in 2010 we had nearly 750 English 101 and 102 students and in 2011 we have nearly 900 students from English 101 and 102. As a matter of fact, the celebration of student writing is the brain child of a single graduate student, who made this happen on her own. Her name is Genesea Carter. It was her idea and her project from the start. I remember the first time I met her. I was working as associate dean for assessment, so I wasn’t as involved in our writing program. It was Genesea’s first year here, so this was like four years ago. She had to interview a faculty member for her introduction to graduate studies class. I hadn’t met her. We started talking about stuff, and I showed her Linda Adler-Kassner’s YouTube video of their celebration of student writing at Eastern Michigan. And Genesea’s like “Wow,” and by the next year, on her own, she made it happen, and it came off really well. The next year was better, and more people started getting excited. This year was even better. Genesea and another graduate student—Erin Penner, who got her Masters and is going to be in the Peace Corps for a while—are doing some interesting qualitative research on it to find out “are these celebrations doing students any good?” I don’t think we really know that answer.

SKR: I think I would want to make the argument that...

CP: Yes, we want to argue that, but we need some data to make the argument compelling.

SKR: Yes. But I’m very interested in these kinds of events as—I want to be careful about this—as doing the work that assessment does in terms of showing people, assuring our stakeholders and constituencies, that the right thing is going on in our programs. And viewed that way, that, yes, it’s good for the students to get something out of it and to learn

some skills, develop confidence and all that, but if all it did was make the work of the classes visible to people who have a stake in what's going on, presumably, that would be valuable.

CP: If you want to be totally cynical about it, you could say, "Yeah, the celebration does the writing program a lot of good, but does it do the *students* any good?" I mean, that's actually a really good question: is this just the writing program showing off? I think we need to interrogate that and find out. I don't know what they'll find, but I wonder whether we can make the case that celebrations lead to some hard-to-measure but very important outcomes, those things that go beyond the usual sort of writing course learning outcomes, perhaps the outcomes we tend to stuff under that big umbrella called "student engagement." We know that students who get involved, who collaborate with other students, are more engaged and tend to succeed better. My work with the National Survey of Student Engagement has convinced me of that. As you probably know, student engagement is about the total student experience, not just academics but also the kind of things usually handled by the student-affairs side of the university. So it's very exciting that one of our celebration partners has been UNM Student Affairs, making it become part of *the* Freshman Experience. Also, we're thinking about ways of expanding our celebration. For example, at this year's TYCA-Southwest in Houston, I met Kate Mangelsdorf, who told me about their version at the University of Texas El Paso. Their WPA, Beth Brunk-Chavez, has combined the celebration with their new media and multimodal composing initiatives, so their celebration is a film festival of short films. [Note: UTEP's First Year Composition showcases some of the films at filmfestival.uglc.utep.edu/]

SKR: That's awesome.

CP: From what I've seen and heard, it is. I hope we can do some swiping of their ideas, bringing multimedia more programmatically to our own writing curriculum and beyond. More good work for our energetic and dedicated graduate students.

[Note from SKR and CP: At our request, Genesea Carter supplied the following additional information about the Celebration of Student Writing: "Our vision for the Celebration of Student Writing is that civic literacy is fostered through the event's two goals: 1) To help build community between the university and first-year students by offering a public forum for those students to display, discuss, and celebrate the work they are accomplishing in their core writing classes. 2) To give first-year students voice, agency, and authorship at UNM, which helps improve student involvement, retention, and graduation rates. Our vision

for the future of the Celebration of Student Writing is to expand the event to include all first-year students and showcase their writing from across disciplines. We're figuring out how we might partner with CNM or non-English departments to expand the event because, really, this event is about celebrating all kinds of student writing. According to the anonymous survey distributed to all the CSW participants post-event, 97.6% of respondents said yes to the question "Was the Celebration a success?" and 74.4% agreed that "After the Celebration I learned more about my peers."]

SKR: Let me ask you a place related question about that: There are other schools that have their versions of your Celebration of Student Writing. We did what we called a "Showcase" when I was at Purdue and we're in the development process for one at ASU. If someone were to be just plopped down in the middle of the space, the room where you are having your Celebration of Student Writing, how would they know that they were at the University of New Mexico rather than, say, Eastern Michigan University or ASU? What would be going on at UNM that would immediately signal that these are things these UNM students are involved in, or engaged in or care about?

CP: Well, in each class, students come up with their own ideas for "how are we going to exhibit what we're doing?" Exhibiting what you do to passers-by is different than putting things in an 8-1/2-by-11 piece of paper, so classes usually examine the ideas they're exploring. For instance, there was one exhibit from a freshman learning community section that linked first-year writing with an Earth Sciences 101 class. We have the beautiful Sandia Mountains here, 10,678 feet high, which are really a geological marvel. Anyway, these students created this exhibit where they showed the Sandia Tramway going up the mountain and they had a lot of fun with it. They used the metaphor of the writing process as going up to the peak, and they also associated those processes with the different ecological zones of the Sandia Mountains. Apparently there are seven zones in the world, and the Sandia Mountains have five of them or something like that. And the students also wrote brochures about the ecology and the flora and fauna of the Sandia Mountains. So they were doing a different kind of writing, writing for the public and things. By the way, I'm hoping to arrange an activity for the Sunday after the WPA conference—a hike up the Sandia Mountains, or along the crest ridge, led by a geologist-professor friend, Gary Smith, who also happens to run our teaching enhancement office. The Sandia foothills border the city limits. Our bookmark promoting the conference has a shot of the Sandia Moun-

tains. There are very few places in Albuquerque that you can't look up and see these amazing mountains.

SKR: That sounds wonderful. Now, I have a question about your own career. You were an undergraduate at UNM.

CP: Yes, I lived in Albuquerque from the age of one up through graduating UNM, and then I was lucky enough to return as a professor. I feel incredibly fortunate.

SKR: Do you think your experiences at other institutions help you to see things about UNM that are maybe unique to that institution and that might reflect its location?

CP: I was an undergraduate here. Some of my current colleagues were my undergraduate professors. It was really nice to come back. I mean, my family was here. I got here in 1994. But yes: getting away was important. It was really important to have that experience at the University of Massachusetts-Boston, which is a lot like UNM in terms of being a commuter campus and just a little bit smaller. As you know, UMASS-Boston ... Anne Berthoff was there, but I was doing pure lit. It is funny—I had to go to Duke, which nobody associates with rhet/comp, to realize that rhet/comp is really what I wanted to do. I had to fashion for myself a curriculum, working with Erica Lindeman, for instance, at UNC and Van Hillard (now the WPA at Davidson) and the people who were at Duke to become a rhet/comp specialist, and frankly, I've learned a lot on the job. I had to go to Duke to understand. I was at Duke with these really smart people. That was the Stanley Fish era. The speakers who used to come to Duke when I was there—we used to joke, "Oh, it's just Jacques Derrida, I don't know if I have time for that." It was just a very exciting time to be there. Very theory driven and my professors were of course really, really talented and impressive. I went there expecting to study poetry and literary theory, but I realized that the way that I could have an impact was through teaching, and therefore, I went into the rhet/comp side of English studies, which, as Joe Harris has called it, is a teaching subject, right? So I came out of Duke a historian of composition, but since 2004 when I started going to WPA conferences, I've become much more associated with the Writing Program Administrators Council. And I really feel like, by the way, I've come home—my people, by god, you know, these are my people! This is what I want to do, that this is how I can make an impact. But it took going to Duke with its kind of snobbishness and high theory to make me realize that that's not what I wanted to do.

SKR: Do you think that the way has been more open for you there at UNM to pursue that? If you had pursued the poetry would you have returned to New Mexico? Could you have seen yourself returning to UNM? I guess I'm asking, "what's the connection that you would make between your knowledge of place and your place in that place, so to speak?"

CP: I'm in the writing program, which is grounded in the students you have and the place you are and the nitty gritty of the institution; I don't think I would have changed as much, had I been hired in American poetry or whatever. I'm really glad I went this route. I love language and I love teaching writing, and it's fun. The other thing is that I love collaboration, and we're such a collaborative discipline, right?

SKR: Yes, very much so.

CP: And that actually was a big turning point for me in my career when I realized I need to collaborate. I don't like to work by myself. I like being a colleague. At UNM, we're a very collegial place.

SKR: Let me pick up on a metaphor you used when you're talking about your journey, the route you've taken. I'm very interested in Route 66, so I know that the University of New Mexico is along U. S. Route 66. Does the university's relationship to the Mother Road show up in the writing program at all? I'm not talking about the touristy Route 66 but the road as the thoroughfare, the way people got from one place to the next, the crossing with Jack Kerouac, the movement east to west and the movement back east again. Is there any connection between the University and that movement?

CP: That's a really interesting metaphor and maybe could be a guiding metaphor, for instance, for *Writing Across Communities*. Albuquerque is close to the heart of Route 66. When people are here for the conference this summer, they can take a five-minute walk to the heart of the heart of Albuquerque's Route 66, Central Avenue at Old Town. They can see some of those great old motels, that are all on the historical registry and can't be torn down, which is terrific. I hadn't really thought about Route 66 as a metaphor, but it's kind of interesting to remember that Route 66 and the old Santa Fe Railroad were really outsider projects, a way for people to move *through* the state and kind of gawk at the—quote—"primitive and mysterious" Navajos, Hopis, and various Pueblo Indians. Remember those art deco Santa Fe Railroad posters and their portrayal of the wide-open land and the indigenous cultures? [Note: Examples of these can be seen in the PBS's *Antiques Roadshow Archive*: <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/roadshow/archive/200302A37.html>] But maybe the real "mother road" for New

Mexico runs perpendicular to Route 66, the Rio Grande. That's the route of El Camino Real, and it's what has held New Mexico together culturally and politically. I recently did a teacher observation of a senior "geography of New Mexico" class, and she was explaining how New Mexico's geography, specifically the Rio Grande, allowed the Native and Hispanic cultures to resist the post-1848 European invasion, especially in the northern part of the state, because there were so many population concentrations along the river. It still defines us politically and culturally today. So I hadn't thought of that before. Come to think of it, maybe it's the idea of the Route-66/Rio Grande *crossroads*, about four miles from UNM's doorstep, that would make an apt metaphor for the university and for Writing Across Communities. Here's what I mean: The University and its faculty are kind of transplants to New Mexico, but rather than just travelling down Route 66 and gawking at the cultures, we travel along the Rio Grande and El Camino Real into the heart of New Mexico communities. It's kind of like that Bugs Bunny motif where he says "I knew I should have turned left at Albuquerque." Do you know that Bugs Bunny motif? [Note: See a montage of Bugs Bunny cartoons with this motif at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e8TUwHTfOOU>] That's what we're trying to do—engage with our communities for mutual benefit.

SKR: That's an interesting point about moving through New Mexico. The fastest passenger train on the Santa Fe Railroad is "The Chief," which takes just over 48 hours for its run from Chicago to San Diego. I've taken that train, and it does stop for a while in Albuquerque...

CP: Another metaphor for UNM vis-à-vis the surrounding communities is captured in a 1890 photograph of the university showing its single building sitting on a lone mesa with nothing anywhere near it for miles and miles. [See a photo in the Albuquerque Museum Collection at <http://www.cabq.gov/city-store/images/hodginhall.jpg/view>] It is all by itself, separate from the rest of the city—that old idea of a college as a world apart from society, right? My former graduate student Beth Leahy (now at University of Arizona earning her PhD) did some terrific archival work here that included some great narrations of 1890s UNM life. It cost a nickel to take the three-mile donkey-cart ride from Old Town to UNM. But here's where I think it gets interesting, when you compare that image and idea with the university and its surroundings today. We are right in the thick of Albuquerque, with Route 66, Central Avenue, literally at our building doorsteps. We're not at all that world apart anymore. The city and the community have grown all around us. We simply cannot remain inside our buildings.

