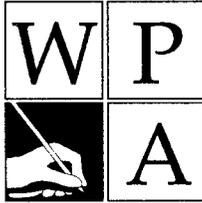


**Writing Program Administration**  
**Journal of the**  
**Council of Writing Program Administrators**

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# Writing Program Administration

Journal of the  
Council of Writing Program Administrators

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- 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
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- 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.

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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*

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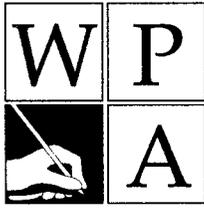
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# Writing Program Administration

Journal of the  
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## From the Editors

I'm doing a study on expert readers, related to my other work on reading. But the study involves participants who happen to be members of the editorial board of this journal. Their responses to a set of survey questions completed as part of my study offer some interesting insights to how the articles that appear in the journal come to publication, so I thought I would share. My findings should be of interest to readers of this journal, to those whose work has been published here, and to those who might submit articles for possible publication.

My participants are a structured sample of six editorial board members who vary in age, background, part of the country and other factors. The IRB at my institution reviewed and approved the study. It entails a survey completed online and a semi-structured 30 minute recorded interview on reading and review practices. Each participant received (with author permission) a few articles reviewed previously and the comments s/he provided on those articles and was asked to review these prior reviews as the basis for the discussion.

Our reviewers treat all the articles with care and attention, spending at least an hour on each review. There are three key insights that derive from the data I've collected. First, reviewers pay close attention to the audience and author purpose in each piece they read. They try to envision the typical WPA journal subscriber citing in the interviews such issues as "could someone use this Monday morning?" and how useful would this piece be to me or to a reader with more or less experience in WPA work? And our editorial board reviewers try to figure out what the author's purpose is in writing the article. If the author's purpose isn't as clear as it should be, our reviewers will make a point of mentioning this fact in their responses.

A second insight that arises from the data is that the editorial board pays attention to the context of the topic in the field. We (the editors, Debra Dew and I) send articles to reviewers based on our assessment of the topic and our list of their areas of expertise, working for a match, so that the reviewers have the appropriate background to assess the article fairly. Thus, when reviewers respond to submissions, they are drawing on their own

knowledge of the field as well as their own research and experience. The relative importance of the topic and its usefulness are important points in their evaluation of articles.

Finally, our reviewers look at the overall structure and organization of each article they review. They examine the literature review if there is one. Closely related, of course, is an assessment of the methodology used by the writer. In their evaluation, they consider whether the claims made are reasonable and appropriate given the data that have been presented to support them. Such material may arise from large or small empirical studies, case studies, program reviews, narratives, or from other sources.

As our readers then, you should find the articles in this and all our issues to be exemplars of these standards the editorial board uses in its reviews: usefulness and appropriateness for WPAs, suitable discussion of the topic given the field as a whole, and strong, clear writing that includes a solid literature review, appropriate methodology and reasonable conclusions that arise from the data or sources used.

These principles appear in practice in this issue. Faye Halpern's "The Preceptor Problem" is an autobiographical account that describes how her experience as a preceptor at Harvard's Expository Writing Program ("Expos") shaped her work. While freedom from disciplinarity has strong appeal, a preceptor's life post Expos brings disciplinary expectations back into clear relief.

In "Students in the First-Year ESL Writing Program: Revisiting the Notion of 'Traditional' ESL," Elena Lawrick offers an exhaustive profile of international ESL students at her doctoral granting institution, Purdue University. Her study challenges the prevailing perception of international undergraduates as a homogeneous group of English language learners with limited experience in the authentic use of English and English composition.

Mark Mullen's "Students' Rights and the Ethics of Celebration" challenges readers to consider the degree to which many of our celebratory practices involve problematic appropriations of student work for our own purposes, some of which may run counter to established professional guidelines for the teaching of writing as laid down by the CCCC.

Kendall Leon and Thomas Sura's article describes an alternative approach to service learning pedagogy, shifting the rhetorical focus of service learning writing from producing texts for public audiences on behalf of a community partner to documenting the organization's writing processes. They argue that the resulting "engagement portfolios" can create a more sustainable partnership between writing classes and community organizations.

In “Using Systems Thinking to Transform Writing Programs,” Dan Melzer argues that Critical Systems Thinking is a useful methodology to understand, critique, and transform campus writing programs. He uses the example of transformations to his own institution’s campus writing program to illustrate the systems methodology and gives advice for applying the methodology to campus writing programs across institutional contexts.

In “Negotiating Expertise: A Pedagogical Framework for Cross-curricular Literacy Work,” Sandra Tarabochia argues for a reconfiguration of cross-curricular faculty teaching relationships, which focuses on the interpersonal dimensions that often constrain successful negotiation among co-teaching colleagues.

Chris M. Anson reviews Peter Elbow’s *Vernacular Eloquence: What Speech Can Bring to Writing* in a lively essay - “A Word for Peter” - that combines speech-like strategies owing largely to the ideas of the book.

In “Feminist WPA Work: Beyond Oxymorons,” Laura Micciche and Donna Strickland review *Performing Feminism and Administration in Rhetoric and Composition Studies*, edited by Krista Ratcliffe and Rebecca Rickly. Placing this new volume in the context of previous work on feminism and WPA work, Micciche and Strickland analyze the various ways the field has achieved, and in some cases has not, goals set for feminist administrative approaches over the last few decades.

Chris Thaiss reviews two edited collections that reflect on the influences of two “heroes” in writing studies: Edward White and Stephen North, respectively. Thaiss argues that, to varying degrees, the essays in both books do more than just celebrate the past: collectively, they provide a snapshot of the diversity of current perspectives and suggest future directions for WPA work in all its many forms.



## The Preceptor Problem: The Effect of “Undisciplined Writing” on Disciplined Instructors

Faye Halpern

### ABSTRACT

*Joseph Harris has experienced the “multidisciplinarity” of Duke’s freestanding writing program as liberating. My article explores how this freedom from disciplinarity is experienced not by a WPA but by an instructor in such a program. This is an autobiographical account that describes how my work at Harvard’s Expository Writing Program (“Expos”) shaped me. In the course of this account, I describe Expos’ evolution into a program that would base its pedagogy on what academic writing shares across the disciplines. The designers of the revamped Expos were thinking about the effect the new program would have on students, but it would also have a profound effect on its instructors—or at least it did in my case. Initially, I, too, found my work at Expos both empowering and liberating, but the reasons for that reaction also caused problems for me in my post-Expos academic career. This article uncovers a problem in freestanding writing program like Duke’s, not in terms of how I was exploited as a contingent laborer (which I do not believe I was) but in the way that such a program shaped me intellectually, making it difficult for me to adjust to a post-Expos life of disciplinarity.*

This is a personal narrative about the time I spent working in a freestanding writing program, that is, one not connected to an English department, and the effect the experience had on me after I left for other academic jobs. This narrative describes why I found the experience of working in the Harvard Expository Writing Program (more familiarly called “Expos”) as an instructor both liberating and empowering, just the way that many writing program administrators (WPAs) of such programs experience it themselves. Yet those aspects of the job that made me experience it this way also made it difficult for me to adjust to life outside such a program. Unlike the WPAs

of such programs, I could not continue in the program indefinitely, and, ironically, some of the aspects of the job that made me love it so much made it difficult for me to adjust to life back in the traditional disciplinary world, in my case, of an English department. This narrative complicates accounts of freestanding programs by WPAs like Joseph Harris and Nancy Sommers, narratives that tout the freedom such freestanding programs allow, a freedom that they view as unproblematic. Toward the beginning of the article, I trace the way Expos achieved just such a freedom from disciplinarity. It was hard work to achieve such freedom, and one can understand why Harvard's director and co-director were proud of their accomplishment. Yet I hope to illuminate the ramifications of this lack of disciplinarity (what actually might be more accurately called "transdisciplinarity") on me and, I imagine, other instructors, who eventually return to the departments that Expos' and Duke's programs partly define themselves against. I do not think I possessed a false consciousness in finding my work at Expos liberating and empowering at the time, and I still look back on that period with great affection. Yet the kind of work I did led to problems once I left, intellectual problems different from the more frequently considered problems of exploitative working conditions.<sup>1</sup> This article is addressed both to WPAs and instructors in such a program, the former because I hope they might find ways to address the kind of problems that I experienced (on the assumption my experiences were not unique) and the latter, so they might become aware of the potentially disabling view of disciplinarity that working in such a program can foster.

The occasion for this narrative comes from recent interest in such freestanding departments. These programs represent one model for delivering college composition—to borrow from the title of Kathleen Blake Yancey's *Delivering College Composition: The Fifth Canon*, which details many others—but it's a compelling one. For Harris, Duke's writing program offers a respite not just from the discipline of English but from the pressures of disciplinarity in general. "Multidisciplinarity is thus not a theoretical ideal but a lived reality in the Duke UWP" ("Thinking" 360).<sup>2</sup> Duke's writing program is multidisciplinary<sup>3</sup> in a number of ways: it teaches a multitude of first-year students, who are destined for different disciplines; it offers courses whose content and methods derive from a wide variety of disciplines, and it is staffed by a revolving group of post-docs who get their Ph.D.'s from, to quote Harris, "African American studies, architecture, biology, communications, cultural anthropology," etc. ("Undisciplined" 157)—and that's just up to the c's. Harris' program follows a model of composition that "disdains the status and order of the traditional academic disciplines" (155), and as such, it offers a refuge from the border-patrolling questions that plagued

him at his earlier job teaching writing within an English department, such as who gets to direct dissertations? Should articles on teaching count as research? (160). Harris experiences his job directing Duke's Writing Program as a liberation.

But how is such a program experienced not by the WPA but by an instructor who worked in it? Before I answer that question, let me give some background both on my own situation and on Expos itself. I worked at Expos from 2000-2004, and it shared all of the qualities Harris describes, from its separation from the English Department to its hiring of instructors from different disciplines, most of whom were not drawn from Harvard's own pool of graduate students. That is, they did not draw from the captive audience of English PhDs at Harvard or people with PhDs in Rhetoric and Composition. As with Duke, Expos hires people with degrees from a variety of disciplines. Though many received degrees in literature or related fields, this is not a policy but a result of the fact that this is a population to whom such a job seems plausible and even familiar. But there are also many people at Expos from philosophy, history, psychology, anthropology—even one person, when I was there, with a degree in Environmental Science. I myself was still a graduate student in English at Brown when I was hired (most instructors have their degrees when they start at Expos, but some do not). A number of things drew me to the job. I had been frustrated at Brown by the lack of practical pedagogical training I had received: our pedagogy class pressed upon us the need to decenter authority from the teacher (this was not something I needed to learn at that point in my young, female life) but did not teach us how to put together a syllabus, lesson plan, or assignment prompt. I had also become intrigued by the question of how one could teach students to be better writers: what I knew how to do as an academic writer, I knew how to do only intuitively and haphazardly. I did not know how to articulate principles of good academic writing. And Expos is in Cambridge, Massachusetts, a wonderful place to live, especially since it enabled me to live with my husband, a philosophy PhD who had also gotten a job at Expos. What I did not expect was just how empowering I would find it there: they taught me a lot about how to teach generally and even more about how to teach academic writing specifically.

One thing you have to understand about Expos is how its history is tied to its pedagogy and hiring practices. Let me depart for a moment from narrating my own history to narrating Expos' in order to explain how Expos evolved into a program that discounted disciplinarity at the same time as it connected what it did to what students would need to know once they entered particular disciplines. Expos was always separate from other departments, but before the early 1990s, classes were divided into different,

relatively pedestrian “sorts” or categories like “Writing about Literature,” “Writing about Social and Ethical Issues,” and “The Essay.” Unlike now, the program was separated not just physically from other departments but pedagogically. The essays taught in Expos at this time were self-contained units, having little relevance to the kind of essays the students would write in their other classes. This apparent irrelevance—the distance between the writing done in the old Expos program and the writing done in students’ other courses—was a problem.

Both Nancy Sommers, the Director of the program (she has since left), and Gordon Harvey, the Associate Director (he has also since left), became interested, after they arrived in 1987 and 1986 respectively, in recasting the program. Harvey was bothered by the way the “sorts,” the different categories of courses taught at Expos, were not parallel and resulted in flat course descriptions, which did not allow the individual instructor to engage his or her particular expertise. Sommers spoke of how she felt that until Expos tied itself to the rest of the curriculum, it was in a vulnerable position with the deans.<sup>4</sup> So in the early 90s, they embarked on two projects that eventually resulted in the current configuration of the program: Sommers interviewed thirty faculty and twenty-five graduate teaching fellows and surveyed 123 juniors to learn more about the culture of writing beyond the freshman year. Harvey expanded what had started as a casual collection of student assignment prompts by soliciting assignment prompts from professors across the university. Sommers found that students felt their Expos experience was isolated, that they were not learning the things that would equip them to write the academic essays they were expected to write in their other classes. They also did not feel as if they were getting adequate writing instruction from the professors of these other classes, who spent very little time talking explicitly about what a good academic essay looked like, let alone how to write one. Harvey found not just that the assignments he had collected stressed argument (something he had suspected from the beginning) but that the assignments fell into certain basic types, which corresponded to how they asked the student to handle sources.<sup>5</sup> In the meantime, he developed a list of terms to describe the elements of the academic essay, terms that instructors in Expos could use to guide their teaching, terms that would give their students a language to discuss the academic essay: e.g., “motive” (how you answer the “so what” question readers always bring with them), “sources,” and “keyterms.” Sommers and Harvey now had evidence to show the deans that the program was needed to address the absence of writing instruction in the students’ other classes. They also had a better idea of how to make that writing instruction directly relevant for the students, who would not henceforth be writing personal

essays or book reviews but argumentative essays that fell into certain distinct types they would meet again and again.<sup>6</sup> Soon after Sommers and Harvey arrived, they made sure classes in Expos were no longer organized by “sorts”; they were instead organized around a great range of topics, each chosen and developed by the particular instructor (with lots of help from the head instructors and director) and shaped by the instructor’s disciplinary training and area of expertise.

One can see how disciplinarity played a complex role in this evolution: what was wrong with Expos in its earlier incarnation was its isolation from the kind of writing students were doing in particular disciplines, but rather than develop a Writing In the Disciplines program, Expos developed a method of teaching writing that would be relevant for each discipline but specific to none. How is that possible? They developed what we might call a “transdisciplinary” method: a method that attends to what writing in different disciplines shares rather than what distinguishes it. I am also evoking the sense of “trans” that connotes “beyond”: such a pedagogy derives from a sense of getting beyond the disciplinary foothills that obscure the panoramic view available when one views academic writing as the countryside we in the university all inhabit. Transdisciplinarity is an inspiring way to see academic writing and to the extent that Expos prepares students to write in whatever discipline they eventually choose—and many of them have reported being helped—it seems a very useful one. The approach Expos developed is also a fairly idiosyncratic one: the “elements” do not form the cornerstone of most other writing departments, except ones headed by ex-Expos instructors, nor are they the lingua franca of Rhetoric and Composition. In fact, one characteristic of Expos when I was there was its remoteness from the discipline. Although not discouraged from reading in that discipline, instructors were not given an introduction to it as part of their own training. Only in retrospect, did I realize that many of the principles—if not the “elements” that structured our courses in Expos—were derived from findings in that field: e.g., our assigning of multiple drafts indebted to the idea of “writing as a process” and “writing as a form of thinking,” and our prioritizing of ideas over grammar in our commenting on student essays indebted to Sommers’ own research.<sup>7</sup>

In developing the program, Sommers and Harvey thought about how the new incarnation of Expos would affect students, but this new design also had a profound effect on the way that instructors learned to teach. I found that the “transdisciplinary” pedagogy required a lot of meta-teaching, by which I mean a lot of explicit talk to the students about how what I was teaching related to their university education as a whole.<sup>8</sup> I developed a course on “Satire and Irony,” a course that took advantage of my disci-

plinary training in English in its subject matter (it was structured around literary texts and criticism on satire and irony). But it was not like the literature courses I had taught at Brown: for example, instead of a discussion of the final chapters of *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* being an end in itself, I used such a discussion to bring out the idea that controversies are what shape academic discussion in general. In subsequent classes, I framed the pieces of literary criticism on the ending of *Huck Finn* that we were reading as entries into a “critical conversation,” a “critical conversation” that the students entered themselves in their final essay, with their own original contribution to the conversation. Further, I told students that even if they did not go on to major in English, no matter what discipline they entered would be structured by these critical conversations; learning a discipline requires not just the mastery of a bunch of terms but a mastery of which critical conversations animate the area of the discipline you end up studying. As you can see, teaching was never just a matter of discussing the thing itself, in my case, a literary text or a piece of literary criticism: these became occasions to limn the genre of academic writing in general, to help the students situate what they were doing and how it would relate to what they were going to do in other classes. Harvey’s “elements” provided the foundation for this method since it taxonomized all academic writing. One nicely fiendish extra credit exercise I assigned challenged students to find an academic paper without a “motive” (the motive could be implicit as it often is with very controversial theses): no one ever managed to get that extra credit.

Expos gave me just what I needed: a place in a community of people who were likewise committed to learning how to be good teachers and a set of terms that allowed me to articulate what good academic writing involved. What also made the experience of working there empowering was the sense of expertise it gave me, although it was an odd sort. Academic expertise usually involves learning a discipline, but that is precisely not what I learned at Expos: I learned how to move beyond my discipline. The way I taught took advantage of what I already knew about the discipline of English; however, it also taught me about academic writing in general and made me feel like I could teach students outside the English department.

Harvey allowed instructors both to use and transcend their particular discipline when he helped establish the program in its new incarnation. As Harvey wrote in an internal document outlining the new program:

The best introduction to academic writing isn't a seminar on that concept but rather one on a particular academic subject. . . . This kind of focus—on “The Ethics of the Environment,” “The World of George Orwell,” “Imagining the Civil War,” “Law and Psychology”—allows students to engage a subject in a sustained enough way

to have something to argue and explain in their papers. . . . It also brings into play more immediately the academic energies and passions of the preceptor, who is after all the most immediate example of an academic thinker and writer. (“Premises of the Program”)<sup>9</sup>

Instructors’ teaching took advantage of their disciplinary expertise, and the instructors themselves modeled scholarship for their students; however, disciplinary expertise was the means and not the end of the course. In fact, it did not matter what the instructor’s particular academic expertise was so long as she had one. So rather than cultivate disciplinary expertise in Expos, I developed an expertise in how to use my expertise in English in order to transcend it. I found that experience liberating. I did not learn how to teach literature and criticism to English majors; I learned how to teach writing, using literature and literary criticism, to beginning university students. The work allowed me to think of myself as more than just a would-be English professor, and I took on the habit of seeing what English professors do as a subset of what all professors did. Harris’ habit of seeing English professors’ insistence on the uniqueness of their discipline as a form of border-patrolling became my view as well.

#### DOUBLE EDGED SWORDS IN EXPOS

When I worked at Expos, instructors held five-year terms, although they could be extended a few more years in special cases (the program has since tightened up that rule). The WPAs at Expos assumed that instructors, with their strong commitments to their own discipline, would eventually return to their home departments. The assumption offered intellectual justification for keeping the positions temporary (there were already institutional reasons for doing so). Yet this justification also puts pressure on making this job a stepping stone for such a position, for if it is assumed that instructors will go on to get jobs outside of the program in traditional disciplines, then the program should offer the tools and credentials to do that, and this is where Expos, by serving me so well in some regards, did not serve me well in this one, in my transition back to my home discipline.

There are reasons why an instructorship might not help an instructor return to her home discipline. Some of these are no fault of Expos—and outside their control. Instructors at Expos are not, in fact, referred to as “instructors”; our official title is “preceptor.” I found that “preceptor” as job title was either baffling or misleading to most hiring committees (what did we do, patrol dorms for illicit drinking and comma splices?), and the position itself is hard for English departments to respect. For one thing, it is a teaching position, and this emphasis on teaching does nothing to impress

research universities (though it might help at smaller, teaching-oriented colleges). Second, the teaching of *writing* does not convince those English departments that stress literary studies to the exclusion of Rhetoric and Composition that one is capable of being a professor of English.

In my view, this bias on the part of some English departments is unfounded in most respects. Teaching at Expos taught me a way of making literary texts vivid to students (it particularly comes in handy when teaching older texts, whose intended audience is distant from a contemporary one): I learned to offer competing interpretations of an older text and invite the students to take up a position within the “critical conversation.” For example, the poetry of Phillis Wheatley, the first African-American woman to publish a book, can be brought alive by teaching how controversial she has been and continues to be. Scholars now debate the extent of her capitulation to racist ideologies, a debate to which students find they, too, have something to contribute. Teaching at Expos also made it easier for me to publish because I myself began to think seriously about “motive,” and this attention paid to why my own work mattered helped convince others it mattered, too.

Yet this anti-Expos bias on the part of English departments is understandable in one respect: Expos drew me away from disciplinary thinking. I do not mean this in the sense that I stopped investigating the questions and controversies that animate the corner of American literature my research was exploring and my teaching took advantage of, but it did make me think disciplinarity itself was a distraction and impediment to what really mattered: teaching students how to write academic essays regardless of their discipline.

Harris and the directors of Expos tried to create a utopian space where the normal disciplinary rules did not apply. Extrapolating from my experience of Expos, they succeeded to a large extent. At this point, though, we might do well to heed Joe Marshall Hardin’s warning that there is no ideal space in composition. WPAs often pit themselves against the “corporate university,” or, more locally, the English Department, putting a *cordon sanitaire* around themselves, although, in Expos’ case at least, the program remained very attentive to what kinds of writing went on in other departments. But Expos’ borders are permeable in ways the directors might not have fully acknowledged as long as their preceptors have limited-term appointments and are expected to continue in their original disciplinary home. The problem was not just that I became comfortable in this seeming utopian space of transdisciplinarity, but that I did not realize how distinctive a space Expos had created. I became good at tweaking my c.v. to downplay the fact that these were writing classes I had been teaching (while

finding subtle ways to highlight the fact I had been teaching at Harvard), but something else had happened to me that could not be finessed: Expos had made me, a trained English scholar who had begun working in the program as a *traditional* scholar, much less orthodox.

Some of the ways Expos changed me have not made it hard for me to go back to an English department. Yes, I have come to believe that writing is simply fundamental to learning. In fact, stating it like that feels ridiculous to me now, like saying breathing is important to living. My habit of putting writing first, more specifically, of teaching to the papers I want my students to write, has affected the way I put together my syllabi and lesson plans. I cannot foresee designing a course by thinking up what texts are needed to illuminate the genre, author, period, or the cultural logic that defines the period—the traditional ways English professors design courses. I think now in terms of questions and controversies that certain texts activate, things that students can write about. Similarly, it is still uncomfortable for me to think of teaching a literary course without including secondary criticism since it is much harder for students to write meaningfully on a topic without the conversation, even though many introductory literary courses leave it out.<sup>10</sup> It is also hard for me to envision teaching a literature course without devoting a lot of class time to talking about how to consider counterarguments or pulling out examples of different theses from student essays for us to discuss. These tendencies, although they grow out of a commitment to teaching academic writing in a transdisciplinary way, have not presented much of a problem in my subsequent jobs, especially since they shaped only the way that I taught my own classes. The problems arose when I tried to promote my own transdisciplinary view of writing to colleagues. Ironically, this view got me into trouble even before I went back to teaching in an English department, when I was hired specifically to teach other professors how to teach writing.

## POST EXPOS

In 2004, when my term at Expos was almost up, I went on the job market. My search resulted, tellingly enough, in two campus interviews, both at small colleges, one where I would teach American literature and a couple of writing classes every year and one where I would run their writing center, take part in running their writing program, and teach two writing classes per semester. I was eventually offered the latter job, which I accepted. This job, though potentially permanent, was not tenure-track; it had a renewable three-year contract, generous benefits and salary, and a chance to be director of the writing program someday. But it also offered absolutely no

chance of being part of the English department: there was a well-policed border separating us (I was not able even to teach a class whose topic overlapped with something they wanted to teach). This border in fact grew out of the same soil that eventually produced an independent writing program. Until the mid-90s, first-year writing courses at this small college had been offered out of the English Department. But the English professors found the teaching of these writing classes onerous, making it difficult to staff their literature classes (many English professors also felt keenly the conventional hierarchy between professing literature and teaching writing), and so the independent writing program was born. To their credit, the college tried to establish it according to the Wyoming Resolution: the directorship of the program was a tenure-track position, with a renewable Associate Directorship to help run the program (the job I took). In fact, they hired a Rhet/Comp PhD to become the first director, one of whose charges was to begin offering advanced undergraduate courses on rhetoric and writing, not just first-year composition classes.

The creation of a writing program separate from the English department also gave the administration a chance to re-think who should teach these writing classes, and they decided, just as administrators at Expos did, on scholars from a range of disciplines. But in this school's case, as is the case with most liberal arts colleges with first-year writing classes (or writing-intensive classes), the classes were to be staffed not by outsiders but by existing faculty at the college. In so doing, they seemed to bypass the problem that places like Expos introduce: because their writing classes are taught by existing faculty, they do not have to worry about exploiting temporary laborers.

But a new problem arose. It quickly became apparent that there would not be enough faculty to teach all the sections of the first-year writing courses, so at least during the two years I was there, we had to hire adjuncts to fill in the gaps, a necessity that conflicted with the administration's aim to rely less on contingent labor than they had been. Why weren't there more faculty willing to teach these classes?<sup>11</sup> There was the publicly stated reason, which was that departments were having trouble staffing their own courses, and given the choice between using their already stretched-thin faculty to teach a departmental class or a first-year writing class, they quite reasonably opted for the former. In addition, there was the private reason, frequently related to me when I was trying to recruit a particular professor to teach in the first-year writing program—"But I don't know how to teach writing! My class would be terrible." And when I told the person that I had materials—lots and lots of materials and workshops, many workshops, and an orientation that could span several days!—to help, they nodded weakly and

said they would think about it. I got quite angry at this kind of resistance, silently accused the person of gross dereliction of duty, both to the college and to the Goddess *Rhetorica*.

But I theorize this reaction differently now, and my new perspective has led me to be more sympathetic. At the time, I was not thinking in terms of disciplinarity, of how professors in order to become professors in a particular discipline are trained in the particular methods and topics of their own field and, furthermore, trained to know that other disciplines have quite different ones. In fact, even had this fact occurred to me, I would have discounted it. On the face of it, the lack of importance I attributed to disciplinarity in teaching academic writing should have conflicted with the director's immersion in the world of Rhet/Comp, which has struggled to assert its own disciplinary distinctiveness and importance. Instead, we were oddly aligned, and this led to the problem. In splitting off the program from English, in creating a tenure-track position in the new independent writing program, in paving the way for Rhet/Comp to be seen as a discipline like other disciplines, the college was unwittingly setting up a tension between institutional structures and pedagogical requirements: we in the writing program thought we knew what it meant to teach a writing course, and that claim was a big part of the director's disciplinary expertise; despite my own distance from Rhet/Comp, I, too, had come to teach writing in a way that other disciplines generally do not train its own scholars to do (my strange transdisciplinary expertise), to the extent they train their own scholars to do so at all.

In fact, it was, in large part, the transdisciplinary way I looked at and taught writing that distinguished my way of teaching writing. Yet here we were needing our courses to be taught, and the available labor was from professors in *other* disciplines. The more the writing program seemed like its own disciplinary endeavor—what the director thought we had to reinforce in order for us to gain professional respect at this college—and the more I thought that professors had to unlearn their disciplinary biases and learn this new thing, then the more the professors from other disciplines resisted being trained to teach a writing class, which they justifiably believed they did not have the background to teach (or the time to master). But this analysis is only enabled by hindsight. At the time, I uncharitably attributed the resistance I met from many professors to laziness; instead, it might very well have been motivated by their desire to teach writing well or at least the way they sensed we wanted it taught. I should have been more worried by the professors who easily agreed to teach a first-year writing course with only the minimal training we ended up providing, for their ready agreement often signaled not a commitment to a new approach but a commit-

ment to offering courses that looked identical to the courses they usually taught, with one or two extra papers assigned. But in order to think about a solution to this problem, I had first to be able to understand its origins, and my training at Expos did not equip me to think in terms of disciplinarity since it seemed to me that the teaching of writing was not anchored to any particular one. Working from a perspective that assumed that of course anyone (with a lot of training) could teach a writing class, I could not see how the institutional particulars of this writing program were contributing to the opposite impression.

Ironically, the college had set up the program in such a way that faculty would need to think about writing pedagogy as a transdisciplinary endeavor since it would be taught to first-year students who had not been sorted according to what discipline they would end up in (something it would be extremely hard to do at a liberal arts college whose students were encouraged to explore many disciplines before settling on a major). However, in order to gain credibility the way Rhetoric and Composition recommends, the writing program had been set up in a way to broadcast to others that what we did belonged to our own discipline. The faculty I spoke to were reading the institutional signs better than I was. Because I could not read the situation correctly, I had little hope of bettering it. Instead, I got mad at individuals when in fact the problem lay elsewhere. It lay in the contradictions the college had engendered by establishing the writing program the way it did: as a place of disciplinary expertise that nevertheless depended on a faculty whose disciplinary expertise lay elsewhere. But it also lay with me, because my assumptions about the transdisciplinarity of writing instruction determined that although I thought writing could (and should) be taught to a mixed-disciplinary audience, only instructors who gave up the idea of disciplinary specificity in teaching writing were appropriate. This problem arose out of my extremely effective training at Expos, which became, in this different context, more shackling than liberating.

I left this small college after two years for a tenure-track job in the English Department at a large university in Canada. I had finally returned to my original disciplinary home only to realize it felt like the home of a stranger. At an interview with a dean, I mentioned my interest in teaching writing, and the dean informed me that “Unlike American students, Canadian students already know how to write.” When I arrived, the University of Calgary had no first-year writing course anymore; in the early 90s, the English Department offered a first-year comp class to all entering students, but it ended a few years later with the professors in the department vowing never to teach composition again. They felt, much like the faculty in the

English department at the small college, that it had become too onerous, and that their first responsibility lay with their own majors.

Despite the dean's assurance, a couple of years after I arrived, a colleague and I decided that the Canadian students we were encountering did in fact need writing instruction, so we proposed a mandatory first-year writing course for English majors as part of a curricular overhaul the English department was engaged in. What enabled my colleague and I to successfully promote this writing course was to insist on its traditional (literary) disciplinarity: this was not a class for all first years; rather, to the contrary, it would benefit English majors exclusively. (This was enabled by the fact that first-year students come into this university having chosen their major.) The course focuses on teaching practices that English majors specifically need to adopt, the "close reading" of a literary text, for instance. Other aims of the course could be made to seem relevant only for English majors, although they actually fit quite nicely into a transdisciplinary approach: the student learns how to engage with other (literary) critics and how to formulate a debatable thesis (about a literary text). But the real trick in getting this new course passed by the department was to avoid two words in our proposal: "composition" and "writing." English 203: Introduction to Literary Analysis was born three springs ago, and the department has managed to secure the course enrollment at twenty-five students, despite the pressure to teach bigger and bigger classes.

In hindsight, I realize how important the issue of disciplinarity was to its passage. In fitting this class to the intelligible skills needed to be an English major, we made it seem palatable to my department. Writing pedagogy as a "transdisciplinary" endeavor had to be downplayed. We offered a (writing) course that only we in English could teach and that only our students could take. Yet this "solution," which fully acknowledges the disciplinary specialization of those who will be teaching it, has come at a high cost. In making the teaching of it fit more easily within the English faculty's comfort zone (although there is still a good number of the department faculty who prefer not to teach it), these classes assign more writing than usual, but many faculty do not yet seem to teach writing self-consciously at all. Faculty members teaching the course use "coverage" as the organizing principle of their syllabus development. We have no common set of terms to name what reading and writing skills English majors rely on beyond that nebulous term "close-reading," and many faculty who teach in the program talk of grammatical correctness as being the be-all and end-all of explicit writing instruction.

Although teaching writing may not require a wholesale rejection of a professor's disciplinarity, the truth is that it does require at least a partial

transformation of how one teaches. And this is something the English department has not accepted nor facilitated, even if it were to accept this idea—but not for lack of my trying. However, I have no authority in the department as a writing person (I was hired as an Americanist) or power to make or enforce any policy, and my attempts to teach my colleagues how it might be done comes off as annoying know-it-all-ness if not American imperialism. Despite this problem, I do see more clearly than I had before, how disciplinarity cannot be transcended in the very real, un-Utopian space of this department.