The Mother Road went right by the university, still does. The Rio Grande is a few miles away. So, we started out like a lot of universities: we were going to be separate, and we now find ourselves right in the middle.

SKR: At the heart.

CP: Yes, at the heart of the community, which again gets back to the Writing Across Communities. We realize we're a part of this large community. We don't have a giant wall around us; we're not separated anymore by miles and miles of nobody being there. And you know, we've been shaped by our past and by our geography. Native and Hispanic influences are still very important culturally and politically. Route 66 may have brought in lots of Anglos, like my family, but maybe it's the power of the geography that keeps New Mexico New Mexico. For instance, and I learned this from Beth Leahy's work, New Mexico's original constitution recognized Spanish as the second official language. We wanted to be a bilingual state. The only reason we became monolingual is because some Indiana senator was *not* going to let us be a state unless we became English only. There are all these incredibly offensive documents about how primitive we are. We finally became a state a few days after Arizona did, in 1912—100 years ago exactly.

SKR: In 1912? Gosh . . .

CP: Yeah . . . but I really like that metaphor of the Mother Road, getting from one place to the other, and the University being sort of at the heart of the heart of that, the Mother Road. That's a great idea; we need to seize on that.

SKR: Get back in touch with your Jack Kerouac. I also wanted to ask about the Pueblo Revival style of architecture because I have been looking at some pictures of places around campus, and it is clear that that style is an influence on the physical space of the campus, and I wondered, to what extent is there a strong design influence in the writing program or other aspects of the institution?

CP: It's a theme we've talked about before. Architectural historians will tell you the Pueblo Revival style is actually a fake thing.

SKR: It's a made up genre. But still, if you compare it to, let's say, trying to imitate the architecture of Tuscany, what are your choices? If you're going to imitate something why not imitate something indigenous?

CP: Yes, you're right. It was an early University president, William Tight, who in the early 1900s, after a big controversy, officially adopted the Pueblo Revival style, which as I understand it kind of blends the architecture of the Pueblos and of Spanish missions. And again, I grew up in Albuquerque, I was an undergraduate here, I didn't realize New

Mexico was beautiful until I'd been away. I sometimes forget how beautiful and unusual our campus is. I forget because it is the water I swim in. When people come to campus, they remind me with their "God, what a beautiful campus." You know what I mean? As a kid, I thought those long stretches of road where you can see forever were the most boring landscapes, and then I moved away and now, I'm thinking, "Oh my god. This is gorgeous."

SKR: I grew up on a landscape, in Southeast Colorado, that is very much like New Mexico. I find when I go back there, I mean literally I feel like my heart is opening up, to be able to see those long distances and see where the sky meets the horizon.

CP: I remember. After I graduated UNM and spent my first year living in Boston, I came back and I was like, "Oh my! What happened? I don't remember this!" It was a different place. I mean, I couldn't believe the space. It was a different place. I had never *seen* it until I left and came back.

But you know, getting back to one of your questions. One asked about plant or animal metaphors to describe our program. I don't know of any. I think maybe the Pueblo Revival and Route 66/Rio Grande crossroads would make pretty good metaphors. Like New Mexico, like UNM's architecture, what we are has *not* been created by a chief architect or a single vision. Is there any one person who is responsible for who we are? No. It really has been a collaboration—people working things out together—that has defined us. There has been no grand plan saying, "This is what we're going to do" or "These are the rhet/comp specialists we're going to hire, and in this order." In fact, when I think of my current and past colleagues, I think we have all been hybrids—syntheses of where we came from and this place, of the cultures that have been brought into New Mexico on Route 66 and the cultures that have been living on the Rio Grande for thousands and thousands of years. Kind of like Pueblo Revival architecture.

But back to this idea of hybridity. Maybe if we were in a more wealthy state, we'd be more structured along lines of expertise. So again, part of that hybridity comes from the fact that we just haven't had the funding and resources to say, "This is what we're going to do" and bee-line towards it. It just doesn't work that way here. We get very strong people, I think, very dedicated people—faculty, graduate students, lecturers, undergraduates, our staff—and we let them help us define what we're doing. Maybe that's a stretch of a metaphor, but I actually think it's quite apt.

SKR: As you were talking about the space and also the issues about the lack of resources and making do, I was thinking about my own ranch upbringing in the West, where you're dependent on the weather, your resources are the natural resources and you're trying to husband those resources that are actually pretty scarce. Rain is pretty scarce.

CP: Yep, can't depend on it.

SKR: Sunshine is not scarce; but just trying to keep things going, making a go of it—making use of everything—is a challenge.

CP: Yeah, I really like that. That's the way it is here. And we have our lean and our not so lean times. Right now we're in a lean time, but again, I'm brimming with optimism. Maybe, I'm not sure it is based in rationality, but still I'm very optimistic about the hiring plan our new dean has implemented.

SKR: Sounds to me as though you're at an important juncture for the program.

CP: Right.

SKR: I want to close with a couple more questions. You said a little bit about this already, but when we come to Albuquerque for the conference, what place on campus should we visit so that we understand how the institutional context shapes the writing program?

CP: I'm not sure I want to point you to any one spot on the campus, but to the main campus generally. It's a five minute walk from the hotel to Central Avenue (Route 66), where you can take the bus to campus—a straight shot. Or you can stop at the Rail Runner train (45 minutes) to Santa Fe. But if you're on campus, just go to the heart of the heart of the campus, you'll see, there are some really gorgeous views of the mountains, and I mean, it really is a lovely, lovely campus. There are lots of places to sit, and it is held together by this common, unusual architecture, again, which I think is a good emblem for the way we are as a writing program.

SKR: I heard you talk about it last summer at the WPA conference. You keep talking about the natural beauty of the setting. I think it must have a profound effect on people to have that kind of easy, continuing, reliable access to just the visual stimulation of natural beauty.

CP: Yeah. We tell this joke here about what New Mexico does to you. New Mexico's nickname is the Land of Enchantment, but we joke it's the Land of Entrapment. Once you come, you don't ever want to leave. There are very few places in the city where you can't see the mountains. My house, unfortunately, happens to be one of them. But, there are very few places where you can't orient yourself to the mountains. I have a very strong sense of direction because growing up I always

knew exactly where east was and to this day, whenever I go anywhere I have to know where east is or I feel uncomfortable and sometimes it takes me 24 hours before I really get that feel for it, so yeah, there's really that strong sort of orientation of feeling anchored and centered by those mountains. And they're very unusual mountains. There's not too many of them in the United States, but you know what formed the Rio Grande Valley was not two faults pushing up against each other, but the land actually getting stretched out. That's what created the valley that the Rio Grande found several million years ago. As for what created the mountains, what happened was as the land stretched out, the mountains popped up like this. So, on the backside of the mountains it is the same geological formation. It doesn't change even though it goes from 5000 feet to 10,000 feet. On the opposite side though, then you're going through time. Very unusual mountains and they're always there to orient you and to make you feel anchored and to give you a little bit of comfort. Sounds like another metaphor brewing, but I think we have enough of those for one interview. I mean, right now they have snow on them, which is kind of unusual for November 9th. They had snow when I got back from Washington, as a matter of fact, which was unusual. And that was in, uh, early October.

SKR: What else would you want other WPAs around the country to know about your writing program?

CP: Irrational exuberance? I don't know. Hopefulness. We're trying really hard to make it a good place to be that is going to reach out to the community and grow. Anyway, one of the things we want to do in Spring 2013, is bring the WPA Consultant Evaluator Service, because we'll have two new tenure-line faculty and five new lecturers, right? It would be nice to have the consultants come this spring but I want to wait for our new faculty members to do that.

SKR: My first year at ASU, we had a Consultant-Evaluator visit and it was a really good thing. For one, it was my pre-text for doing a lot of research about the program, talking to a lot of people, getting a lot of information together. We had a time line for it; we had an excuse for it. And then, Chuck Schuster and Lil Brannon were our team, and they were excellent. They got people to talk frankly with them, and they spoke frankly back, and it made an impression on people, and we were able to basically use the report to make a map of what we need to do.

CP: I have a commitment from my dean and my chair to make that happen. That's part of what's going to make this an interesting, exciting place to come. Things are a little ill-defined right now, but the upside

is really great, and we have all these cool things happening and support from the right people.

SKR: Sounds as though UNM is a great place to be. Thanks for talking with me, Chuck. I'm looking forward to seeing you in Albuquerque this summer and thanks again for hosting the conference!

CP: It was wonderful talking to you. Thanks.



WPA Symposium Response: Composition, Commonplaces, and Who Cares?

Melissa Ianetta

My professional career began rather modestly when I arrived at Ohio State University with an MA in literature and no formal training in writing studies. As one might expect from this background, my predominant memories of doctoral coursework are a mélange of panicked reading, a calmly fatalistic sense that I knew little about the field in which I was scrambling to qualify for a terminal degree, and a growing awareness that I was starting in composition studies just as it was losing some of its first founders. That last feeling, at least, can be verified in the historical record: when I arrived at OSU in late summer of 1998 Edward P. J. Corbett, the founder of the OSU program, had just passed away; a year later, James Kinneavy, after delivering the inaugural Corbett Lecture, passed; and the year after that Robert Connors, an OSU alum and a friend to some of my professors, died in a highway accident. From my teachers' reactions, I sensed that writing studies was losing its first wave of statesmen and mentors.

The thing that felt odd to me, however, was that I didn't actually *know* any of these people whose lives had shaped the field I wished to join. Moreover my ignorance was not merely personal, but scholarly: in those early years, I hadn't yet read deeply or broadly enough to fully appreciate their individual work, never mind their larger impact in the field. So as a novice reading the encomia offered in our disciplinary journals and on our listservs, I found myself focusing not just on the descriptions of lifetime achievements but also on the axioms of professional virtue and the uncontested values of the field expressed in this stream of epideictic rhetoric. To borrow from David Bartholomae, that is, I was unwittingly seeking the commonplaces of our profession:

Each commonplace would dictate its own set of phrases, examples and conclusions... A "commonplace," then, is a culturally or institutionally authorized concept or statement that carries with it its own necessary elaboration. We all use commonplaces to orient ourselves in the world; they provide points of reference and a set of "prearticulated" explanations that are readily available to organize and interpret experience. (626)

Reading across the testimonials to Corbett, Connors, and Kinneavy, I not only learned of their individual contributions but also discerned what we valued as a field: praise for their classical erudition, for example, seemed to be always paired with a description of their teaching skill, while catalogs of the exceptionalism of their achievements were paired with testimony to their personal modesty. In some ways, these descriptions were my first glimpse of the people who comprised the profession beyond my institution and my first understanding of the ethical and intellectual values that draw us together both as a community of individuals and as a field of study.

So too, when turning to the stories of starting that comprise this journal's recent symposium of "Mentoring the Work of WPAs," my strongest response is less to the individual particularities and personal choices that distinguish one story from another and more to those rhetorical commonplaces that seem to unite these stories as expressions of our field. For, as with the "In Memoriams" of my graduate training, I think the commonplaces contained in narratives offered by these new WPAs can tell much about what we value and much about the ways in which we organize these values into administrative strategies. Here, then, I want, first, to look at the ways in which these stories seem to express and celebrate deeply held disciplinary values and, secondly, to consider some of the ways in which these values might simultaneously fuel our work and undermine our best efforts. For while these may be the individual stories of newly minted WPAs, the community values I see expressed here, such as egalitarianism and selflessness, rank among the most common, the most laudable, and yet the most taxing to enact in writing program administration.