Expos was hard to leave, not just because I loved working there, but because in having moved beyond disciplinarity in certain ways, Expos did not consider how disciplinarity would affect its preceptors, who at some point would need to leave Expos. The strategy Expos pursued to justify their program had unintended consequences for me, when I had to navigate quite different institutional spaces after I left. I needed to know more about the role disciplinarity would play for me after I left the program, so I might see it neither as simply a non-factor nor a hindrance. According to Stanley Fish, for a discipline to survive, it needs to be seen as distinctive, as doing something other disciplines do not. That is not to say that people in a viable discipline do only one thing in only one way, but that “the kind of thing they do around here is not positively defined in a list, or even in a very precise single statement; it is defined by their being able to have a share of a franchise to which no one else can lay a plausible claim” (Fish 162). Fish’s observations might explain the border-patrolling Joseph Harris ran into when he was teaching writing as part of an English department and why faculty from other disciplines might be resistant to adopting a “transdisciplinary” pedagogy. Fish’s observations might even suggest something else: that in most cases, disciplinarity is not something to be gotten around or ignored. Could programs like Expos and Duke’s help its preceptors understand how disciplinarity does not stymie the teaching of writing but can enable it?

Perhaps one of the hardest things for a program to do is to acknowledge its own partiality. I mean “partiality” in two senses: programs are partial to their own methods, and their methods constitute only one approach, an approach that intersects inevitably with the work of others. WPAs should not allow their partiality in the first sense to obscure what they would surely acknowledge to be the truth of the second. Joseph Harris thinks—and I completely agree—that Duke’s approach is terrific. Yet however much he is grateful to have left the questions of disciplinarity behind for himself, he needs to acknowledge that for his instructors, those questions might just be beginning. We need to make sure that the safe harbor from disciplinarity

these programs offer any one WPA does not inadvertently hamper the professional advancement of their departing instructors.

## NOTES

1. There is a rich body literature describing the exploitation of contingent labor in writing program and possible solutions. See, for example, Jeanne Gunner's "The Fate of the Wyoming Resolution," Richard E. Miller's "Let's Do the Numbers," Michael Murphy's "New Faculty for a New University," and Harris' "Meet the New Boss." Actually, Expos paid a living wage, around \$44,000/year when I was working there, and with only two courses to teach per term, the workload was manageable.

2. See Harris' "Déjà Vu All Over Again" for a more detailed argument for teaching of writing "as a multidisciplinary project" (536).

3. I will explain later in the article why I think "transdisciplinarity" might better describe Expos.

4. The details of this evolution are taken from private correspondence with Gordon Harvey as well as a talk given by Nancy Sommers at the 2004 CCCC conference and since turned into an article, the former entitled "The Case for Research," the latter called "The Call of Research."

5. For example, Harvey found there are essays based on "giving a close reading," essays based on "comparing," essays based on "testing one or more particular claims or arguments," and essays based on "testing a general theory, principle, or definition" ("Common Assignment Tasks at Harvard").

6. This work of assuring the continuity between Expos and the rest of the student's undergraduate career continues. The current director of Expos, Tom Jehn, has noted how difficult it is for beginning students to transfer knowledge about writing from one course to another (perhaps because students think in terms of what a particular professor wants); Expos courses now explicitly help students with such a knowledge transfer, e.g., decoding assignments students might run into and talking a lot about what is unique to this Expos course and what they will run into again but under different names.

7. See Sommers' "Revision Strategies."

8. One result of this focus in Expos' pedagogy is that students often became quite articulate themselves about what academic writing involved; in their early years at Harvard, as the Harvard Writing Study, a longitudinal study that followed the writing development of a group of Harvard students over the course of their four years, found, students could often talk better about what they were doing than actually do it. See Sommers and Saltz' "The Novice as Expert" for more details.

9. It was not until I left Expos and got more of a sense of how other institutions teach writing that I realized this is a controversial premise. I realized that many other programs teach academic writing by making writing itself the topic of the class. Or they work by dividing the syllabus into units like “Explaining Concepts,” “Taking a Position,” and “Evaluation” and having students read essays—not necessarily all academic—that demonstrate each of these moves (this latter approach is, in fact, a description of a popular textbook, Axelrod et al.’s *Reading Critically, Writing Well*). Yet I think Harvey’s method, which is also widespread, has many advantages: it models very closely what students will actually be doing in their other classes and can offer more compelling subject matter to students who are not particularly interested in exploring writing as a topic.

10. Gerald Graff has described the benefits of including literary criticism and teaching controversies at all levels in both *Professing Literature* and his more recent *Clueless in Academe*.

11. For an account of others’ experience of—and advice on—involving existing faculty in teaching in a writing program, see Susan H. McLeod and Margot Soven’s *Writing Across the Curriculum*, especially Karen Wiley Sandler’s “Starting a WAC Program,” which describes the successful methods by which she got faculty from different disciplines involved in aWAC program. For another account of what faculty stand to gain by such participation, see Barbara E. Walvoord et al.

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## Students in the First-Year ESL Writing Program: Revisiting the Notion of “Traditional” ESL

Elena Lawrick

### ABSTRACT

*An exponentially growing body of international undergraduate students in U.S. writing programs calls for the development of writing pedagogies that build on students' composition literacy and their experiences in the authentic use of English. The implementation of this task requires an update of assumptions regarding international ESL students that is supported by data and takes into consideration the sociolinguistic realities of the global spread of English. This study investigated the characteristics of students enrolled in the ESL Writing Program at Purdue University. Through a questionnaire, the study documents student backgrounds, including their ESL characterization (international or U.S. resident); language backgrounds; academic literacy developed in native (L1) and U.S. educational contexts; instruction in L1 and English composition received in L1 educational contexts; as well as student motivation to register for an ESL composition course. Findings challenge the prevailing perception of international undergraduates as a homogeneous group of English language learners with limited experience in the authentic use of English and English composition. Implications for policies and practices of teaching composition are discussed.*

### INTRODUCTION

For writing program administrators (WPAs), the need to accommodate linguistically diverse undergraduate students has become a challenging reality. Indeed, in U.S. colleges and universities, the body of students for whom English is a second, third, or fourth language (ESL) is growing in both numbers and diversity. The “CCCC Statement on Second Language Writing and Writers” identifies linguistically diverse writers as “international

visa students, refugees, and permanent residents as well as naturalized and native-born citizens of the United States and Canada”. In the scholarship in second language writing (SLW), linguistically diverse writers are broadly categorized into international ESL or U.S. resident ESL<sup>1</sup>. The distinction between two groups is largely based on student’s pre-college educational context and post-college residence. Specifically, international ESL students arrive in the United States on an F1 student visa to obtain a U.S. college degree and, supposedly, intend to return to their home countries after completing their studies (e.g., Ferris 4). In contrast, U.S. resident ESL students either immigrate at an early age to or are born in the United States, receive pre-college education in the U.S. K-12 setting, and stay in the country as U.S. residents and/or citizens after obtaining a college degree (Harklau, Siegal, and Losey 1).

Because the two groups of ESL students differ in academic literacy and English language proficiency, they demonstrate distinct needs in a first-year college composition (FYC) course. To highlight these differences, Friedrich put together a concise yet detailed account of their contrasting characteristics, comparing resident ESL, international ESL, and native English speaking basic writers (18-23). Friedrich points out that U.S. resident ESL undergraduates are typically proficient in spoken English and accustomed to the U.S. culture. They are also conscientious about avoiding the ESL label, which is commonly perceived as stigmatizing (Friedrich 22; Ortmeier-Hooper), and tend to identify themselves as native speakers of English. Nevertheless, U.S. resident ESL writers are challenged in a college composition course because they are commonly unaccustomed to the use of written English and formal register and they lack “study skills and writing strategies” as well (Friedrich 18-19).

Compared to resident ESL students, the challenges of international ESL undergraduate writers are largely shaped by their limited fluency in English and scant knowledge of U.S. cultural values, including academic culture. International ESL undergraduates spend more time on writing assignments and tend to focus the revision process more on their language use than on rhetorical organization and idea development (Silva, *Toward*; Reid). In collaborative activities conducted in mixed (ESL and native English speakers) groups, international ESL writers frequently assume passive roles and therefore are rarely responsible for writing (Leki, *Undergraduates*). Furthermore, their insufficient proficiency in English hampers their oral participation in peer response groups (Zhu). In addition to challenges of writing *per se*, international ESL undergraduates, whose literacy development began in L1 (native language) and C1 (native culture) contexts, have to adjust to the Western rhetorical framework and communication style. Nonetheless,

the most challenging adjustment that often remains unnoticed by writing instructors is the need to fit in culturally. To blend in a FYC class, some international undergraduates choose to suppress their cultural beliefs and consciously develop an alternative identity which is accepted in the U.S. academic discourse (Allaei and Connor; Leki, *Understanding* and *Undergraduates*; Nelson and Murphy; Tucker). Most importantly, as Leki compellingly argues in *Undergraduates*, ESL, particularly international, students have to work much harder than other students to establish and maintain socioacademic relationships with native English speaking peers and faculty which are instrumental to their academic survival (276). In contrast to these deficiency-related findings, international ESL undergraduates do demonstrate a higher level of academic literacy and awareness of their language use than their U.S. resident counterparts (Leki, Cumming, and Silva). As a result, they tend to respond to the teacher's corrective feedback in a more positive way (Goldstein; Leki, *Understanding*) and provide more detailed and constructive written comments during peer response activities (Zhu).

"The diversity of [ESL] writer profiles in college composition classes" (Friedrich 17) is further exacerbated by an ever-growing diversity *within* each ESL group. For example, today's U.S. resident ESL students demonstrate a great variety of pre-college academic literacies because of a widening spectrum of their social backgrounds and an increasing exposure to ESL-sensitive curriculum options which have been emerging in the K-12 setting ("NCTE Position"). Similarly, international ESL undergraduates come from 220 countries and from a variety of academic traditions ("Open Doors"). Most importantly, their diversity extends beyond mere national representation. Recently, the group of "traditional" (that is, those who study in the U.S. academic setting from the very beginning) international undergraduates has been further diversifying with a rapidly emerging phenomenon of the *international transfer student*. The latter is a by-product of global outreach programs that U.S. universities have been developing aggressively. In an effort to generate revenue lost to budget cuts, many U.S. institutions of higher learning extend their campuses overseas and / or create partnership programs with universities worldwide. In such programs, international students spend the first and second academic years in a home country university and then transfer to a partner U.S. university, where they complete their degree. Because of the ramifications of a long-term exposure to two distinct academic cultures, international transfer students differ from traditional international undergraduates who are exposed to the U.S. academic culture from the beginning of their studies. Although transfer students arrive in U.S. universities being more mature and academically prepared, they are more likely to undergo profound social and cultural adjustments in

order to survive and succeed in the educational context in which writing is perceived as the foundation of literacy (Leki, *Undergraduates* 238).

Regardless of the aforementioned diversity, all ESL students enter a FYC course to fulfill a ubiquitous first-year writing requirement, thus challenging WPAs and instructors with their differing characteristics and a wide range of needs.

In an attempt to recognize and accommodate the diverse needs of ESL writers in FYC courses, WPAs have been called to “develop institutional practices that are responsive to the unique needs of ESL writers” (Matsuda, “Situating” 100). The issues of concern include ethical placement options (such as credit bearing ESL track courses and directed self-placement), ESL-sensitive curricula and teaching practices, and teacher training in second language writing (Braine, “Starting” and “ESL Students”; “CCC Statement”; Matsuda, “Situating” and “The Myth”; Matsuda, Fruit and Lamm; Silva, “An Examination” and “On the Ethical”). Responding to this call, some U.S. colleges and universities establish ESL Writing Programs that function as an alternative to mainstream FYC programs. Although this curriculum innovation appears to be growing across the U.S. institutions of higher learning, a handful of studies have investigated the specifics of its implementation as well as the characteristics of students populating ESL Writing Programs (Braine; Williams). Most importantly, the available studies, conducted at the onset of the U.S. college ESL Writing Programs, are contextualized within the global sociolinguistic realities of the mid-1990s, which have significantly changed. Furthermore, in the aforementioned scholarship, only Braine’s “ESL Students,” focused explicitly on students *per se*, providing a profile of students enrolled in the ESL Writing Program. Specifically, the study found that all the students were international (93), which corroborates a recurring observation that resident ESL writers prefer mainstream composition courses (Roberge, Siegal, and Harklau; Ortmeier-Hooper). Despite the significance of its findings, the study did not investigate the students’ academic and/or composition backgrounds developed prior to their enrollment in the ESL Writing Program.

Therefore, to date, no comprehensive research has systematically examined the academic and composition backgrounds that international ESL undergraduate students acquire before entering U.S. college-level ESL Writing Programs. Largely because of limited awareness of their pre-U.S. backgrounds, international ESL undergraduates are often perceived by instructors as well-educated and hard-working but, as Leki argues in *Undergraduates*, “the unidimensional and inferior Other” (261). In a similar vein, Zamel observes that instructors’ insufficient knowledge of international students’ prior academic and writing experiences often results in

conflicting expectations between teachers and students. Even the SLW literature appears to construct international ESL undergraduates as a homogeneous group of traditional (i.e., first-time college student) foreigners who had “little opportunity to write extended texts in English” in L1 educational settings (Ferris 89). This perception inadvertently assumes that for international undergraduates, the “proper” development of writing and academic literacy begins in a U.S. university writing class, which is their *first exposure* to the explicit teaching of rhetorical and/or composing strategies. Meanwhile, although the concept of *tabula rasa* or a blank slate has served us well once, it has been recently called into question by the worldwide internationalization of higher education. Driven by the increasing number of international partnerships among schools in different countries, the importance of explicit instruction in writing in English is more prevalent now than ever. In fact, the dominance of English as an international language of science and academia (Flowerdew 14) and a global trend to restructure national higher education systems based on the U.S. model (Lee) cause a worldwide increase in offering instruction in English composition. These global realities call for in-depth insight into the composition literacies that international students attain prior to their enrollment in U.S. FYC courses.

This project provides such insight as it reports on a one-semester exploratory study of students populating the ESL Writing Program which was conducted at Purdue University. Through a systematic examination of students’ characteristics, pre-FYC academic and writing experiences, and motivations to register for the ESL FYC course, the study contributes to the development of research-informed institutional policies and practices, which are more responsive to the needs of linguistically diverse students. In particular, the study addressed the following research questions:

1. What kinds of ESL students—international or U.S. resident—comprise the population of the Program?
2. What are the students’ linguistic profiles with respect to their native languages (L1) and multilingualism?
3. What is the students’ experience with academic discourse prior to a FYC course?
4. What is the students’ prior exposure to formal instruction in L1 composition and English composition received in an L1 educational setting?
5. What motivated the students to register for the ESL FYC track?

## INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

Purdue University, where this research was conducted (henceforth the University), is the fourth largest U.S. public higher education institution in international student enrollment (“Open Doors”). Figure 1 illustrates the undergraduate enrollment trends—both domestic and international—over the past six academic years. From 2006 to 2011, total undergraduate enrollment has been fluctuating in the neighborhood of 31,000 students. Domestic undergraduate enrollment (lighter grey bar) has been declining slightly since fall 2009. On the contrary, international undergraduate enrollment (darker grey bar) has been increasing steadily since 2006. Specifically, over the period of 2006-2011, the enrollment increased by 2,684 students, peaking at 15% (4,544) of the total undergraduates matriculated in fall 2011. Among incoming international students, a new phenomenon, international transfer students, has been growing recently. The University’s statistical reports first documented this new category of students in fall 2010 (“Fall 2010”; “Fall 2011”). The number of internationally transferred undergraduates grew from 238 in 2010 to 260 in 2011, with China and Malaysia accounting for the majority of transferred students (178 and 36, respectively).

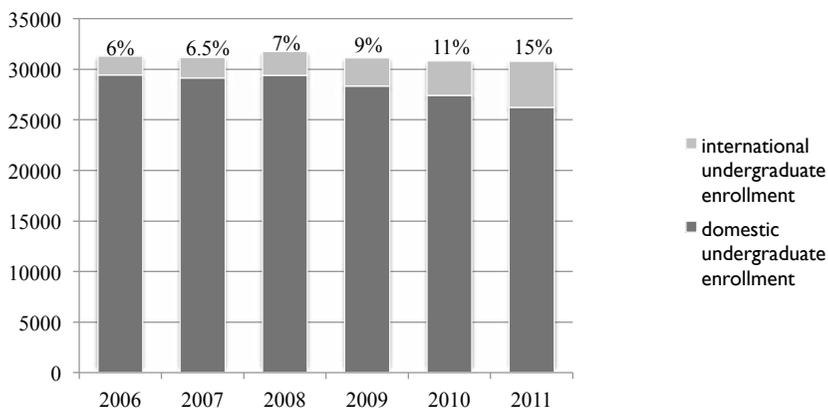


Figure 1. Increase in International Undergraduate Enrollment in the Period of 2006-2011

Overall, matriculated international undergraduates come from 89 countries, with the largest groups from China, India, South Korea, Malaysia, Indonesia, and Taiwan (“Fall 2011”). Table 1 illustrates the enrollment trends among the six largest national groups for three academic years, from 2009 to 2011. Notice that, while the numbers of admitted students

from India, Malaysia, Indonesia, and Taiwan remain relatively stable, the enrollment of Chinese students has more than tripled, followed by a steady annual increase in the enrollment of students from South Korea.

Table 1. The Origin of the Largest Groups of International Undergraduates.

Country of origin	Fall 2009	Fall 2010	Fall 2011
China	675	1230	2,250
India	594	552	557
South Korea	461	464	525
Malaysia	194	229	224
Indonesia	126	121	119
Taiwan	90	94	100

Along with international undergraduates, the University admits resident ESL students. They have U.S. permanent resident or citizenship status and are graduates of U.S. high schools. It is noteworthy that resident ESL students are virtually invisible in the University's statistical reports. Neither are they required to provide a proof of English language proficiency to obtain admission to the University.

In contrast, in order to be admitted, their international counterparts are required to submit one of the following proofs of English language proficiency: the score of 79 or higher on the Internet-based Test of English as a Foreign Language (88 for the School of Engineering); the score of 480 or higher on the Critical Reading Section of Scholastic Aptitude Test; the score of 6.5 or higher on International English Language Testing System; the score of 20 or higher on the English Section of American College Testing, or General Certificate of Secondary Education with at least Grade B for English language ("Application"). The University offers no courses in developmental English; nor does it have an Intensive English Language Institute. Possibly, this lack of pre-college ESL courses is based on the assumption that the rigorous admission requirements warrant an adequate proficiency in English for Academic Purposes.

To accommodate the needs of international (and, presumably, U.S. resident) ESL writers, the University offers two tracks of one semester FYC course: mainstream and ESL. In an effort to effectively maintain the global engagement agenda, the University positions ESL FYC courses as an *equal* alternative to mainstream FYC courses. ESL FYC courses are integrated into the University's support system for international students and appear not to carry a negative "remedial" perception. Both FYC tracks

bear the credit of four hours and a student transcript shows both tracks as ENGL 106. The placement protocol for a FYC course is best described as directed self-placement. Having consulted with an academic advisor, students self-register via an online system, where an ESL track is identified with a hyphenated letter I (i.e., ENGL 106-I). There is neither placement nor exit examination for ESL students, just as for their native English speaking counterparts. Rather, a successful completion of an FYC course is a graduation requirement for all undergraduates, both native English and ESL speaking. While there is a certain expectation that a FYC course will be taken during the first year of study, it is commonplace among students to delay it until the second or even third year of studies.

Two FYC tracks are implemented via two writing programs: the Introductory Composition Program (open to both native and non-native English speaking students) and the ESL Writing Program (supposedly, for international students). Because the distinction between the programs is not clear cut, some international ESL students take a mainstream writing course and, similarly, some U.S. resident ESL students take an ESL writing course. The writing programs share the goals, but the ESL curriculum places more emphasis on individual instruction and language focus as well as has a smaller section capacity of 15 instead of 20 students. To catch up with a steady increase in international undergraduate enrollment, the ESL Writing Program has been recently expanding, from 10 sections to 13 in 2009-2010 and then to 19 sections in 2011-2012. Until 2011-2012, ESL composition instructors were the second or higher year doctoral students from the Second Language Studies/ESL Graduate Program. In 2011, the University provided funding for hiring additional three full-time lecturers.

## METHODS

The data reported in this paper come from two sources: a questionnaire and Purdue's Office of the Registrar. A nine-item, paper-based questionnaire was distributed among the students enrolled in thirteen<sup>4</sup> sections of the ESL FYC course offered in spring 2010 (see Appendix). The students spent around 20 minutes completing the questionnaire. The items intended to elicit information about the students' (1) L1s and multilingualism, (2) academic experience, (3) instruction in writing (in L1 and English) received prior to the University admission, and (4) motivations to register for an ESL FYC course. A total N of 161 of 195 students enrolled in the Program completed the questionnaire, producing the response rate of 82.5%. The questionnaire excluded the item inquiring about student's visa status due to the concern that students might be reluctant to participate in the study because

of this particular question. Instead, the data on the students' immigration status were obtained from the Office of the Registrar.

## RESULTS

### *ESL Characterization: International or Resident?*

The recent influx of resident ESL students attending U.S. colleges and universities has provoked the claim that resident ESL students are replacing international students in ESL FYC courses across the country (Ferris; Roberge, Siegal, and Harklau). The student demographics found in this study, however, do not support this argument. On the contrary, international students made the majority of student population in the researched ESL Writing Program. Specifically, of total 195 enrolled students, 91% (177) were internationals, whereas 9% (thirteen) were resident ESL. Among the latter, nine students were U.S. citizens, and four were U.S. permanent residents. In other words, the results indicate that only a small share of students learned English as well as writing in English in the U.S. K-12 educational setting, whereas the majority learned English and received pre-higher education in non-U.S. settings.

### *L1s and Multilingualism*

Knowing ESL students' native (L1) and other languages is instrumental in an effective writing instructor's practice, largely because it helps distinguish between L1 transfer effect (that is, traces of L1 rhetorical and linguistic features in a text written in English) and a writer's insufficient grammatical and rhetorical knowledge, thus helping adjust the instructor's feedback accordingly. Two questionnaire items investigated this aspect. The yielded data are discussed below.

The students self-identified as speakers of eighteen languages. Table 2 illustrates the distribution of L1s and proficiency in other (than L1 and English) languages. Note that, along with four individual L1s, Table 2 shows three collective L1 groups: Chinese, Indian, and Miscellaneous. The Chinese L1s group included Mandarin and Cantonese (two dominating languages in China) as well as regional and/ or hometowns dialects. While this categorization may be considered politically and linguistically inaccurate, it reflects the fact that the students identified themselves as speakers of Chinese, instead of naming a specific language. At the author's request to clarify which particular Chinese language they speak, some added their language/dialect in parentheses. In contrast, speakers of languages presented in Table 1 as Indian L1s, identified their L1s as Hindi, Telugu, Bengali, Gujarati, and Kannada. These individual languages were grouped

in one category to reflect students' national representation. In this group, Hindi speakers dominated, followed by a small group of Telugu speakers and individual speakers of Bengali, Gujarati, and Kannada. Finally, L1s which were represented by few students (1-2 individuals) were grouped as Miscellaneous. The Miscellaneous L1 group included Thai, Japanese, Spanish, Kazakh, Russian, Farsi, French, and Croatian.

Six distinct L1 groups stood out against a diverse backdrop of eighteen native languages: Chinese, Malay, Korean, Indian languages, Bahasa Indonesia, and Arabic. Among these large L1 groups, Chinese students significantly dominated, which is in line with the statistics on a recent 57% increase in students from the People's Republic of China admitted in U.S. universities (Ide). The second largest group was Malay, followed by Korean, Indian, Bahasa Indonesia, and Arabic. As Table 2 illustrates, a certain number of students in each L1 group were multilingual, which is indicative of their capacity to acquire language learning-related knowledge and skills.

Table 2. L1s and Multilingualism

L1	% of total students	% of students in an L1 group proficient in languages other than L1 and English	Other languages reported in an L1 group
Chinese languages (incl. Mandarin, Cantonese, Taiwanese, dialects)	46	8	Malay, Japanese, Swedish
Malay	14	13	Chinese, Arabic
Korean	11	18	Spanish, Japanese
Indian languages, incl. Bengali Kannada Telugu Gujarati Hindi	10.5	- - 100 100 67	- - Hindi Hindi Gujarati, Kurukh, Sadri, French, Kannada, Bengali, Spanish

Lawrick / Students in the First-Year ESL Writing Program

L1	% of total students	% of students in an L1 group proficient in languages other than L1 and English	Other languages reported in an L1 group
Bahasa Indonesia	5	13	Chinese
Arabic	4	14	French
Miscellaneous languages	9.5		
Thai		-	
Japanese		-	
Spanish		-	
Kazakh		100	Russian, Turkish
Russian		100	Kazakh, Turkish
Farsi		-	
French		-	
Croatian		-	

*Students' Experience in Academic Discourse*

The SLW scholarship has documented that L1 academic literacy of international ESL students, compared to native English speaking and U.S. resident ESL students, often functions as a transferrable compensation mechanism for their lower English language proficiency (e.g., Harklau, Losey, and Siegal). To address this angle, three questionnaire items investigated the students' exposure to academic discourse both in their home countries and in the U.S.

Regarding an L1 academic experience, 52% of students had studied in an L1 university, from two to eight semesters, before admission to Purdue University. It is noteworthy that all Malaysian students transferred to Purdue University after studying for two or more semesters in an L1 university.

Regarding the U.S.-based academic experience, 14% of students had studied in a U.S. high school from two to ten semesters. The majority in this group were Chinese and Korean students attending U.S. high schools. Although the questionnaire did not look into the nature of their high school experience, several students anecdotally informed me after completing the questionnaire that they had attended a U.S. high school through an international exchange program or as dependents of international visiting scholars at U.S. universities. Most importantly, Purdue University was the first ever exposure to the discourse of U.S. higher education for 98% of

students. Specifically, with the exception of three students who had previously attended another U.S. college, Purdue was the first and only U.S. academic community for the majority of students participating in the study. Furthermore, the questionnaire examined how long the students had been studying at the University when they took an ESL writing course. The results were as follows: 77% freshmen, 18% sophomores, 4% juniors, and 1% seniors. In the freshman group, 87% took an ESL writing course during their second (spring) semester, and 13% took the course immediately upon their admission.

### *Previous Exposure to Formal Instruction in Composition*

As discussed earlier, it is commonly assumed that the first encounter of international ESL undergraduates with the explicit teaching of composition and rhetoric occurs in a U.S. FYC classroom. The questionnaire tested this assumption through the examination of students' exposure to formal instruction in L1 composition<sup>5</sup> and English composition in L1 educational contexts. The results are discussed below.

*Prior Instruction in L1 Composition.* This study suggests that receiving instruction in L1 writing is commonplace, at least in the represented national contexts. In fact, 71% of the students indicated that they had learned L1 composition in an L1 educational setting (henceforth formal instruction). The length of received formal instruction varied significantly, ranging from one to twenty-eight semesters. Table 3 shows the breakdown of data for L1 groups. Note that the breakdown by individual L1 was not possible in the Chinese group, where the majority of students identified themselves as speakers of the Chinese language.

The national groups that yielded the highest percentages of formal instruction in L1 composition included: Thai, Bengali, Kannada, French, and Russian (100%); Chinese (82%), Malay (78%), Hindi (75%); Bahasa Indonesia (63%), Korean (53%), Arabic (57%), Kazakh (50%), and Spanish (50%). The longest duration of received instruction in L1 composition (22-28 semesters) was found in Chinese, Malay, Hindi, Arabic, and Kazakh groups. It is noteworthy that the duration of instruction varied within each L1 group.

In contrast, Japanese, Farsi, and Gujarati students reported that they had received no formal instruction in L1 composition. Similarly, 80% of Telugu students indicated that they had not been schooled in L1 composition. One possible explanation is that Gujarati and Telugu students studied composition in Hindi, which is a dominant dialect in India.

Table 3. Received Formal Instruction in L1 Composition

L1	% of students who received formal instruction in L1 composition	n of semesters of received instruction in L1 composition <sup>6</sup>
Chinese	82	1-28
Malay	78	4-22
Korean	53	1-18
Indian:	75	2-26
Hindi	100	no data
Bengali	100	20
Kannada	20	4
Telugu	-	-
Gujarati	-	-
Bahasa Indonesia	63	2-8
Arabic	57	8-24
Miscellaneous languages		
Thai	100	5
Japanese	0	-
Farsi	0	-
Spanish	50	12
French	100	10
Kazakh	50	22
Russian	100	3
Croatian	no data	no data

*Prior Instruction in English Composition.* The majority of students in the Program (88%) had received explicit instruction in English composition in an L1 educational setting. Most importantly, in each national group, the number of students who had received such instruction significantly exceeded the number of students who had not. The numbers follow: Malay and Indonesian (100%), Indian (90%), Chinese (88%), Arabic (86%); and Thai, Spanish, Russian, Kazakh, and Croatian (82%), and Korean (71%).

The questionnaire also looked into a spectrum of settings in which instruction in English composition occurred. The students who responded that they had been taught writing in English were asked to check a box (or boxes) indicating a relevant instructional setting and also write a note regarding the duration of instruction received in each setting. This questionnaire item included three options: a school writing course (number of semesters), individual tutoring (number of months), and a preparation pro-

gram for college admission examination (number of months and the exam's title). Figure 2 below shows the patterns of L1 educational settings within which the students had been taught English composition.

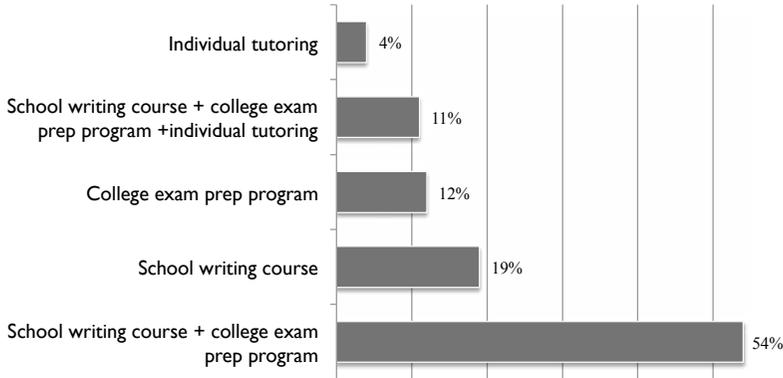


Figure 2. The Patterns of L1 Educational Settings in Which the Students Received Instruction in English Composition.

The data point out that the two most frequently indicated settings of learning English composition are K-12 and a college entrance examination preparation program, mentioned either in combination or individually. Specifically, the reported duration of school-based composition instruction varied from one to thirty-six<sup>7</sup> semesters, with four, eight, and twelve semesters being mentioned most frequently. The reported instruction received in the setting of a college admission examination preparation program varied from two weeks to twenty-four months, except one student who studied English essay writing for sixty months. In this setting, the students were taught English composition to prepare for the following college admission examinations:

- the U.S. testing system: Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOELF), Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT), American College Testing (ACT), Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC), Graduate Record Examination (GRE);
- the U.K. and Australian testing systems: International English Language Testing System (IELTS), First Certificate in English (FCE), Certificate in Advanced English (CAE);
- the South Korean national testing system: Test of English Proficiency (TEPS) developed by Seoul National University, South Korea.

Among these examinations, TOEFL and SAT were reported in all national groups. In addition, IELTS was indicated in Malay and Arabic groups, FCE and CAS in the Indonesian group, and TEPS in the Korean group.

Furthermore, studying English composition with an individual tutor was found in all national groups except Hindi. The duration of tutoring varied from one and a half to twenty-four months.

### *Population Profiles*

The following profiles for each national group are intended to provide a more in-depth understanding of English composition backgrounds that may be useful to WPAs and instructors working with specific national groups.

#### *Chinese*

Among the Chinese, 88% received formal instruction in English composition in L1 educational settings, whereas 12% did not. Table 4.1 shows a spectrum of instructional settings in which instruction in English composition occurred and a length of received instruction in each setting. As shown, the dominant setting (for 62% of Chinese students) was the combination of a school writing course(s) and a college examination preparatory program. The Chinese students most frequently indicated preparing for a writing component of TOEFL and SAT, with other examinations including ACT, IELTS, and GRE.

Table 4.1. English Composition Instruction Received by Chinese Students in L1 Settings

<b>Instructional setting(s)</b>	<b>% of students who indicated receiving instruction</b>	<b>Length of received instruction</b>
School writing course + college exam preparatory program	62	1-28 semesters + 0.5 -12 months, respectively
School writing course	16	1-12 semesters (12 semesters were reported most frequently)
School writing course + college exam preparatory program + individual tutoring	13	2-18 semesters + 1-60 months + 1.5- 4 months, respectively
College exam preparatory program	9	2-6 months

*Malay*

All of the Malay students (100%) studied English composition in L1 educational settings (see Table 4.2). The dominant setting (for 87% of Malay students), even more pronounced than in Chinese group, was the combination of a school writing course(s) and a college examination preparatory program. The Malay students most frequently indicated preparing for a writing component of TOEFL and SAT, followed by IELTS and then by taking a college-level advanced writing course.

Table 4.2. English Composition Instruction Received by Malay Students in L1 Settings

Instructional setting(s)	% of students who indicated receiving instruction	Length of received instruction
School writing course + college exam preparatory program	87	1-28 semesters + 0.5-12 months, respectively
School writing course + college exam preparatory program + individual tutoring	9	4-16 semesters + 2-6 months + 12 months, respectively
School writing course	4	4 semesters

*Korean*

Of the Korean students, 71% studied English composition in L1 educational settings, whereas 29% did not (see Table 4.3). Similar to the aforementioned findings, the dominant setting (for 58% of Korean students) was the combination of a school writing course(s) and a college examination preparatory program. It is noteworthy that of all national groups the Korean students received the highest percentage (25%) of formal instruction in English composition exclusively in the setting of a college examination preparatory program. They most frequently indicated preparing for a writing component of TOEFL and SAT, with other examinations including TOEIC, GRE, TEPS, and ACT.

Table 4.3. English Composition Instruction Received by Korean Students in L1 settings

Instructional setting(s)	% of students who indicated receiving instruction	Length of received instruction
School writing course + college exam preparatory program	58	2-8 semesters + 0.5-6 months, respectively
College exam preparatory program	25	2-6 months
School writing course + college exam preparatory program + individual tutoring	17	2-4 semesters + 6-24 months +3-12 months, respectively

*Indian*

Of the Indian students, 90% studied English composition in L1 educational settings (see Table 4.4). The dominant setting (for 55%) was a school writing course(s), followed by the combination of a school writing course(s) and a college examination preparatory program (for 30%). The Indian students indicated preparing only for a writing component of the U.S. examinations TOEFL, SAT, and GRE.

Table 4.4. English Composition Instruction Received by Indian Students in L1 Settings

Instructional setting(s)	% of students who indicated receiving instruction	Length of received instruction
School writing cours	55	4-26 semesters (4 and 8 semesters were indicated most frequently)
School writing + college exam preparatory program	30	8 semesters + 1-2 months, respectively
School writing course + college exam preparatory program + individual tutoring	10	6-26 semesters + 1-24 months +24-84 months, respectively
College exam preparatory program	5	2-6 months

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*Indonesian*

Similar to the Malay group, 100% of Indonesian students received instruction in English composition in L1 settings (see Table 4.5). The dominant setting (for over 62%) was the combination of a school writing course and a college examination preparatory program. It is noteworthy that the Indonesians were the group with a high percentage (25%) of students who received instruction in English composition exclusively from individual tutors. The Indonesian students most frequently indicated preparing for a writing component of TOEFL and SAT. The other examinations included the U.K. Cambridge Exams FCE and CAE, which points to the British orientation of the Indonesian education system.

Table 4.5. English Composition Instruction Received by Indonesian Students in L1 Settings

Instructional setting(s)	% of students who indicated receiving instruction	Length of received instruction
School writing course + college exam preparatory program	62.5	3-6 semesters + 1-18 months, respectively
Individual tutoring	25	3-12 months
College exam preparatory program	12.5	No data provided

*Arabic*

In the Arabic group, 86% received instruction in English composition in L1 educational settings, whereas 14% did not (see Table 4.6). Two equally dominant instructional settings (for 33% of Arabic students, respectively) included a school writing course(s) and the combination of the former and a college examination preparation program. The Arabic students most frequently reported preparing for a writing component of TOEFL and SAT, with several students additionally indicating IELTS.

Table 4.6. English Composition Instruction Received by Arabic Students in an L1 Settings

<b>Instructional setting(s)</b>	<b>% of students who indicated receiving instruction</b>	<b>Length of received instruction</b>
School writing course + college exam preparatory program	33	6 semesters + 1-5 months, respectively
College exam preparatory program	33	2-19 months
School writing course	17	10 semesters
School writing course + college exam preparatory program + individual tutoring	17	6 semesters + 5 months + 3 months, respectively

*Miscellaneous*

Recall that the Miscellaneous group included Thai, Japanese, Spanish, French, Croatian, Kazakh, Russian, and Farsi students represented by small numbers. In this group, 82% studied English composition in L1 settings, whereas 18% (one Japanese, Farsi, and French student, respectively) did not (see Table 4.7). Similar to the Arabic group, two equally dominant instructional settings (for 44% of students, respectively) included a school writing course(s) and the combination of the former and a college examination preparation program. The students in the Miscellaneous group indicated preparing for TOEFL and SAT.

Table 4.7. English Composition Instruction Received by Misc. Students in an L1 Settings

<b>Instructional setting(s)</b>	<b>% of students who indicated receiving instruction</b>	<b>Length of received instruction</b>
School writing course	44	2-20 semesters
School writing course + college exam preparatory program	44	2-20 semesters + 3 months, respectively
School writing course + college exam preparatory program + individual tutoring	12	8 semesters + 2 semesters + 2 months, respectively

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*Motivations to Register for an ESL FYC Course*

The last questionnaire item inquired whether a student would have registered for an ESL track of FYC course if it had not been recommended by academic advisor<sup>8</sup>. This question yielded a high positive response: 48% of students indicated that they would have registered for an ESL writing course in any case; 31% responded negatively; 21% had difficulty to respond.

On a more specific note, the study also investigated what motivated the students to register for an ESL writing course. To elicit these data, the last questionnaire item asked students to provide an explanation if a student answered “Yes” to the previous Yes/No question. Explanations were grouped into five categories according to the response number in a given category: (1) intention to improve writing skills, (2) acknowledgement of pragmatic value of having a writing proficiency in English for academic and/or professional success, (3) fairness and ease of an ESL writing course compared to its mainstream counterpart, (4) general interest in writing, and (5) not specified.

As shown in Table 5, 84% of students who indicated that they would have registered for an ESL writing course without academic advisor’s recommendation were motivated by a perception that a strong writing proficiency is instrumental to their success in college and professional career (Categories 1 & 2 in Table 5). Furthermore, 9% of positively motivated students (Category 3) believed or felt that an ESL course provides a more supportive environment compared to its mainstream counterpart. In the same category, however, several students perceived that an ESL track is an “easy credit” course.

Table 5. Students’ Motivations to Register for an ESL Writing Course

Motivation	% of positively motivated students	Examples of students’ reasoning
Aim to improve writing skills	50	“It is a great class in effectively improve English writing.” “I want to improve my writing skills as much as possible.”

Motivation	% of positively motivated students	Examples of students' reasoning
Practical use for academic or professional career	34	"It's useful for future classes/ research papers." "Because English is a tool that I'll be using for the rest of my college career." "I will need to write in other courses." Useful in any job area." "It's beneficial for future professionalism."
Fairness and ease of an ESL course (compared to its mainstream counterpart)	9	"Because I think it is fair to let all International Students take the same level of English. But if I take normal English course than I have to work harder since I will be competing [with students] whose native language is English." "Easy credits."
Interest in writing	4	"I love to deal with my papers and essays." It [ESL course] is fun and I learn a lot from it."
No explanation provided	3	No data

On the other hand, several students volunteered to explain the reason why they did not want to take an ESL composition course (the questionnaire did not ask to provide a reason if a respondent checked a "No" box). The reasons included a lack of interest in writing *per se* (e.g., "I'm not interested in writing"), a busy schedule (e.g., "This semester my schedule is too challenging"), and a FYC course previously taken at an L1 university (e.g., "I took a similar course in a home country university").

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In an attempt to advance our understanding of ESL undergraduates admitted to U.S. higher education institutions, the current study investigated the backgrounds of students enrolled in the ESL Writing Program of Purdue

University. Through this dataset, the study aimed to verify whether several dominant assumptions regarding this group of student population are consistent with the recent developments in international educational contexts.

The first assumption concerns the ESL characterization of students populating ESL Writing Programs. In the current study, 91% of students were internationals. In other words, the study provided no evidence of the shift in the demographics of ESL Writing Programs from international ESL to resident ESL (as shown in Ferris; Roberge et al.). Rather, the findings support the earlier claim that the ESL composition track tends to attract international ESL undergraduates (Braine), whereas U.S. resident ESL students tend to navigate toward the mainstream composition<sup>9</sup> because they perceive themselves as closer to native speakers of English than to internationals (Ortmeier-Hooper; see “remedial” perception of ESL Writing Programs in Williamson). Based on the finding, the target population of specialized ESL Writing Programs is likely to be constituted by international ESL, especially in institutions with a pronounced global orientation. This forecast, of course, needs to be approached cautiously and be validated through the examination of undergraduate enrollment profiles, which vary across U.S. colleges and universities.

There are, however, two potential immediate implications. One is the need to implement instructor training that would highlight the differences between textual features (including error patterns) and composing processes of resident ESL and international ESL writers. Furthermore, professional development for writing instructors working with ESL students should include workshops on writing pedagogies and practices which build on linguistic, rhetorical, and compositional backgrounds of multilingual students. The scholarship providing the theoretical foundation for the aforementioned professional development may include Silva “Toward”, Reid “Which non-native speaker?”, Leki *Understanding*, Ferris, Harklau et al., Roberge et al., Matsuda et al., and Horner et al. More recently, Doolan and Miller offered an empirically-based insight into error patterns of resident ESL writers, as compared to native English speaking basic writers and international ESL writers. The second implication concerns the need to advance awareness of changes in teaching English composition that have been recently occurring in international educational systems. In this regard, Cimasko and Reichelt provide a comprehensive overview of teaching writing in international contexts, and You offers a current account of teaching English writing in China.

Since the majority of students in this study were found to be international or traditional ESL, the rest of the discussion will focus on the assumptions relevant to this particular ESL group. What appears to be

the prevalent view is that international undergraduates are a homogeneous group of English language learners with limited prior experience in the use of English language outside of the classroom, English composition, and academic discourse. This monolithic perception grows from the assumptions that international “students come to L2 writing without any previously learned discourse schemata” (Leki “Twenty-Five”: 124) and therefore they get exposed to teaching of rhetoric and composition for the first time in a U.S. FYC setting. These assumptions guide the ideology of composition courses in U.S. colleges and universities yet appear to be problematic, at least from two perspectives. From an ideological standpoint, these “monolingualist” and “monorhetorical” assumptions are harmful because they reinforce the dominance of the Western rhetorical tradition in academic writing (Canagarajah). From a pedagogical standpoint, they are counterproductive, as they take out of the equation a set of knowledge and skills that students accrue prior to their participation in a U.S. FYC course.

The current study does not support the assumptions outlined above in several ways. First, the study provided no evidence to support the common perception that international ESL undergraduates are *learners of English* whose prior communicative experiences in English are limited to an L1 classroom setting. In this ESL Writing Program, the students’ national representation fell into three distinct contexts:

1. the countries where English functions in social and educational contexts alongside local languages (India, Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand);
2. the countries where the role of English in educational systems has been significantly emphasized, thus prompting the reorganization of national curricula based on the U.S. model and an aggressive hiring of native English speaking teachers and/or U.S. graduate degree holders (China, South Korea, and the Middle East countries);
3. the countries where English primarily functions as a dominant foreign language learned in educational settings and the *lingua franca* of international communication (Japan, Iran, Kazakhstan, Croatia, France).

Based on the presence of English in a country of student origin and the status of English in the national educational system, the above contexts form a hierarchy. Context 1 represents the Southeast Asian countries belonging to the Outer Circle of Englishes (Kachru). In these countries (India, Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand), English is omnipresent in daily communication or even institutionalized (in India). In education, English-

medium instruction has been historically prominent. Increasingly, English functions as a *lingua franca* of regional interethnic communication among Chinese, Malay, Koreans, and speakers of other languages of Southeast Asia (Kirkpatrick, *World Englishes*). Due to the wide use, a post-colonial English has developed into several nativized varieties, each having distinct phonological, morphological, and syntactical features (see the description of Asian Englishes in Kachru and Nelson; Kirkpatrick, *World Englishes*; Schneider). Consequently, it is safe to assume that, prior to their studies at U.S. institutions of higher education, students from Southeast Asia may have acquired and routinely used a full lectal continuum of their own nativized variety of English, in which a Standard nativized English (e.g., Malaysian English) is associated with a speaker's higher social status and better education, whereas a less prestigious lect (e.g., Manglish) is commonly used as an indicator of social proximity. In other words, given the present, well-documented, sociolinguistic realities of English in South Asia, it would be erroneous to perceive and treat Southeast Asian students as learners of English. Rather, they should be considered as native speakers of a different (from American English) variety of English. In a U.S. FYC course, such students need to be taught how to *adjust* their linguistic and rhetorical repertoires to Standard American English, rather than to *learn* them from scratch.

A similar adjustment of perception begs to be made regarding students belonging to Context 2, which includes China, South Korea, and the Middle East countries. Two processes factor into a need for this adjustment. The first process is an exponential growth of functional range of English use in respective speech communities, largely in response to globalization. The second process encompasses profound changes in writing curricula, due to ubiquitous internationalization of higher education. This process includes aligning national higher education systems with the U.S. higher education, including revising national curricula and policies, hiring teachers with graduate degrees from U.S. universities, and, most importantly, establishing partner programs with and/or extended campuses of U.S. universities. These changes, in turn, alter students' experiences with English and English composition, transforming English from a foreign language with a restricted use in the classroom setting use into a common means of communication. While arguably still being considered as learners of English (Schneider), students in China, South Korea, and the Middle East use English outside the classroom more often than ever before. Similarly, they get more exposure to English composition, in many cases being taught by U.S.-educated instructors in public and private institutions.

In contrast, for the students from Context 3 (Japan, Iran, Kazakhstan, Croatia, and France), opportunities to use English beyond the classroom

(i.e., in social interactions within local communities) are less ample and often limited to the purpose of international communication. Therefore, the majority in this student group may be rather accurately described as learners of English. Nevertheless, even in this group, the number of students who extensively use English prior to their U.S. studies is growing exponentially (for example, consider a prominent presence of English in Europe).

The sociolinguistic analysis of student origin has shown that it would be an imprecise generalization to consider *all* international undergraduates to be learners of English. Such a generalization would be in dissonance with the present global realities. In fact, the current study, over 90% (Contexts 1 and 2 combined) of the Program population under study were speakers of several nativized varieties of English, each characterized by distinct linguistic features, as well as a distinct identity. This emerging characteristic of the international student population needs to be recognized in the form of developing writing pedagogies which integrate awareness of new Englishes to enhance the efficiency of instruction.

Second, the current study provides evidence that confidently refutes the claim that international undergraduates have limited exposure to learning English composition prior to their U.S. studies. In fact, the majority of students indicated that they had developed backgrounds in composition in L1 contexts. Specifically, 71% of students studied L1 composition, and 88% studied English composition in L1 educational settings. Notably, most of the students studied English composition at school and/or in a college examination preparation program. In other words, the study brought two observations to the fore. First, English composition courses are becoming included in pre-higher education curricula across the globe. Second, the majority of international students carry into a U.S. FYC course previously acquired knowledge and skills of composing that “inevitably reproduce [...] culturally preferred discourse styles” (Leki “Twenty-five”:124). While these results, yielded by a single exploratory study, need to be further verified through systematic research conducted across U.S. writing programs, they strongly suggest that it has become inaccurate to perceive international ESL undergraduate writers as some sort of empty vessels ready to be infused with the appropriate tradition of teaching composition (note the implication of superiority). Rather, like never before, it is essential to recognize the role of cross-language and cross-cultural relations in composition (Horner, Lu, Matsuda; Kirkpatrick, “Traditional”) and fully integrate the latter in writing pedagogies, assessment practices, and teacher training.

Finally, the study provided some insight into academic literacy of international undergraduates. More than half of the students had developed

academic literacy in L1 university contexts, whose cultural conventions certainly differ from those of the U.S. academy. Arguably, such students do not share expectations of their U.S. writing instructors (Atkinson and Ramanathan; Casanave; Ramanathan and Atkinson) and thus would benefit from explicit articulation of expectations and norms of the U.S. academic community. In addition, conducting comparative studies across represented academic cultures would help advance our understanding of social behavior of matriculated international students.

The current study also contributed to the research into student perceptions of ESL composition courses. Overall, the findings of this line of scholarship appear to be somewhat inconclusive. On the one hand, the literature suggests that international ESL undergraduates (in contrast to their U.S. resident counterparts) tend to demonstrate a pragmatically positive attitude to the ESL composition track (Braine, *ESL Students*; Leki, *Undergraduates*). On the other hand, evidence also suggests that students rarely share the instructor's belief in pragmatic value of an ESL composition course, which they commonly perceive as a hurdle in their academic progress (Goldstein; Leki, *Understanding*, "Good", "A challenge"; Leki and Carson, "Students' perceptions", "Completely"; Williams).

While partially reflecting the two-sided argument, this study's findings highlighted a positive perception, with a well-pronounced recognition of benefits provided by the ESL track. In fact, only 31% of students indicated that they would not have registered for an ESL composition course if it had not been recommended by academic advisor. This particular ("negative") group yielded results that are informative for institutional policy makers. First, none of the students pointed to the stigma of being ESL-labeled, which is commonly documented in case of resident ESL undergraduates. This notable finding is certainly accounted for by the University's practice of using an ESL course designator exclusively for internal purposes, whereas an external transcript does not reflect which composition track was taken. Based on the current study, this institutional practice has a potential for adoption by U.S. colleges and universities, provided that this finding will be confirmed by a focused study investigating the research question: "Would students register for an ESL writing class if it were labeled on the transcript as ESL?"

Another finding that might be of interest to institutional policy makers concerns the reasons why some students did not want to take the course. First, the international transfer students had to repeat a FYC course that they had taken in their home (L1) university. For them, a requirement to re-take it in the U.S. University indeed slowed down their progress toward a degree. Bear in mind that international transfer students are expected to

complete some of their coursework at L1 universities, much like U.S. students transferring from one university to another. In the case of international transfer, however, degree requirements and curricula of L1 and U.S. partner universities are considerably better coordinated, especially when an L1 university is, in fact, an extended campus of a U.S. university. Still, the first-year writing requirement is not considered to be met until an international transfer student repeats a FYC course at a U.S. university. Given that global outreach initiatives are growing across U.S. universities, the time has come to put up for discussion the issue of whether the credits for a FYC course taken at an L1 university are transferable to a U.S. degree-granting institution. Second, some international students who began their studies at Purdue University (i.e., non-transfer) were reluctant to take an ESL FYC course largely because they were concerned about their ability to manage a heavily-loaded schedule. Recall that the majority of students in the Program were taking an ESL FYC course during their first semester, i.e. weeks or even days after arriving in the U.S., when they were contending with numerous adjustments.

This finding raises a question of whether it would be beneficial for incoming international undergraduates to delay a FYC course until the second semester of studies. Arguably, FYC functions as a gateway to the U.S. academic discourse, introducing both domestic and international undergraduates to the U.S. academic culture (Spack; Zamel). While this argument is certainly valid, it is essential to bear in mind that international students have to maintain a full course load immediately after their arrival in the U.S. in order to sustain F-1 student visa status. The requirement to take FYC, along with several other college-level courses, during the period when students are undergoing immense language, cultural and social adjustments, may easily result in cognitive overload, thus hindering their ability to master the nuances of academic writing. Delaying a FYC requirement until the second semester would allow a more manageable cognitive load, while the introduction to norms and expectations in U.S. academia can be implemented in a college study skills and/or orientation course during the first semester.

In sum, the finding that 31% were reluctant to take an ESL FYC course for the reasons which were *not* associated with their negative perception of the ESL Writing Program was further supported by the high percentage of students who confidently indicated that they would have registered for ESL FYC without recommendation of academic advisor. In this group, the majority articulated their awareness that a strong proficiency in writing in English is the foundation of successful college studies and future professional career. In line with Braine's findings, this result emphasizes a global

trend to recognize a pragmatic value of English (Blommaert). Furthermore, 9% of students demonstrated their perception that a supportive setting of the ESL FYC track contributes to a higher learning gain. In this particular group, many students voiced the opinion that they would have been disadvantaged in a mainstream FYC course where they would have to compete with native English speaking students. Pointing to students' awareness of being linguistically disadvantaged in a mainstream course, this finding echoes Janopoulos' argument that "a double standard places [ESL] students at risk" (43) made in his publications "Writing" and "University". In this respect, the current study emphasized the perception that the ESL Writing Programs provide a supportive learning environment sensitive to the needs of ESL writers. Meanwhile, the study also brought to the surface the student perception that an ESL writing course may be an "easy credit" course. While being articulated by only few students, this unsettling perception reminds that, in order to be efficient, the ESL Writing Program has to maintain a delicate balance between the need to provide a supportive learning environment and the need to challenge students to develop their writing proficiency to a level allowing for their competent performance in content college courses.

Regardless of its limitation of a one-semester exploratory inquiry, the current study provided evidence that the profile of ESL undergraduates admitted in U.S. higher education institutions continues to diversify. The dichotomous categorization of ESL students enrolled in U.S. composition courses into U.S. resident (or Generation 1.5) and international (or traditional) has truly become more of an imprecise generalization rather than a helpful guide to WPAs and practitioners. In the traditional ESL group, comprised by international undergraduates admitted to U.S. higher education institutions, the characteristics are profoundly changing, largely due to internationalization of higher education and an exponential growth of English use in students' home countries. This emerging reality calls for a data-driven revision of assumptions related to the needs of international students in U.S. FYC courses. In addition to ideological adjustments, it is essential to develop pedagogical approaches and assessment practices that provide a challenging yet supportive learning environment for international undergraduate writers by integrating—rather than denying—their previous backgrounds in English and composition.

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## NOTES

1. The term, *resident ESL*, suggested by Friedrich, seems to be more accurate and inclusive than “Generation 1.5”. See the argument made by Friedrich (15-16).

2. Source: *Enrollment Summary* in fall 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011; *International Student and Scholar Enrollment & Statistical Report* in fall 2009, 2010, 2011.

3. Source: *International Student and Scholar Enrollment & Statistical Report* in fall 2009, 2010,

4. During the semester when the study was conducted, the ESL Writing Program offered 13 sections.

5. In this paper, the phrasings “writing in English” and “English composition” are used interchangeably.

6. This column shows the reported duration of instruction in the minimum and the maximum semesters.

7. This number was reported by one student who may have counted the pre-school English writing instruction.

8. In the hindsight, the phrasing “if it were not recommended by academic advisor” could have been interpreted as “not required” or “not mainstream”. If the study was repeated, this item would be better developed into two questions: (1) “Would you register for a writing course if it were not required by university?” and (2) “When registering for a writing course, would you choose an ESL course over mainstream?”

9. In colleges and universities where the dominant ESL population is U.S. resident, ESL Writing Programs need to be tailored to accommodate the specific needs of this group. In such cases, however, WPAs will most likely to face a challenge of overcoming the ESL stigma.

10. The responses were distributed as follows: YES – 48%; NO – 31%; DIFFICULT TO RESPOND – 21%.

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## Appendix: The Questionnaire

1. What is your native language?
2. In what languages other than your native language and English are you proficient (i.e., you can speak and write relatively well)?
3. Have you taken any writing courses in your native language? If yes, then for how many semesters? Check the proper box.
  - I have not taken any writing courses in my native language.
  - I have taken writing courses in my native language for ... (write the number) semesters.
4. Before ENGL 106i, were you taught composition in English? Check the proper box.
  - I have never been taught composition in English.
  - I have been taught composition in English.
5. If you answered "I have never been taught" to the previous question, skip this question. If you answered "I have been taught", then answer this question: What kind of instruction did you receive? Check the proper box.
  - Writing in English course in school for ... (write a number) semesters.
  - Individual private tutoring for ... (write a number) months.
  - College examination preparation course for ... (write a number) months.Write the name of the exam you studied for (e.g., TOEFL, SAT, or other)
6. How many semesters did you study at college in your home country? If you did not study at college prior to Purdue University, write 0.
7. How many semesters, including this semester, have you studied in a U.S. college / university (i.e., at another U.S. college or university + Purdue University)?
8. Did you study in a U.S. high school or college prior to Purdue University? Check the proper box.
  - I did not study in a U.S. high school or college prior to Purdue University.
  - I studied in a U.S. high school or college prior to Purdue University. Please circle where you studied (high school / college) and write the number of semesters.
9. If ENGL 106i were not a required course recommended by your academic advisor, would you have registered for it?
  - Yes. Please, write down your reason.
  - No. If you would like to let us know, write down your reason.
  - It's difficult to say.

## “We Don’t Need Any More Brochures”: Rethinking Deliverables in Service-Learning Curricula

Kendall Leon and Thomas Sura

### ABSTRACT

*Drawing on recent scholarship on service learning in writing programs, and on community engagement with new media technologies, this article reflects on the adoption of service-based curricula into first-year writing programs. This article aims to contribute to service-learning scholarship by questioning the primacy of deliverables for public audiences as a goal of service-learning classrooms—those brochures, posters, white papers, and so on that provide evidence of our community “intervention” (Deans, “English Studies” 9). In particular, this article focuses on the use of digital technologies for the production of internally circulating deliverables. To do this, the authors propose engagement portfolios as a way to focus service-learning efforts on inquiry while providing community partners with meaningful deliverables—descriptions of their infrastructures and histories.*

### INTRODUCTION

In the 2010-11 academic year, the authors of this essay participated in developing a new service-learning curriculum for first-year composition at a large Midwestern institution. Our inquiry into developing this curriculum began with a visit to our campus volunteer center. The primary purpose of this center was to coordinate the placement of students, faculty, and staff volunteers with local community partners.<sup>1</sup> During our interview, the campus volunteer coordinator provided two interesting pieces of information. First, he described a “glut” of volunteers from departments across the campus and explained that finding volunteer opportunities in the immediate vicinity was becoming more and more difficult. For his two-person operation, the number of students being shepherded their way was becom-

ing increasingly difficult to manage. Second, with dead eyes, he said, “We don’t need any more brochures.”

These discoveries led us to wonder about the products of service learning in first-year writing courses. In other words, what were the students producing as a result of their service? While a significant portion of discourse about service learning argues for what it should do—mainly foster critical cultural awareness—we aim to contribute to service-learning scholarship for writing program administrators by focusing on the primacy of deliverables for public audiences—those brochures, posters, white papers, and so on that provide evidence of our “intervention” (Deans, “English Studies” 9). Our concern is that these deliverables often become the primary focus of service-learning courses in ways that can actually undermine the learning goals of first-year writing. To counter this focus, we articulate an inquiry-based approach to service learning that begins with students mapping the infrastructure of a community partner through genres like profiles and instruction sets. These documents are then collected into a form of an *engagement portfolio* that serves as the deliverable for a community partner. We specifically focus on the use of digital technologies for the production of these engagement portfolios because of the opportunities for invention, collaboration, circulation, and sustainability. We believe this strategy for developing service-learning curricula in first-year writing programs may better sustain administrative, course, and partnership goals over time.

#### SERVICE LEARNING IN FIRST-YEAR WRITING PROGRAMS

Service learning and community engagement are approaches to teaching writing that have received ample attention in rhetoric and composition, and as our volunteer coordinator suggested, in many other disciplines as well. Writing about service learning at its nascent stage, Linda Adler-Kassner, Robert Crooks, and Anne Watters describe how this type of curriculum can increase motivation for both students and teachers as well as establish connections between the community and all levels of the academy (2–3). Yet service learning is not without formidable challenges. Ellen Cushman argues that strong and sustainable community partnerships must avoid the “hit-it-and-quit-it relation” employed by so many service-learning initiatives (“Sustainable Service Learning Programs” 41). Likewise, Linda Flower asks writing teachers to [re]consider the goals and methods for these courses to better reflect and respect community knowledge (95–96). Therefore the arc of service-learning curricula has moved from simply writing *about* the community to writing *for* the community to writing *with* the community (Deans, *Writing Partnerships* 17).

Despite the wealth of information on service learning in higher education, service learning and community engagement specifically within writing program administration has been largely underexplored (Rose and Weiser 5). In *WPA: Writing Program Administration*, for example, only a handful of articles have explicitly addressed the subject. In 2004, Candace Spigelman argued that when adopting service-based curricula, writing program administrators must avoid treating the activity as an “individualist enterprise” (98). The rhetoric surrounding service learning, she argues, too often reinforces “radically individualist” ideologies like “equal opportunity, merit-based rewards, and individual action” rather than “foster[ing] (or at least rais[ing] awareness of the need for) social justice or social transformation” (96–97). In 2007, Nicole Amare and Teresa Grettano warned against one-size-fits-all, course-based approaches to service learning, contending that “issues concerning budgeting, student responsibilities outside the classroom, connections with organizations in the community, and training and commitments of faculty have made service learning difficult to implement everywhere” (58). They further suggest that “to work toward community engagement and reap some of the benefits of traditional service-learning initiatives, WPAs at certain institutions need to devise alternative programs that work within their institutions’ frameworks” (58).

What these scholars identified and addressed in different ways were deficiencies in how writing program administrators talked about and implemented service learning in their programs. For Spigelman, the answer to the rhetorical problem of service learning was to “take students beyond the coursework-outreach connection, beyond even a critique of systemic conditions and hegemonic discourses, to interrogate as well their own roles (and complicity) as service learners” (108). For Amare and Grettano, the answer to the challenges of implementing service-learning courses was to move their service learning outside of the traditional course-based model. In both cases, the scholars left ample room to address how WPAs might work to move students toward greater awareness of social justice and related issues within the formidable constraints of traditional course-based service learning.

In 2010, Shirley Rose and Irwin Weiser published *Going Public*, a much-needed collection exploring the intersections of service learning and writing program administration. This collection does a great deal for integrating service learning into the intellectual terrain of writing program administration, but it stops short of providing a how-to guide for writing program administrators. Instead, the focus of the collection is capturing the “emergence of a new conception and definition of the pragmatic work of writing programs, informed by a new rhetoric and renewed rhetorical theory as well as by new conceptions of disciplinarity and professionalism” (5). This

“new rhetoric” for engagement includes “developing awareness of new audiences, turning attention in different directions, and discovering new sets of arguments for curricula” (4). Our aim in the remainder of this essay is to examine some of that pragmatic work of service learning and writing program administration and to contribute to the lexicon of the new rhetoric that Rose and Weiser advocate.

#### THE ELEVATION OF DELIVERABLES

In order to contribute to a new rhetoric for engagement for writing programs, we want to begin by “turning attention in different directions” (Rose and Weiser 4). Right now, we presume that the default premise of some, if not many, service-learning curricula is to produce something for the community partner that will exist in external circulation: a public document that is rhetorically crafted for an audience apart from the community partner. The primary goal is that the community partner’s audience will see it, as if the only challenge for any community partner is “getting the word out” about what they are doing. For example, an engagement project with a local animal shelter may focus on creating community awareness about the animal shelter’s services. Hence, students compose brochures, flyers, or websites for the animal shelter’s perceived audiences.

In addition to meeting partnership goals for service-learning projects, instructors might feel compelled to have students produce something for the community partners by the end of the semester that can also be shown to the various audiences that writing program administrators have to respond to—including students, other administrators, scholarly venues, and possible funders for these service-learning endeavors. This challenge we are calling the *elevation of deliverables*. The purpose in proposing this term is to give a name to the often intense pressures both to provide a community partner with something that adds value to its work through external circulation and to document our own—teachers’ and students’—intervention in that work to our various audiences. To make it visible. We contend that this *elevation of deliverables* creates two counter-productive situations in service-learning curricula. First, it emphasizes product over equally valued curricular components like inquiry. Second, it severely limits the invention of possible ways students and teachers might engage productively with community partners.

The elevation of deliverables has its roots in articulations of what differentiates volunteerism from service-learning. In essence, volunteerism focuses on contributing hours of time to a cause while service learning combines volunteer time with classroom instruction and critical reflection

in order to achieve new insights and engage in public advocacy. The key difference for service learning, then, is the inclusion of a reflective component; however, this alone proved inadequate for practitioners. Thomas Deans, for example, sums up the difference this way: “[I]n addition to inviting abstract critical *interpretation* of cultural phenomena, service-learning initiatives demand the logical corollary, that is, grounded, active *intervention* in the very cultural context we inhabit” (“English Studies” 103). The deliverables of a service-learning course are the tangible embodiments of *intervention*. They are proof that we were here and that we did something. Examples of these interventions abound in the literature connecting service learning and composition studies. In 1994, Bruce Herzberg alluded to the evolution of service-learning deliverables:

At first, the projects were simple: Students in writing courses visited soup kitchens and wrote up their experiences. Later, as the service-learning program developed, students in accounting classes helped revise the accounting procedures of non-profit community service agencies and audited their books for free. Students in marketing and business communication designed advertising and public relations materials to improve the distribution of agencies’ services. (307)

In its first phase, reflection was the expected outcome, but as the curricula evolved, students began practicing the core competencies of their disciplines. Accounting students revised procedures and provided audits. Marketing students designed ads and public relations materials. What, then, could writing students do but write? In 2000, Deans reported that “novice college writers are working in teams to compose research reports, news-letter articles, and manuals for local nonprofit agencies; tutoring children and bringing that experience back to the classroom as a text to be analyzed alongside other texts; and collaborating with urban youth to craft documents in intercultural, hybrid rhetorics” (*Writing Partnerships* 97). These projects make sense, and they appear to fit so well. The problem is that this reporting of novice college writers engaging in these complex and meaningful projects glosses over how incredibly difficult it can be to identify and complete these projects at least to a satisfactory level within the time constraints of a sixteen-week writing course. As Cushman suggests, “The end-of-the-semester project model of service learning undermines its goal of providing real-world writing because the real research process and writing that professors engage in is grossly represented and generally overlooked as an integral part of the service learning” (“Sustainable” 46). With a finite amount of time and a dearth of heuristics for invention, it is easy, if not necessary, for instructors in service-learning courses to default to basic,

familiar genres that demonstrate what they've done *for* a community partner—posters, flyers, brochures, and even attempts at websites. But we must recall our volunteer coordinator's message at this point: "We don't need any more brochures."