Scanning across these essays—and, more broadly, across the body of WPA mentoring literature—one of the more readily identifiable notions is our unquestioning acceptance of virtues of egalitarianism for WPA work. Kathryn Gindlesparger, for example, specifically refers to such "flattened hierarchy" as one of the "delights of the job" (153). Other contributors articulate this ideal less directly but appear no less influenced by it. Joyce Inman, for instance, refers to her professor/supervisor as her "colleague" and so elides the professor/graduate student, teacher/supervisor hierarchies (150). Tim McCormick, meanwhile, asserts that he "support[s] and enable[s]" the adjunct faculty at his institution and makes clear to the reader that he is "avoid[ing] the verb manage" (163), and so invokes a frame of friendly collegiality and specifically rejects the managerial administrative role decried by Marc Bousquet and James Sledd. Similarly, Darci Thourne lists such a collegial paradise among her goals when she describes how in her first year on the job she wanted "to create the teaching and learning community that [she] always wanted to belong to" (156). Finally, Collie

Fulford expresses her early desire that her new writing program would be “consolidated around some shared . . . theory of writing” (161). In each and every story in the symposium, we see some longing for and exaltation of a community of like-minded peers in which the WPA is merely first among equals. Such ideals are not restricted to this symposium, of course, since the larger body of mentoring scholarship asserts similarly egalitarian values. Jennifer Fishman and Andrea Lunsford, for example, dispose of the term *mentor* altogether in order to sever their relationship from “the deeply hierarchal notion associated with traditional mentorship” (20). In its place, Fishman and Lunsford offer as their preferred term “colleague,” for it “connotes partnerships created and maintained by choice and it suggests relationships founded on mutual respect rather than hierarchies” (29).

While it would be hard to argue with the noble impulses that drive such democratic assertions, we should consider the unintended consequences to which these impulses may lead. For such commonplaces inevitably “organize and interpret experience” (Bartholomae, 626) and the interpretations they generate can, in fact, run counter to our professional goals. A rhetorical analysis of the symposium stories, for example, reveals the tensions and fissures that emerge when this impulse towards flattening of the hierarchy collides with the position of the WPA. That is, as the name “writing program administrator” asserts, this position is, in fact defined by its place in the institutional administrative hierarchy. And yet, in stories built on our democratic ideals, the WPA seems to be identified neither by her institutional role nor by her hard-won scholarly expertise. Rather, the unique value of the WPA’s knowledge is suppressed in a flattened system and all teachers’ voices—regardless of their experience or the authority of the position they occupy—are treated as equal. In such an egalitarian vision, all professional expertise—a degree in writing studies, a long term of teaching, or enthusiasm for one’s students—is framed as equally valid and is often expressed in the rhetorical commonplace that “we are all excellent teachers in the writing program.” Here, WPA ethos appears to be characterized not in terms of intellectual capital—since we are all equally excellent and authorized—but through reference to the individual WPA’s self-sacrifice, duty and altruism. Inman, for example, grounds her ethos, at least in part, on her role as “one of the few advocates for our undergraduate population” (151); Gindlesparger shares with us that she is “more a part of the campus community than many . . . pre-tenure faculty colleagues” (155); and McCormick describes the way “a single consultation with an adjunct professor . . . can take all the available scholarship hours out of [his] week” (165). In claims such as these, the authors offer as exceptional not their disciplinary

knowledge or professional abilities, but their personal commitment and sacrificial readiness.

To say this is not to question the writers' sincerity, of course. It is, however, to draw the CWPA readership's attention to the ways in which our democratic impulses can drive us to flatten hierarchies even as those same impulses lead us to think we care more—and care better—than do our colleagues in other disciplines. I will leave aside the problematic local politics that can emerge from such commonplaces of compositionists' caring—such as the difficulties in evaluating instructors or enforcing policy when you've worked to establish yourself as but one voice among many. Rather, I want to focus on the difficulties such commonplaces present for the individual WPA. That is, I wonder if the idealism and pursuit of inter-program equality I find so attractive in the stories of many WPA peers is, in fact, also a contributing factor in that "climate of [WPA] disappointment" Laura Micciche so deftly captures (432). When we assert these commonplaces of intra-program equality and our exceptional level of personal sacrifice and caring, that is, do we take into consideration the physical and emotional cost to the WPA herself? I worry that WPAs in the kinds of novice positions described in the symposium—which are all stories of starting as a WPA—are particularly susceptible to suppressing the authority of their expertise in an attempt to build coalition and establish friendly relations in their programs. And, after all, authority once given away is hard to reclaim.

Moreover, if our pastoral ideals lead us to unconsciously see ourselves as "the ones who care," they likewise lead us to see those who do not agree with our priorities as "those who do not care." Under this rubric we can discern two groupings: that seemingly apathetic cadre external to the program who "simply do not give a shit about composition" (Inman 150); and that internal group of instructors who McCormick describes as "present[ing] daunting obstacles to advancing [the] writing program" (165). These groups are both, I think, familiar in WPA discourse and often ground our rallying cries and commiseration with other WPAs. But here too, the suppression of the WPA's disciplinary-based authority can lead to arguments founded in interpersonal relations rather than professional allegiances. Put another way, I see my scholarly knowledge and relevant professional experience as the reason I was appointed to be the WPA—it was not because of extraordinary caring or sacrifice on my part. Accordingly, I can face my Americanist colleague's indifference towards the writing program with equanimity. Writing studies is not his scholarly interest after all, and I in turn find nothing of interest to me in his intellectual passion, Thomas Paine. So too, when confronted by writing program faculty who resist the revision of the writing curricula or enforcement of program policies, I understand that for many of

them it is a result of our different disciplinary orientations and intellectual commitments. For few of the part-time teachers in my program chose to pursue writing degrees but are, as in many institutions, literary specialists who were unable to find employment in their field of choice. Their understandings of textual production and writing pedagogy were formed by this prior orientation and, by extension, their resistance is not likely indifference to their students or a desire to present obstacles to the writing program itself. Addressing our pedagogical differences as the product of our differing intellectual commitments and institutional perspectives is far less emotionally exhausting—and far more generative—than thinking in terms of attending to emotional commitments—or lack thereof.

Such comments on the celebration of community feeling that are for many of us the most appealing quality of this profession may seem cold blooded, but I am not, of course, arguing that we replace our “ethic of care” with an ethic of “I don’t care.” Rather, my argument here has been that we have accepted our discipline’s commonplaces about its communitarian ideals without fully considering the unintended, and counterproductive, effects to which these commonplaces can often lead. All of us, then—both our newly-appointed colleagues and those senior WPAs who mentor them—can have much to gain from thinking through more carefully the role of our utopic ideals in program building and the commonplaces that we use to express them.

WORKS CITED

- Bartholomae, David. “Inventing the University.” *Cross-Talk in Comp Theory: A Reader*. Ed. Victor Villanueva. 2nd ed. Urbana: NCTE. 623-653. Print.
- Fishman, Jennifer and Andrea Lunsford. “Educating Jane.” *Stories of Mentoring: Theory and Praxis*. Ed. Michele F. Eble and Lynee Lewis Gallet. West Lafayette: Parlor P, 2008. 18-33. Print.
- Fulford, Collie. “Hit the Ground Listening: An Ethnographic Approach to New WPA Learning.” *WPA: Writing Program Administration* 35.1 (2011): 159-162. Print.
- Gindlesparger, Kathryn Johnson. “Snapshot of a Tenure Decision.” *WPA: Writing Program Administration* 35.1 (2011): 152-155. Print.
- Inman, Joyce Olewski. “Reflections on Year One as an Almost-WPA.” *WPA: Writing Program Administration* 35.1 (2011): 149-152. Print.
- McCormack, Tim. “Boss of Me: When the Former Adjunct Runs the Writing Shop.” *WPA: Writing Program Administration* 35.1 (2011): 163-166. Print.
- Micciche, Laura. “More Than a Feeling: Disappointment and WPA Work.” *College English* 64 (2002): 432-458. Print.
- Thoune, Darci L. “The Pleasures and Perils of Being First.” *WPA: Writing Program Administration* 35.1 (2011): 156-159. Print.

Kitchen Cooks, Plate Twirlers, and Posers; or, the I's Have It

Rita Malenczyk

It was the end of the day Monday, and I had read and responded to e-mail; prepared a class; designed a Writing Center survey and sent it out (results are good so far); finished up yet another survey and circulated it for review to some colleagues; read and responded to more e-mail; written a recommendation; met with our coordinator of first-year composition to discuss modifications to our online placement process; signed student employment paperwork; written some e-mails of my own; gone to another meeting; talked with panicked peer tutors about their tutoring schedules and, in some cases, changed said schedules; read and responded to the responses to the e-mails I sent out; taught a seminar (truncated version, it being the first day of classes). I went home.

* * *

Some things about being a writing program administrator don't change, no matter how long you've been doing the job. I've been doing mine for 16 years now, and in the narratives comprising the Mentoring Symposium, I recognize myself—not just the self I was 16 years ago, but the self I am today. On one particular day, it's the WPA as plate-twirler (in Mary Pinard's 1999 formulation); sometimes it's the WPA as Incredible Hulk. Certain things about the job simply have not evolved that much over the years. The themes that emerge, or that I notice, in this collection of narratives are constant. For no particular reason, I'm calling said themes the three "I's", as follows:

IDENTITY

Some years ago—never mind how long precisely—I completed a Ph.D in nineteenth-century American literature at New York University and started searching for a job directing a writing program. These two events were not unrelated—but (for the conclusion-jumpers among you) not for the reasons you might think. As my colleague Alfred Guy and I have detailed elsewhere, NYU at the time was a hotbed of dissensus. That dissensus extended to the English Department's stewardship of the Expository Writing Program, which was owned by the department but directed largely by English Education faculty whose expertise and passions were in the field of composition. As a result, a lot of what one might call current-traditional vs. process fighting went on, with the English Department looking to stan-

dardize curricula and exert other forms of control over the program. Perhaps unsurprisingly, then, an Expository Writing Program joke emerged that “the graduate students were left to run the program while the faculty directors were busy fighting for its existence” (Guy and Malenczyk 238). Whether or not that was completely true, many of us were able to be junior WPAs with a lot of authority: with our nominal leaders otherwise engaged, we mentored each other. The resulting intellectual excitement, opportunities for leadership, and relevance to the real world led many of us, including me, into long and usually satisfying WPA careers.¹

Of course, according to some people quoted by Joyce Olewski Inman, this narrative makes me—as well as the many other non-rhet-comp students from NYU and elsewhere who went on to learn all we could about the field of writing studies and to direct writing programs and writing centers—a “poser” (151). I don’t find that a particularly useful label, and if you ask me neither should Inman, especially since, as I see it, all WPAs are to some extent posers. I don’t dispute the value of a degree in rhetoric and composition as the best credential for directing a writing program—I would’ve gotten one if certain circumstances, too complicated to explain here, had been different. Nevertheless, such a degree is not exactly a stay against self-doubt. Collie Fulford, winner of the CCCC Best Dissertation Award in 2011, worries how her “white, queer, rhet-comp, New England transplant” self will transfer to a southern historically black university with, as far as she can tell, “no other gay people” in the department and precious few rhet-comp faculty (159). Tim McCormack, with the admonitions of Marc Bousquet ringing in his ears, wonders how to remain true to the values of his former adjunct self as he becomes a full-time WPA (163–66). Darci Thoun looks around her and sees that her new institution doesn’t look much like graduate school, what with its lack of obvious faculty commitment to writing and its inconsistent approach to first-year composition. How can she get along in this environment and yet represent the field that, she feels, defines her (156–59)? What these narratives have in common is their concern with how WPA identities, and the values that come with those identities—at least in the WPA’s perception—are closely tied to a WPA’s ability to effectively administer his or her program.