To address this challenge to service-learning curricula, we invoke another element of the new rhetoric proposed by Rose and Weiser: "developing awareness of new audiences" (4). We propose turning attention from a community partner's external audiences to the community partner itself. Our inspiration for this shift is derived from Jeffrey Grabill's recent work connecting infrastructure and writing programs. In "Infrastructure Outreach and the Engaged Writing Program," Grabill contends that writing programs are already places where research and teaching happen. As such, writing programs provide the infrastructure necessary for research on engagement, but they often don't think of themselves in that way. Grabill defines infrastructure in many ways. He argues that infrastructure "supports work" and that it is "not stable, fixed—visible even—but rather emerges—becomes visible and meaningful through use (15). Furthermore, he asserts that "if we want to understand the rhetorical work that people do together, we must render visible the infrastructure that remains (or wants to remain) invisible and that supports, locates—participates in—that rhetorical work" (21). Though Grabill's work is expressly focused on writing programs, we want to apply the same ideas of infrastructure to engagement with community partners. Instead of students working all semester to make their intervention visible to the community partner's audiences, what if students worked all semester to make visible the infrastructure that supports the community partner's rhetorical work? Doing so may enable students to learn that writing is an embedded and supported activity that requires a systematic method and an awareness of new audiences—including the instructor, the instructor's future students who may work with the community partner, and the community partner itself.

While Grabill's notion of infrastructure helps us imagine one way we might approach work with a community partner, the idea of focusing inquiry on the community partner itself is not at all new. In fact, in 2002, Cushman asserted "the professor in service learning needs to understand the workings of these organizations just as much as the students do" ("Sustainable" 43). In the final section of this essay, we articulate a new argument for curricula that facilitate the turning of attention and the awareness of new audiences that we have described so far. It is an attempt to describe a systematic method of writing in service learning that re-imagines the portfolio—a ubiquitous and valuable tool in contemporary writing instruction—and its place in a new rhetoric of engagement.

## ENGAGEMENT PORTFOLIOS IN THE SERVICE LEARNING CLASS

In writing courses, portfolios are typically divided into two categories: best-works portfolios and process portfolios. According to Nedra Reynolds and Rich Rice, best-works portfolios are aimed most specifically at evaluation or presentation. They consist of polished drafts of multiple genres and generally focus on proving to an audience that its owner should “pass a course, receive an award, or get a promotion.” On the other hand, process portfolios are not expressly produced for evaluation or presentation. They create a space “specifically designed to benefit learners” because “students have the freedom to determine most of the content and the method of organizing it.” In essence, students choose from “a variety of artifacts that demonstrate how [they have] learned, not just what [they have] learned.” The glue that makes this portfolio more than a scrapbook is the student’s “collection, selection, and...reflection” (2). The value, then, for a portfolio pedagogy emerges out of its sensitivity to the writing process without neglecting the finished product, as well as the inclusion of reflection and inquiry to generate new knowledge about content and writing itself (Yancey 15–16).

As a result of our own work in service learning combined with our understanding of portfolios and a need to “understand the workings of these organizations just as much as the students do” (Cushman, “Sustainable” 43), we imagine using process portfolios more or less as a heuristic for working with a new community partner. In other words, rather than service learning requiring an instructor to invest countless hours uncovering a viable way for students to engage with a community partner, that work should actually become the work of the course, both initially and throughout subsequent iterations of the course.

We imagine these portfolios unfolding through any number of thoughtfully integrated tasks. Knowing full well that any context where this strategy is implemented will yield new ideas or remixes, we present here a pragmatic foundation from which to build. *Engagement portfolios*, in their most basic form, may include the following writing tasks:

- *Write a Profile.* Any organization is made up of individual people. Depending on the number of people, students profile each participant, including rich descriptions of who they are and what they do. Organizations, like compositions, are also “invented” as they emerge, respond to exigencies, are arranged and revised. The profile, then, might also include a historical investigation into how the organization came to be.
- *Write an Instruction Set.* In an organization of people doing work, there are processes enacted daily. Perhaps more common in profes-

sional writing and editing, instruction sets are a genre described by Anne Wysocki and Dennis Lynch in *Compose Design Advocate*. Students, using their interviewees as resources, write instruction sets describing the various processes that community partners engage in.

- *Write a Rhetorical Analysis*. As an organization of people doing work, any community partner will possess pieces of communication that may include memos, brochures, or websites. For this assignment, students analyze one of those pieces of communication, attempting to explain how it works by using a rhetorical lens. The rhetorical analysis might also delve into the function, impact and view of the organization in the local community.
- *Write a Position Paper*. In an organization of people doing work for a purpose, there will be complex community and social issues that the organization is working to address. For example, the issues may be how to persuade pet owners to spay and neuter their pets or how best to care for the elderly.

While these writing tasks may easily be produced and compiled into binders or books, to do so automatically is to ignore one of the great affordances of digital technology.

Recently, there has been burgeoning interest in exploring the particularities of, and implications for, incorporating new media and digital technologies in service-learning first-year writing classrooms. Toward this end, several scholars have developed heuristics and methodologies for new media engagement (Cushman, “Toward a Praxis”; Kimme Hea, “Developing Stakeholder Relationships” and “Rearticulating Web 2.0 Technologies”; Turnley). Employing these heuristics led us to think about electronic engagement portfolios as something other than static repositories of distinct Microsoft Word documents to facilitate better collaboration. Instructors and community partners may employ many of the Web 2.0 technologies that support collaboratively produced and shared knowledge through media (such as Prezi or wikis) that can be housed on the Web and located on a particular server.

While this may seem unconventional for a first-year writing classroom, there are several examples of wikis being employed in this manner. Allowing for “vertical knowledge building,” Chris Anson and Susan Cochran-Miller have demonstrated that wikis in the writing classroom enable “meaningful connections [to] occur not just between instructors teaching the same course, or between students within a section of a class, but also across space and time, between sections of the same course” (39). Instead of starting from scratch each semester, current students build on what stu-

dents from previous semesters have done. The wiki enables the writing to remain as a record and a heuristic.

We contend that these same affordances of sharing writing processes between classes from semester to semester would be especially applicable for students engaged in service-learning projects. In this regard, what is especially salient about the use of Web 2.0 technologies for electronic portfolio production is the capability to capture non-linear writing processes and the mundane (and yet nonetheless insightful) writing indicative of invention—such as planning documents, marginalia, sticky notes, and so forth. Such spaces might better afford memory, or documentation, of nuances in a shared knowledge-making endeavor and spark new ideas for how social network technology may be utilized by the community partner. In these ways, the community partner receives sustained attention, an opportunity to lead the action, and an impetus for innovating.

The use of digital technologies to capture what might be treated as more “mundane” acts of writing further supports our primary goal of inquiry-driven learning for the students. While the above list of potential writing tasks that students might consider including in their engagement portfolios may seem fairly traditional when seen as outcomes of a service-learning-based writing course (see for example Deans, *Writing and Community Action*), we postulate that the digital technologies that students engage with in their everyday lives represent potential inquiry tools. For instance, students can document the various writing processes, spaces and environments of a community partner by using cell phones to capture sound or video. Or, groups collaborating on a project might use text messaging as a way to record observations unobtrusively, problem solve, or brainstorm from different locales. In this way, the use of digital technology throughout the students’ engagement with a community partner extends a learning outcome of first-year writing as stated by the Council of Writing Program Administrators—to “use electronic environments for drafting, reviewing, revising, editing, and sharing texts” (“WPA Outcomes Statement”)—beyond just the production and circulation of texts. The employment of everyday technologies also addresses obstacles that some instructors face when integrating writing technologies in their pedagogy. Everyday technologies may in fact be preferable to the less mobile and more expensive hardware and software that require extensive resources and institutional support to maintain. Students typically are already bringing such technologies to class; the portability of these devices allows for both mobile composing and for capturing writing in action.

## IMPLICATIONS

Our new argument for curricula related to service learning relies on re-imagining the portfolio, both its audience and its apparatus. These two elements of portfolios are united here by a pedagogy focused on memory making, which speaks to the potential implications of employing engagement portfolios as deliverables in service-learning courses.<sup>3</sup> To be more specific, we see ways in which engagement portfolios may yield positive outcomes for all of the stakeholders in service-learning or community-engagement encounters: student, community partners, teachers, and administrators.<sup>4</sup>

For students, engagement portfolios emphasize writing as a mode of sustained inquiry into local and contextual issues, rather than a mode of expressing an opinion about a solution to a more broadly defined and decontextualized social issue. For example, this approach might highlight the question “What does poverty look like in my community?” rather than “What should America do about poverty?” As Michael Norton and Eli Goldblatt explain, “Inquiry emphasizes the need to write and rewrite because writing matters to others around you” (32). Engagement portfolios emphasize the people working on these issues, the choices they make, and the limitations they must grapple with—choices that involve considerations of audience and purpose. Likewise, the assembling of engagement portfolios asks students to compose with a clearer purpose and multiple audiences in mind, as well as to consider the rhetorical effectiveness of their chosen media in reaching these audiences.

Our hypothesis is that through the primary research and reflection made central in this approach, students may make more progress toward the goal of critical consciousness than they might through the production of other common deliverables. Engagement portfolios would also allow for students to collect a range of writing materials such as notes, memos, and other important memory artifacts, which can often be more useful or insightful than “polished” writing—thereby extending their understanding of writing both in the composition classroom and beyond. Composition, as we all might agree, is not just about writing alphabetic texts. Composition is about composing, arranging, and connecting. Electronic engagement portfolios enable students to see composition in an expansive way as they work to create a robust and fluid memory of an organization.

One of the key tenets of service learning is the idea of reciprocity (Cushman, “Sustainable”). Having the rhetorical memory of their organization composed through engagement portfolios speaks to a beneficial outcome for community partners. Let us give you an example to illustrate this point. One of the authors recently joined a board of directors for a local organiza-

tion. There is currently no paid staff for the organization, yet they have been successful in achieving outreach to their primary audiences and in sponsoring a few major local events. However, the processes used to achieve these goals are not documented, nor are the events and outreach initiatives, nor the impact these initiatives (or the organization) has on the community. This is the kind of information and documentation that is needed in future compositions such as grant proposals. Engagement portfolios would provide an opportunity for students to collect and create this documentation. At the same time then, engagement portfolios, as we have articulated them, effectively blur writing *about* and writing *for* the community. Community partners may find useful questions, dialogues, or ideas that result directly from the students' thinking about the community partner and their work. If one semester of student engagement with the community partner yields the identification of one or two major challenges, then the next semester of student engagement may yield the identification of one or two feasible solutions. The third semester may yield one or two attempts at executing those solutions as well as the identification of one or two new challenges, and so on. The ability to share and build upon engagement portfolios would work well in both a one-semester approach to first-year writing and a two-semester sequence in which the portfolio would be the culminating outcome for the second semester.

For teachers, especially considering that many of the people teaching these courses may be graduate assistants or adjunct faculty, the outcomes include strategies for contending with the elevation of deliverables and the sustainability of relationships with community partners. During the initial stages of engagement with the community partner, the instructors too can focus on inquiry, using the course to learn—along with the students—about the community partner. Most discourse about higher education employs the “co-learner” rhetoric for incorporating technology into pedagogy (e.g., Davis and Marsh; Frost; Journet); however, there is no reason it cannot apply to other circumstances. The pressure is off of the instructor to make the course solely about video, audio, or Web production; instead, the course can focus on inquiry.

Furthermore, the elevation of deliverables requires that projects be completed within a semester (Lawler). Students may take away from this project timeline an inaccurate understanding of what it means to write in community spaces. Portfolios would allow projects to operate more on a writing-*with* approach because they can be responsive to the rhetorical timing of a community partner. The culminating project for a particular class could then be a blueprint for how to enact the next step to address a particular problem or exigency. The artificiality of the semester timeline also contrib-

utes to a problem of sustainability. A well-developed engagement portfolio might result in more usable (and later adaptable) writing for community partners who have high turnover rates for staff and volunteers. Such a portfolio would also allow a community partner to decide, along with students, which technologies to use to deliver a project or meet a goal, at any given time, in this way invoking what James Lawler describes as an “agile methodology” to teaching technologically rich service-learning courses (118). Engagement portfolios can be taken up by subsequent classes for pedagogic and project development but can also be utilized as a resource to enable research on community and engaged writing as it creates a sharable memory of the project planning. Therefore, one instructor could not only share that history with the community partner but also feasibly pass that history on to a different instructor or WPA so that the relationship can continue.

This benefit for the instructor applies at the administrative level as well. Engagement portfolios can be a method for achieving programmatic cohesion and memory, as well as new models for assessment. As part of a group of instructors teaching a service-based approach to first-year writing, we often struggled to determine what these courses had in common (aside from meeting the overall goals for the first-year writing course). Our initial impetus was to collect shared readings for the course to ground all of our sections, especially as we had the added complexity of the course needing to fulfill the goals for our composition course. We found it difficult to come to a consensus about which readings equally fit the needs of the particular section or project, and as writing instructors, we did not want to put the emphasis on readings as the glue binding our sections together. Instead, we see adopting a shared portfolio approach to teaching this course as a way to ensure cohesion.

Portfolios would also allow us, as administrators, to better assess the rhetorical abilities developed through a service-based writing pedagogy in comparison with a more traditional approach. For a service-learning pedagogy, portfolios can enact rhetorical memory in several ways. Whereas we found that, in their cover memos to their service projects, students myopically focused on the production of the project, portfolios would allow students to consider their development of critical practices in multiple moments in a course and not just in the production of the project itself. Even if we were only to consider the project, portfolios might extend students’ consideration of their invention and engagement to include nuanced moments in their service project cycle and not just those that students would typically consider to be relevant to a writing course. Further, the development of engagement portfolios as a deliverable of the course allows an infrastructure to emerge that supports continuity and continuance of

our courses to help “enable the work of others” including teachers, students and our community partners, which is the work of a writing program (Grabbill 15).

## CONCLUSION

The new rhetoric for engagement that Rose and Weiser call for comes at a crucial moment in how we think about writing program administration. The Liberal Education and America’s Promise (LEAP) campaign undertaken by the Association of American Colleges and Universities, has explicitly articulated that civic knowledge and engagement—on both local and global levels—are essential learning outcomes for liberal education (“Essential Learning Outcomes”). As writing program administrators, our challenge is to preserve what we already know about impactful writing instruction while developing its nuances and expanding its scope to address the learning needs of the twenty-first century. Likewise, our argument for something new—engagement portfolios—is in reality a call to enhance and enrich a founding tenet of rhetoric and composition as a “dappled discipline” (Lauer 20). In 1984, Janice Lauer extolled the virtues of the multidisciplinary of rhetoric and composition but also suggested that this virtue comes at a price. She wrote, “As [Howard] Ranken cautions, anyone who borrows work from another field must not only acquire an accurate and thorough grasp of the work itself, but also must understand its context, history and the status it enjoys in its parent field” (26). Like Janice Lauer, and later, Ellen Cushman, we suggest that our ventures into service learning are much the same as our ventures into other fields. While we stand to gain from these ventures, we must also engage in them thoughtfully and thoroughly with our students. Our hope is that engagement portfolios provide one way for us to approach community partners with the same respect and thoughtfulness that Lauer, Cushman, and others have suggested, striving to understand their work but also striving to understand their context, history, and status in order to truly be of service.

## NOTES

1. This model for an on campus volunteer center may differ from other models insofar as the volunteer center focused solely on volunteer placement and connection, with the occasional facilitation of service projects to garner student involvement. The pedagogical considerations of service learning in the classroom are addressed at a separate office on campus, which serves as the general teaching development center.

2. Paying attention to questions of “what” might seem [current] traditional in light of the trend in rhetoric and composition to attend to matters of “when” (i.e., DeVoss, Cushman, and Grabill); or the “how” (i.e., Sirc). However, service learning in the writing classroom—especially in the multimedia writing classroom—deserves attention in its uncomplicated reification of the “what.”

3. As instructors teaching some of the pilot sections of our writing program’s attempt to integrate service learning into our first-year composition classes, we grounded the course theoretically and methodologically for students in memory and memory-making. Memory is an especially salient aspect of the rhetorical canon here because we consider memory as part of communities and community building within different spheres, including geographic areas, digital spaces, and writing programs. Memory has been invoked in writing program administration scholarship, primarily focused on institutional memory through genre and documentation (Dyer). Within community literacy and service learning scholarship, memory becomes a resource for invention, reinvention, and continuance (Muttick; Monberg). Finally, memory is widely studied in professional writing and digital studies as questions about archiving, documentation, and recollection as they relate to participation and collectivity abound (Whittemore; Haskins; Haas). Memory creates overlaps between these scholarly areas as we raise questions of sustainability and circulation.

4. We are currently in the midst of piloting the use of engagement portfolios in our service-learning writing classrooms and assessing these outcomes.

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## Using Systems Thinking to Transform Writing Programs

Dan Melzer

### ABSTRACT

*Building on Porter et al.'s call for institutional theorizing and critique at the system level, in this article I argue that Critical Systems Thinking (CST) is a useful methodology to understand, critique, and transform campus writing programs. CST focuses on changing the structures and ideologies of an entire system through locating points of leverage where even small changes will affect the entire system, moving it from isolation to liberation. I use the example of transformations to the campus writing program at my institution to illustrate the systems methodology, and I end the article with advice for applying CST to campus writing programs across institutional contexts.*

For decades, the campus writing program at my institution was a system that perpetuated an outdated and ineffective model of literacy—a system whose problems will be familiar to many WPAs working to reform writing at their institutions. A one-shot timed writing test placed half of the first-year students in non-credit-bearing “remedial” courses, and a similar rising junior exam placed a quarter of our student population into the same type of remedial coursework. This remedial work was done partly in the English department and partly in the learning skills department, which was separated from the composition program both physically and ideologically. Faculty across disciplines placed the responsibility for teaching academic writing squarely on the shoulders of the English department and the learning skills department, but many of the instructors in the composition program who had been trained primarily in literature as graduate students taught our composition courses with literary texts and themes. The only nod to a responsibility for teaching writing beyond the composition program was a single writing intensive course requirement that students often took outside their major in their search for the “easiest” class. The campus writing program as a system reinforced a deficit model of student writing

and structured behavior that led to inevitable conflicts among the learning skills department, the English department, students, and faculty across disciplines. What was needed was structural change: the transformation of the entire bureaucratic system as well as the model of literacy that both shaped the system and that the system reinforced. The question for the WPAs at my institution was how to make this kind of structural change given the restraints of the system and the rigid ideology it had perpetuated for decades.

In “Institutional Critique: A Rhetorical Methodology for Change,” Porter et al. encourage WPAs to focus more attention on theorizing and critiquing academic institutions as a means to counter oppressive bureaucratic structures. Porter et al. argue that when faced with systemic oppression, compositionists have focused on theorizing the classroom and the department of English rather than focusing on the larger system of the institution. Porter et al. feel that institutional critique should focus on the bureaucratic structures of our institutions, since “understanding the power and operation of such structures is important to developing strategies for changing them” (626). They argue that because we have focused on the classroom without adequately theorizing the institution, we have made it seem as though institutions are “beyond an individual’s power for change,” or at best we have relied on the “enlightened, active individual” to make change (617).

Building on Porter et al.’s call for institutional critique at the systems level, in this article I argue that systems thinking is a useful methodology to understand, critique, and transform campus writing programs. Educational theorist and systems thinker Bela Banathy says

having a systems view of education [. . .] means that we can think about education as a system, we can understand and describe it as a system, we can design education so that it manifests systems behavior, and we can engage in educational inquiry by using approaches and methods of systems practice. (*Concepts and Principles* vii)

Because systems thinking as a methodology focuses on changing the structures and perceptions of an entire system, it can serve as a valuable framework for WPAs who wish to play a role in transforming not just a course or a department but their entire campus writing program, as well as the ideologies that inform the program. At the same time, systems thinking makes the daunting task of changing an entire system more manageable because it emphasizes locating points of leverage where even small changes will affect the entire system.

A systems approach can help WPAs move beyond blaming students or individual faculty and administrators when problems occur, and instead can refocus WPAs' energy on analyzing how systems structure behaviors and how we can move from isolation towards liberation in the ways academic bureaucracies function. As evidence of the usefulness of systems thinking, I will discuss the example of the application of systems thinking in the transformation of my own institution, where the WPAs have collaborated to make significant changes to both the conceptual model of literacy that informs the system of the campus writing program and the bureaucratic structures that reinforce that model. After discussing the application of a systems methodology in transforming my own institution, I will end the article with some advice for applying systems thinking that I hope will be useful across institutional contexts.

#### SYSTEMS THINKING: AN OVERVIEW

In *Systems Thinking, Systems Practice*, Peter Checkland explains that systems thinking emerged in the 1940s in the fields of biology and engineering as a method for understanding the complexities of natural and engineered systems in ways that the reductionist and fragmented approach of classical science could not adequately address. Systems thinking encourages us to approach complex natural and human systems by focusing on patterns of relationships and by “using the concept of wholeness to order our thoughts” (Checkland 4). Like Checkland, Banathy encourages educational researchers and administrators to “consider the complex interactions and systematic connectedness of the various components that integrate into the whole” (*Concepts and Principles* 8). Banathy argues that “considering a part out of the context of the total system, dealing with one thing at a time, isolating variables, and dividing up the system” are not effective approaches, and that we should instead focus on “the wholeness of the system” (*Concepts and Principles* 93).

Banathy explains that part of seeing the “total system” is understanding how a system interacts with “suprasystems”—systems that are beyond a particular system's boundary but that affect the system. These suprasystems may have the effect of reinforcing the ideological rigidity of a system or may be used to create positive changes to a system. Systems thinkers must be aware of the possible negative influences of suprasystems and must also be thoughtful about ways to use suprasystems to make positive changes to their campus writing program.

Although systems thinking focuses on the wholeness of systems and their connections to suprasystems, Banathy argues that large, open, and

complex systems like schools have a natural tendency toward independence, and that this independence “moves the system’s components toward progressive segregation and isolation and eventually toward the dissolution or termination of the system” (*Developing* 24). Understanding relationships among components of the system is key to a systems view, but as Banathy points out, all too often relationships at educational institutions can become “rigid and static” (*Developing* 29). A systems thinker would argue that looking at the whole of the system is the most effective way to work against this isolation and rigidity, rather than merely “tinkering with parts” (*Concepts and Principles* 8).

A systems thinker’s attention is on the ways the structure of a system will construct behavior. Peter Senge, in *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization*, emphasizes a key concept in the systems view: “Different people in the same structure tend to produce qualitatively similar results” (40). Because of this, Senge and other systems thinkers feel, “We must look beyond personalities and events. We must look into the underlying structures which shape individual actions and create the conditions where types of events become likely” (Senge 43). A key part of the underlying structure of a system is what Senge refers to as the “mental models” that the system operates under—what Banathy and Checkland call the “conceptual models.” Conceptual models are assumptions that underlie the system, whether these assumptions are explicit or implicit. The conceptual models dictate the way the system operates, but at the same time the way the system is structured reinforces the conceptual models.

The systems thinking framework involves a recursive process that begins with actors in the system painting a rich picture of the system. This process involves an extensive discussion of how structures and processes relate to each other within the system. These actors also create a conceptual model that defines their ideal of the system, and the ideal is compared with the structures, processes, and results of the actual system. Other possible models of the system are then considered, including the probable benefits and restraints of these alternative models. A key part of the systems thinking process is looking at underlying structures and finding the points in the system that will provide the most leverage for change. These points of leverage are typically points in the system that have a high level of connection to multiple actors in the system, so that any change in the leverage point would affect many actors and have long-term ramifications for the entire system. Recognizing points of leverage requires moving beyond “parochial boundaries” (or “turf” in the language of the academy) and finding the places in the system where “actions and changes in structures can lead to significant, enduring improvements” (Senge 114). In the next section of this

essay I will make this methodology more concrete by discussing how the WPAs at my institution approached the problem of a dysfunctional campus writing program in a systems way, but to provide a visual representation of the systems thinking process I've included a diagram of the process in Figure 1.

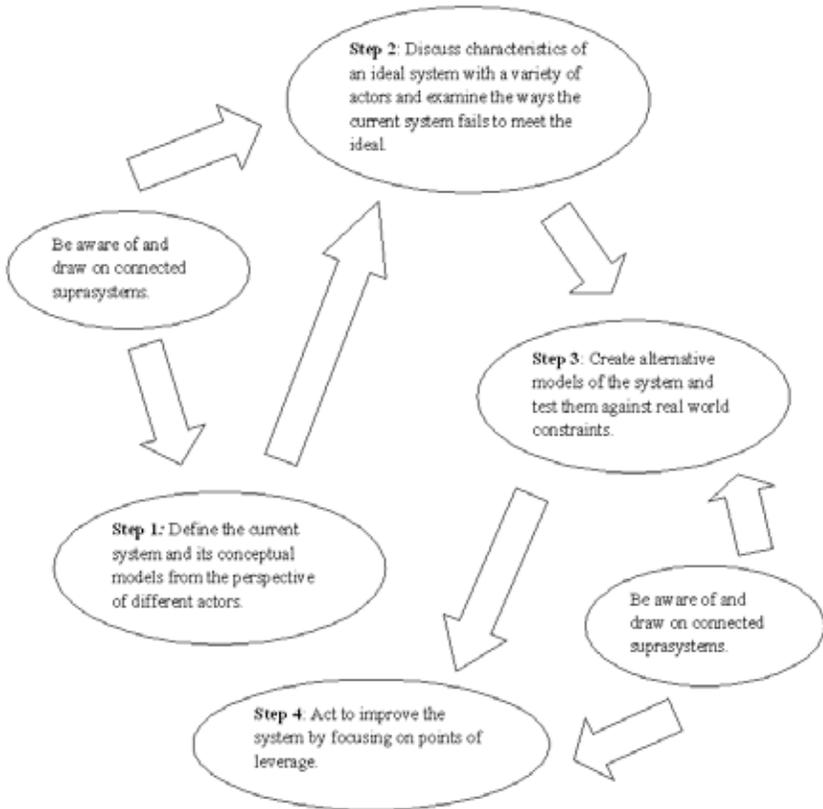


Figure 1 The Systems Thinking Process

The most current evolution of systems thinking, Critical Systems Thinking (CST), differs from traditional systems thinking in that its advocates claim that traditional systems thinking does not take a critical enough stance on inequalities of race, class, and gender in its push for the wholeness of systems and reconciliation of social orders. CST theorists such as Robert Flood, Michael Jackson, and Gerald Midgley argue that traditional systems thinking, as outlined by Checkland, fails to consider the historical/social conditions that have given rise to the system. CST theorists believe that in the quest for traditional systems theory to create more efficient and balanced systems, this theory may ensure the survival of those

already in power. The goal of CST is not balance but emancipation and the exposure of inequalities and conflicts: CST works toward liberation rather than equilibrium. CST theorists such as Flood draw on Foucault, with his focus on how power determines what counts for knowledge in social systems, to argue for a critical systems approach that emphasizes “recognition of subjugation” and “the bringing about of...liberation” (Flood 51). Flood argues that historically in systems thinking the ideological is too often not acknowledged. With CST, “the ideology is declared at the outset” (Flood 69). Throughout the CST methodological process, the ideologies of the stakeholders and the ideologies reinscribed by the current system are made explicit, from understanding the positions of all the actors in the system to creating a model of the system as it currently exists to imagining other possible models of the system. It is possible that the ideologies that underlie the system would be implicitly considered in the traditional systems thinking process, but the interrogation of the system’s ideologies is central and explicit in the CST process.

In this way CST is aligned with the view of writing programs as ideological entities, as Jeanne Gunner argues in “Ideology, Theory, and the Genre of Writing Programs.” Gunner believes that writing programs are “ideological entities” that “embody, enact, and reproduce a set of beliefs that take discursive and material form at sites of cultural power” (7-8). Gunner argues that writing programs reproduce ideological values; thus a critical approach aimed at change is necessary. Aligned with Gunner’s critical approach, Porter et al. argue for a rhetoric of institutional critique with the “aim to change the practices of institutional representatives and to improve the conditions of those affected by and served by institutions” (611).

CST provides a useful methodology for the kind of changes in practice that Gunner and Porter et al. argue for. CST methodology includes critical awareness, exposing dominant voices, and freedom from restrictive power relations (Flood and Raam; Midgley). CST aims to include equally the voices of all stakeholders in the system and expose oppressive power relations through explicit models of the current system and alternative models of more liberatory systems. One of the goals of the WPAs at my institution was to analyze the system in order to expose subjugation and coercion. We wanted to create a new model based on a conceptual framework of liberatory pedagogy rather than a deficit model of student literacies. The principles of CST have helped us as we have worked toward that goal, as I explain in the next section.

## APPLYING THE CRITICAL SYSTEMS THINKING METHODOLOGY: AN EXAMPLE

The institution where I coordinate the writing across the curriculum (WAC) program is a large, comprehensive state university located on the West Coast of the United States. The institution is one branch of a large state university system, with each branch connected to the others through a system-wide chancellor's office, but each branch functioning as a mostly autonomous university. Most of our faculty have been teaching at this institution since the 1970s, and in terms of bureaucratic structures, little has changed since the 1970s. When there is a change to the system, the faculty senate is typically the catalyst, and as a result of a 2005 senate retreat focused on improving the campus writing program, the senate reading and writing subcommittee was charged with making a proposal to improve the sequencing of the campus writing program, improve the graduation writing assessment requirement (a state-mandated upper-division assessment of student writing), and infuse writing more broadly across the curriculum.

The campus WPAs are all on the subcommittee: as WAC coordinator, I chair the subcommittee, and the graduation writing assessment coordinator and English department writing programs coordinator are members. The chair of the learning skills department joined the subcommittee as a guest during our discussion of the campus writing program. A representative from each college and the associate dean of undergraduate studies are also members. See Figure 2 for the subcommittee membership.

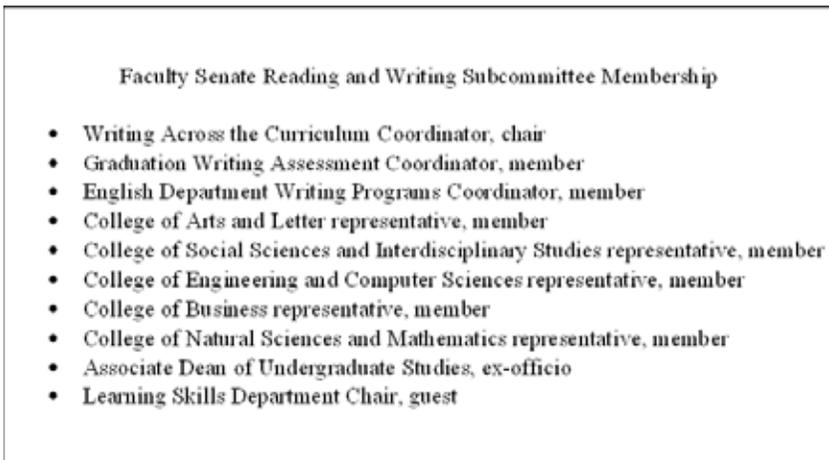


Figure 2 Faculty Senate Reading and Writing Subcommittee Membership

At the time the subcommittee was charged with rethinking the campus writing program, I had been reading systems thinking scholarship and I was interested in using the systems approach. My fellow WPAs were not explicitly looking to apply a systems thinking methodology, but like me they were focused on ways to transform the campus writing program at the system level. Because the reading and writing subcommittee membership included all of the campus WPAs, representatives from each college, and a representative from the administration, from a systems view it was well positioned to be the instrument of change. In addition to including so many “agents” within the system, it was connected to the senate and to various other senate committees, which meant it had strong leverage within the system.

#### THE FIRST STAGE: CREATING A MODEL OF THE SYSTEM AND ITS UNDERLYING IDEOLOGIES

As outlined in Figure 1, in the initial stages of systems thinking, actors in the system engage in a discussion of how structures and processes relate to each other within the system in order to paint a rich picture of the system. Ideally this picture is mapped out in a visual representation of the system. In the case of the campus writing program, we already had this kind of visual representation of the system: a flowchart that we gave faculty and students. Even a quick glance at the flowchart in Figure 3 reveals the many problems with the processes and relationships of the system.

In the perceptions of the WPAs, the system had two essential problems: an outdated conceptual model that saw students as “deficient” and a rigid and convoluted sequence of testing and remediation based on this deficiency model. In a CST approach, the description of the system should focus on revealing systemic oppression, and the testing and remediation conceptual model that informed our institution’s entire system is evident in the flowchart in Figure 3. The English placement test, a timed standardized test mandated by the state chancellor’s office (a closely related suprasystem), placed nearly half of our students in a variety of non-credit-bearing courses, beginning in the learning skills department and continuing to a “remedial” course in the English department. Another timed test was administered during the junior year, the writing proficiency exam. This test, which certified the chancellor’s office mandated graduation writing assessment requirement, could be taken twice. Students who failed both times needed to then pass another non-credit-bearing course at the junior level, ENGL109. A number of students who scored low enough on the rising junior test were placed into LS86, the same remedial course many first-year students were

placed into by the English placement test. Ideally students would meet their writing intensive requirement after taking the second required composition course (English 20) and the writing proficiency exam. But students often postponed taking English 20 and the writing proficiency exam until they were in their final semester, a situation that was possible due to a lack of sequencing and oversight within the system.

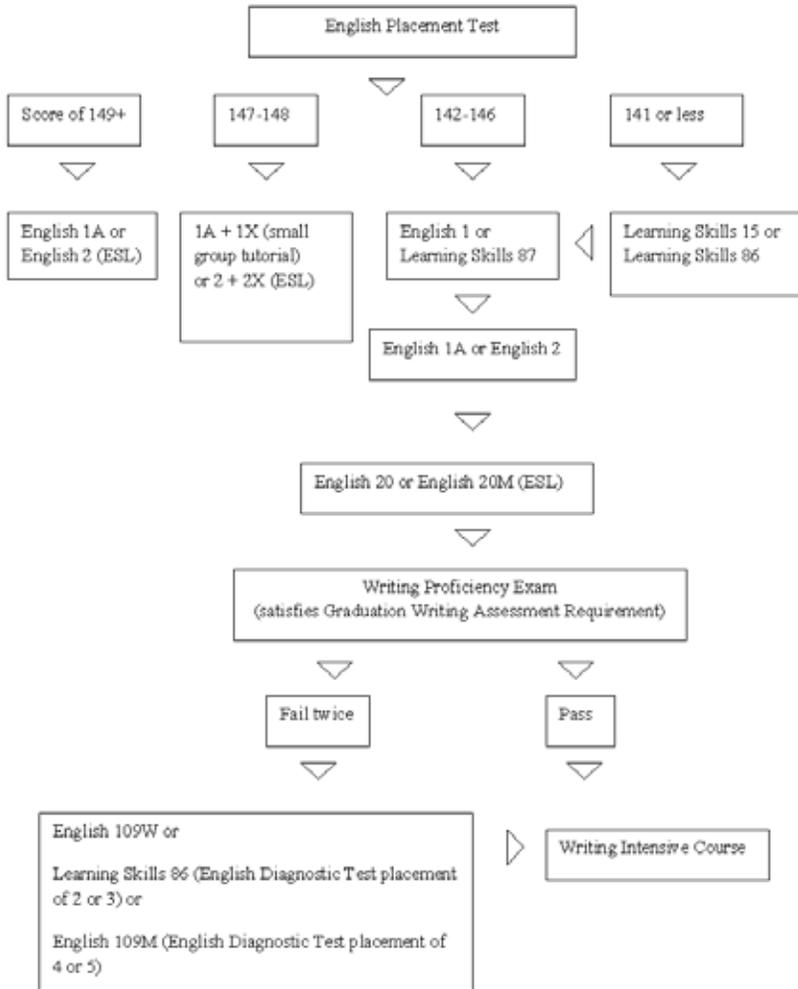


Figure 3. Campus Writing Program Flowchart

The campus writing program was built on what Senge would label negative “reinforcing processes.” Senge defines “reinforcing processes” as processes in a system that continuously reinforce each other, creating a cycle that can be either positive or negative. The reinforcing process began with

students being labeled deficient by a standardized test and placed into non-credit-bearing courses, which in turn reinforced their own lack of confidence in their abilities and caused teachers to believe that these students didn't belong in college, which led to lowered expectations for students and teachers. This negative reinforcing process was repeated again in the junior year. The system forced a handful of writing specialists to be held responsible for "remediating" underprepared students, and removed instructors in the disciplines from any substantial involvement or investment in the campus writing program. This allowed instructors in the disciplines to simply blame the English department when their students struggled with writing, a reinforcing process that would never end since the system was not built to adequately support students in their writing across the curriculum.

Of course, not all of the actors in the system agreed with the WPAs' perceptions of the campus writing program. Some subcommittee members felt, for example, that the long sequence of "remediation" was necessary, and that the timed writing tests were useful ways of sorting and certifying. Checkland warns that in the initial stages of systems thinking it's important to imagine the best possible conceptual models for the system and to avoid lapsing into describing the system that is already in place (170), and this is especially true at academic institutions that have entrenched structures, where faculty may have difficulty imagining other possibilities for teaching and assessing writing. Checkland argues that using key verbs is an effective way to begin to define an ideal of the system. In order to describe the ideal system using key verbs, the subcommittee began the second stage of the systems thinking process, defining an alternative model of the system, by creating a list of what we wanted from students and faculty in our ideal campus writing program.

#### THE SECOND STAGE: RECOGNIZING IDEOLOGICAL DIFFERENCES AND DEFINING AN ALTERNATIVE MODEL OF THE SYSTEM

Defining an alternative model of the system is a key stage in the systems thinking process, and to help us create a list of characteristics of our ideal campus writing program I asked the subcommittee to draw on a number of important suprasystems: Council of Writing Program Administrators (CWPA), Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC), and National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE). These organizations' position statements, and a previous site visit by a CWPA consultant-evaluator, were critical in persuading the faculty across disciplines on the subcommittee that our institution was working under outdated conceptual models of literacy, and that there were disciplinary best

practices that we could look to as we rethought our model. The position statements from professional organizations and the recommendations of the site visit were used again when we presented the proposal to the faculty senate.

The subcommittee took a number of meetings to reach consensus on the following characteristics of our ideal campus writing program:

- Students will write in a variety of rhetorical situations: for a variety of audiences and purposes in a variety of genres, both print and multimedia.
- Students will use writing to learn: to invent, draft, and revise; to explore their own ideas and experiences; and to discover what they have to say in both formal and informal exploratory writing assignments.
- Students will engage in writing as a process that includes invention, revision, and editing, and will receive feedback from peers and instructors throughout the writing process.
- Students will learn to use a variety of reading strategies, read a variety of print and electronic texts, and use writing to analyze, evaluate, and reflect upon what they have read.
- Students will engage in extended research and will learn to enter into the discourse communities of their disciplines: to cite, synthesize, and evaluate multiple sources.
- Students will write and will read frequently at all stages of their writing career in a sequence that begins with composition courses and moves toward writing in the major.
- Students will understand that writing is a critical tool for learning content knowledge as well as an important ability for their careers beyond the university.
- Faculty will view the responsibility for teaching writing as campus-wide and will appreciate the value of using writing to initiate students to the ways of thinking of their discipline.
- Faculty will feel invested in the campus writing program and will play a greater role in the campus-wide teaching and assessment of writing.
- Faculty will be given the support needed to help improve student literacy across disciplines and will be rewarded for integrating more reading and writing in their courses.

It is important to highlight that these characteristics of an alternative system describe actions of both students *and* faculty. Had there not been tension at our university between faculty and administration, ideally this list

of characteristics of an ideal campus writing program would have more explicitly described actions of administrators as well. In systems thinking, as many stakeholders as possible should be represented in discussions of the current system and in models of alternative systems.

The “critical” in “Critical Systems Thinking” was key in these early stages, since the WPAs had to make our ideologies explicit to the subcommittee and argue that the sequence of testing and remediation acted to oppress students based on race and class. Checkland emphasizes that it is important for the actors in the system to engage in extensive debate as they define the system and consider what the system’s goals should be, and for CST theorists this debate should also involve interrogating ideologies. We could have started our subcommittee meetings with concrete ideas for tweaking the campus writing program, but instead we spent multiple meetings debating over our ideological differences and shaping learning goals. Some subcommittee members were impatient at first and wanted us to start talking “nuts and bolts,” but it was critical that we engaged in these first stages of CST rather than charging ahead without examining and critiquing the ideologies that informed the system.

#### THE THIRD STAGE: FINDING POINTS OF LEVERAGE TO CHANGE THE SYSTEM

Senge argues that the most enduring and effective changes to a system occur when we find the critical points of leverage, where the least amount of effort can enact the most amount of change. For CST, this change needs to involve not only a less segregated system but also one that moves toward liberation for oppressed groups. Once we had developed a revised conceptual model of the campus writing program, the subcommittee began to brainstorm a variety of changes we might make. Some proposed changes fit our conceptual model but would have required such a dramatic change to the system that they would not have provided us with any leverage. As Banathy argues, all systems have restraints, and we need to be realistic about the nature of change in the face of a complex, open system like a campus writing program. For example, the WPAs on the subcommittee proposed a longitudinal portfolio to replace the rising junior timed writing exam. The learning skills coordinator, who oversaw a curriculum focused on timed writing exams, argued that this would lead to plagiarism. Her argument, along with concerns by the faculty on the subcommittee about a workload increase due to scoring portfolios as compared with the efficiency of the timed exam, was enough to persuade a majority of the subcommittee to vote against the portfolio option. The WPAs would have also liked to

replace the remediation sequence with a two-semester cohort-based stretch composition course in the English department. This would have had the effect of removing the remedial stigma from composition courses, as well as giving students baccalaureate credit for whichever composition course they were placed into. However, this change would have also meant an abrupt dismantling of the learning skills department, which was an established department, and the coordinator of the learning skills department argued vehemently against a stretch course and persuaded the subcommittee to vote against it. The implementation of a stretch composition course, like the creation of a portfolio assessment, was not something the system was ready to accept.

Other proposed changes would have merely tweaked the current system but would have provided little leverage for enduring and systemic change—for example, the learning skills coordinator's desire to have learning skills composition courses count for baccalaureate credit, which would have done little to end the conflict between the learning skills department and the English department or to end the segregation of multilingual students into a "basic skills" curriculum. What were needed were smaller changes that were possible within the current system but worked toward a different mental model. We needed changes that would lay the foundation for further reforms once the revised system began to structure different behaviors. As much as the WPAs would have liked to make rapid and dramatic changes to the system, as Senge argues, "Faster is slower" (62). Any dramatic changes would have risked being voted down by the senate, or implemented by the senate but without the necessary support from the campus.

The English department writing programs coordinator was the one who found the ideal point of leverage within the system. She suggested a change that appeared slight but actually helped us challenge the ideology of the old system and rethink the entire sequence of the system. She proposed changing the chancellor's office mandated upper-division graduation writing assessment requirement from a passing score on the rising junior timed writing test to a grade of C- or better in the writing intensive course. She was aware that the campus was not yet ready to abandon the test altogether, and so she suggested changing the rising junior exam to a placement test that could be taken only after students had completed the second composition course, English 20. She also suggested providing students the option of bypassing the test altogether by self-placing into a junior-level writing course taught in the English department, English 109, a course that students would take before their writing intensive course. This was the course most students had to take when they failed the rising junior exam twice in the old system.

This seemingly small change wound up influencing the entire system of the campus writing program. It was the point of leverage we were looking for in order to make significant structural and ideological change. The change in the rising-junior assessment shifted the conceptual model from testing to placement and teaching; from a one-shot timed test as measuring and certifying writing ability to a course, the writing intensive course. It made the writing intensive course the centerpiece of the campus writing program—the certification moment—and thus raised its visibility and its importance. With the writing intensive course as the graduation writing certification, a large part of the responsibility for teaching writing was moved from English to the entire campus: from a test administered by the English department to courses taught by faculty across disciplines.

The change to the rising junior exam (which we are now calling the “writing placement for juniors”) also put pressure for change on other parts of the system. Because the exam would become a placement for the writing intensive course, and the writing intensive course would certify the graduation writing assessment requirement, students would be more likely to take writing courses in a more logical sequence. If they couldn’t take the exam until after they had completed English 20, the second composition course, then students would be far less likely to put off that course until they were graduating seniors, and in turn less likely to put off taking the writing placement for juniors, since they needed a placement on the exam to register for a writing intensive course.

This sequence created a closer connection between English 20 and the writing intensive courses, and that connection provided a rationale for the English department writing programs coordinator to include in our proposal to the senate a change in the English 20 curriculum from an instructor’s choice theme course—often based on a literary novel—to a course focused on introducing students to writing across disciplines. Similarly, under the improved sequence English 109—the junior-level academic writing course—would now be a stepping stone to the writing intensive course, and because of this change the graduation writing assessment coordinator had leverage to propose a revision to the English 109 curriculum, from a generic academic argument course to a “writing in the major” course in which students rhetorically analyze the reading, writing, and researching conventions in their major. The seemingly minor change in a single test helped completely transform curriculum in two essential writing courses.

Another effect of the change was to introduce the concept of self-placement, and the word “placement” replaced the words “exam” and “proficient”—a new vocabulary that reflected a new conceptual model and, in the context of CST, served as an ideological shift toward liberation and

away from the oppression of timed tests. “Interdependence” is a key concept in systems thinking, and by finding the right point of leverage in the system we were able to put pressure on the entire system to change due to the interdependent nature of systems. We were creating a new and positive reinforcing process: a small change that could build and build on itself, reinforcing different kinds of behaviors among participants in the system.

#### THE SYSTEM TRANSFORMED: POSITIVE REINFORCING PROCESSES

The reading and writing subcommittee’s proposed changes to the campus writing program were approved by the faculty senate in 2006. Since that time, the WPAs at my institution have seen the power of reinforcing processes take effect. One example is the writing intensive requirement. With the writing intensive course now certifying both a general education requirement and the graduation writing assessment requirement, there has been a renewed interest on campus in the writing intensive course. The WPAs have worked in focus groups with writing intensive teachers to create shared learning outcomes and develop the course criteria to make writing intensive courses more academically rigorous, and the university assessment coordinator is focusing on the writing intensive requirement as a place for university-wide assessment. A senate class size task force included the writing intensive course in its report, recommending that the course be capped at thirty. The graduation writing assessment coordinator is currently working on a proposal that we hope will lead the campus to re-envision the writing intensive requirement, moving away from the single-course model to the certification of writing intensive majors. This would involve the reading and writing subcommittee certifying required sequences of courses within departments as satisfying the graduation writing assessment requirement, so that any student who completes the certified major would meet the writing assessment requirement. The leverage of the change that made the writing intensive course satisfy the graduation writing assessment requirement rather than a timed test created a reinforcing process that inevitably led to renewed emphasis on the writing intensive requirement within the system. All of the actors in the system remained the same, but the new system structured new behaviors.

A number of suprasystems have recently intervened to change the first-year assessment and coursework in our campus writing program at a more rapid pace than the WPAs had imagined. Both the board of trustees and chancellor’s office were threatening to outsource developmental writing programs, and at the same time an English council made up of a group of English faculty from across the branches of our state university was devel-

oping position statements against the deficit model of remediation and in favor of directed self-placement and two-semester stretch courses. Our provost asked us to pilot a credit-bearing stretch course that would include students who would have normally been placed into non-credit-bearing “remedial” courses. The two-semester, cohort-based stretch course expanded rapidly: the learning skills faculty has been folded into the English department and there are no more “remedial” composition courses. Along with the stretch course, we are developing directed self-placement for incoming first-year students, a move that might not have been possible without the 2006 campus shift in the conceptual model of students having to pass a rising junior test to students having the option of self-placement into the junior-level writing course. Figure 4 is a flowchart of the new version of the campus writing program as we expect it to look in the next few years.

#### ADVICE FOR APPLYING CRITICAL SYSTEMS THINKING PRINCIPLES

I will end this article with some general advice for applying the CST methodology that I hope will be useful to WPAs across institutional contexts. Each systems problem is an “unstructured problem” and one that is context-specific, but some general principles of systems thinking can be applied in a broad way to almost any institutional context.

*Work for change at the systems level rather than tinkering with an isolated course, program, or department by finding points of leverage within the system.* In their argument for institutional critique, Porter et al. advise WPAs to “look for gaps or fissures, places where resistance and change are possible” (631). In a systems view, these places of change involve points in the system where conceptual models can be changed, and where a negative reinforcing process can be turned into a positive reinforcing process. At our institution, changing a single test from a certification of writing ability to a placement instrument and moving the certification to the writing intensive course had the effect of forcing us to rethink the sequence of our entire campus writing program, encouraging us to change curriculum in multiple courses and causing the rest of the campus to rethink the use of a timed writing test as a certification of writing ability. Because the rising junior test had relationships with many different parts of the system and many actors within the system, it was a strong point of leverage for making systemic change.

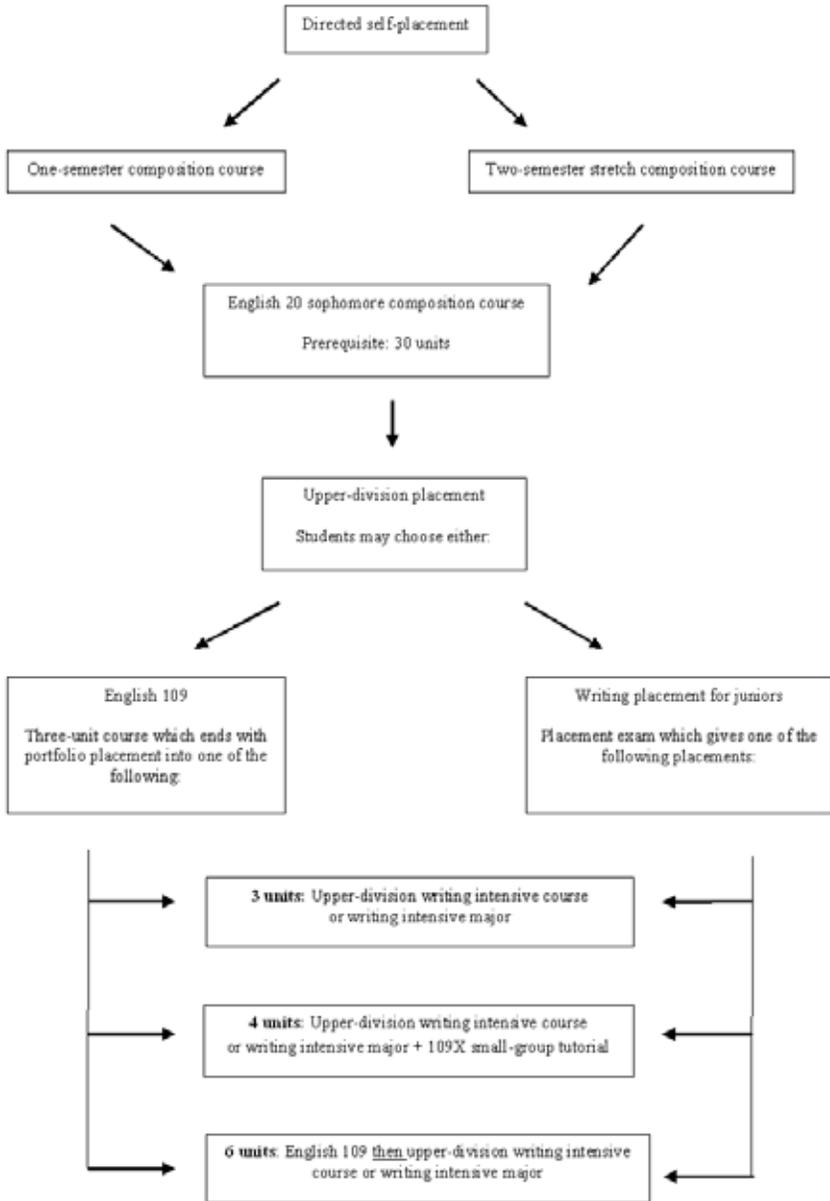


Figure 4 Future Campus Writing Program Flowchart

The WPAs could have spent much energy trying to reform the sophomore composition course or working on getting students academic credit for learning skills courses, and those efforts might have brought about a short-

term change, but they would not have had a sweeping transformation since neither of those elements of the system had a high level of interaction with other parts of the system.

*Create structures for making change at the systems level.* Without the faculty senate reading and writing subcommittee, the WPAs at my institution would have had difficulty proposing changes to the entire system. It would have been equally difficult for us to involve actors from so many parts of the system in the process of making change. The subcommittee was a point of leverage in the system, since it was composed of numerous actors in the system (WPAs, faculty across disciplines, the learning skills department, the administration), and it frequently interacted with other high-leverage components of the system (other faculty senate committees and the senate as a whole). WPAs who are at institutions that do not have a senate committee devoted to writing should work to form such a committee in order to gain better leverage within the bureaucratic system.

*Look beyond individual actors within the system and focus on the ways the system structures behavior.* When a department chair protects turf at the expense of what is best for students or a Dean undermines our efforts at reform, it is natural to become frustrated by the behavior of individuals. But as Senge points out, “Systems cause their own crises” (40). In the case of our writing program, individual actors who sought to protect their remediation programs or their share of the general education pie were to a large degree behaving in ways that were reinforced by the structure of the system.

*Focus on systemic oppression and its relation to the conceptual model that underlies the system and that the system normalizes.* Our approach to transforming our campus writing program rested on two underlying CST principles: that all systems operate from ideologies, and that these ideologies become normalized and go unchallenged as the system grows more and more rigid. Exposing race and class biases in remediation programs and timed writing assessments may be difficult and uncomfortable for WPAs, but connecting to suprasystems such as CWPA, CCCC, and NCTE can assist in framing our ideological critiques in the context of national best practices. In addition to students, writing instructors are often the victims of oppression due to conceptual models that view composition as non-disciplinary. Although in making changes to our campus writing program we did not address the oppression of writing instructors at our institution in the form of contingent labor and increasing workload, this is another area where CST can be effective. Another application of CST that we did not address in making

changes at our institution is the oppression the composition program itself faced. Had we focused on this aspect of the system, CST would have helped us to recognize the ways that lack of respect for WPA disciplinary expertise and the politics of being a minority group within a literature-dominant English department (as opposed to an independent writing unit) could be interrogated at the systems level.

*Do not expect rapid changes in a complex, open system like a campus writing program.* Banathy says, “Remembering that all systems have constraints can make you more realistic about the nature of change” (*Developing 2*). Campus writing programs are simply too complex, and their boundaries too open, to change rapidly. The WPAs at my institution would have liked to have seen a quick end to timed writing tests and basic skills remedial courses, and the immediate implementation of a longitudinal portfolio, but trying to force changes that are not yet possible due to the constraints of the system can lead to both frustration and a loss of political capital. Some of our frustration as WPAs comes from unrealistic expectations about how rapidly ideologies and the institutional structures that are shaped by and continuously reinforce these ideologies can be changed. Transforming both the system of our institutions and the conceptual models those systems operate under can take decades of hard work.

*Embrace the idea of perpetual change.* Perpetual change is an inherent part of CST, since it is natural that routine, rigidity, and isolation will develop in any system. The conceptual model at my institution that was effective in the 1970s is no longer effective, and the model we are working toward now will most likely no longer be useful a decade from now. WPAs who are systems thinkers must embrace the idea that we are on a perpetual quest to transform our institution as a system and set it on a course towards wholeness and positive change.

This advice regarding the application of CST to campus writing programs, and the experiences of using CST to transform the campus writing program at my institution described in this article, have broader implications for college writing. CST speaks to the need to remove timed writing tests from our campus writing programs, both as placement and assessment tools, since these tests create oppressive reinforcing processes for students and limit faculty members’ conceptual models of academic literacy. CST supports the argument against “remedial” or “basic” or “developmental” writing courses, since these courses create mental models of students as inherently deficient that become self-perpetuating because they reinforce

negative behaviors in teachers and students. CST provides further evidence of the need for a longitudinal, writing across the curriculum approach to college literacy, since the isolation of writing in only one part of the system will lead to a breakdown in the teaching of literacy in the entire system. Even though CST supports a WAC/WID approach, it also provides a strong argument for the value of the first-year writing requirement. If the current emphasis on testing and tracking in high school persists, then the composition course is the point of leverage in the system that can work against the conceptual model being imposed on the suprasystem of K-12 education. CST can help us rethink aspects of the system of postsecondary writing even as it provides us as WPAs with a methodological tool to find the points of leverage in our campus writing programs that can slowly move them from isolation to liberation.

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## Students' Rights and the Ethics of Celebration

Mark Mullen

### ABSTRACT

*The celebration of student writing in its many forms is an ethical gray area due in no small part to the appearance of celebration as an unadulterated good. Many of our celebratory practices, however, involve problematic appropriations of student work for our own purposes, some of which may run counter to established professional guidelines for the teaching of writing as laid down by the CCCC. Our current understanding of celebration as beyond the scope of professional norms is due to the failure of the CCCC to live up to the promise of the 1974 resolution concerning Students' Right to their Own Language. The CCCC has, in effect, focused on the "language" aspect of the resolution at the expense of the idea of students' rights. This has resulted in a fuzziness concerning ethical uses of student work that has allowed student work to become an index of our own obsessions. Celebrations of writing in particular highlight our desperate yearning for "authentic" writing and for purity in the pedagogical encounter.*

In the last few years, there has been no shortage of writing programs that have created events designed to celebrate the work of student writers.<sup>1</sup> Small-scale efforts, such as those at the University of Rochester, involve simply sponsoring an annual essay contest ("Celebrating Writing"). More comprehensive efforts, at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, for example, take the form of an annual event that showcases work done in various writing classes and recognizes outstanding students. Arguably the most popular model, however, is the research-based capstone event. Representative in this regard is Eastern Michigan University's (EMU) semi-annual Celebration of Student Writing. EMU's event takes the form of poster sessions, where students create presentations based on their research and then engage with one another and interested faculty. This same type of celebration is (or at least has been) offered at schools as varied in their organization and student bodies as Texas A&M-Commerce and Pennsylvania's

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California University, both of which acknowledge EMU's event as their model. Another widely adopted form of celebration is the annual publication of a student writing anthology. UMass Amherst's writing program, for example, claims that its yearly anthology "rewards our student authors with public recognition and an opportunity to have their voices heard beyond the walls of the classroom" ("Our Students' Writing").<sup>2</sup>

The celebration of student writing is now a cornerstone of our professional practice. Certainly there are many good reasons for such celebration itself to be celebrated. It provides a capstone for a course (or sequence of courses) that many students experience as demanding and not a little discouraging; it is also potentially a way for students to recognize what they've learned in a way that may assist knowledge transfer. Taken individually and collectively, however, such celebrations raise a number of questions: precisely what or whom is being celebrated? Are we celebrating the mere fact that students can write? A particular kind of writing? Features of the work of a specific student writer? Are we celebrating the writer? The student? One obvious problem with the research-writing capstone event is that it can easily become more of a celebration of research than of writing (and I say that having helped to organize several research-writing capstone events).

Texas A&M-Commerce's writing program illustrates this tendency when it tells students, "This is your chance to show off all you have learned throughout the course of the term. You are the developing expert in the research site you investigated, so it only makes sense that you should have the chance to share your work with audiences that extend beyond your classmates and instructor" ("The Celebration of Student Writing" (CSW)). This exhortation also points to two related problems. The first is the degree to which celebrations encourage students to "show off." Hewett and McRuer, writing about the first iteration of the conference at my own institution, note that students are already thoroughly immersed in a capitalist model of compulsory demonstration of abilities for which they will be suitably rewarded: "Clearly the last thing our students need is another competitive public space to demonstrate and market their "skills" " (101).

A second problem inherent in the advice to students proffered by Texas A&M-Commerce is the effect that sharing one's work is supposed to have. The vaguely articulated value to the student that comes from "exposing" one's work is crystallized in the UMass Amherst's description of its student anthology. While affording students an "opportunity to have their voices heard beyond the walls of the classroom" sounds like a fine goal, in the case of this particular program, the goal is undermined by the fact that the primary function of the anthology appears to be to serve as a compulsory text in their writing classes. While the program's intentions are noble, I

hope I'm not the only one to see something a little problematic in the re-packaging of uncompensated work that students were, after all, *required* to produce in order to create a product that other students are *required* to buy. The larger issue—highlighted in this anthology example but evident in many celebrations of student writing—is that the conception of the audience for the writing celebration remains disturbingly vague and even, on occasion, a little misguided. Thus the writing program at UMass Amherst includes PDFs of the anthology on its website in order to “broaden our students’ readership” with little apparent realization that the primary audience for a university writing program website is students and faculty of that writing program: the same people, presumably, who already have access to the anthology.

The current emphasis on celebration is the product of the convergence of two trends in writing pedagogy: the widespread acceptance of student-centered teaching and learning practices, on the one hand, and an interest in encouraging students to engage with and write for “real” publics as a way of honing both their academic writing and citizenship skills. The problem with the current emphasis on celebration—evident in the examples I have sketched above—is that in our enthusiasm to celebrate the writing (or the student, or the research. . . ) we seem to check our critical faculties at the door. I cannot emphasize too strongly that I am not charging celebration organizers with some kind of malign agenda. It is, in fact, precisely due to celebration’s appearance as an unadulterated good—what harm could possibly be done by a celebration?—that the celebration of student writing is an ethical minefield. We are all familiar with situations where good intentions can have extremely problematic side effects. At the very least, enthusiasm unaccompanied by reflection may blind us to problems with the assumptions on which our celebratory practices rest. Moreover, it is worth asking, as Hewett and McRuer do, if some forms of celebration may work *against* our attempts to develop a critical, sophisticated approach to writing in our students: by equating effective writing simply with public recognition, for example, or emphasizing conferences and anthologies as instances of celebrity and résumé-building rather than sites of intellectual exchange. Lastly, our celebratory practices deserve scrutiny not least for the fact that what we as teachers of writing seem to end up celebrating most often is actually not the student or their writing but, as I will show, our teaching and ourselves—even, paradoxically, in the act of denying the influence of our teaching.

Our professional organizations such as the CCCC and NCTE are virtually silent in terms of position statements and policy guidelines governing the use of student work in celebratory contexts. This is troubling because

some of our celebratory practices may in fact end up violating other guidelines governing the use of student work. Before I look more closely at some of these practices and their implications, I want to trace the origin of this silence to the rather ambiguous reception of what many of our formal and informal writing histories treat as the founding document of a student-centered pedagogy: the CCCC's position statement on "Students' Right to their Own Language" (hereafter SRTOL), adopted in 1974. It was this document, moreover, that played a key role in the growing sense of the teaching of writing as a field that needed to be subject to professional norms: functionally, SRTOL laid the groundwork for all the later position statements of professional practice and ethics formulated by the CCCC.

Among the wide range of position statements that the CCCC has advanced over the years, SRTOL is the only resolution centrally concerned with articulating a set of rights for students and—more importantly—positioning that set of rights as ethically distinct from our teaching practice.<sup>3</sup> Despite its pivotal role in our professional and pedagogical history, calls to rework SRTOL to accommodate the different cultural and professional circumstances of the twenty-first century have systematically been ignored; the CCCC instead rather vaguely reaffirmed the existing resolution in 2003. The CCCC refusal to rework the resolution is a response to a rather troubling possibility raised but kept contained in the original resolution. What if students were understood to possess not just conditional rights to the "dialects of their nurture" (1) but *exclusive, all-inclusive* rights to *all* their languages, including those they produce in our classes? That we do not currently have such a guiding resolution is, I argue, the enabling condition of many of our celebratory practices and also the condition that underpins some of their more problematic elements.