INSTINCT

In these narratives I see beginning WPAs confronting problems—including problems created by their conflicted identities, as above—and trusting their instincts as they try to find ways to solve them. It’s this ability to use intuition and be creative that informs much effective WPA leadership, par-

ticularly if one's instincts involve a basic notion of respect for others. Yet, as Malcolm Gladwell articulated in *Blink*, what looks like instinct is often past experience or practice. Fulford, for instance, plugs into her background as an ethnographer as she observes and learns from the existing dynamics of her program (160). McCormack's experience as a labor advocate allows him to push back at his initial resentment toward resistant faculty members and, instead, sit down and talk with those faculty members to learn something he hadn't known before (165). Kathryn Johnson Gindlesparger recognizes "program building" as that which her previous work in community literacy and her job as a WPA have in common, though she is not completely satisfied with the places that job has led her, in particular the need to choose whether she will continue in an administrative line or advocate for her current line to be converted to faculty status (155). This leads me to the third "I":

IMPERFECTION

In "For Slow Agency"—an article that appears in the same *WPA* issue as the Mentoring Symposium and which I would, if it were up to me, give every new WPA to read and plaster on his or her heart—Laura Micciche eloquently critiques WPAs' obsession with (a) making quick changes in programs and (b) taking sole responsibility for those changes. The "plate-twirling WPA," she says, "is no imperative" (78). We might approach our work, as Micciche does with a large curriculum-development project, "as a marathon rather than a sprint" (81). We are, furthermore, rarely in control of organizational time, as Micciche demonstrates in her essay: the other players—and in colleges and universities, there are many—also have something to say about that.

Unlike the first two "I's", then, I find the presence of this last one—imperfection, or the worry over same—troubling in these essays. In some of them I find not only unrealistic expectations for what can be accomplished in any given year, but also a striving for a prelapsarian universe in which there is no definition and, therefore, no need to self-identify. Realistically, however, this need is simply part of the scene, here in the fallen world. McCormack worries that he'll become the boss compositionist—and yet he *did*, after all, take the WPA job, with a better salary and benefits than he had before. While he can and does learn from his adjuncts how to be a more humane and better administrator, he will (as he himself acknowledges) nevertheless be faced with the difficult decisions administrators make and have to make them, even though he can and should continue to keep labor equity as a touchstone for making those decisions. Gindlesparger

seems not to want to accept the faculty vs. administrative bind (which kind of position is more desirable?): but on some campuses, particularly unionized campuses like mine, one has to define oneself as one or the other and accept that definition—and it is still possible, even having done so, to see oneself in what Gindlesparger calls the “generative place . . . between tenure and administration” (155). Overall, I’m not sure how productive it is to worry this issue—i.e., Why must I choose what to be? Why can’t I have it all?—too much, particularly when one has already, to some extent, chosen.

Unless, of course, the worry leads one to embrace the contradictions. In yet another essay I think all new WPAs should read, “Queering the Institution: Politics and Power in the Assistant Professor Administrator Position,” Tara Pauliny describes her experiences as not only a queer WPA but also as a queer theorist, and argues for how queer theory can help any WPA re-envision his or her work. As Michele Eodice has explained, “Being queer in and of itself . . . has nothing to do with queer theory”:

It is really more about queer as a way to understand identity, through a theory that borrows its bends and twists from the actual experiences of the fringe—and the performance that follows these experiences—to form a generative way to view the world. (92)

For Pauliny, though “WPAs must function within the institution and be a regulatory force in their own right,” the “inherently queer” position of the WPA, particularly the untenured WPA—authorized yet de-authorized, faculty yet administration, in possession of “an ethos that is mobile and shifting as she moves through her daily roles” (1)—can be used to productively disrupt norms and create Gindlesparger’s “generative space.”²

Which is what I like about WPA work: its institutional instability. But then, I’m sort of an odd duck. My outsider/insider status within the field has given me a complicated relationship not only to WPA work but also to mentoring: the idea of it, the practice of it, the sense of who ought to do it. On some level, I wish I’d had a strong faculty mentor in graduate school. When I listen to people who studied in other programs—particularly programs in composition and rhetoric—describe their experiences learning their field and craft and their collegial relationship to the program faculty, I get a little jealous: I start feeling as if they had the big house, the nice bike, and the birthday parties while I struggled to survive a childhood staffed by mean-spirited nuns. On the other hand, by having only (well, mostly only) my graduate-school colleagues to mentor me, I learned a lot about trusting my own instincts, accepting the pros and cons of the position I found myself in, and—above all—looking to the wisdom of other colleagues on the same level as I. Mentoring need not be hierarchical. I would simply

say to these new and relatively new WPAs, what you're doing—working, watching, listening—is exactly what you should be doing. Keep doing it. Talk to each other. Get over the imperfections. Keep self-flagellation to a minimum. You will perhaps mentor others in the future; you will add to the storehouse of knowledge in the field; you will, I'm guessing, do the best you can.

NOTES

1. As Alfie Guy and I detail, approximately 29 graduate students whom we could name went on to direct writing programs. Several, including Joseph Harris, Joseph Janangelo, and Lauren Fitzgerald went on to become influential figures in the fields of composition, writing program administration, and writing center direction despite not having Ph.Ds in composition and rhetoric (Guy and Malenczyk 235).

2. On the topic of WPA ethos as “mobile and shifting,” see also Geller et al.'s *The Everyday Writing Center*, which applies Lewis Hyde's reading of the mythological figure Trickster—a shapeshifter and boundary-crosser—to writing center directors' work. As Melissa Ianetta has pointed out, *The Everyday Writing Center* and its readings of administrative work are eminently applicable to WPAs as well.

WORKS CITED

- Eodice, Michele. “Introduction to ‘Queering the Writing Center.’” *Writing Center Journal* 30.1 (2010): 92–94. Print.
- Fulford, Collie. “Hit the Ground Listening: An Ethnographic Approach to New WPA Learning.” *WPA: Writing Program Administration* 35.1 (2011): 159–62. Print.
- Geller, Anne Ellen, et al. *The Everyday Writing Center: A Community of Practice*. Logan: Utah State UP, 2007.
- Gindlesparger, Kathryn Johnson. “Snapshot of a Tenure Decision.” *WPA: Writing Program Administration* 35.1 (2011): 152–55. Print.
- Gladwell, Malcolm. *Blink*. New York: Little, Brown, 2005. Print.
- Guy, Alfred E., Jr., and Rita Malenczyk. “A New Paradigm for WPA Mentoring? The Case of New York University's Expository Writing Program.” *Stories of Mentoring: Theory and Praxis*. Ed. Lynée Lewis Gaillet and Michelle M. Eble. West Lafayette: Parlor P, 2008. 235–47.
- Ianetta, Melissa. Rev. of *The Everyday Writing Center*, Anne Ellen Geller et al. *WPA: Writing Program Administration* Fall/Winter 2007: 250–53. Web.
- Inman, Joyce Olewski. “Reflections on Year One as an Almost-WPA.” *WPA: Writing Program Administration* 35.1 (2011): 149–52. Print.
- McCormack, Tim. “Boss of Me: When the Former Adjunct Runs the Writing Shop.” *WPA: Writing Program Administration* 35.1 (2011): 163–66. Print.

Malenczyk / WPA Symposium Response

- Micciche, Laura. "For Slow Agency." *WPA: Writing Program Administration* 35.1 (2011): 73–90. Print.
- Pauliny, Tara. "Queering the Institution: Politics and Power in the Assistant Professor Administrator Position." *Enculturation* 10 (2011): n.p. Web. 30 January 2012.
- Pinard, Mary. "Surviving the Honeymoon: Bliss and Anxiety in a WPA's First Year, or Appreciating the Plate-Twirlers' Art." *Kitchen Cooks, Plate Twirlers, and Troubadours*. Ed. Diana George. Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1999. 56–62. Print.
- Thoune, Darci L. "The Pleasures and Perils of Being First." *WPA: Writing Program Administration* 35.1 (2011): 156–59. Print.



Different Paths to the Same Goal: A Response to Barbara Cambridge

Randall McClure and Dayna V. Goldstein

Whenever the impulse hits our profession to make a change across the nation, the actual implementation of that impulse must go through Barbara Cambridge's NCTE office in Washington, DC. In her capacity as Director of the DC office, Cambridge works directly with the audiences she advises us to engage. Cambridge's broad call for individual political action in "Research & Policy: Antithetical or Complementary" inaugurates an important agenda for each of us to take up from our own institutions and positions: to become savvy in the political arena and directly involved in public policy discussions.

Cambridge opens her piece by recounting a moment with US Education Secretary Duncan where he asks her, "What do YOU want ME to do?" (135). In response to Secretary Duncan's question, Cambridge "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" (135). Using this anecdote as her impetus, Cambridge suggests that her WPA readers need to be prepared to respond intelligently to those with the greatest impact on national and state policy.

In addition to being at the ready to offer select samplings of the relevant research, Cambridge argues that WPAs must understand how politicians use the research they encounter (136). To this purpose, Cambridge reviews "research that helps us sort through the current use or lack of use of research by policy makers" and reports some policy makers believe "research can't be trusted, it can be shaped to say anything, and it is not often timely" (136). In fact, she indicates "many other factors currently take precedence over research evidence" (136).

Citing economic, legal, media, and public opinion obstacles among others, Cambridge next asserts that influence rather than research is the pri-

mary course which WPAs individually should chart. To do so, Cambridge offers five recommendations: get to know policy makers in the region; understand emerging policy issues; include writing for the public in all expository writing courses; serve on tenure committees to champion the value of public policy research; and become educated on the functions of research in policy making (139-146).

But we wonder: is individual action the right path to achieve the goal of impacting public policy on writing and literacy education? The individual activities that Cambridge suggests are not superfluous; however, a collective research and public policy agenda seems the path with a greater chance of success.

In this response, we illustrate how Cambridge's suggestions are dependent upon framing our invisibility in public policy debates as a lack of research-inflected individual politicking. We then suggest that framing policy problems as necessitating individual action actually limits action itself. Many WPAs will not encounter decision makers as directly as needs to happen for Cambridge's solution to be enacted successfully. Next, the discussion turns to how, even accepting the individual frame of the problem, Cambridge's solution compromises the solid research that most behooves Rhetoric and Composition generally and replaces it with personal narrative.

Overlooking these concerns, we question in the end whether the body of knowledge accrued by the discipline is sufficient to the task Cambridge proposes for it. In doing so, we may complicate her emphasis on the intermediary and the value of narrative. However, our recognition of the complications for following Cambridge's path to public policy work should not be read as dissuasive of her agenda, merely as identifying hurdles in doing so. For this reason, we offer an alternate path to the same goal.

INTERMEDIARIES, PROXIMITY, AND INFORMATION

In the opening anecdote, Cambridge and Secretary Duncan are zero degrees of separation from each other. Given this proximity and the immediateness of Cambridge's request, individual self-mediated action appears a viable opportunity for WPAs in the role of "intermediary" (137). Cambridge's individual framing of the problem/solution occurs here, as she characterizes her WPA audience as individuals, thus identifying the myriad of roles available to them. She provides options to readers of what they "might choose to do in [their] roles as citizens, writers, researchers, teachers, and writing program administrators to promote effective decision making and policy setting" (136), implicitly if they were ever zero degrees of separation from a decision maker.

Cambridge's desired enrollment of potential intermediaries seems indiscriminate. She privileges the individual and suggests that WPAs themselves have the most potential to become intermediaries. WPAs as "trusted sources" could serve "to translate research evidence and connect it to issues at the local and state level" (137). While not wanting to question her experience in the public policy arena, we think Cambridge overestimates the influence of the local WPA. As the almost daily calls on the WPA listserv for convincing data and analysis show us, WPAs struggle to merge research and policy on their own campuses, let alone in the larger arena. This challenge suggests to us that we need several social configurations of solutions, including not only times when professionals are one degree of separation away as an intermediary but also when they are several degrees of separation away as a local change-maker.

Cambridge's framing of the problem as one that is solved by individual mediation may be beneficial in circumstances where one has direct access to decision makers. In other situations, the better service to the cause of composition is participating in more collaborative venues and social configurations intended to inform public policy. Disciplinary initiatives such as the National Conversation on Writing and the Network for Media Action afford composition the opportunity to advocate for broad-based political support of writing related policy collectively and more effectively. Initiatives like these stand a better chance to generate influence, particularly when several degrees of separation exist.

Our suggestion resembles that of Linda Adler-Kassner, who champions and advocates for collective action on writing and writing-related issues (labor, literacy, technology, etc.). In *The Activist WPA: Changing Stories about Writing and Writers*, Adler-Kassner offers a detailed discussion of collective initiatives like the Network for Media Action. She writes of this particular effort, "[W]hen we do join together with WPAs across the country we can be most effective if we can bring our experience, base, and allies from the local level to those national conversations so that there is always a clear ebb-and-flow, a dialogue, around how the national concern is of local relevance" (140). Whereas Adler-Kassner sees the need for attention to both individual/local and national/collective action, Cambridge appears to view collective action as ancillary at best. Therefore, WPAs must assess how they can most effectively contribute to raising the profile of Rhetoric and Composition, as an intermediary as Cambridge recommends, in some of the extant collective initiatives, or in some other social configuration.

Even accepting Cambridge's frame that centers the intermediary, we pause to question if WPAs are primed to take on yet another new identity. To this point Cambridge writes, "Composition teachers and writing

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” (146). We are not in agreement that the “special abilities” WPAs possess—whether communicative prowess, plain gamesmanship or some combination—are so rhetorical as to transcend the context. In fact, what WPAs do on a daily basis couldn’t be more unlike what Cambridge asks. To be blunt, the areas where WPAs excel are not easily transferable to the public policy arena.

Cambridge exhorts WPAs to work harder visiting representatives and making presentations to them on their turf, and becoming experts on a single policy. We certainly do not question the motives behind these recommendations, but her focus on the individual WPA—often the lone advocate for writing on campus—will turn overwork into exhaustion. With many of them likely not even knowing where to start, this approach is not going to create the large pool of intermediaries Cambridge envisions.

Even with said frame and accepting the assumed communicative prowess of WPAs in the public policy arena, the research component of Cambridge’s solution remains a problem. She is asking WPAs to present quality research to policy makers,¹ but the overall emphasis is less on engaging in this type of inquiry and more on situating oneself to grease the wheels of public policy (138). We believe Cambridge does not provide enough emphasis on the need for *replicable, aggregable, and data-supported* (RAD) research (see Haswell) to put WPAs in a position to be successful in the policy arena.

Instead, Cambridge argues for localizing the interpretations of national research as “the strongest need,” suggesting in a way that conducting sound quantitative research is much less important. We see this as perpetuating the vaunted state of narrative, and of the local in the field. Throughout her discussion, including her recommendations, Cambridge allows WPAs to see their storehouses of stories to be, more or less, the only ammunition they need in influencing policy both locally and nationally. Stories, not numbers, carry the day, as do influence and character over data and analysis.

Rhetoric and Composition professionals already suffer from a lack of widely collected data and reinforcing narrative. As she cautions WPAs, “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” (142). Before building relationships, saving narrative, or educating others, WPAs must have the information, the research, ready. Rhetoric and Composition scholars must gather and interpret comprehensive and meaningful information before combining it with storehouses of stories and

experiences to influence public policy. If we don't, we risk entering into relationships with policy makers that do more harm than good.

Accepting the individual framing of the problem and the intermediary role Cambridge lays out for WPAs, the recurrence of "information" as a stand-in for research in comments from policy makers selected by Cambridge concerns us. For example, one quote she uses from Bogenschneider and Corbett's interview with one long-term incumbent reads, "[We] are hungry for *information*. I mean, you can't have enough *information*. . . . You do research and need *information*. . . .to make you feel that you feel that you are doing the right thing" (27 qtd. in Cambridge 137; emphasis added). A paragraph later, Cambridge includes a quote from another legislator, "Good information, no matter what side of the issue, is important, but the most valuable [information] is the kind that saves you from yourself" (29 qtd. in Cambridge 138). "Information" seems cheap in these references, and reputable data and analysis need to be the standard here.

Cambridge herself asks of her readers, for example, "Do you have *information* about the success rate in second semester composition classes of students who entered with dual enrollment credits versus AP credits?" (140; emphasis added). We ask here: what information do WPAs currently have to put into the hands of policy makers on this topic (or most any other) beyond our stories? Although information is, in a sense, important to Cambridge and others she cites, learning how to get information to the right people based on what they value is far more important. This attitude is backwards to what will make composition more successful as a discipline.

Despite her stance that "[b]arriers to the use of research abound" (137), Cambridge herself believes that research can indeed be trusted, really only if and when it comes from trusted sources. To this end, a unified, comprehensive yet distributed and easily distributable research agenda, as Cambridge suggests in passing, is the step that must be taken first. RAD research organized by the Council of Writing Program Administrators must not only be undertaken, but also move out from the professional venues where it typically resides (conferences, journals, CompPile, etc.) into forums easily accessible for policy makers and their staffers and in formats and language easily digestible by them.

DIFFERENT PATHS

Where WPAs find themselves amongst policy decisions at any one time is anyone's guess. Each incident of policy creates a unique kairos. Consequently, a one-size-fits-all solution seems impractical. Therefore, the question of how research may be used to affect policy is best answered by creat-

ing easily networkable resources. Bearing this in mind, we suggest an effort to “YouTube Writing Research.”² In this effort, the WPA Council would coordinate efforts to publish short videos (less than three minutes) referencing data and analysis critical to policy issues on topics important to the organization. These videos, rich with illustration and explanation, would serve in ways that Cambridge asks of individual WPAs. Since the WPA Council already provides research support,³ perhaps future research grant competitions could focus on a concentrated public policy effort.

Overall, the plan for the future should not be a focus on building up each WPA with the hope that the few intermediaries will become the many. We are concerned that WPAs are just not ready for the work of influence Cambridge suggests, and we encourage instead a more collective approach, one steeped in RAD research and designed for policy makers to consume through a myriad of social configurations.

NOTES

1. Cambridge uses Bogenschneider and Corbett’s definition that high quality research is high in scientific merit, unbiased, readily available, organized efficiently, and easy to read (138-139).

2. These “writing research” videos could take the same informative approach as the video produced in 2009 introducing the WPA Council (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CB68sKQbWpk>). As of this writing, the video has been viewed more than 450 times.

3. The WPA offers grants to facilitate research. More information may be found at <http://wpacouncil.org/grants/research-grant-2012>.

WORKS CITED

- Adler-Kassner, Linda. *The Activist WPA: Changing Stories about Writing and Writers*. Logan: Utah State UP, 2008. Print.
- Cambridge, Barbara. “Research and Policy: Antithetical or Complementary.” *Writing Program Administration* 35.1 (2011): 135-47. Print.
- Council of Writing Program Administrators. “WPA Network for Media Action.” *Council of Writing Program Administrators Website*. (2011). Web. 6 Jan. 2012.
- CWPAAdmin. “Introducing the Council of Writing Program Administrators.” *YouTube*. Web. 25 Jan. 2012.
- Haswell, Rich. “NCTE/CCCC’s Recent War on Scholarship.” *Written Communication* 22 (2005): 198-223. Print.



Review Essay

Enhancing Learning and Thinking in Higher Education

Sherry Rankins-Robertson, Tiffany Bouelle, and Duane Roen

Adler-Kassner, Linda, and Peggy O'Neill. *Reframing Writing Assessment to Improve Teaching and Learning*. Logan: Utah State UP, 2010. 180 pages.

Arum, Richard, and Josipa Roksa. *Academically Adrift: Limited Learning on College Campuses*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2011. 259 pages.

Hacker, Andrew, and Claudia Dreifus. *Higher Education? How Colleges are Wasting Our Money and Failing Our Kids—And What We Can Do about It*. New York: Times Books, 2010. 271 pages.

Peckham, Irvin. *Going North Thinking West: The Intersections of Social Class, Critical Thinking, and Politicized Writing Instruction*. Logan: Utah State UP, 2011. 180 pages.

Scott, Tony. *Dangerous Writing: Understanding the Political Economy of Composition*. Logan: Utah State UP, 2009. 216 pages.

How effectively are colleges and universities enhancing students' learning and thinking? This question has been front and center in recent critiques of higher education. On the one hand, such critiques can be helpful because assessing learning and thinking should be an ongoing activity throughout the curriculum. However, such critiques can be counterproductive when they do not take into account current disciplinary theory, research, and practice. Each of the books reviewed here generates conversations about the effectiveness of higher education, with some attention to learning and thinking, and several of them consider how writing programs, in particular, can further promote students' learning and critical thinking.

Those who critique postsecondary education need to consider questions whose answers will benefit students striving to be successful in the academic, professional, civic, and personal arenas of life: What should students learn in college? What is the value of any particular kind of learning or critical thinking? What counts as critical thinking? Why should faculty use particular curricular and pedagogical practices? Who should teach students to think critically?

The books considered here examine critical thinking from multiple perspectives: understanding critical thinking, preparing and mentoring faculty, and assessing student learning. Although there are many factors that influence critical thinking, this review will consider scaffolding for understanding critical thinking, for examining how faculty are prepared to engage students in critical thinking, and for discussing measures to assess students' knowledge and understanding.

Offering a lens for understanding critical thinking, Irvin Peckham, in *Going North, Thinking West: The Intersections of Social Class, Critical Thinking, and Politicized Writing Instruction*, discusses how critical thinking skills can be taught and learned. As he considers the evolution of critical thinking, Peckham describes two strands: cognitive and social. Cognitive thinking involves questioning assumptions and evaluating evidence, as well as knowing the appropriate time to question these assumptions. On the other hand, the social strand encourages students to deconstruct the social structures that "naturalize the exploitation and oppression of dominated social groups" (61). Peckham suggests that the two strands may be approached simultaneously in the classroom, noting that educators can encourage students to think critically about their culture to perceive the "social injustice embedded within it and be moved to do something about it" (88). In the classroom, educators can prompt students to read texts about marginalized or oppressed groups, aiding students in adopting new ways of seeing the world, while at the same time questioning the assumptions and beliefs that students may hold (Peckham 66).

When linking cognitive and social strands of thinking, teachers can encourage students to question the social order that contributes to the ways in which they learn—an important aspect of critical pedagogy. However, teachers must be mindful so that the classroom does not become more oppressive than liberatory. Specifically, Peckham explains how educators who adopt a critical pedagogy may be doing a disservice to students by widening the gap between working- and middle-class students. When educators challenge students through critical pedagogy, they open up space for working-class students to fall behind because they may be reluctant to share their experiences.

According to Peckham, practitioners of critical pedagogy can fall short when students resist the topics, readings, or general structure of the course. Too often, teachers structure their syllabi or have students read essays in ways that alienate the working class either by using language with which they are unfamiliar or by using language that immediately implies that they will be questioning their preconceived assumptions. Further, these issues present themselves in assignments that encourage “critical thinking.” Assignment prompts may foster resistance, encouraging students to write about “safe” topics to meet the assignment’s writing goals instead of the critical thinking goals. Ironically, when teachers read students’ writing, they may become too focused on the critical thinking agenda to see other features of the writing. As a result, they “misread” the texts that students craft (142). Peckham argues that when teachers focus on critical thinking too much, they miss opportunities to teach students how to write—to connect their ideas, to work on organization, to consider genre conventions and style, and so on. Throughout the book, he illuminates potential problems with critical pedagogy, providing an interesting perspective on a pedagogy that many educators use in the classroom without fully understanding its ramifications.