Naturally, I am not assuming that our everyday practices fall neatly into line behind official position statements. Nevertheless, these documents play important evidentiary, representational and formative roles: they help constitute writing studies as a discipline and influence the ways in which we represent ourselves as teachers and programs to administrators and colleagues in other disciplines. Position statements and resolutions also offer information and guidance to practitioners, an important role given that the typical route whereby people arrive at teaching in our profession (still mainly through literary study) itself isn't necessarily grounded in a strong practice of the teaching of writing (an even greater challenge for WID or WAC programs). Therefore, when I began this project, I assumed two things: 1) that most of my audience would be familiar with the SRTOL resolution, and 2) that it had exerted a profound influence on the development of our profession. The first assumption turned out not to be true at

all and the second to be under dispute. The CCCC Language Policy Committee, in its 2000 Language Knowledge and Awareness Survey, found that almost two thirds of its nearly one thousand respondents had never heard of the resolution (14).<sup>4</sup> Therefore, since the resolution now seems like a discarded relic in the midden of our profession's theoretical archaeology I quote it in full here:

We affirm the students' right to their own patterns and varieties of language—the dialects of their nurture or whatever dialects in which they find their own identity and style. Language scholars long ago denied that the myth of a standard American dialect has any validity. The claim that any one dialect is unacceptable amounts to an attempt of one social group to exert its dominance over another. Such a claim leads to false advice for speakers and writers, and immoral advice for humans. A nation proud of its diverse heritage and its cultural and racial variety will preserve its heritage of dialects. We affirm strongly that teachers must have the experiences and training that will enable them to respect diversity and uphold the right of students to their own language. (1)

While the resolution was targeted explicitly by the neo-conservative back-to-basics movement of the 1980s, this does not fully explain the oblivion to which the SRTOL resolution has been consigned; still less does it explain the partial remembering exemplified by the vague reaffirmation of the resolution in 2003.<sup>5</sup> One explanation is offered by Smitherman, one of the resolution's original authors, who highlights a crucial tension between the SRTOL initiative and the National Language Policy (NLP, often referred to as "Language Plus"), adopted in 1988. For some teachers, she notes, the latter policy may have been understood to replace the former resolution because of the perception that it focused not just on "marginalized" groups but upon the necessity of multilingual competence of everyone (369).<sup>6</sup> At least, that would be a reasonable supposition if anyone had actually heard of the NLP. In fact, the Language Policy and Awareness Survey indicates that about the same number of people had never heard of either the National Language Policy or the SRTOL resolution.

Moreover this narrative of supercession only works if we consider SRTOL to be solely concerned with language diversity. The aspect of this resolution that seems to have been forgotten most completely is that which is hidden in plain sight: in the title, in the first line. This resolution isn't just about language rights, it is about *students' rights*. The resolution and its accompanying statement potentially raise issues of power and empowerment in the classroom and prompt all teachers not simply to address issues

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of linguistic diversity but to do so within a framework of a more student-centered pedagogy.<sup>7</sup>

The original resolution is not without its problems. The supporting statement in particular is often contradictory in its treatment of language. Students, for example, have their “own” language but that language is also possessed by groups. Indeed, when the supporting statement shifts from a discussion of reading to writing, the focus changes from dialect as a language of students’ nurture, to multiple dialects as languages of choice:

In communication one may choose roles which imply certain dialects, but the decision is a social one, for the dialect itself does not limit the information which can be carried, and the attitudes may be most clearly conveyed in the dialect the writer finds most congenial. Dialects are all equally serviceable in logic and metaphor. (11)

The statement thus envisions multiple occasions for writing, but in what strikes me as a peculiarly US conception of democratic opportunity, blithely asserts that these can be navigated simply by employing an individual’s freedom of choice. What is missing is an acknowledgement of the multiple ways in which contexts of production and reception serve to constrain our language choices. (Myself, I would love to be able to convey my ideas in “the dialect the writer finds most congenial.” I am, however, routinely criticized by my colleagues for doing so, mainly because of the amount of profanity that is typically involved.) Finally, one of the very strange things about the supporting statement is that for all the attention to pedagogy, the classroom is portrayed as having very little effect on the students’ language. Students arrive in the classroom with their own dialect—the language of their nurture—and if the teaching/learning encounter goes well, they may improve their ability to articulate themselves in the dialect, but their language remains essentially unchanged. The resolution and its supporting statement are, then, ultimately shaped by a simplistic pedagogy of individual voice.

Due to these many limitations, calls mounted for a reworked version of the SRTOL that would be more in sync with changed cultural and professional circumstances surrounding the teaching of writing. For example, in 2000 the CCC Language Policy Committee’s *Language Knowledge and Awareness Survey* (LKAS) drew on a 1983 report (by the Committee on the Advisability of a Language Statement for the 1980s and 1990s) to point out that the SRTOL resolution was “a bold but isolated philosophical statement . . . [that] has had little discernible effect upon English teaching in the elementary and secondary schools” (quoted in LKAS, 27). The Language Policy Committee also forcefully recommended, among other things, that

a “*Students’ Right* document for the Twenty-First Century should be developed, one that would reflect the last quarter century’s advances in research on language and linguistic diversity” (29). The need for a new SRTOL initiative was arguably even more evident after the 2001 publication of Bruce Horner’s “‘Students’ Right,’ English Only, and Re-imagining the Politics of Language.” In a nuanced analysis, Horner argues that despite its strengths the SRTOL resolution is an example of “a pervasive, tacit policy of “English Only” in composition and of a constellation of assumptions about languages and language users, that continues to cripple both public debate on English Only and compositionists’ approaches to matters of “error”. . . .” (742). Despite such critiques the original SRTOL resolution was updated in November 2003 only with this brief statement: “Realizing the continued need to preserve our Nation’s diverse heritage of languages and language varieties, the CCCC reaffirms and upholds its 1974 position statement” (41).

The limited impact of the SRTOL upon teaching practice and the unwillingness of the 4Cs to do more than pose with the resolution for a touching family portrait is in part due to the constraining effect that resulted from an understanding of the resolution as concerned only with issues of language diversity. Even attempts to argue for a more radical role for the SRTOL still focus on language issues as the key to a full resolution of issues of power, bias, and representation (see, for example, Kinloch). An alternative approach, one that bears directly on the ethics of celebration, is suggested by Carmen Kynard in the course of an argument that both resumes the Civil Rights era conversations about language and representation that shaped the SRTOL and defends the initiative against some of the subsequent attempts to de-radicalize it.

Today the possibilities for SRTOL, always imagined and yet never fully achieved, fall squarely in line with our inadequate responses to the antisystemic nature of sixties social justice movements. The legacy of SRTOL and its current possibilities can only be understood inside of the calls for change forwarded by the Black Power Movements that exist outside of our current imaginations of and workings toward a linguistically diverse, ethno-middle class that can code-switch to match “codes of power” (Lisa Delpit’s term) instead of undoing them. (371)

Kynard’s argument that the promise of reinterpreting the SRTOL lies in seeing it not simply as a resolution about language but one whose focus is “antisystemic” changes the nature of the conversation. Horner ties this anti-systemic project to a more student-centered pedagogy. He notes that,

in making the SRTOL's gesture, what has often been overlooked is students' already existing potential and active agency—students' power—as writers, to work with, within, and through language, in their own and others' use of language, to respond to and against the material social conditions of the place in which they find themselves, in order to better that place. (755)

In fact, what Horner is advocating and what, arguably, most celebrations of writing are predicated upon, takes an additional step: the move from a student-centered pedagogy to what I would characterize as a *student-involved* pedagogy.

In this entirely laudable endeavor, two problems are immediately apparent. The first is: whose agency? Student agency is not the only kind that is at stake in our writing celebrations. At least as important to most of the celebrations I've studied or in which I've participated is the desire to foreground the event as a counter to a reductive cultural perception of writing itself as an activity that lacks meaningful agency. Equally, celebrations of writing are celebrations of the teaching of writing, a reassertion of agency by practitioners who are routinely denigrated by administrators, other academic disciplines and the culture at large. What happens when these assertions of agency begin to overwhelm the student agency that is supposed to be at the heart of our celebrations? When, for example, students become exhibits to support a particular theory of writing, or arguments for the necessity of institutional support for a writing program? What enables this slippage is a reluctance fully to consider the materiality of our celebratory practices. While Horner himself seems to be attentive to this dimension, he equates materiality simply with "conditions" and "place." Yet public conferences, anthologies, etc. are not just matters of conditions and place: they are rendered material through artifacts produced by student writers: essays, posters, PowerPoints, presentations.

From an "antisystemic" perspective, not just language differences but power differences are crucial; these power differences shape the technologies and artifactual forms underlying acts of communication. Focusing only on students' language, even in more radical re-considerations of SRTOL means, ironically, that the one question central to students' language rights never gets asked because it is so thoroughly embedded in power relationships: students may have a right to the language of their nurture, but who owns the languages produced in our classrooms and their various material instantiations? If the original resolution understands "language" to be heavily shaped by (if not entirely synonymous with) voice, and, moreover, if language is defined as both pre-existent to the classroom encounter and largely unaffected by it—if, finally, the students' right to their own language is

thereby effectively so circumscribed *as not to cover the actual writing artifacts produced in our classes*, then a number of potential issues with our professional practice are neatly avoided. The rights that are secured for students by the 2003 reaffirmation are precisely those that don't threaten our ability to use student writing in a variety of contexts—including celebrations—necessary to secure and enhance our professional presence.

Consider, for example, the CCCC position statement on assessment, a useful and considered set of guidelines for how to design and implement responsible assessment projects. But the statement has nothing to say about the use of assessment data, and it is at this point that a broader view of students' right to their own language would throw a spanner in the works of many everyday assessment practices. The common practice at my own institution, for example, is to regard all assessment data used for program development and in-house evaluation as exempt from the requirements that surround those contexts where results might be published externally as part of faculty research projects (and which need to go through an IRB approval process). If students were held to have a right to their own language, regardless of the context of its production or the purposes for which it was produced, then we would not be able to be so cavalier with our assessment usages. Likewise, the CCCC's statements on teaching in digital environments and working with electronic portfolios nowhere acknowledge the ethical implications of the fact that these technologies have facilitated our ability to reproduce and distribute student writing more easily and widely than ever before, in ways potentially not envisaged or intended by student authors or even their teachers (our annual reporting process, for example, requires that I submit a selection of student work as evidence of "effective" teaching).

Moreover, if we really believe that the students' right to their own language includes the full spectrum of languages they invent, nurture, protect, hide manipulate, fake, mangle and abandon in our classes, then one of the most problematic areas of our practice becomes the celebration of student writing. In the first place, the celebration of student writing seems to stand apart from all the other practices for which the CCCC's position statements seek to establish a set of disciplinary norms. We aren't grading student writing, we aren't providing feedback, we aren't assessing it, we aren't researching it, we aren't publishing it. . . hey, we're just celebrating it! Depending on the kind of celebration we are staging, however, we may in fact be doing some or all of these things and doing them in ways where we violate the disciplinary norms that the CCCC has tried to establish precisely because they don't seem to apply to a "celebration." To take just one example, the guidelines on the ethical conduct of research stress the importance of obtaining

the consent of any students in photographs before their publication; yet at my own institution, we have routinely violated this principle in the images we publish on the website associated with our research and writing symposium (University Writing Program).

The celebration of student writing exposes one of the central tensions in our classrooms: who is responsible (in several senses) for the writing produced therein? This is actually two questions: first, who produces the writing in our classes, and second, who then gets to speak for that writing? Students “produce” the writing, but only if we understand that act in the same light as factory workers producing widgets. Alternatively, teachers “produce” the writing, but only if we understand that act in the same light as a Hollywood producer working behind the scenes to secure the funding, keep everything on schedule, and make sure the director stays off the sauce. Celebrations of writing thus represent the point at which two premises concerning our conflicted attitude toward the classroom and our own agency meet. We want to insist upon the importance and influence of our own teaching practice; on the other hand, a desire not to take all the credit leads us to attempt to erase the influence of our labor. For the most part, our professional discourse deals with this conflict through two complementary strategies: attempting to erase the material influence of the classroom, on the one hand, and insisting upon the possibility of “authentic” student writing as the defining criteria of value.

The hunger for the authentic that saturates our professional discourse (a search for authentic moments of engagement, authentic epiphanies, authentic arguments) may seem quixotic. So much of our writing and research about teaching problematizes the classroom in useful ways. Rarely, however, do we confront the brute fact of the writing classroom itself: compared with the many non-instructional situations in which writing takes place, our classrooms are the most artificial, highly constructed, overdetermined, constrained, *systemic*, contexts imaginable. That anything “authentic” should be produced in such an artificial situation is highly unlikely. Yet this can all be made to work, the authentic can still be conjured via celebration, through an answer to the second part of the question I outlined above: who gets to speak for the writing produced in our classes? The answer, resoundingly, is that teachers do. Students may help with the logistics of our celebrations, writing teachers almost always tightly control the discourse surrounding the celebration.

This concern with authenticity is evident even in those moments where we seek to challenge its power, such as Hewett and McRuer’s discussion of the origins of the *Composition and Cultural Studies Conference*, the forerunner of my institution’s current *University Writing and Research Symposium*.

Their article is a deft and focused analysis of the way in which composition teachers and student writers are enmeshed in the university's implementation of the capitalist drive toward increased "flexibility" and "efficiency," and the authors argue persuasively for student writing events conceived of as, in effect, resistant anti-celebrations. Both authors are, as I noted earlier, highly skeptical of traditional forms of celebration that locate the authenticity of writing in an act of individual genius. This fixation on forms of student expression, they argue, tends both to obscure and forestall the possibility that students might adopt an activist stance in their writing:

The relocation of student voices that an activist pedagogy encourages helps to stall the production of passive student bodies and of environments that can only protect monovocal, hegemonic speech. Student activists have composed, and can continue to compose, alternative publics. Their activism has the potential to disrupt the flexible university as they write into existence new ways of knowing and as they collectively and disputatiously write their way into new locations. (106)

Yet while Hewett and McRuer mount a fierce critique of authorized institutional skills-based definitions of authenticity, they simply shift the goal posts in order to privilege a celebration of a different kind of authentic writing: activist writing that "authentically" challenges hegemonic cultural narratives.

Not surprisingly, therefore, among the CCCC position documents I referenced earlier, the very few moments that seem to imply a more comprehensive student ownership of writing and utterance betray a yearning for authenticity. The guidelines for electronic portfolios, for example, include a section on "Virtual Identities" that argues "Students represent themselves through personalized information that conveys a web-savvy and deliberately constructed ethos for various uses of the e-portfolio. Students manage those identities by having control over artifacts and who sees them." While the idea that we can manage identity simply through controlling access seems more than a little simplistic, it is the insistence that students construct a virtual identity through "personalized" information that is the attention grabber. Although the suggested principle seems to partake of the relentless insistence upon the BlogFaceTweeing publication of self so characteristic of our online environments, it also seems to betray a deep fear of the fact that the real power of a virtual identity is in fact to do just the opposite: fake the self.

This hunger for authenticity, the belief in our students' ability to provide it and in our special teacherly ability to recognize it, is also evident

in the CCCC's position statement on "Guidelines for Ethical Conduct of Research." In the section that describes the importance of quoting students fairly, accurately, and with permission, we are told that "Composition specialists report written and spoken statements accurately. They interpret the statements in ways that are faithful to the writer's or speaker's intentions, and they provide contextual information that will enable others to understand the statements the way the writer intended." While the intention behind the resolution is undoubtedly to prevent the misappropriation of student writing, is this not also a rather remarkable instance of the long discredited intentional fallacy offered as a rationale by one of our major professional writing organizations? It is precisely this kind of slippage, the moment where our official discourse doesn't quite walk the established theoretical talk, which suggests that our ideals of political responsibility remain in conflict with some very traditional notions of the nature, purpose, and authorship of writing. It is this conflict that generates the ambiguity surrounding many of our celebratory enterprises.

Elsewhere I have argued that even as specific notions of voice and intention underwent a post-structuralist hammering by rhetoric and composition scholars, the continued fascination with the broader category of authenticity on the part of writing teachers is due in large part to our discomfort with the idea that our classrooms are essentially simulation chambers that task students with producing the best possible simulations of "real" writing (Mullen). To be sure, in this discomfort, there is a more wide-ranging anxiety at work. Turkle, for example, has argued that given our awareness that we inhabit a broader culture of simulation, "the notion of authenticity is for us what sex was for the Victorians—threat and obsession, taboo and fascination" (Turkle 4). Yet, cultural anxieties notwithstanding, there is no reason why the more specific concept of the classroom as simulation space should make writing teachers uncomfortable; in other academic disciplines and particularly outside academia, simulation occupies a highly valued place in many learning contexts.

That there is nevertheless discomfort can be traced to two sources. The first is that while the "post-structuralist turn" produced a lot of light and noise, it did not do a lot of damage to the notion of "real" writing as the distinctive product of an individual subjectivity. Thus, our professional literature continues to highlight new pathways to the production of authentic writing, particularly in the form of teaching initiatives that supposedly produce "real" writing in "real contexts" (the service learning movement, for example, is rife with such claims). The second reason is that an ideal of authenticity is built into what is for many composition scholars and practitioners the bedrock of their practice: critique. Recently, Lynch has argued

that scholars representing what he terms “the apocalyptic turn” in composition all offer challenges to the profession’s definition of critique as the ability to unmask the real, the authentic, the true: “As it is traditionally defined, critical thinking suggests a revelation: throwing down the idols and getting behind the shadows” (Lynch 458–59). The problem, Lynch notes, particularly for critical pedagogy, is that “To spend all one’s time insisting that reality is mere shadow is to spend all one’s time looking at mere shadow” (469), thus producing a “trained incapacity” to see the world around us and intervene in it productively (463).

The irony here is that simulation or, to be blunt, the fake, may actually be a more productive description of both our everyday practices and their potential than the more idealized notions of authenticity. As Eubanks and Schaeffer argue in their bracing “A Kind Word for Bullshit: The Problem of Academic Writing,” misrepresentation of intent, fakery and inauthenticity of all kinds abound in both our disciplinary writing and our classrooms. If you pressed most writing teachers, they would acknowledge that the best we can hope for from our classes is to aspire to the “as if:” Students write *as if* they were writing for an authentic audience, *as if* they were doing authentic research, *as if* they were developing an authentic voice. Yet in the context of the celebration of writing, the “as if” of our classes drops out. As I have demonstrated at the beginning of this essay, our various celebratory contexts—ranging from writing prizes, published collections (electronic or print) of student writing, student writing and research colloquia, symposia, portfolia—all are branded with the implicit promise that this writing is, in some vaguely defined sense, authentic. You never see an anthology of “excellent” student writing prefaced by this comment: “These examples of student writing were produced in classes that students were required to take, in sections chosen mostly on the basis of the number of chili peppers the instructor received on RateMyProfessor, and where they had little or no choice in the kind of assignments they were required to complete, much less whether or not to complete them.” This, in fact, seems to be what our celebrations are really celebrating: the dream of a decontextualized ideal of authenticity that stands outside the classroom as a necessarily compromised site of writing production.

Moreover, many celebratory occasions (particularly published collections and research presentations) establish their authenticity in accordance with the position statements that treat a student’s work as the product of a single authorial genius, independent of the work of peer reviewers or, tellingly, our own teaching labor. In the early years of The George Washington University’s *University Writing and Research Symposium*, we experimented with group presentations as an alternative to such celebrations of individu-

alism. Some classes staged collective performances based on research work into memorializing the Holocaust. An entire class guided their session audience through an experiment in manifesto writing. About a dozen students spread across two sections I was teaching planted one of their number on a traditional panel and then “interrupted” his presentation on gender and videogames to re-stage the cut-and-thrust of a vigorous online discussion we had had on the topic. Since that time, however, such experiments in a collective and collaborative notion of research, writing, presentation, and celebration have diminished until in its final year, the old Symposium was entirely given over to traditional academic panel presentations. Ostensibly this was in response to the need to streamline the symposium to accommodate more students, render the selection process more efficient, and maximize the use of venues. The fact that our entire faculty, including myself, acquiesced in this shift suggests, however, that our logistical imaginations are heavily shaped by the single-author model, the “natural” mode to which we will default when things get organizationally challenging (We have since extensively reworked this event and I discuss those changes briefly below).

There are, of course, powerful sociocultural factors that bear upon our seemingly perverse desire to insist on writing as the product of the lone literary genius even as evidence piles up refuting simplistic conceptions of authenticity, voice and authorship.<sup>8</sup> It is also entirely possible, as Eubanks and Schaeffer point out, to build an engaging pedagogy around the inauthentic, a concept they term “productive bullshit” that embraces “faking it” as a necessary precursor to “making it.” This, they note, is a concept that goes back to Isocrates: one needs to act as if one is already what one hopes to become (377, 385). However, what interests me here is that the uses to which we put students’ writing in the act of celebration (especially when understood through the lens of a more expansive definition of SRTOL) deny the authenticity of student writing even in the act of insisting upon it. Or rather, it may be authentic, but it isn’t the students’ own. For if students really do “own” their own language (in however problematic a sense), they might not authorize some of the uses to which we put their work, even in the context of celebrating it/them.

How often in our published works is an argument that purports to be about the student and/or their writing really about the teacher? Look, colleagues, this excellent outstanding, engaged, mature writing was summoned forth by my teaching (I myself have used this move in conference presentations and publications). For example, consider the way that Hewett and McRuer (the title of whose article is “Composing Student Activists”) introduce their subject: “In this chapter, we discuss the way radical teachers working within a cultural studies tradition (such as ourselves) work against

the dominant ideological framework, encouraging the development of—and “going public” with—students’ varied creative abilities. . .” (98). This is an enlightened view of students, but at the same time it is the teachers who are the active agents in this piece: they are the ones doing all the encouraging, interpreting, defining, supporting, etc. At the same time, Hewett and McRuer clearly recognize the “hero-teacher” model rearing its ugly head and struggle against it. At one point, discussing a student panel that had the potential to become quite contentious, the authors respond: “However, we were committed to composing student-activists—meaning not that we were committed to shaping student-activists into some prescribed activist mold, but rather that we were committed to understanding the writers and speakers with who we had worked all semester as composing student-activists” (104). The double sense of “composing” here—students as people who are shaped and who are themselves active shapers—is possibly deliberate, but notice how, even in an obvious attempt to back away from the “hero-teacher” move, the phrase “we were committed” is repeated three times in the space of as many lines.

Trying to efface the influence of our teaching is not necessarily a more ideologically defensible position than adopting the standpoint of the hero-teacher. Both roles do, however, point to the degree to which we writing teachers seem unable to avoid tying ourselves to a notion of an authentic writing performance in order to justify our sense of self and the legitimacy of our pedagogies. In the context of celebration, the writing is treated as if it is generated by a single student author, with the teacher having done little more than provide the necessary classroom space. Behind the scenes of these celebrations, however, the writing is often firmly tied to the authenticity of the teacher’s pedagogy itself. I witnessed the latter phenomena in later iterations of the conference whose origins are detailed by Hewett and McRuer. In corridors and cafes after and during the conference, student writing was routinely treated as an index of the teaching that produced it; sometimes in a joking way, often in the form of collegial compliment, but occasionally to denigrate the pedagogy of particular teachers.

In a larger sense, therefore, our celebrations do not stand outside the often fraught institutional contexts in which our writing programs are embedded. Indeed, the tensions inherent in those institutional contexts often call these celebrations into being. The faculty members in my program, for example, value our own student research and writing symposium as a tactical resource in various ongoing battles with our administration; this is perhaps inevitable, given the politics of our institutions. However, when students sign up to be celebrated (assuming that they do sign up) are

they consenting to the use of their writing in administrative power games, or as a stick with which to beat their teacher?

Many of the issues that I've raised here may not in fact present any kind of problem for our practice when fully considered. Perhaps, too, celebrating student writing simply casts into sharp relief many of the ethical challenges that are endemic to our profession. The problematic appropriation of student writing, for example, is of a piece with the ethics of representation we often struggle with in the company of our students, the maze of nuances that distinguish speaking for someone from speaking in place of someone from speaking with someone . . . and so on. The difficulty of escaping the trap wherein a discourse that purports to be about our students is in fact mostly about us may reflect the institutional and professional pressures that ensure that even our best work cannot free itself from the taint of shameless self-promotion.

Nevertheless, it is significant that one of our major professional organizations has been attentive to promoting ethical behavior in a wide range of practices associated with teaching and researching writing but the ethical gray areas inherent in the idea of "celebration" have not been fully considered. The issues surrounding the celebration of student writing—who is being celebrated, by whom, and for what purpose—are both illuminated by the idea that students possess a right to their own language and raise a set of provocative questions. However, the practical legacy of SRTOL seems to be just the opposite of what was intended. Far from focusing our attention on classroom practice and the participation of both language *and* teaching in systems of power and privilege, the resolution has blinded us to those by providing us with a discourse replete with authentic gestures of recognition. We shouldn't forget that it was SRTOL that strongly affirmed students' right not just to "the dialects of their nurture" but to the "dialects in which they find their own identity and style," a move that sets the stage for an authenticity grail quest. Therefore, without wanting to go all Oliver Stone on the issue, the reluctance to even revisit the SRTOL resolution, much less rework it, has at the very least been professionally convenient for the CCCC and its membership. The idea that students possess rights that inhere even in a context where they are being celebrated bears on a more troubling question: to what extent is the celebratory impulse, seemingly so well-intentioned and worthy, participating in a process that treats writing within a framework of compulsory publicity? To what degree are our celebrations implicated in the various educational movements that insist that learning can be reduced to externalized, immediately measurable demonstrations of outcomes? In a troubling irony, our fixation on an unreflective celebration of authenticity may reinforce the same reductive, systemic,

consumption-driven view of writing that so many of our celebrations are attempting to overcome.

I have never been a fan of professional over-bureaucratization, even (or maybe especially) when it is well-meaning; the extraordinary hoops that many of us have to jump through to acquire human-subjects approval for even small-scale usage of student work is an example of how a justifiable concern can give birth to an unnecessarily burdensome process. The case for a separate resolution on the part of our professional organizations, one dealing explicitly with celebrating student work, might, therefore, seem flimsy, especially when elements applicable to the ethical situations inherent in celebratory situations seem to be present already in other resolutions. The “CCCC Guidelines for the Ethical Conduct of Research in Composition Studies” to which I alluded earlier, for example, emphasizes the importance of voluntary participation on the part of research subjects and their right to withdraw at any time.

As I have been arguing throughout this piece, however, it is precisely the ambiguous nature of celebration and the diffusion of applicable guidelines across a variety of official documents that make celebrations of student writing such an intriguingly problematic area. I would wager that there are few if any writing teachers who would consider their celebrations to be research in a way that would make the research guidelines applicable. Nevertheless, official resolutions are not the only solution; in the first place, their effect on practice presupposes widespread familiarity with official policy and professional guidance, a familiarity which, as I noted earlier, is in question even with some of our profession's most historically important initiatives. For that reason, I would suggest that there are three additional factors we as teachers can keep in mind when planning celebratory events at our own institutions.

First, our laudatory events should not celebrate writing in general but specific aspects of writing, lest they end up trivializing the very thing they seek to celebrate. To understand the danger inherent in generic celebrations of writing, consider for a moment a very different context and example that come from my current research interest: *The Art of Videogames* exhibition held recently at the Smithsonian American Art Museum in Washington, D.C. This visually stunning exhibition combined hardware artifacts, commentary from designers and game studies scholars, playable demonstrations of games, interviews with players, and a variety of conceptual materials to argue for the intellectual sophistication and cultural importance of videogames. It was nevertheless an exhibition whose deeply conservative approach betrayed its anxiety concerning its central premise: that videogames are art. This anxiety is palpable even in the exhibition's hedging

title—many would concede that videogames involve art while not rising to the level of Art—as well as in its traditional historical organization (from “primitive beginning” to “sophisticated graphic wonder”).

To understand why this is a problem, consider the situation of painting. No one organizes an exhibition to prove that painting can be an art form. Exhibitions instead revolve around the work of particular artists, or periods, or genres, or cultural problematics. I fear we are in the same boat as the Smithsonian exhibit if we engage in abstract celebrations of writing. There is a whiff of desperation about the idea that writing in general needs to be celebrated: “no, really, writing is cool! You’ll see! Being a writer will make you lots of mon—. . . well, ok, it will get you a lot of respect. . . . Well, it is just really cool. That’s all!” Campus celebrations should instead simply assume that the awesomeness of writing is a fact and build events around more specific facets of writing: writing that contributes to public awareness of science, for example, or activist writing, autobiographical writing, writing involving archival work, and so on.<sup>9</sup>

An alternative response to the generic celebration problem is to make the celebration of writing almost a byproduct. We have taken this approach in my own writing program by turning our annual celebration into an explicitly pedagogical activity. The Research and Writing Conference brings in students from the previous semester of our first-year writing course to talk to students taking the course in the current semester. The student panels are geared explicitly toward offering other students advice about research and writing strategies and a discussion of the intellectual process that students went through while crafting their major research project. Students attending the conference receive a lot of specific advice from speakers to whom they are more disposed to listen (however much the advice may replicate what their own teachers have been telling them). Not every student in the audience walks away convinced that writing is a worthily complex, intellectually challenging and personally enriching activity. The fact that writing is all of these things, however, forms the organizational belief system that provides the framework for the event: we let the event show this, rather than feel that this is a truth that needs to be “celebrated.”

My final suggestion returns us to the document with which I began, the CCCC position statement on “Students’ Right to their Own Language.” If student writing is to be celebrated, then it is perhaps students who should be setting the agenda by deciding what aspects of their writing need to be celebrated or even whether their work needs to be celebrated at all. The focus of the SRTOL initiative was to emphasize that students are partners in a learning process. When students are only the subject of the event rather than being active in shaping the event itself, there is always the tendency

to reduce students to exhibits, curiosities framed by an unintentional but insistent diminution: "This is excellent work. . .for a student." Implementing all three of these suggestions could produce fundamentally different kinds of events. For example, students and faculty might collaborate on planning a half-day seminar on effective techniques for writing about science, one that put examples of work by students and faculty on an equal footing. Through such events we would not be abandoning our pedagogical mission, but would rather be strengthening it, in an ethically defensible manner, one consistent with the larger role for student expertise envisaged by the original SRTOL resolution almost thirty years ago.

## NOTES

1. An early version of this article was presented as "Gatecrashing the Student Writing Kegger" at the 2009 Council of Writing Program Administrators Conference in Minneapolis. I would like to thank my colleagues Rachel Riedner, Christy Zink, and Phyllis Ryder for feedback on an early draft of this paper, as well as Joseph Janangelo, Deb Dew, Alice Horning, and the anonymous reviewers of *WPA: Writing Program Administration* for their many helpful suggestions.

2. While many of these celebratory practices seem to date from the mid- to late-2000s, my former institution, the University of California at Irvine was creating annual student writing anthologies in the mid-90s. Likewise, the first version of my current institution's writing event, a multi-day research and writing conference, was piloted in 1998.

3. The resolution also stands apart from its descendants in its desire to make its subject visible as a contested domain of intellectual inquiry, supplementing the text of the resolution itself with an elaborate discussion of scholarly research into dialect and a substantial scholarly bibliography. In contrast, future resolutions and position statements would confine themselves mainly to recommendations and an articulation of best practices.

4. Interestingly, the lack of awareness of the resolution seems to correlate with the organizational affiliation of the survey respondents. The authors of the *Language Knowledge and Awareness Study* note that roughly 62% of their sample were members of NCTE with the remaining 38% belonging to CCCC. As Smitherman notes, the NCTE never adopted the SRTOL resolution, passing only a watered down version; ironically, however, despite the fact that fierce lobbying by the CCCC in order to secure NCTE support ultimately proved futile, many people are still under the impression that the NCTE authored the SRTOL resolution (371-72). The Committee on Language Policy's survey may suggest that the NCTE's reluctance to support the resolution plays a role in the lack of awareness of the initiative on the part of composition teachers.

5. Smitherman's 1999 retrospective concerning SRTOL demonstrates that 4Cs itself played a role in limiting the impact of the resolution on teaching practice as it flinched in the face of the conservative backlash (364–65). Similarly, Wible argues, following Horner, that basic writing pedagogy secured a foothold in the academy precisely because it turned its back on some of the more radical implications of classroom initiatives like those of the LCRG and successfully fused its approaches with those of the Back-to-Basics movement (466).

6. In fact, the problem with the “Students’ Right” movement seems to have been that its focus was understood to be even more exclusive than the broad category of “the marginalized.” Some textbook publishers, for example, rejected a textbook built around a SRTOL pedagogy with the comment that it would appeal only to an African American audience (Wible 462). The NLP, then, could be read as offering many teachers relief that language issues no longer applied simply to “them” but now to “all of us.”

7. For a document that ends up granting students inalienable rights, some of the discussion leading up to the resolution seems to have addressed this issue only glancingly, and then with a decidedly negative cast. Smitherman recounts how during the debates over the SRTOL one person had proposed using the word “people” in the title, but “someone remarked that we were dealing with “students,” not “people” ” (361).

8. Those of us in the privileged classes of the developing world are doing more writing, communicating with one another more often, are more “connected” than ever before. Yet it is hard to escape the impression that the need of writing teachers to stage periodic homages to authenticity (and to deny the inauthenticity of the classroom space) is driven at least in part by an awareness that whatever residual authenticity we may have felt we possessed is fast disappearing. In a telling analysis of the influence of new media on changing notions of friendship, Deresiewicz notes that while Facebook, for example, may provide the illusion of connection with myriad friends, you get “the sense that my friends are doing their best to impersonate themselves. . .” (B10).

9. I anticipate one obvious objection here. Many of our writing curricula, particularly at the freshman level, are either too formulaic in their assignments or too personalized to allow for programmatic or institutional celebrations focusing on specific writing issues. In either case there is often a rigid adherence to the fiction of the generic “academic research paper.” That may be true, but celebrations exist not just to heap praise on what is, but to hold up a vision of what might be.