While Peckham offers a theoretical foundation for critical pedagogy, Tony Scott, in *Dangerous Writing: Understanding the Political Economy of Composition*, provides more concrete advice for implementing critical pedagogy. Whereas Peckham prompts educators to revisit their syllabi and assignments, Scott specifically argues for incorporating assignments that will open up space for students to write about their lives instead of assignments that merely help students acquire certain skill sets useful for the workforce. Pedagogies need to promote writing that encourages students to look at how they forge connections in their lives, how their class influences their thinking, and how these identities shape them as individuals. Further, he analyzes how the very notion of critical pedagogy, where teachers may strive to foster identification in social categories, may, if done badly, emphasize students’ current identities without analyzing their historical roots. Reviewing his own students’ work, Scott demonstrates how students can examine their identities and also make connections between the sometimes opposing worlds of academia and the workplace.

Both Peckham and Scott suggest that a contributing factor to the misuse of critical pedagogy is the clear division between non-tenure and tenure-track faculty that often occurs in English departments. For instance, in *Dangerous Writing: Understanding the Political Economy of Composition*, Scott discusses the gap between tenure-line faculty and part-time faculty, noting that tenure-line faculty who serve as administrators often claim

first-year composition as their “territory.” However, they often do not teach these classes. Instead, most of the first-year composition classes are taught by part-time faculty who may have little or no control over their course content. Scott emphasizes that this disparity can be detrimental, arguing that departments need to ensure that first-year writing faculty are well-educated professionals in the discipline.

Similarly, Peckham also argues that faculty should meld research, theory, and practice, as they implement critical pedagogy. He challenges the notion that “members of the professoriate are better versed in the literature and consequently less likely to blunder” than contingent faculty (143). Even though contingent faculty and professors alike may have noble intentions, Peckham stresses the importance of working together to challenge the educational system that “tends to reproduce the social system within which it exists” (160). By learning to listen to each other, faculty can find common ground to open up spaces for learning. WPAs must ask what resources and preparation are available to all educators within the writing program—teaching assistants, contingent faculty members, and tenure-line professors. This means, based on Peckham’s call, that all members need access to professionalization within the discipline. More professionalization provides teachers with the tools that they need to enhance students’ critical thinking skills.

Making similar claims to Peckham and Scott, in *Higher Education? How Colleges Are Wasting Our Money and Failing Our Kids—and What We Can Do about It*, Andrew Hacker, a professor emeritus of political science at Queens College, and Claudia Dreifus, a journalist and an adjunct associate professor of international affairs and media at Columbia University, discuss the widening gap between professors and contingent faculty within the university system. They offer a scathing critique of higher education, arguing that “college should be a cultural journey, an intellectual expedition, a voyage confronting new ideas and information, together expanding and deepening our understanding of ourselves and the world” (3). However, they claim that higher education is failing to achieve this vision for many reasons, including but not limited to the vast differences in both rank and monetary status for educators. For instance, they disparage the tenure or “caste system” (15) in which tenured faculty carry lighter teaching loads than they should, and in which the remaining faculty “are the contingent people of the campus—exploitable, disposable, impoverished by low wages. They do the bulk of the undergraduate teaching at many universities” (15). Hacker and Dreifus offer these and other indictments of higher education and support some of the same kinds of efforts that many members of our profession actively promote.

In the chapter “Contingent Education” regarding non-tenure track teaching positions, the authors note that “Higher education is probably one of the only sectors of the national workplace where one regularly finds two people with similar credentials, working side by side at comparable jobs, and experiencing such extreme pay gaps” (49). Like many members of our field, Hacker and Dreifus admire the teaching that adjuncts provide, but they lament the conditions under which adjuncts provide that invaluable service to undergraduates. By publishing a popular book that raises awareness about this issue, Hacker and Dreifus may provide welcome ammunition to writing program administrators who regularly make the case to department chairs and deans to improve the contracts for adjuncts.

Hacker and Dreifus devote a chapter to making the familiar argument that tenured and tenure-track faculty spend so much time doing research that they neglect teaching. This imbalance, they note, is the result of a reward system that values research much more than it values teaching. In yet another chapter, “Fireproof: The Tangled Issue of Tenure,” the authors make the case that tenure is not needed to protect academic freedom. They go further to argue that “few junior faculty are willing to try unconventional research or break with the orthodoxies of their discipline, espouse dissenting ideas, indeed do anything that might otherwise displease their seniors” (146). At the end of the book, in a list of recommendations for improving higher education, Hacker and Dreifus go so far as to assert, “*Paid sabbaticals should be ended* (original emphasis). For their part, colleges should cease requiring research from their faculties. If professors are burning to write books, they have long summers and three-day weekends” (240).

It may be no surprise that Dreifus, a journalist, would offer these recommendations; after all, she may not fully appreciate the synergistic relationship that exists among theory, research, and practice. However, it is surprising that Hacker, a lifelong faculty member, would not do more to acknowledge this important relationship. Hacker and Dreifus seem to be unaware of the benefits of knowledge-making in the academy. They consider research to be a personal privilege for tenure-line faculty. However, as scholars in our field already know, research can benefit a host of stakeholders, including teachers, students, employers who hire graduates, and society in general. Without research, there is no new knowledge for teachers to share with students, so that graduates can contribute to society. In addition to the importance of an institution of higher education generating new knowledge, colleges offer spaces for students to grow intellectually as they grow in all arenas in life, including the personal, civic, and professional.

Another popular text that addresses factors that may influence critical thinking is *Academically Adrift: Limited Learning on College Campuses*.

Authors Richard Arum and Josipa Roksa claim that while many factors such as preparedness, disciplinary expectations, and financial access all affect students' success in college, institutions can do more, such as provide realistic expectations and focus on student persistence for college success. However, Arum and Roksa's principle claim in *Academically Adrift* is that "American higher education is characterized by limited or no learning for a large proportion of students" (30). This claim relies heavily on limited data from an insufficient measure of assessment.

Analyzing data from the College Learning Assessment (CLA), Arum and Roksa claim that "many students are not improving their skills in critical thinking, complex reasoning, and writing" (36). To make this claim, the authors track students' CLA test scores in students' first year of college, and "at the end of their sophomore year" (20). Arum and Roksa indicate that students "completed the CLA at multiple points in their college careers." However, there is no evidence that the CLA data were collected or evaluated beyond the first two years. Arum and Roksa indicate that the CLA offers real-world situations, including two writing tasks. In the first task, students "generate a memo advising an employer about the desirability of purchasing a type of airplane that has recently crashed" (21). In the second writing task, students are asked to evaluate the validity of a proposal for reducing crime and to evaluate a critique of that proposal. Students are given ninety minutes to perform one of the writing tasks. A detailed scoring rubric and sampling are used to assess the test.

Although the CLA may ask students to write about real-world situations, the context in which students address those situations is less than optimal. First, the typical first-year college student is relatively unfamiliar with the genre of the memo. Being asked to write in an unfamiliar genre can magnify the difficulty of any writing task. Second, it is challenging for even highly experienced writers to perform such complex tasks in ninety minutes. In the second task, for instance, students are "provided with a set of documents, including newspaper articles, crime and drug statistics, research briefs, and internal administrative memos" (22), which serve as the evidence to support their evaluations. Further, the scoring rubric "requires that the presentation is clear and concise, the structure of the argument is well-developed and effective, the work is persuasive, the written mechanics are proper and correct, and reader interest is maintained" (22). At this point, most writing teachers are horrified that anyone, especially a first-year college student would be expected to attend to all of those matters in ninety minutes. In most first-year composition classrooms, students have at least several weeks to review the documents, generate ideas, produce drafts, work

on support and organization, revise, and edit. Editing alone may take more than ninety minutes.

Beyond the use of CLA, Arum and Roksa call for “externally mandated accountability systems on public colleges and universities similar to the ones required and promoted in elementary and secondary school systems through policies such as No Child Left Behind” (137). Given that teachers and administrators in the field of rhetoric and composition have already responded to mandates such as the Common Core State Standards with “The Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing,” a resolution calling for external systems would reverse the movement toward responsible accountability. *Academically Adrift* suggests a full transformation that would require “everything associated with coursework, from faculty expectations and approaches to teaching to course requirements and feedback” (131). Writing program faculty and administrators should question the findings of this text based not only on the CLA as an assessment tool, but also on the oversimplified conclusions of this study.

Concern about Arum and Roksa’s findings becomes more apparent in light of the CCCC statement on assessment, which states, “*The methods and criteria that readers use to assess writing should be locally developed, deriving from the particular context and purposes for the writing being assessed.*” The individual writing program, institution, or consortium should be recognized as a community of interpreters whose knowledge of context and purpose is integral to the assessment. There is no test that can be used in all environments for all purposes, and the best assessment for any group of students must be locally determined and may well be locally designed.

Arguing for discipline-specific assessment in *Reframing Writing Assessment to Improve Teaching and Learning*, Linda Adler-Kassner and Peggy O’Neil provide practical applications for improving teaching and learning and discuss using “valid, reliable, and discipline-appropriate assessment to improve teaching and learning” (109). Adler-Kassner and O’Neil discuss the role that assessment plays and how the conversations regarding assessment for writing needs reframing: “a theoretical framework, concrete illustrations, and suggestions for action” for those who “care deeply” and are “invested in postsecondary writing instruction” (12). They question the general assumptions of “‘what education should be,’ a frame that also profoundly influences discussions about assessments intended to provide information about what students are learning as well as how and why they are learning it” (15). A highlight of this book is Chapter 5, “Reframing In Action,” in which the authors provide case studies for portfolio, WAC, and writing center assessment models with theoretical examination. Unlike *Academically Adrift*, this book examines how various audiences perceive

and interpret data, specifically how “the public discourse tends to focus around quantitative data that will *prove* what is (or is not) taking place in the classroom” while within the discipline scholars focus more on “qualitative data designed to help instructors *improve* the work of their classroom or program” (39). Adler-Kassner and O’Neil argue that these are not opposite ends of a spectrum, but complementary tools. They remind us that the job of writing teachers and writing program administrators is to function as skilled researchers in building diverse alliances, conducting empirical research, and communicating with stakeholders about what we are doing in the writing classroom.

Although Adler-Kassner and O’Neil examine some of the challenges of using portfolio assessment, they argue that standardized tests cannot effectively determine functions of intelligence (78). Portfolios offer a long-standing, widely-accepted method of assessment in the field of rhetoric and composition. As Edward White observes in *Teaching and Assessing Writing*, tests serve as a “snapshot” whereas a portfolio serves as a “motion picture” of students’ learning (119). In *Learner-Centered Assessment on College Campuses: Shifting the Focus from Teaching to Learning*, Huba and Freed note that portfolios can encourage active student engagement in the learning process, thus enhancing critical thinking.

Recognizing how portfolios engage students in learning and reflecting on learning, first-year composition faculty in the School of Letters and Sciences at Arizona State University (ASU) use this tool extensively both to promote learning and to assess it. The frame for portfolio assessment at ASU is the Council of Writing Program Administrators’ “WPA Outcomes Statement for First-Year Composition,” a synthesis of research, theory, practice, and years of discussion. Similarly, the “Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing”—jointly produced by the Council of Writing Program Administrators, the National Council of Teachers of English, and the National Writing Project—focuses on facilitating student learning. As the CCCC Position on Assessment suggests, teachers in the ASU program ask students to construct course portfolios based on the WPA Outcomes Statement to “improve teaching and learning” (CCCC). In these portfolios, students make the following case: “In light of the learning outcomes for this course, here is what I have learned. Further, I offer the following evidence to document that I have learned what I claim to have learned.” *Academically Adrift* and *Higher Education?* ignore such sophisticated assessment devices; the assessment tools, which were used as the premise for each of these texts, were not developed with values of any particular discipline or curricular goals in mind, and certainly not the values of the discipline of rhetoric and composition.