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## Negotiating Expertise: A Pedagogical Framework for Cross-curricular Literacy Work

Sandra L. Tarabochia

### ABSTRACT

*This article examines the function of expertise in relationships between WPAs and colleagues in other disciplines who co-develop disciplinary writing curriculum and/or writing pedagogy. I argue that scholarship on interdisciplinary expertise has unexplored implications for the work of writing specialists and disciplinary-content experts collaborating across disciplinary lines. Tapping into that research, I retheorize cross-curricular literacy (CCL) efforts as a pedagogical activity in order to sponsor the integration of literate and disciplinary knowledge among faculty experts. Unlike current calls to negotiate expertise in WAC contexts, a pedagogical framework emphasizes the interpersonal dimension of day-to-day interactions and generates relationship-building strategies in response to forces that enable and constrain successful negotiation. By treating expertise as a vehicle for reflexive inquiry, itself open to reconstruction and transformation, such a framework suggests alternative ways to research and engage in CCL relationships.*

### INTRODUCTION

Negotiating expertise with colleagues across campus is one of the most fruitful and frustrating tasks writing program administrators undertake. Indeed, many have addressed the paradoxical challenge of legitimizing writing expertise while working toward collaborative decision making, power sharing and decentering of authority (Gunner; Howard; Hult; Werder; White). As these scholars point out, to simultaneously claim and share expertise is tricky business for writing specialists given our historically complicated relationships with other academic disciplines. As WPAs are called upon more frequently to initiate and sustain the integration of writ-

ing across curricular contexts, what Jeff Jablonski calls cross-curricular literacy (CCL) projects,<sup>1</sup> the difficulty of negotiating expertise with colleagues in other disciplines becomes a more pressing challenge.

While research about the relationship between literate and disciplinary expertise emphasizes the importance of helping students integrate knowledge across disciplinary lines, effective negotiation of expertise among writing specialists and disciplinary faculty has not been fully realized. More recent attempts to theorize crossdisciplinary partnerships (e.g., Jacobs; Paretti; Paretti et al.) provide useful criteria for evaluating success and failure; however, they don't necessarily offer behaviors, strategies, or frames of mind for faculty negotiating expertise across disciplines. To meaningfully negotiate expertise, WPAs need an approach to CCL work that promotes the synthesis of multiple dimensions of expertise as a cornerstone of collaborative meaning making.

Toward that end, this essay offers pedagogy, richly conceived, as a theoretical and practical framework for interpreting and engaging expertise across disciplinary boundaries. The theory emerges from my experience as a writing specialist working with biology faculty to develop science-writing curriculum and pedagogy. Before tracing its emergence, I describe the dominant culture of expertise and how it limits knowledge integration "across conceptual and epistemological boundaries" in the contexts both of student learning and faculty interaction (Paretti et al. 74). Using extended examples from my time in the biology department, I explore benefits and limitations of existing frameworks for interdisciplinary collaboration before proposing pedagogy as an alternative theory that can more fully support the negotiation of expertise among writing specialists and disciplinary-content experts. Looking forward, I consider implications of a pedagogical framework for future CCL research.

#### RECOGNIZING THE DOMINANT CULTURE OF EXPERTISE

Efforts to retheorize CCL work and sponsor meaningful negotiation of expertise must contend with a dominant culture of expertise that diminishes WPAs' knowledge of (teaching) writing (Carter; Mahala and Swilky; Norgaard). In particular, the dominant culture (1) devalues writing throughout postsecondary curriculum; (2) dichotomizes teaching and research; and (3) lacks a cohesive counterargument for the relationship between writing and disciplinary expertise. In her landmark work, *Academic Literacy and the Nature of Expertise*, Cheryl Geisler documents how postsecondary institutions divorce knowledge of writing and rhetorical processes from disciplinary-content knowledge. Such "bifurcation" com-

partmentalizes the writing specialist's expertise, deeming it less valuable than disciplinary subject matter or even irrelevant for basic undergraduate education. Dichotomizing teaching and research similarly delegitimizes the expertise of writing specialists. In professional interactions with colleagues, faculty respect the tentative, evolving nature of disciplinary knowledge, while in the classroom they transmit expertise to students as a static body of specialized knowledge and methods (Mahala and Swilky 38). Positioning writing and language "outside the essential operations of knowledge-making" designates WPAs as service providers employed to solve the problem of poor student writing (39).

Writing specialists might be tempted to juxtapose this dominant notion of expertise with a "distinctive culture [of expertise] within composition, rhetoric, and writing across the curriculum" (Norgaard 44). However, the disparity between cognitive researchers who treat expertise as general knowledge and social theorists who believe expertise requires local discourse community knowledge indicates the lack of a unified theory of expertise in the field (Carter 266). Indeed, clashing cultures of expertise, in Mahala and Swilky's words, "produc[e] resistance to incorporating cross-curricular writing instruction as an integral part of higher education" because "conditions are at odds with the goal of having everyone share the responsibility for teaching students to write or using writing as a means of learning" (36). In this conflict-ridden climate of expertise, WPAs struggle to form lasting relationships with colleagues in other disciplines.

A richer understanding of how students develop expertise has begun to challenge this dominant culture. Activity theorists, for example, fuse domain content and rhetorical process knowledge, arguing that to teach writing is to engage students in the disciplinary activity systems in which writing functions (Prior; Russell). Expertise, in this view, becomes more than abstract disciplinary theory on one hand and methods of communication on the other but a multilayered "rhetorical sophistication" developed throughout (not following) students' postsecondary education (Bazerman 241; Carter; Scardamalia and Bereiter). Such theories of expertise usefully emphasize the interplay between domain content and rhetorical-process knowledge, treating expertise itself as "always constructed or 'composed'" (Norgaard 52). Scholars such as Anne Beaufort (*College Writing*; "Developmental Gains") go further, extending the scope and texture of the knowledge domains student writers can develop. More specifically, the identification of reflection (Schön; Tynjälä) and student motivation (Alexander, "Development"; "Model") as vital components of expertise broadens the range of capacities needed to develop and perform expertise.

Despite efforts to challenge dichotomous notions of expertise, the interdisciplinary negotiation of expertise has not yet become a way for students “to reconceptualize writing in relation to their work” or a “mode of collaboration” among WPAs and disciplinary faculty (Paretti et al. 74). One reason may be that we’ve yet to explore how this rich body of research retheorizes cross-curricular relationships between writing specialists and experts in other disciplines. This essay offers a first step in building “a more robust theory of WPA collaborations” (Paretti et al. 102) that embraces the same integrated, multidimensional expertise we hope to foster in students, recognizes the interactive nature of negotiation, and generates concrete strategies for negotiation in day-to-day encounters. Because the act of theorizing from lived experience is vital to a pedagogical theory of CCL work, I begin with two extended examples to illustrate the emergent process of theory building and emphasize how my vision of pedagogy both embraces and extends current theories of interdisciplinary collaboration.

#### BENEFITS AND LIMITATIONS OF EVALUATIVE FRAMEWORKS

In the fall of 2006, I began a two-year project with two different faculty members in the School of Biological Science to integrate writing into their courses. During the first semester, I co-instructed an honors seminar for non-majors with Professor Chase,<sup>2</sup> the chair of the department. For the next several semesters, I developed writing workshops with Professor Blake, who taught a large lecture course for biology majors, and then collaborated with teaching assistants to incorporate workshops into the lab sections attached to his class. Workshops were designed to help students compose reports based on lab experiments and focused on science writing conventions, peer review, and sentence-level revision.

While we successfully incorporated writing into both courses, I struggled to negotiate expertise with one professor more than the other. Existing theoretical frameworks explain why negotiating expertise with Professor Blake came rather naturally, while Professor Chase and I were never able to put our expertise in conversation. They illuminate forces—age, institutional position, approach to teaching, assumptions about writing, and so forth—that impacted our relationships and ability to collaborate across disciplinary lines. Existing theories do not, however, suggest how to work within and against those forces. They offer a lens for understanding how the dominant culture of expertise operated on our relationships but not necessarily a scaffold (based on that understanding) for negotiating expertise in future collaborations. By looking more closely at my relationships with these two biology professors and theorizing out of my experience, I con-

ceptualize a pedagogical approach that untethers WPAs from existing constructs and empowers us to revise dominant notions of expertise.

*Reciprocity vs. Integration: How Existing Frameworks Explain Failure*

Several factors likely contributed to the “mixed feelings” Professor Chase and I expressed regarding the success of our collaboration. For example, the course structure subordinated my writing and teaching expertise to Professor Chase’s disciplinary expertise. I taught for the first segment of each three-hour weekly session—facilitating writing activities, running peer review groups, and conducting short lessons about writing—while Professor Chase led discussions about science during the second segment. We attempted to divide assessment responsibilities as well. Though Professor Chase acknowledged the difficulty of separating writing and content, he asked me to focus on “the effectiveness of writing” when grading student work, while he assessed “the content or ideas.” Choices about course design and our roles in the course bifurcated rather than integrated domain content and rhetorical-process knowledge, thwarting meaningful negotiation of expertise.

Even though Professor Chase recognized writing as a vital skill for students and scientists, he viewed writing chiefly as a communication tool rather than a vehicle for knowledge production. Professor Chase described the relationship between thinking and writing this way:

The ideas seem to come spontaneously and clear. . . I look back over my career and think about the most innovative successful ideas I’ve had. . . I can remember the moment when the idea occurred to me and it came into my mind full blown. You know and the only thing that [the ideas] seem to have in common is that I was immersing myself in a flow of information. [. . .] Often then on the surface [the information] had absolutely nothing to do with the idea it stimulated. That’s not the way my writing is [laughs]. Now after that happens there’s a process of turning that idea, clarifying it, turning it into a—operationalizing it into an experiment or a theoretical statement and that’s the part that’s similar to writing. Even that, yeah, I don’t know.

Here Professor Chase locates writing apart from idea formation. For him, writing seems to come after the creative work of science, communicating what has already been discovered. His distinction between writing and science governed how Professor Chase organized our course and perceived our relationship. My area of expertise, writing, was subordinated to his area of expertise, course content.

Distinct institutional positions likely influenced our struggle to negotiate expertise as well. In a post-project interview, Professor Chase acknowledged positional inequalities. “[T]he fact of the matter is that I’m a faculty member, a full professor, and you are a second-year graduate student,” he admitted. However, despite his professed desire to equalize our relationship, Professor Chase reinforced our uneven power dynamic:

I think you probably deferred to my judgment more than perhaps you should have, certainly more than I thought you needed to, okay? I wasn’t going to pick an argument with all the time pressures, but there were times I expected you to argue with me. [. . .] So . . . maybe [we were] not quite equal. [Still], my sense was that we were both pretty comfortable most of the time . . . I saw you as a coinstructor, who clearly has a substantial expertise in writing and teaching writing that I don’t have.

Professor Chase frames expertise in terms of argument and deference instead of integration and collaboration. While he acknowledged our inequality at the end of the project, he did nothing to address it throughout the semester, never admitting his role in perpetuating it. Moreover, blaming my lack of assertiveness for our relationship’s imbalance ignores the material effects of difference on our collaborative efforts.

Beyond differences in professional rank, neither Professor Chase nor I considered how age and gender differences influenced our relationship or how institutional treatment of the hard sciences compared to the humanities might have impacted our perceptions of expertise. Thus, our inequities, as well as how we chose to respond to them (or not), prevented successful negotiation of expertise. As action research participants Toohey and Waterstone observed in their study, despite best intentions toward equity, partnership, and collaboration, Professor Chase and I ended up “articulat[ing] with and sometimes reforc[ing] institutional and structural hierarchies” (292).

According to Paretti et al., our relationship was *reciprocal*: we respected each other and valued one another’s expertise, expecting respect would translate into a “sense of equality and mutual exchange” (75). Paretti and her colleagues argue that interdisciplinary relationships “involv[e] mutual learning across disciplinary boundaries and the willingness to engage not only with new knowledge, but with new ways of constructing and valuing knowledge” (77). Because Professor Chase and I merely contributed our respective expertise to a common goal, remaining relatively unchanged by the experience, our collaboration was multidisciplinary rather than interdisciplinary (76). While these concepts explain our struggle and usefully identify our lacks, they don’t generate strategies for addressing those limi-

tations. As evaluative frameworks, they don't necessarily help me decide what to *do* in future situations. By the same token, while current theories highlight conditions that sponsor meaningful negotiation of expertise, they don't always suggest how to navigate less than ideal conditions when necessary.

*Cognitive Flexibility and Knowledge Production: How Existing Frameworks Conceptualize Success*

The semester following my experience with Professor Chase, I developed and facilitated writing workshops in the lab sections of Professor Blake's large lecture course on evolutionary biology. Institutionally speaking, Professor Blake and I were closer than Professor Chase and I had been. Professor Blake was young, untenured, and new to the department. He read about science pedagogy and often mused about new class activities he'd developed. He attended WAC workshops on our campus and initiated conversations with students and fellow professors about writing instruction in the department. Not surprisingly, Professor Blake and I negotiated our expertise more easily than Professor Chase and I did. In the following transcript excerpt, Professor Blake reflects on a faculty grant-writing workshop as he considers how to teach biology students to write lab reports. Our exchange demonstrates, on a faculty level, the characteristics of interdisciplinary expertise scholars have promoted in terms of student learning—the fusing of domain content and rhetorical process knowledge, a willingness to employ multiple layers of expertise (including reflection), and the co-construction of meaning.

Sandy: I liked your idea too of having a description of the audience somewhere on [the handout], trying really hard to . . . keep it rhetorical. You know, like this is why you need to write . . . because your audience is going to be wondering . . . this, this, and this.

Professor Blake: Yes. No, that's a good point because that's what comes across. [The grant writing workshop facilitator] spends like four hours in the seminar on exactly that . . . say your audience is a bunch of people who don't want to read this; they were assigned to read this; they are reading it because they have to read it. Whereas a research paper you choose to read. You are flipping through a journal and you say, "Oh, this looks interesting!" and you choose to read it. Grant proposals are assigned to reviewers so it's a tougher audience . . . very focused on audience. That's not reflected in the outline [we have for students]. And we would need to put that same audience

emphasis. I think you are right; I think a little statement about audience on there, but also maybe including a little presentation from the TAs.

Sandy: Yeah. Part of the first writing workshop this semester was to say, “What are the rules of science that you know?” and we put those on the board, and we sort of complicated those and saw which ones conflicted . . . and I am wondering if we could adapt that to this [new idea we have]. So talk some about who the audience for the lab reports is going to be throughout the semester and then say, “Okay, based on what you know about lab reports, what do you think this audience would need to know in an introduction?” And just have a brief discussion where [students] can sort of throw out their ideas, keeping it audience based—[which] I think is something we thought about doing this time, right, having them think through it and then giving them the outline.

Professor Blake: What you’re saying is not . . . we were trying to get them to come up with this outline by brainstorming, and I think what I’m reading now is . . . to get to this [outline] [students] actually need to think about the audience first. Let’s have them brainstorm about audience and then say, “Here’s an effective tool that we think communicates that.” It’s . . . I’m really asking them to do two steps at once by having them try to come up with this and they’re finding it frustrating.

Professor Blake’s memory of the workshop led us to actively negotiate a new approach to teaching lab-report writing. I understood the need to demystify disciplinary writing conventions, and he internalized the value of a rhetorical approach to teaching writing. Rather than assert our own or defaulting to one another’s expertise, we each underwent “internal revision,”<sup>3</sup> leading to what Donna Qualley, drawing on Thomas Newkirk, calls “earned insights,” or the “kind of understanding whose essential truth is only realized or more fully grasped as it is made manifest through the individual’s experience and contemplation of that experience” (35).

Professor Blake’s newness to the profession, in contrast to Professor Chase’s established career, might partially explain the former’s receptivity to new ideas (Jacobs 69). More importantly, Professor Blake’s willingness to bring his own writing experiences to bear on our integration of writing and disciplinary content contributed to and inspired the negotiation of expertise. Our relationship was interdisciplinary as opposed to reciprocal, Paretti et al. suggest, because we “engage[d] in an intellectual exchange

that synthesize[d] elements of [one another's knowledge] domains to create new knowledge" (80). However, while these observations describe the characteristics of our relationship, they don't suggest *how* we were able to develop and embrace the qualities that enabled us to successfully negotiate expertise. I'm left wondering how I might proactively sponsor those characteristics in future relationships when they don't come so easily.

As I hope these examples have shown, extant theory usefully describes circumstances that enable or constrain interdisciplinary collaboration and by extension negotiation of expertise in CCL contexts. When used for evaluation or identification, the frameworks don't generate strategies or frames of mind for productively navigating future interactions. When used pedagogically, however, current frameworks can empower WPAs and disciplinary-content experts to theorize from experience and imagine alternative approaches to future situations.

#### ROOM TO NEGOTIATE: RETHEORIZING CCL WORK AS PEDAGOGY

To conceptualize a pedagogical theory of CCL work, I draw on the move in composition studies to understand pedagogy as "the reflexive inquiry that teachers and learners undertake together" (Gallagher, *Radical* xvi). This formulation challenges traditional views that presume pedagogy is transmitted by instructors to students in classroom settings, framing it instead as what happens anytime learners (of all kinds) participate in "shared knowledge building" (*Radical* xvi). In this view, pedagogy is the process and product of creative, collaborative interaction among participants who are simultaneously teachers and learners. While certainly collaborative, pedagogy is more than collaboration; it brings a focus on multidirectional learning to collaborative activities. Terms such as "critical collegueship" (Gallagher et al.) or "participatory professionalism" (Gallagher, "We Compositionists") might seem more appropriate for describing faculty relationships, especially for faculty who feel a pedagogical approach positions them as students in a subordinate sense. However, I choose to theorize faculty relationships as pedagogy in order to actively disrupt conventional, hierarchical, one-directional conceptions of teaching and learning both within and outside the classroom. Doing so challenges our dominant culture of expertise by resisting static binaries between teacher as powerful expert and student as passive novice and supports revisionary approaches to teaching and learning inspired by the WAC movement.

In *Professing & Pedagogy*, Shari Stenberg, drawing on Gallagher, Paul Kameen, Amy Lee, and Donna Qualley, articulates several characteristics central to my view of pedagogy:

(1) Pedagogy is knowledge-making activity that involves the interplay of visions and practices, both of which require reflection; (2) pedagogy is dependent on learners and is remade with each encounter, as the students and the teacher change; (3) pedagogy cannot be finished . . . Rather, it requires an ongoing commit [sic] to learning and reflexivity. (xviii)

Stenberg writes about teacher development in English Studies, but her formulation of pedagogy is equally relevant for WPAs engaged in CCL work. Embracing pedagogy—as a knowledge-making activity that sponsors ongoing learning and reflection—can shift the way we perceive and perform expertise with colleagues in other disciplines. It can guide us to embrace the characteristics and activities of interdisciplinary expertise we’ve long promoted for students—those identified but not scaffolded by existing collaborative frameworks. More specifically, a pedagogical framework enables WPAs to:

1. work within and against a dominant culture of expertise that compartmentalizes knowledge and devalues writing expertise;
2. embrace the integration of multidimensional domains of expertise;
3. attend to the interactive function of expertise as it unfolds through daily encounters among differently positioned experts; and
4. generate tangible, adaptable strategies for negotiating expertise across disciplinary lines.

In what follows, I elaborate on these affordances and explain how they support writing program administrators’ efforts to cultivate meaningful partnerships with colleagues across disciplines.

A pedagogical approach to CCL work empowers WPAs to recognize and resist the dominant culture of expertise. As Lee points out, pedagogy intersects material and discursive realms, working simultaneously for meaningful revision in theory, practice, discourse, and action (150). In Gallagher’s words, “Pedagogy is theory producing, rather than theory applying” (*Radical*, xvi). That is, a pedagogical framework, grounded in Deweyan pedagogical progressivism, resists unconscious application of existing theory, instead encouraging “teachers and learners [to] collaborate in the construction of their objects of study” (Gallagher, *Radical* xvii). In a CCL context, rather than applying or carrying out existing objectives and theories, writing specialists and disciplinary-content experts coconstruct goals for a particular project as well as the philosophies to guide that work (See Text Box 1). By undertaking that constructive process, we are more likely to

recognize the constraints of dominant cultures of expertise—ones that urge us to privilege disciplinary expertise or embrace reductive forms of writing expertise—and find ways to resist it. As we purposefully change our practice we interrupt and revise the discourse surrounding CCL work; likewise changes in the discourse encourage ongoing revision of practice.

Text Box 1. Revising the Dominant Culture of Expertise

The focus on Writing Enriched Curriculum (WEC), as originally conceived at the University of Minnesota, illustrates one way writing specialists and disciplinary content experts might coconstruct subject matter and begin to revise (in discourse and practice) the dominant culture of expertise. In an effort to infuse writing meaningfully into the curriculum for all degrees and majors, writing specialists at the University of Minnesota *join* disciplinary faculty in describing discipline-specific writing values and implementing plans for change. Rather than deliver disciplinary writing curriculum, writing specialists at UM attend department meetings where they pose questions, document conversations, and help imagine possibilities. As a result, faculty are able to identify valued characteristics of student writing, map existing curriculum, determine if/when/how writing is taught, develop and pilot new curricular sequences, design assessment mechanisms, and specify needs for support. This process (creating a plan to integrate writing, implementing new curriculum, assessing it, revising it, and assessing it again) takes several years. During that time the writing specialist serves not as a change agent, but as an “academic anthropologist” studying and constructing disciplinary writing curriculum alongside faculty members. Everyone involved both teaches and learns as the locus of expertise shifts among participants. (See [wec.umn.edu](http://wec.umn.edu) for more about WEC at the University of Minnesota.)

The process of knowledge construction and revision at the heart of theory building draws on multiple dimensions of expertise and encourages participants to creatively imagine the range of expertise we can contribute (See Text Box 2). Uncovering multiple ways of knowing requires an interactive form of reflection, what Gallagher, invoking Qualley, calls *reflexive inquiry*, a dimension of expertise commonly valued for student learning but underutilized in faculty collaborations. Reflexive inquiry happens when teacher-learners “take stock together of how they construct knowledge, how

they make meaning” (Gallagher, *Radical* xvii). Rather than legitimize individual knowledge—as dominant notions of expertise would have us do—reflexive sense making invites CCL participants to treat “expert” conclusions “as tentative, partial, approximate, and open to further examination,” useful only to the extent that they function in conversation with others (Qualley 24).

Text Box 2. Multiple Dimensions of Expertise: The Role of Reflexive Inquiry

Suppose a writing specialist wants to convince a chemistry professor to assign reflective writing in her lab, but the professor is more concerned with how students communicate ideas clearly in their lab reports. The writing specialist could try to push the behavior on her colleague based on the legitimacy of her own expertise, or she could default to the professor’s disciplinary knowledge and focus on teaching students surface-level features of lab reports. Alternatively, the two decide to think reflexively together about their various perspectives, where they come from, and what they accomplish. The colleagues treat their views as tentative rather than conclusive and consider how they inform one another. The writing specialist draws on her position as a disciplinary outsider to invite the chemistry professor to better articulate what kind of thinking she wants communicated clearly in student lab reports. The professor draws on her experiences as a writer in the discipline to clarify and refine her own expectations as she communicates them to students. By integrating their expertise, they are able to revise the idea of a reflective journal to fit the professor’s notion of scientific inquiry. They have students write to reflect and inquire and tie that process concretely to the goal of clear communication in lab reports.

In addition to broadening perceptions and performances of expertise, a pedagogical approach to CCL work goes beyond conceptual identification of conditions that enable or constrain the negotiation of expertise to generate practical means of engagement. In fact, a pedagogical framework urges WPAs and disciplinary-content experts to make deliberate decisions about how to perform expertise (See Text Box 3). Julie Jung’s notion of pedagogical performance provides a useful illustration. In *Revisionary Rhetoric, Feminist Pedagogy, and Multigenre Texts*, Jung identifies several teacher subject positions, including The Dummy, The Hard Ass, and The Martyr.<sup>4</sup> When she treated the subjectivities as rigid identities, Jung realized, they unconsciously influenced her classroom practice and research, often with unin-

tended effects. However, distinguishing and labeling them allowed her to act more purposefully according to particular teaching or research goals. Like Jung's teacher subjectivities, traditional roles for writing specialists—the missionary, the anthropologist, the cultural critic<sup>5</sup>—constitute identities with corresponding versions of expertise that can have unintended effects on CCL interactions. Naming available subjectivities and identifying the pedagogical genres they inspire empowers WPAs to rhetorically choose among them, to “play with them,” in order to achieve particular pedagogical purposes (Jung 147).

Text Box 3. Pedagogical Performance: Purposefully Enacting Expertise

A colleague of mine in the School of Social Work emphasizes how important it is for social workers to move fluidly between roles when working with clients. Professors in the department take great care to train students to competently perform a variety of roles—teacher, counselor, advocate, case manager, resource provider, and so forth. According to my colleague, the ability to move between roles is a great strength as it allows social workers to meet the unique needs of a situation. While I wouldn't necessarily compare CCL work to social work, the professional situations are similarly complex in that they require purposeful flexibility. Because few compositionists, at least traditionally, are trained to be writing consultants in CCL contexts, we enter relationships with disciplinary-content experts without a full sense of the roles available to us or strategies for moving among them. Moreover, when we do move among roles, it is often either to persuade OR better understand disciplinary colleagues. A pedagogical framework allows multiple purposes, encouraging CCL participants to make choices among various roles according to pedagogical goals.

The focus on pedagogical purpose distinguishes Jung's performance of expertise, grounded in reflexivity and collaborative meaning making, from performances of expertise rooted in rhetorical persuasion (Hartelius) or translation (Jablonski). While WPAs must certainly draw on what Jablonski calls “rhetorical knowledgeability” to make our knowledge meaningful in CCL contexts, a myopic focus on the rhetoric of expertise can easily work against efforts to simultaneously decenter and validate our authority (14, 190). Alternatively, attending to the pedagogical dimension of expert performance urges CCL participants to do more than convince one another

of the legitimacy of what we know. It invites us to seek out creative ways to position ourselves as experts in conversation with one another.

In sum, a pedagogical framework supports the negotiation of expertise among writing specialists and disciplinary-content experts more fully than current theories of CCL work because it (1) works within and against the dominant culture of expertise, (2) sponsors the integration of multiple dimensions of expertise, (3) attends to expertise as emergent from interactions among knowers-in-process, and (4) generates adaptable strategies for perceiving and performing expertise for the purpose of negotiation. Knowing and valuing a pedagogical approach to CCL work isn't enough, however. Faculty colleagues need practical ways to enact the characteristics I've described and actively negotiate expertise.

#### REFLEXIVITY AND PURPOSEFUL ACTION: A PEDAGOGICAL FRAMEWORK FOR INTERDISCIPLINARY COLLABORATION

A useful pedagogical framework guides participants to embrace the “pedagogic significance” of interdisciplinary interactions (Van Manen, *Researching* 2). The following heuristic tool represents one way to enact the framework in CCL contexts. It takes the form of a strategic series of questions designed to facilitate pedagogical activity (see appendices). As “a set of topics for systematic consideration,” the heuristic aims to help participants learn from past experience; as a “set of discovery procedures for systematic application,” it sponsors a reflexive approach to new situations (Johnstone 9). Figure 1 offers a graphic representation of how the heuristic might function to sponsor pedagogical relationships between writing specialists and disciplinary-content experts in the context of CCL projects.

In the spirit of experiential, interactional views of teaching and learning (Van Manen, *Tact*; Dewey) I locate participants, subject matter, and context at the heart of a pedagogical approach to CCL work; those categories appear in the circle at the center of Figure 1. Participant questions concentrate on personal/professional circumstances and identity characteristics (age, gender, race, etc.) of the writing specialist and disciplinary-content expert. They examine the interactional nature of expertise—how relationships shape and are shaped by people involved. Subject matter questions deal with the project itself, the work at the heart of the collaboration. These questions invite participants to consider what they know about writing, disciplinary content, and their integration. Finally, context questions attend to contextual forces—institutional structures, dominant discourses, departmental or programmatic relationships, and so forth—that shape interpersonal interactions.



Figure 1. Visual Representation of A Pedagogical Approach to CCL Work

Specific questions in each category are shaped by three main purposes that correspond to key moments in a CCL project. As indicated by the outer circles in Figure 1, questions motivate self-inventory before the project begins, collaborative inquiry during the project, and reflection for transfer when the project is over. Participant, subject matter, and context questions in the self-inventory category (See Appendix A) establish a foundation for reflexivity and future negotiation of expertise. For example, a writing specialist might ask herself what kind(s) of expertise she hopes to contribute to the project or identify personal circumstances that might shape the roles and responsibilities she is able to take on. Similarly, she might consciously consider what she (thinks she) knows about fellow participants. How might professional circumstances like lack of tenure or identity characteristics like

age or gender shape her relationships with colleagues? By the same token, subject matter and context questions during self-inventory concentrate on what participants already know about writing, disciplinary content, and project goals. They reveal hidden assumptions and force participants to consider possible ramifications of present circumstances.

Questions designed to support collaborative inquiry facilitate active knowledge production and negotiation of expertise during the project (See Appendix B). Questions such as “What are we learning about each other as our project evolves?” and “How can we work within and against constraints?” prompt participants to take stock of progress toward goals, track evolving beliefs, address restrictive forces, and evaluate the overall function of their relationship. Here participants consider multiple, potentially untapped, dimensions of expertise and discuss roles and responsibilities in relation to expectations. Collaborative inquiry questions are important because they encourage metacognitive awareness during the project when (ideally) participants can still alter processes, behaviors, or expectations.

Questions encouraging reflection for transfer invite participants to look back on their experiences as the project ends (See Appendix C). Inspired by Anne Beaufort’s questions “to facilitate positive transfer of learning,” they prompt participants to articulate the individual and collective learning that results from interdisciplinary collaboration (*College Writing* 182). These questions emphasize the importance of knowledge production (rather than translation or application) as the process and product of pedagogical activity. Since pedagogy “is dependent on learners and remade with each encounter” (Stenberg xviii), knowledge constructed in this moment doesn’t constitute a set of best practices, but rather motivates creative attention to engagement processes. By asking questions such as “Did we discover dimensions of expertise we hadn’t anticipated?” and “What new knowledge have we gained and how does it relate to what we thought we knew about writing?” participants not only come to understand the integration of writing and disciplinary content more deeply, but also generate important insights that will inform future interdisciplinary work.

While the heuristic emphasizes purposes for reflection according to key moments in a project, it is designed to function recursively rather than linearly. In Figure 1, arcs connect the purposes to show how they motivate one another. The arcs form a circle, indicating how crucial moments in one CCL project become part of participants’ lived experience and inform how they approach future projects. In other words, the heuristic embodies the recursive motion of pedagogical activity where learning and reflection are ongoing, integrated processes that empower participants to work within and against traditional cultures of expertise.

Structured and flexible, the heuristic encourages WPAs to explore options for fostering pedagogical relationships. As Barbara Johnstone points out, “There is no fixed way of following [the procedures of a heuristic]” and no guarantee they will lead to a specific outcome (10). Given particular project parameters, certain questions may be more useful than others. Participants who meet only once, for example, might not have time to explore collaborative inquiry questions during their project. By the same token, spontaneous interactions may not allow for a careful self-inventory beforehand. Therefore, WPAs can adapt and arrange the questions according to particular circumstances.

The flexibility of the approach also allows WPAs to explore questions individually or with disciplinary colleagues. While mutual engagement with questions is ideal (particularly for collaborative inquiry questions posed during the project), disciplinary-content experts are not always able to engage in the deep reflection and inquiry that make up the heart of pedagogical activity (Jablonski 57–61). Knowing when, how, or whether to engage disciplinary colleagues in collaborative reflexive inquiry requires “pedagogical tact” (Van Manen, *Tact*). Because the heuristic foregrounds the relationship-building process, it helps writing specialists recognize opportunities to invite faculty to cultivate pedagogical relationships and be more creative about how we extend those invitations. At the same time, the heuristic supports a process that allows writing specialists to recognize instances when a pedagogical relationship is unlikely so we can make more informed, proactive decisions about when to move forward with collaborations and when to decline involvement.

I cannot claim my relationship with Professor Chase would have been dramatically different had we used the heuristic. However, I do believe foregrounding the reflexive process would have made it possible for us to identify and wrestle more productively with challenges we faced. In this case, Professor Chase likely would have been open to reflection and discussion; regardless, the heuristic would have helped me more strategically navigate factors influencing our (in)ability to negotiate expertise. As I hope my experience with Professor Chase makes clear, I do not intend the heuristic to be a panacea for difficult CCL relationships but rather a framework for recognizing and grappling with forces impacting the negotiation of expertise, forces that might otherwise remain hidden or uninterrogated. It demonstrates how retheorizing CCL work as pedagogy shifts how WPAs understand past experiences, approach current relationships, and imagine future interactions with colleagues in other disciplines. That shift in understanding calls for new methods for investigating cross-curricular literacy relationships.