As teachers, when the three of us read such portfolios, we consistently see evidence that students are engaged in critical thinking. For example, anyone who has studied rhetoric for any length of time—even for a few weeks in a first-year writing course—understands that rhetorical choices involve critical thinking. When a student decides how to craft a piece of discourse for a particular audience, with a specific purpose, and in a specific context, that writer is thinking critically. When a student decides whether to use one conventional organizational pattern rather than another one in an argument, that writer is thinking critically. When a student decides to use a more reliable source of information rather than a less reliable source, that writer is thinking critically. When a student analyzes his or her own discursive practices in a course portfolio, that writer is thinking critically.

However, for most students, there needs to be some reason to be invested in the decisions that writers make. For the findings in *Academically Adrift* based on the CLA, students' investment is relatively low because there are few if any consequences tied to performance. Some students spend relatively little time on the CLA tasks, which is understandable because there is little incentive to engage in those tasks or perform well on them. Although college administrators and governing boards may be invested in the results, students may be much less concerned about them because students do not have vested interest or see the benefits of applying themselves to a test that has little to no impact on their success in their academic programs. For more than thirty years, our discipline has widely rejected standardized testing as a single measure of student ability and capability. In course portfolios the investment is higher. Granted, for some students the investment is based on a desire to earn a particular grade in the course. For many students, though, the investment is based on a desire to learn how to use language to accomplish something in one or more of the four arenas of life: academic, professional, civic, personal.

Writing teachers can encourage students to be more invested in writing and engage them in critical thinking by designing writing assignments that encourage students to write about topics that interest them. Further, to promote critical thinking, teachers can encourage students to address audiences that matter to them. Also, students should have opportunities to choose genres and media that fit the occasion. As classroom teachers, we have observed that portfolios are often a point of pride for many students when they are able to see the overall picture of their learning in response to learning outcomes. Unlike individually graded assignments that the student never revisits, the portfolio shows the writer's growth over a semester, series of semesters, or throughout a program.

When the National Council of Teachers of English, the National Writing Project, and the Council of Writing Program Administrators developed and adopted the Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing in early 2011, they offered another set of tools for promoting critical thinking, as well as the other learning outcomes described in the WPA Outcomes Statement. Furthering the conversation for educators outside of writing programs, teachers in all disciplines can implement methods for students to assess their own learning and thinking. As Peckham suggests in *Going North, Thinking West*, critical thinking should be taught within a discipline and assessed by that discipline because it is difficult to assess critical thinking outside of one's field given that the standards in one field do not translate to another. In other words, critical thinking is "field-dependent" (60). Critical thinking cannot be performed in a vacuum, meaning that critical thinking cannot occur without teaching critical thinking *about* something. To encourage critical thinking across the disciplines, teachers can establish course outcomes based on their discipline's values, implementing writing assignments and student self-assessment opportunities similar to portfolios used in first-year writing courses.

The books under review here remind writing program administrators that many internal and external stakeholders are invested in the success of higher education, and they care about the teaching and learning that students experience. When outsiders, including administrators, suggest or impose specific assessment practices for writing programs, writing teachers and administrators need to respond—or better yet, be proactive—by drawing on theory, research, and practice in the field to advocate for effective assessment. Additionally, to gain the support needed for writing programs, writing program administrators must use methods and language to represent assessment findings to those outside of writing programs in language that stakeholders can understand. In the Council of Writing Program Administrators, for example, the Network for Media Action has taken on this responsibility. Writing program administrators must develop strategies for determining what works most effectively in their local programs, but theories and research about critical thinking and student success are also increasingly important. As noted here, there are no "quick fix" solutions to the challenges of assessing thinking and learning, and book authors who lump together all programs within an institution—or worse, all institutions as a whole—fail to adequately and fairly represent learning in higher education.

AUTHORS' NOTE

We thank Ed White for very helpful comments on earlier drafts of this review essay.

WORKS CITED

- “Framework for Success in Post-Secondary Writing.” Web. 8 Jan. 2012.
- CCCC. “Writing Assessment: A Position Statement.” Web 8 Jan. 2012.
- Huba, Mary E., and Jann E. Freed. *Learner-Centered Assessment on College Campuses: Shifting the Focus from Teaching to Learning*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 2000. Print.
- White, Edward M. *Teaching and Assessing Writing*. 2nd ed. Portland: Calendar Islands, 1998. Print.
- “WPA Outcomes Statement for First-Year Composition.” Council of Writing Program Administrators. 2008. Web. 8 Jan. 2012.



Contributors

Barbara J. Blakely is the Director of ISUComm Foundation Courses—the first two courses in Iowa State University’s CAC program. ISUComm is progressive in its attention to written, oral, visual, and electronic modes. Blakely teaches the proseminar for new TAs, advanced composition theory and pedagogy, and qualitative research. In addition to place-based curricula, her areas of interest include critical literacy, specifically critical composition pedagogy; critical technological literacy; TA development; and popular culture. Her work has appeared in *Computers and Composition*, *Pedagogy*, *Journal of Visual Literacy*, *Journal of Popular Culture*, and *WPA: Writing Program Administration*, among others.

Tiffany Bouelle was a Lecturer at Arizona State University, where she taught first-year writing and technical communication courses. She has recently accepted a position as an assistant professor at the University of New Mexico. Her research focuses on multimodal composition and using service-learning projects in technical and professional writing classes.

Dayna V. Goldstein is a Temporary Assistant Professor at Georgia Southern University. She, along with the other editor, is a winner of the 2009 CCCC Research Award and is a member of NCTE’s Contingent Labor Committee as well as WPA’s Grant Committee. She has published in *Writing Spaces*, *the CCC-IP Annual*, and *Stories of Mentoring: Theory and Praxis*. Goldstein has presented at several conferences including CCCC, WPA, and *Computers & Writing*. She continues to work to complete her dissertation investigation into the disciplinary consistency of honors theses through Kent State University. Her research interests include Activity-Network Theory, writing assessment, and labor conditions.

Matthew Heard is an assistant professor in English at the University of North Texas, where he also directs the freshman composition program. His past research has focused on intersections between rhetorical theory and literature (particularly the literature of transatlantic modernisms) and

on the ethical implications of genre-based pedagogies in composition studies. Currently, he is finishing a book manuscript entitled *Writing as Attunement*, which explores the emotional and physical dimensions of writing through the metaphor of tonality. His articles have appeared in *College Literature*, *Pedagogy*, and *JAC*.

Melissa Ianetta is Associate Professor of English and Director of Writing at the University of Delaware. In this position, she leads the writing center, composition program and writing across the curriculum initiative and teaches classes in rhetoric and literature. Her research in rhetoric and writing has appeared venues such as *College Composition and Communication*, *College English*, *PMLA*, *Rhetoric Review*, and *Composition Studies*. With Lauren Fitzgerald of Yeshiva University, she edits *Writing Center Journal*.

Emily Isaacs is an associate professor of English and director of the First-Year Writing Program at Montclair State University. Her research projects are primarily empirical; currently, she is working on a study of approaches to writing at 4-year state institutions across the nation, and another study of the impact of writing in the major (with Catherine Keohane). Recent articles have appeared or are forthcoming in *College English*, *Journal of Teaching Writing*, and *Pedagogy*, and edited collections from Hampton Press, Parlor Press, and Lexington Books.

Catherine Keohane is Assistant Professor of English at Montclair State University, where she teaches writing and literature courses, and serves as Assistant Director for Placement. Her research interests include both literature and composition. She has published articles in *ELH*, *Studies in the Novel*, and *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture*. Her current book project examines eighteenth-century depictions of charity and debt in didactic and imaginative literature. Together with Emily Isaacs, she is studying the effectiveness of a course on writing in the English major.

Don J. Kraemer has taught since 1991 in the Department of English and Foreign Languages at California State Polytechnic University, Pomona, where he helps direct the graduate program in Rhetoric and Composition, as well as the Basic Writing and FYC programs. Recent articles can be found in *Advances in the History of Rhetoric*, *California English*, *JAC*, *JBW*, *The Journal of Teaching Writing*, and *Rhetoric Review*.

Rita Malenczyk is Professor of English and Director of the Writing Program and Writing Center at Eastern Connecticut State University. Her

Contributors

work on the rhetoric and politics of writing program administration has appeared in the journal *WPA: Writing Program Administration*, *Writing Lab Newsletter*, and in numerous edited collections, including *Exploring Composition Studies* (eds. Kelly Ritter and Paul Kei Matsuda), forthcoming in June 2012 from Utah State University Press. With Susanmarie Harrington, Keith Rhodes, and Ruth Overman Fischer, she co-edited *The Outcomes Book* (Utah State UP, 2005). She is vice-president of the Council of Writing Program Administrators.

Randall McClure earned his PhD in Rhetoric and Writing at Bowling Green State University. He currently teaches first-year writing at Georgia Southern University. His research interests include writing program administration, composition pedagogy, and digital information behavior. He has published articles in *Composition Studies*, *WPA: Writing Program Administration*, *Computers and Composition*, *Writing Spaces*, *Writing & Pedagogy*, *portal: Libraries and the Academy*, *Computers and Composition Online*, *The Journal of Information Literacy*, and *The Department Chair*. His book *The New Digital Scholar*, co-edited with James P. Purdy, should appear later this year.

Susan Pagnac has served four semesters as Assistant Director of ISUComm Foundation Courses as she completes her PhD in Rhetoric and Professional Communication at Iowa State University. She also served as Assistant Director for one year at Oklahoma State University. She teaches both foundation and advanced communication courses at Iowa State University as well as learning community sections of foundation communication. Besides place-based pedagogy, her professional interests are the intersections of social class and first-year composition, composition theory, and writing program administration. Her work has appeared in *Pedagogy*.

Martha (Marty) D. Patton is an Associate Professor of English at the University of Missouri. For a dozen years, she assisted Marty Townsend and Jo Ann Vogt in MU's Campus Writing Program, where she worked most closely with faculty in the natural and applied sciences. Her 2011 book about writing-in-the-disciplines, *Writing in the Research University*, puts a Darwinian spin on socio-historic theories of writing, illustrates the theory with extensive case studies from engineering, and discusses practical implications for all disciplines. She continues to do research on teacher feedback in the teaching of writing.

Ann M. Penrose is Professor of English at North Carolina State University, where she directed the first-year writing program from 2001 to 2007. She teaches undergraduate writing and rhetoric courses and graduate seminars in composition theory and pedagogy, empirical methods, and writing in the research sciences. Interests include writing pedagogy and program administration, socio-cognitive dimensions of academic literacy, and socialization in disciplinary communities. She co-authored *Writing in the Sciences: Exploring Conventions of Scientific Discourse*, with Steven B. Katz (Longman 2010). Her research on college writers has appeared in *Research in the Teaching of English*, *College Composition and Communication*, and *Written Communication*.

Sherry Rankins-Robertson is Assistant Professor and Director of First-Year Composition at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock. She has designed curriculum and taught courses in family history writing, nonfiction, and business writing. Her publications focus on uses of multimodal composition in first-year composition, strategies for online teaching, effective assignment design, and partnerships between universities and prisons.

Duane Roen is Assistant Vice Provost for University Academic Success Programs at Arizona State University, where he also serves as Head of Technical Communication and Head of Interdisciplinary and Liberal Studies. He has published numerous books, articles, and chapters on writing program administration, composition curriculum and pedagogy, writing across the curriculum, faculty scholarship, assessment, and the history of the field.

Shirley K Rose is Professor of English and Director of Writing Programs at Arizona State University. She is a Past President of the Council of Writing Program Administrators. She regularly teaches graduate courses in writing program administration and has published numerous articles on writing pedagogy and on issues in archival research and practice. With Irwin Weiser, she has edited three collections on the intellectual work of writing program administration, including *The WPA as Researcher*, *The Writing Program Administrator as Theorist*, and *Going Public: What Writing Programs Learn from Engagement*. With Dominic Delli-Carpini, she will co-lead the 2011 WPA Summer Workshop in Baton Rouge.

Martha (Marty) A. Townsend is an Associate Professor of English at the University of Missouri. She directed MU's Campus Writing Program from 1991 to 2006. She is working on a case study of the academic component

Contributors

of MU's Division I football program, with an emphasis on student-athletes' literacy.

Jo Ann Vogt was a consultant for writing intensive faculty in MU's Campus Writing Program at the University of Missouri from 1989 to 2007. She has also directed Writing Intensive Tutorial Services (WITS), a writing center staffed by graduate students from across the disciplines and specially designed to serve the needs of students enrolled in writing intensive classes. In June of 2007, Jo Ann began directing Writing Tutorial Services (WTS) at Indiana University. WTS employs a mix of graduate and peer tutors and assists any IU student working on any kind of writing assignment for any IU class.

Announcements

Call for New Editors of *WPA: Writing Program Administration*: The Council of Writing Program Administrators is seeking the next Editor or Editorial Team for its official journal, *WPA: Writing Program Administration*. Our current editorial team of Alice Horning and Debra Frank Dew has delivered distinguished content that reflects our field's continued growth in research and scholarship, but they are ready to move on to other work in the field.

The term is for three years, with possibility for renewal, with work beginning in Fall 2013; the new editor or editorial team will work with the current editorial team to publish content already in development for Volume 37.2 (Spring 2014), and will have full responsibility for content and production beginning with Volume 38 (Fall/Winter 2014 and Spring 2015).

Interested applicants should have the following qualifications: publications in and expertise in the field of writing program administration and related areas; knowledge of the issues that have preoccupied the field, both historically and in the recent past; familiarity with the journal, an understanding of the role the journal plays in the field, and a vision for the journal's future; current membership in and a history of involvement with CWPA; strong editorial and organizational skills; and prior editorial and reviewing experience. We especially encourage applications from prospective editorial teams.

To apply, please submit an application letter explaining why you are qualified for this position and describing any resources or support your institution(s) will be able to provide (released time, secretarial support, startup funds, etc.) as well as resources you will request from CWPA. Applicants should also submit a current c.v. for each member of the prospective editorial team. If you are proposing an editorial team, please explain how you will work together on editing and production of the journal. Upon request, additional information about editorial responsibilities and workflow, journal finances, and production timelines will be made available to

prospective editors. Address queries to Rita Malenczyk, Chair of the WPA Journal Editor Search Committee, at malenczykr@easternct.edu.

Send the application electronically as attached files to Rita Malenczyk, malenczykr@easternct.edu. **Deadline: September 1, 2012.** Members of the Search Committee will be available for phone consultations with prospective editors/editorial teams. We hope to finalize an agreement with the new Editorial Team no later than February 1, 2013.

Call for Proposals – 2012 Graduate Research Network: The Graduate Research Network (GRN) invites proposals for its 2012 workshop, May 17, 2012, at the Computers and Writing Conference hosted by North Carolina State University in Raleigh, NC. The C&W Graduate Research Network is an all-day pre-conference event, open to all registered conference participants at no charge. Roundtable discussions group those with similar interests and discussion leaders who facilitate discussion and offer suggestions for developing research projects and for finding suitable venues for publication. We encourage anyone interested or involved in graduate education and scholarship—students, professors, mentors, and interested others—to participate in this important event. The GRN welcomes those pursuing work at any stage, from those just beginning to consider ideas to those whose projects are ready to pursue publication. Participants are also invited to apply for travel funding through the CW/GRN Travel Grant Fund. Deadline for submissions is April 25, 2012. For more information or to submit a proposal, visit our Web site at <http://class.georgiasouthern.edu/writing/GRN/2011/index.html> or email Brea Shaffer at gs00874@georgiasouthern.edu or Janice Walker at jwalker@georgiasouthern.edu.

CFP for *FYHC: The Journal of First-Year Honors Composition*: *FYHC: The Journal of First-year Honors Composition* (<http://fyhc.info>), a peer-reviewed academic journal, is pleased to announce the launch of its new issue, featuring a lead article by Dr. Carol Poster of York University. *FYHC* was inaugurated in spring 2006 with the intention of being the national forum for collegial discussion of issues related to first-year honors composition. *FYHC* accepts submissions on a rolling basis for publication in an annual issue. We solicit contributions from *FYHC* student-writers, teachers, course directors, writing program administrators, and interested others. The journal is divided into six sections: *Pedagogy*: This section is for essays that consider the pedagogical debates surrounding *FYHC*; *History*: This section is for historical overviews of *FYHC* and case studies of particular *FYHC* programs; *Student Works*: We welcome essays that are written *about* *FYHC* by students and essays that are written *for* *FYHC* classes

by students; Collaborative teacher-student essays are also welcome. We are especially interested in discussions of or representative pieces of best practices for FYHC; *WPA Views*: This section is a forum for writing program administrators, course directors, department chairs, college deans, university presidents, high school principals, etc., to describe the FHYC classes on their campuses and/or to explore key issues concerning FYHC; *Reviews*: This section provides a space to review texts about FYHC or to review texts that have applications or implications for FYHC; *Editorials*: For those who have political, pedagogical, and/or theoretical concerns about FYHC but who want to work in a less formal setting than a full peer-reviewed article, we have an editorial section as well. Submission guidelines can be found at <http://fyhc.info/guidelines.asp>. For questions, please contact the editorial team at fyhcjournal@gmail.com.

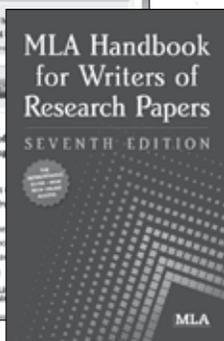
THE AUTHORITATIVE GUIDES TO MLA STYLE

Buy access to the *MLA Handbook* online at
www.mlahandbook.org



and start using it today.

A print copy will be mailed to you.



xxii & 292 pp.
Paper \$22.00
ISBN 978-1-60329-024-1

LARGE-PRINT EDITION
Paper \$30.00
ISBN 978-1-60329-025-8

Recipient of *Choice Award for Outstanding Academic Title*

Searchable Web site features

- the full text of the *MLA Handbook*
- over two hundred additional examples
- research project narratives, with sample papers

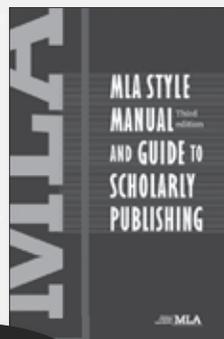
MLA's standard guide for graduate students,
scholars, and professional writers

"The bastion of scholarly publishing etiquette."
—*Bookpage*

xxiv & 336 pp.
Cloth \$32.50
ISBN 978-0-87352-297-7

LARGE-PRINT EDITION
Paper \$37.50
ISBN 978-0-87352-298-4

You can also buy the print edition. An access code in the back allows you to use the Web site, too.



Join the MLA
and receive 20% off
the listed price.

Modern
Language
Association

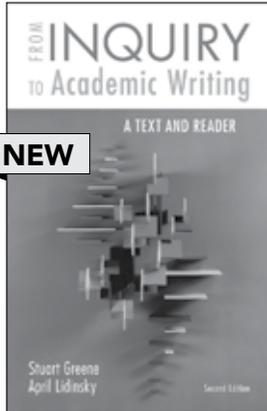
MLA

646 576-5161 • Fax 646 576-5160 • www.mla.org

BEDFORD/ST. MARTIN'S

you get more | bedfordstmartins.com

Demystifies academic writing



[bedfordstmartins.com/
frominquiry/catalog](http://bedfordstmartins.com/frominquiry/catalog)

From Inquiry to Academic Writing A Text and Reader

Second Edition

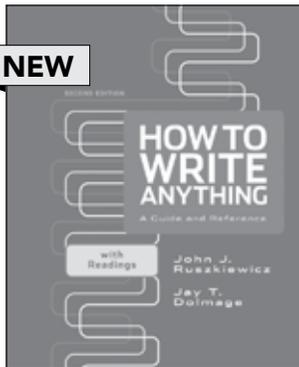
Stuart Greene, *University of Notre Dame*

April Lidinsky, *Indiana University South Bend*

Also available without the reader

From Inquiry to Academic Writing: A Text and Reader demystifies cross curricular thinking and writing by breaking it down into a series of habits and skills that students can learn in order to join academic conversations. The extensive thematic reader opens up thought-provoking conversations being held throughout the academy and in the culture at large.

Because there is more than one writing process



[bedfordstmartins.com/
howtowrite/catalog](http://bedfordstmartins.com/howtowrite/catalog)

How to Write Anything A Guide and Reference with Readings

Second Edition

John J. Ruskiewicz

University of Texas at Austin

Jay T. Dolmage, *University of Waterloo*

Also available without the reader

How to Write Anything provides flexible support for a wide range of students, wherever they are in their writing process. The Guide lays out focused advice for writing common academic and real-world genres, while the Reference covers the range

of writing skills that students need as they work across genres and disciplines. Genre-based readings round out a book that is everything you need to teach composition in a highly visual guide, reference, and reader. The second edition gives students more support for academic writing, more help choosing and working with genres, and new advice on multimodal composing.

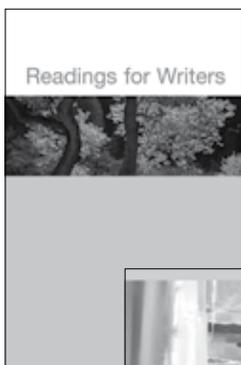
BEDFORD/ST. MARTIN'S

you get more | bedfordstmartins.com

Bedford Select

A custom database

bedfordstmartins.com/select



Make your selection. Build your book.

Bedford Select is a growing custom database for crafting the composition reader or literature anthology that you imagine. Simply log on and choose your selections; we'll take care of the rest.



bedfordstmartins.com/custom

Now with more than 800 carefully chosen essays, stories, poems, plays and images to pick from—along with class-tested instructional materials—the user-friendly Web site makes it easy for you to create the book that best reflects your teaching purposes and preferences.

With *Bedford Select*, you get everything you want and nothing else.

TRANSFORMING
LEARNING
TRANSFORMING
LIVES



Wadsworth Professional Development— Collaborating with *you*.

We're your partner in the classroom—online, on the ground, and in between!



TeamUP Faculty Programs: Take Flight.

For more than a decade, **TeamUP Faculty Programs** have helped faculty reach and engage students through peer-to-peer consultations, workshops, and professional development conferences. Our **Faculty Programs Consultants** are full-time educators and expert teachers who understand your challenges, whether your classroom is on-ground, online, or both. They are available to share their experiences using Cengage Learning solutions as well as instructional best practices developed in their own classrooms. Explore all the ways **TeamUP Faculty Programs** can help you launch a new program or support your continuous improvement efforts. Learn more at www.cengage.com/teamup.



Transforming Learning in Composition eSeminar Series

Cengage Learning is pleased to offer you opportunities for free, online professional development throughout the semester—both live and on-demand, from the comfort of your own home or office. The **Transforming Learning in Composition eSeminar Series** features knowledgeable presenters discussing key issues and teaching strategies in composition. We hope you will join us!

Recent eSeminars include:

- **Plagiarism and Beyond: Navigating the Ethical Waters of Research Writing** with John Van Rys
- **Invention in the Classroom** with John Mauk
- **Writing in the Digital Age** with David Blakesley
- **E-Learning Pedagogy 101: 5 Things I Wish I Knew Before I Started Teaching Online** with Bonnie Tensen

Please visit www.cengage.com/community/englishevents to view our eSeminar schedule and access on-demand, archived sessions.

Council of Writing Program Administrators
Grand Valley State University
1 Campus Drive
Allendale, MI 49401

Change Service Requested

PRESORTED STD U.S.
POSTAGE
PAID
GRAND VALLEY
STATE UNIVERSITY