## THE PROMISE OF A PEDAGOGICAL FRAMEWORK: SOME IMPLICATIONS

Understanding how experts navigate what Kameen calls the “transformative equation of pedagogy” calls for closer attention to day-to-day interactions among writing specialists and disciplinary faculty (32). However, as Jablonski points out, WAC/WID literature currently lacks careful examination of daily exchanges despite their impact on relationship building. Some scholars focus on negotiation in a programmatic sense, not necessarily an interpersonal one (Jones and Comprone; Mahala and Swilky); others promote valuable inquiry-based practices but don’t show *how* interactions and transformations take place (Fulwiler; McCarthy and Walvoord; Kaufer and Young; Waldo). Jablonski fills a gap in the scholarship by emphasizing collaboration in day-to-day interactions and bringing rich dimensions of writing expertise to light. However, his goal is not to capture the *intersubjective* realities we need to understand in order to support pedagogical engagement among writing specialists and disciplinary-content experts.

To flesh out the intersubjective dimension of pedagogical activity, we need research methods that capture interpersonal exchanges among participants. Conversation analysis (Hutchby and Wooffitt; ten Have) or discourse analysis (Johnstone; van Dijk), for example, could shed light on how writing specialists and disciplinary faculty build relationships through the pedagogical negotiation of expertise. Composition researchers already use such methods to investigate interactions around writing. Laurel Johnson Black, for instance, employs sociolinguistic methodologies to examine the ways teachers and students use speech genres to organize relations with one another in writing conferences. Beth Godbee studies the social context of one-with-one writing center consultations, using conversation analysis to explore what she calls “the transformative power of collaborative writing talk” in the face of institutionalized racism (xx). Rebecca Nowacek uses “Bakhtinian theories of language and cognition” to build “a discourse-based theory of interdisciplinary connections” among students and teachers in a team-taught interdisciplinary course (“Toward” 368; “Discourse-Based”). Grounded in a social-constructivist paradigm, these research goals and methods resonate with my pedagogical framework by attending to the interplay among language, relationships, discourse, and action.

Admittedly, discourse-based qualitative research is complex and time consuming. Researchers need participants who are willing to be video/audio recorded during interactions that are likely unfamiliar, complicated, and challenging. We need funding for data collection and transcription as well as time to engage in recursive data analysis that involves checking interpretations against participants’ lived experiences. Nevertheless, the

research is possible, underway, and yielding important insights. Indeed, Huckin, Andrus, and Clary-Lemon emphasize the promise of critical discourse analysis (CDA) as an ideal research methodology for scholars in our field “analyz[ing] new and expanding contexts and texts” (117). In this case, extending sociolinguistic methods to CCL contexts would allow researchers studying everyday interactions between writing specialists and disciplinary-content experts to capture talk as text, remaining attuned to strategies of engagement that could be adapted for future situations. This discursive focus is significant. Because expert practitioners are not always able to consciously identify specific interactional strategies, they may not emerge through narrative anecdotes or traditional forms of qualitative data collection such as observations and interviews. In short, studying CCL interactions on a discursive level illuminates the pedagogical process of negotiating expertise, enabling researchers and practitioners to more fully understand and engage in that process.

Pedagogy is at the heart of what we do as writing program administrators. We explore with great energy and rigor pedagogical possibilities for building meaningful relationships with students in our classrooms, programs, and institutions. The framework I’ve described here usefully scaffolds the teaching and learning we do with colleagues in crossdisciplinary contexts as well. If we are to help students develop the interdisciplinary expertise they need to participate in a world defined by globalization and internationalization (Gustafsson et al.), we must learn to negotiate that expertise ourselves. A pedagogical approach to interdisciplinary collaboration supports postsecondary educators of all kinds as we take on this important work.

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#### NOTES

1. I use the term cross-curricular literacy (CCL) in place of the more standard WAC/WID because this term, which Jablonski borrows from David Russell, encompasses both WAC and WID as well as a range of emergent initiatives, including Communication Across the Curriculum (CAC), Writing Across Com-

munities (WAC), and Writing Enriched Curriculum (WEC), that call for the kind of interdisciplinary interaction/collaboration I take up in this essay.

2. The names of participants have been changed to protect their rights to privacy.

3. For her understanding of “internal revision,” Qualley draws on Donald Murray’s *Learning by Teaching*, in which he describes reading as a process of discovery in which engagement with texts leads readers to new ideas by synthesizing new information with past experiences (35).

4. Jung describes the “The Dummy” as the part of her that “feels inadequate among department’s literary ‘theory heads’”; “The Hard Ass” as the part of her teaching self who “fears being taken advantage by students”; and “The Martyr” as the part of her who “wrongly believes in her own indispensability.” See Jung 123–26 for more detailed (and charming) descriptions of these and several other subjectivities.

5. Jablonski offers an extended discussion of these three prominent roles, each of which corresponds to a major stage of the WAC movement. While each responds to a particular historical context, the roles encompass potentially problematic treatment of participants’ expertise. The missionary seeks to convert disciplinary faculty to composition pedagogy; the anthropologist conducts rhetorical research in the disciplines in order to better understand disciplinary contexts and translate writing expertise more convincingly or adapt writing expertise to disciplinary needs; and the cultural critic embraces critical pedagogy as a means to encourage faculty and students to critique disciplinary discourses. See Jablonski for more about these roles and the corresponding stages of WAC out of which they emerged.

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## APPENDIX A

### Questions for Self-Inventory

#### *Participants*

#### *About Self (writing specialist)*

What are my circumstances (personal, professional)?

(How) are these likely to influence my engagement in the project?

How do I feel about this project (excited, nervous, unprepared, frustrated, wary)?

Which of my identity characteristics (age, race, gender, etc.) might come into play during this project? Why/how?

What expertise do I have to contribute to this project?

### *About Colleague*

What do I know about the disciplinary-content expert's (personal, professional) circumstances?

(How) are they likely to influence his/her engagement with the project?

Which of his/her identity characteristics (age, race, gender, etc.) might come into play during this project? Why/how?

What expertise does this person have to contribute to the project?

### *Subject Matter*

What do I know/believe about (teaching) writing?

What do I know about my colleague's discipline (content, conventions, etc.)?

Where does that knowledge come from?

What are my goals for the project? Why?

### *Context*

In what context (institutional, programmatic, departmental) will our project take place?

What other stakeholder expectations should we consider as we move forward?

What aspects of our context are likely to enable or constrain progress?

## APPENDIX B

### Questions for Collaborative Inquiry

#### *Participants*

What are we learning about each other as our project evolves?

(How) are our individual circumstances impacting our work together?

Do we need to adjust expectations, roles, or responsibilities based on that impact?

What identity characteristics are impacting our relationship/project?

Do we need to adjust our behavior or goals given the impact?

What kind of expertise is each of us contributing to the project?

Are there different or additional dimensions of expertise we could draw on?

#### *Subject Matter*

(How) are we experiencing the relationship between writing and disciplinary content?

What assumptions about writing, disciplinary content, or their relationship are changing (or should change) as our project evolves?

What goals are we pursuing (individually and together)? Are the goals mutually beneficial? Do we need to revise our goals as the project evolves?

Are we making progress toward our goals?

### *Context*

What aspects of our context are supporting our collaboration? The project? How can we better capitalize on those aspects?

What aspects of our context are constraining our collaboration or limiting the project?

How can we work within or against those constraints?

## APPENDIX C

### Questions for Reflection for Transfer

#### *Participants*

What did we learn about each other and/or about working across disciplines during this project?

How did our identities and/or circumstances influence our interactions?

What kind of expertise did each of us contribute to the project?

Did we discover dimensions of expertise we hadn't anticipated?

Were there dimensions of expertise that went untapped? How come?

#### *Subject Matter*

What did we learn about writing through this project?

What did we learn about the discipline?

How did we learn what we learned through this project?

How does this new knowledge relate to what each of us (thought we) knew about writing and/or the discipline?

What does each of us want to remember to consider or do the next time we work on a CCL project?

#### *Context*

What aspects of our context supported our collaboration and the project? (How) did we draw on those aspects? How might we draw on them in the future?

What aspects of our context constrained our collaboration or worked against the project?

(How) did we successfully challenge those aspects? How might we challenge them in the future?

## Low Country Boil with Peanuts: Interview with Michael Pemberton and Janice Walker

Shirley K Rose

Shirley Rose (SR): Several years ago the editorial board of *WPA: Writing Program Administration* decided to publish something that would feature the writing programs of the local hosts of the summer conference each year, so we've been calling these pieces "travelogues." These have given us a chance to take a close-up look at writing programs in their local contexts, which has been the focus of these pieces. Simply put, we want to understand your program's location, with "location" understood in various ways.

Let's start with a basic description of your writing programs at Georgia Southern University. Georgia Southern's Department of Writing and Linguistics is one of our field's oldest independent writing units with department status, and many of our WPA readers will be interested in knowing more about serving as a WPA in a free-standing department of writing. How do you think the independent department status shapes the configurations and workings of your writing programs?

Michael Pemberton (MP): The Department of Writing and Linguistics was established as a department in 1997, and like many such writing departments, it emerged from split in a traditional English department between literature faculty and writing-focused faculty. One of the benefits of being a free-standing department is that everybody in the department is very heavily invested in and has a fairly strong background in either linguistics or creative writing or writing studies...

Janice Walker (JW): Or...

MP: Or professional writing. I can't leave that area out. In some respects, what that means is that there are some arguments and justifications that we don't have to make at least within the department because we're all pretty much working from the same page. We have the same

kinds of understandings about the use of writing in terms of knowledge production, and we also have a pretty good understanding of the kinds of work that other faculty members do and why it's valid and what justifies it in terms of the larger disciplinary community. So I wouldn't say that it completely streamlines things like curriculum development and program management, but it means that we don't have to face the same kinds of resistance that we might face in a more traditional English Department.

SR: So, there's less friction, to use that metaphor of resistance...

JW: Yes, one of the important things, as Michael has touched on, is that everyone acknowledges the incredible amount of work that goes into teaching writing, the need for smaller class sizes. We recognize the kinds of scholarship that are valued. You know, it is not high theory and lit crit, and it is not about teaching lit. It is about teaching writing. Now, that said, with the four areas that we have within the Department of Writing, we still have much discussion about how each area fulfills its functions within the writing department, which has been a learning experience and a definite challenge useful for all involved. And I think our students benefit as much, if not more so, from those discussions.

SR: How long has each of you been at Georgia Southern? Were you there the start, or from before the time the new department was established?

JW: Michael and I both started at the same time—by accident, we didn't know each other prior—in 1999. They were already a stand-alone writing department.

MP: The question that you asked, Shirley, focused on what it's like to serve as a WPA in a free-standing department of writing, and that actually touches on kind of a tricky issue for us in terms of the configuration of the university itself. The state university system of Georgia has a top-down administrative culture, and that has occasionally caused problems when we have tried to create a typical writing programs administrator position that would entail training of first-year faculty, leading ongoing professional development and curriculum development within the first-year writing program, having the power to hire people into the program, to fire them as necessary, and to conduct evaluation and reviews of faculty who teach in the first-year writing program. But administratively at Georgia Southern, and again this is something that is endemic to the whole state university system of Georgia, faculty hiring or firing or evaluation cannot take place at a level below that of the department chair. We do have a person in our department who is responsible for overseeing the first-year writing

program and working in conjunction with the chair to supervise and oversee the faculty who teach in that program, but it's not an official WPA position and that is mostly the result of an administrative dictum.

JW: In addition we have area coordinators for each of the four areas represented in our department who work with developing curriculum, recommending scheduling, chairing search committees, so they have some WPA duties, but they're not WPAs either. So, we have five different people who work with the chair to accomplish what a single WPA is often responsible for doing.

SR: Do you have majors in each of those areas? tracks? or emphases?

MP: Yes, the degree program has changed just over the course of the last two or three years. When the original proposal for the major in writing and linguistics was accepted by the state university system, which was in 2004 if I remember correctly...

JW: I think so...

MP: There were four concentrations within the major and they represented each of the four tracks that we've talked about. Each one of the areas had a separate course of study with very specific courses that had to be taken and completed in order to complete the concentration and to get the degree. About two years ago, it became clear that that design was not working out and we changed the curriculum so that now students can choose their own path through the major. There are no longer specific concentrations in the degree program. There is only a general degree in writing and linguistics, although students may choose to specialize in one of the four areas as they work through the degree program.

JW: What we did retain, what we had in the original bachelor's degree curriculum and what we still have, is what we call the "common body of knowledge," which is required of all our majors in writing and linguistics. Now, they take a course, a foundation course in each of those four areas. So they do get introduced to all four and then they can choose among other courses and they can mix and match among areas. Or, as Michael said, they can choose to focus in a specific area.

SR: Do you have a sense of how many choose to do something fairly broad throughout the whole major versus how many do something pretty specialized then?

MP: I would guess that a quarter of our students go broad. One of the most popular areas in our department is creative writing, so the students who self identify as creative writers will take a larger proportion of their courses in the degree program in that area. We have a some-

what smaller group of people who are specializing in professional/technical writing. I would say that's probably the second largest group of students in the department, followed by writing studies and then linguistics.

JW: In addition to the major, we have the minors in writing, which attract quite a few students in writing studies especially from the College of Education. People who want to be teachers, or who are teachers, are taking courses. In my area, technical writing, we attract from several different colleges. We have an online Bachelor of General Studies program, which offers a concentration in writing. And then we have a second discipline required of information technology students that we offer in technical writing. So it gets very complex.

SR: Sounds like it. Georgia Southern is, I was very interested to read, one of the most popular universities in the country if you look at it in terms of the number of admitted students who actually go ahead and enroll or what's called the "yield." It is in the company of institutions like Yale—it was tied with Yale at seventh place in terms of popularity. How do you account for the university's popularity with college-bound students and how does that popularity manifest itself when you see the students in your writing classes? That is, the fact that this is the place they want to be?

MP: I think there are a variety of reasons. For one, Georgia Southern is a reasonably priced alternative to places like Georgia Tech and the University of Georgia, but still a place where students can get a high quality education. The demographics at Georgia Southern tend to fall into largely two categories. We get a lot of students from Metro Atlanta because students have the sense that it is relatively close to home, but is a safer and more inviting environment than Atlanta. The university also has a very strong teaching mission, something that emerges in part from its institutional history, and I think that its focus on student retention and student success is very, very attractive as well. The standards for admission at the university have also gone up over the years.

JW: Substantially.

MP: It also has to be said that Georgia Southern has very, very strong academic programs in a wide variety of areas. We are especially renowned for our College of Education, for our nursing program, for engineering, for our College of Business Administration, biology, public health. We would like to think that in fact the Department of Writing and Linguistics is making a fairly strong contribution to GSU's attracting new students as well.

- JW: When we first got here, we were nowhere near seventh on that list. We were the college that students went to when they couldn't get in to one of the flagship universities. But then we started raising the admission standards, and it had an opposite effect of what many people had envisioned. It started attracting more students to come to Georgia Southern and now, Georgia Southern is a first choice university for so many of our students. And, I do want to add that Georgia has the Hope Scholarship, which means that students who graduate from a Georgia high school with a B+ average, as long as they can maintain their grades, get pretty much free tuition at Georgia colleges.
- SR: That's a great testimony to Georgia's commitment to higher education for its citizens.
- JW: Of course the scholarship doesn't pay for all of their living expenses, etc. But it does pay tuition and at least part of their books and supplies. They have to maintain their grade point average to keep that, but it does keep many Georgia students in Georgia colleges, and now as one of the first choice colleges, our population has grown. We've got over 20,000 students this year.
- MP: Yes, that's right. Shirley, I want to go back just really briefly to finish the answer to the question you asked a little bit earlier. I said that one group of students at Georgia Southern came from Metro Atlanta, but the other major demographic is students from the greater South Georgia area. GSU is the largest academic institution in southern Georgia, and ever since the university began, it has been a place for students in the region to go for postsecondary instruction. We also attract students from all fifty states, and a significant number of international students enroll here too.
- SR: Are the international students predominantly from any particular region or countries?
- MP: There are a number from China and Korea, from Saudi Arabia, from West Africa, from Honduras. Relatively few from Europe interestingly enough, but many from South America. I think that those are probably the parts of the world where we tend to draw most of our students.
- SR: What attracts these international students to GSU? Does the university have strong programs in disciplines that are highly relevant to their home countries?
- MP: Many of our faculty work in international contexts, both as a part of their research and as professional consultants, so the contacts they make with faculty in other institutions probably has something to do with it. We have a strong international studies focus that filters into many parts of the curriculum, and the university has long been

recruiting international students through outreach efforts, exchange programs, and collaborative research projects. But beyond that, the region itself is a safe, attractive place for international students to come, and they appreciate the opportunity to get much of their instruction from professors rather than teaching assistants in lower division courses especially. In fact, I think that our first-year writing program makes a substantial contribution in that regard. For a great many years, every member of our tenure track and tenured faculty taught in the first-year writing program, so that emphasized to students, I think, the high value that members of our department, including senior faculty, placed on first-year writing in the curriculum.

SR: Let's talk some more about Georgia Southern, the university, as a whole. I know it's dangerous to always think that the writing program is separate.

JW: It's not.

SR: Everything that happens in your program is influenced by the bigger institutional picture. Let's go back to talking about the institution as a whole, and its history. I read that it began as an agricultural and mechanical engineering school in the early twentieth century, and then it became a Normal School for training teachers, and then eventually evolved into a comprehensive university with a Carnegie Foundation classification as a doctoral research university. I was surprised to read about that because it must be fairly unusual to have started out as agricultural and mechanical in focus, which I associate with the Land Grants, and then to become a Normal School, which is a very different direction in terms of institutional development. I think it must be fairly rare to have both those missions in an institution's history, so tell me about that.

MP: Georgia Southern from my perspective, and again I've only been here thirteen years and I haven't extensively studied the history, but my sense of things is that over time, the university has been primarily affected by two things. One is its desire to be responsive to the immediate needs of the community, the environment, and the area. One of the reasons it changed to a teacher's college back in its early history was because there was an urgent need for more teachers in this part of the country, and it stepped in and started fulfilling that mission. But the other part of it is that sometimes the direction that the university takes is influenced by the person who is in charge. The president will come in with a particular vision or mission or set of programs that

he, and I say he with an awareness of gender issues because there has always been a male president here at Georgia Southern...

JW: So far...

MP: So far. He will steer the university in a particular direction. I referred earlier to the state university system of Georgia being very top down. One of the most clear and obvious examples of that policy is that when the president takes office, he says "This is what we're going to be doing and what we're going to be focusing on," and by God that's the direction the university goes come hell or high water.

JW: Which is how we ended up being a doctoral research university. I would say that had a lot to do with Bruce Grube, who was our president who began when Michael and I both began thirteen years ago, and he very much wanted us to move in that direction and we did. But that said, our history is a response, as Michael said, to the needs of this particular region of the country. We're talking about rural South Georgia. Definitely a need for teachers, many of whom didn't want to go away from home or couldn't go in order to study. Same for the mechanical engineering and the agricultural base. Southern Georgia is very much an agricultural area and you can still see that very much reflected in many of the programs that we offer here. Our engineering college has really grown in popularity recently. We offer a major in construction management for instance that I'm very familiar with because those students are all required to take our technical communications class. These are students who are primarily from this area and they intend to remain in this area. We have students with strong agricultural ties, and cultural ties obviously, to this area.

SR: What other connections do you observe between the area's history and culture and your own writing programs?

JW: One response to the area and its history is linguistics professor Thomas Klein's work with the Gullah Geechee populations on the Sea Islands—St. Simons Island. It is kind of a Creole population. [For information about the Gullah and Geechee culture, which retains ethnic traditions linked to West African slaves who worked on rice, indigo, and cotton plantation on the Sea Islands after 1750, when antislavery laws in Georgia colony ended, see the "Geechee and Gullah Culture" entry in the New Georgia Encyclopedia online at <http://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org>] Outside of our department, of course, there have been archeological digs that have unearthed some incredible finds from the Civil War era.

MP: One other way that the university demonstrates its responsiveness to local and regional needs is a consequence of its being on what's called

Georgia's High Tech Corridor. About five years ago or so, Georgia Southern created a brand new college to respond to the need for skilled, highly trained information technology specialists in this part of the country, so we now have a new College of Engineering and Information Technology.

JW: And you've got the Savannah River Plant [Savannah River Site, a nuclear reservation operated by the United State Department of Energy], and the Savannah Port Authority [Industrial Park] attracting greater industry to the area. And we are located on the I-16 corridor between Macon and Savannah and not that far out of Atlanta. It's a wonderful part of the country to be offering education for people to work in these very high tech industries. Gulf Aerospace is another one of the large employers in the area. So in response to those needs you see our programs growing in popularity.

SR: I can see how over time the institution defines what it's going to do in terms of what the community and regional needs are.

JW: Although it began with a very agrarian focus, as industry has been attracted to the area, the university has changed in response to those needs. Even though the agrarianism is still there, there is so much more.

SR: Are there ways that you see that the writing programs are shaped by that history and by that characteristic responsiveness? You mentioned who is in your classes, but other than that, is there some signature feature of one or more of your writing programs?

MP: Like other writing departments across the country, we offer a number "service courses" that meet the curricular needs of a variety of departments in other parts of the campus. We teach several courses that are required or elective courses for students in the College of Education, such as "Linguistics and Grammar for Teachers" and "Teaching Writing." We are also the home of the Georgia Southern Writing Project, so we work with a lot of the students and teachers in the area who are involved in that. As Janice has mentioned, many of the professional and technical writing courses that we offer are either required or strongly encouraged of majors in places like business administration, engineering, and some of the sciences as well.

JW: And the College of Education and ROTC require at least "Writing in the Workplace" if not others.

MP: So much of the curriculum that we have developed, both within and outside our major, has strong connections to our institutional history, our institutional mission, and our desire to respond to regional needs.

JW: And I want to add that Michael, as Director of the University Writing Center, works with students from all of the colleges, all of the disciplines who come to the Writing Center. He has to meet the needs of such a diverse population here, and the Writing Center has grown in response to all of the parts of the university. He has changed it substantially, and in many ways, I think it is a model for schools such as this.

MP: Oh, you're so generous.

JW: Well, you know, I did tell the truth.

SR: Is the Writing Center part of the department's structure?

MP: Not really. The Director is in the department. I'm a professor in the Department of Writing and Linguistics, and I have some reassigned time to serve as the Director of the Writing Center. But the funds for the Writing Center itself have traditionally come from the College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences. Its funding line was just recently either absolutely shifted to the university or been given a much more stable budget line within the college. Sometimes it is hard to tease these things out.

SR & JW: Yes.

MP: But the Writing Center itself was always funded beyond the department level.

SR: Who staffs your writing center?

MP: Over time, primarily due to budgetary pressures, it shifted from full time tenure track faculty in the writing center to full time temporary faculty in the writing center, to what it is now, which is undergraduate peer tutors and a couple of graduate students in the writing center. In 2006 I published a chapter in *The Writing Center Director's Resource Book* that talks about some of the challenges I faced working with full-time faculty in the writing center.

SR: You've already talked a bit about the Department of Writing and Linguistics—is there more you'd want to tell our readers about the history of the department? What's the story of its origins and development? Why was Georgia Southern one of the few places where this has happened?

MP: The Writing and Linguistics Department emerged from a philosophical split between literature and writing faculty in a traditional English department. Our knowledge of exactly what happened is mostly anecdotal because Janice and I were hired after the separation took place, but the story we've heard is not an unfamiliar one. Writing faculty were agitating for an increased emphasis on writing in the English curriculum; literature faculty saw writing courses as service

work with little relevance or scholarly value and saw their colleagues' push for change as threatening. Why was a separate writing department created? Probably because our dean at the time saw that as the simplest way to resolve the department's internal conflict. It was the top-down model I talked about earlier, in action. When the split was made official and formal, the Literature and Philosophy department kept faculty members with a literary focus who were already tenured or in tenure line positions. Everyone else was put into the new Department of Writing and Linguistics even though some of them had no training and little interest in rhetoric and composition.

JW: Let me just interject here that many of these people were hired in tenure track positions but without terminal degrees. At the same time, the new president that year said "That will not happen any more... You can have tenure because you're grandfathered in, but now you can't get promoted without a terminal degree, and we will no longer higher people in tenure lines without terminal degrees." That caused a lot of uneasiness. In addition, many people came out of Learning Support, with the same problems regarding terminal degrees. We had this internal conflict as it were.

MP: Yes, almost immediately after the split took place, the department hired two new faculty who had degrees in rhetoric and writing studies. The two of them quickly became identified as agitators in the department because they were trying to move faculty toward best practices in the field with a strong emphasis on theory and research. That was met with a lot of resistance from members of the faculty who, as we said earlier, were not trained in field and felt displaced in the department already. Our department chair eventually called in conflict resolution advisers to help us deal with our internal conflicts and low morale. We laugh about it now, but over time, a lot of those frictions, differences, and fractures began to subside. Several of the most vocally resistant faculty left or retired, and that eased the tensions considerably. We've continued to hire new faculty from reputable programs in rhetoric and composition and linguistics and other areas that have helped to transform the department and its goals.

JW: In addition to those existing faculty who left, some faculty went back and got PhDs in field. Tim Giles was one of them. He earned a PhD in scientific and technical communication.

MP: In fact, at one point there were six faculty members who were all enrolled in the IUP rhetoric and comp grad program.

JW: ...in summer...

MP: ...yeah, so they would go there during the summer and do their course work in residence, and then they would work on their degrees while teaching here throughout the rest of the year, and I think most of them ended up getting their PhDs in rhetoric and composition as a result.

SR: That's a good outcome.

JW: It benefits the department in many ways because these were people who had a long history at Georgia Southern and with the area; and now, with the terminal degrees in the field, they have made substantial contributions. Angela Crow, Peggy O'Neil, and our then chair Larry Burton were co-editors of the book *A Field of Dreams* published in 2002 by Utah State University Press that talked about independent writing programs including ours.

SR: People would be interested in knowing where they can go read more about this.

MP: There is a chapter in *Field of Dreams* that was written by Eleanor Agnew and Phyllis Dallas that talks about bringing in the conflict resolution team, the reasons why that was necessary, and what happened as a result.

SR: I noticed that the admissions office markets the university as "large scale, small feel." That's a nice turn of phrase: "large scale, small feel." Do you think that's an accurate characterization of the students' experiences in writing programs as well?

JW: I think it was at one time. In all of our writing classes, we have managed to keep caps relatively low, and that does help to keep the small feel in that students and professors or instructors can get to know each other, can work together closely, so in that respect, yes. But for the university as a whole, that's not as true as it once was. They do encourage faculty to participate in community-building programs like move-in day and discussions with professors, but obviously outside of our department, there is a push with budget crises that we've been facing for larger and larger classes. We've managed to keep our writing intensive classes still relatively small, which has been a good thing, but they're not as small as MLA would argue for. [Note: See the "Final Report of the MLA Ad Hoc Committee on Teaching" and the "ADE Guidelines for Class Size and Workload for College and University Teachers of English: A Statement of Policy."]

MP: One of the things that's proven to be a tremendous benefit to the department is that we have a required technological literacy component, which means that all of our first-year writing courses have to spend at least a portion of their class time in a computer lab and all

of the computer labs are maxed out at twenty-four seats, so that has presented us with a very compelling argument against any initiatives to increase the size of our writing courses beyond that. We also identified “writing intensive” and “non-writing intensive” courses in our curriculum. The writing intensive courses are capped at eighteen students, and the non-writing intensive courses, are capped at thirty. We certainly have our students say that one of the few courses that they take in their university experience that allows them to really get to know their instructor as a person is first-year writing. That contributes to GSU’s “small feel” because these students very often feel that they can come back and meet with and talk with their first-year writing teachers years after they have taken the course with them.

JW: I do think, however, that the “large scale, small feel” campaign is something that our school is going to have to rethink. To sell it as “small feel” as it is, outside of our department, is just not necessarily true any more. If they want to keep that small feel, they need to consider how responses to the budget crises have changed that. I hear complaints from students about the auditorium-sized classes that outside of our department are the norm now, even in literature. Students’ dissatisfaction with class size is an issue that university administrators may really need to consider. If they’re going to market it as “small feel,” they really need to reflect on whether their responses to budget cuts undermine that marketing strategy.

SR: Let’s talk about the university’s mission, then. The following quotation is an excerpt from the mission statement:

Central to the university’s mission is the faculty’s dedication to excellence in teaching and the development of a fertile learning environment exemplified by free exchange of ideas, high academic expectations, and individual responsibility for academic achievement. Georgia Southern faculty are teacher-scholars whose primary responsibility is the creation of learning experiences of the highest quality informed by scholarly practice, research, and creative activities. (University Mission Statement [[academics.georgiasouthern.edu/provost/about/mission](http://academics.georgiasouthern.edu/provost/about/mission)])

It’s interesting that the learning environment is described as “fertile”—that seems to be a reference to the institution’s role in the region’s predominantly agrarian past. How do you see your writing program’s teachers carrying out that teacher-scholar role in creating the learning environment?

- MP: The university's desire to become a more research-focused institution is at least partly aligned with [Ernest] Boyer's model of the teacher-scholar. It wants to get NSF grants and foundation grants and corporate dollars of course, because higher ed in Georgia has taken huge financial hits recently, but it strongly values the scholarship of teaching and learning. The university's teaching mission guides much of what it does, and that impacts every college and every department; so there are a lot of people in the department, myself and Janice included, who see their classrooms as sites of potential research and activity. They are encouraged to develop new curricula, to design new courses, and to talk about or write about their experiences.
- JW: It is a balancing act. Traditionally, GSU has been considered a teaching first institution, but with the move to being a doctoral research university, there has been, as Michael said, for tenure and promotion purposes, a lot more emphasis on scholarship. But I hope we're also recognizing, in our field anyway, that much of the scholarship that we're doing directly impacts our students and our classrooms. The teacher-scholar model really can be quite effective in our classrooms.
- SR: It's very well fitted to what we do as writing scholars. It has been interesting to see how your institution, with the two of you providing much of the leadership, has sponsored several conferences in Savannah that writing program administrators would be and have been interested in. Besides our upcoming 2013 WPA Conference, you hosted the 2012 Writing Across the Curriculum Conference and you fairly regularly, it seems, do the Student Success in Writing Conference.
- JW: Every year.
- SR: And then there's the Georgia International Conference on Information Literacy.
- JW: That's every year, and our tenth anniversary is coming up in August 2013. I started the conference not long after I came here because I had interest in working, teaching research, and, obviously, information literacy. It has very much grown in numbers and popularity.
- SR: What effect have the conferences had on your writing programs?
- JW: The Georgia International Conference on Information Literacy came out of a disagreement I was having with a librarian who kept saying, "Oh no, we shouldn't let students use the Internet." And I knew that was not right. We wanted to build and promote this conference across the curriculum, so it is not just our department per se that does that. It involves the Dean of the Library and a representative from library faculty, and from the College of Education. Recently, we brought someone in from Information Technology as well as two people from other

institutions on the steering committee. We have all of these disciplines on a committee that works together to make that conference happen. We have a wonderful Continuing Ed division that does much of the nitty-gritty part that has to be done to make the conference successful.

MP: We had volunteers from the department at the IWAC conference who performed some of the hosting duties, and several of our colleagues presented at the conference. A nice article was written about it in the university's alumni publication, so it helped to raise the profile of the department university wide, and, that ultimately helped the department a great deal.

JW: Also because it was a writing across the curriculum conference, we were able to promote the concepts that were being discussed within our department, within the college, and within the university. You know, "Look at all these people who are interested in this area and the wonderful work they're doing." You bring back so many new ideas and reinvigorate much of what we do. With the WPA Conference I'm expecting more of that here as well. We've read in the scholarship that many institutions have a difficult time with writing studies being recognized as a discipline. We've only been around for sixty years as a real discipline, and bringing these conferences here and sharing this important work shows that, yes, writing studies is a serious discipline like all of the other disciplines in the university. It helps to concretize those kinds of arguments I think.

SR: I've thought about how hosting a conference brings the attention of your peers, your professional peers and disciplinary peers, to your institution and your program, but it hadn't really struck me that your own campus notices, too. That's a valuable outcome.

SR: I have a location related metaphor for the writing program I direct here at ASU. My metaphor is the ocotillo. It is a succulent that can live in the desert climate even at extremes of heat and aridity that we experience. But with sufficient water, it develops these thousands of tiny leaves and blossoms into something that is quite stunning. An ocotillo in bloom is brilliant and beautiful. It can survive without the water, but it's awesome when it has water. What location related metaphor or analogy would you suggest for your writing programs at Georgia Southern that could help us to understand them better?

JW: Michael and I have two different metaphors. I'll let him lead.

MP: Ok, I just couldn't resist this one even though it's such a cliché. I'm going to talk about our writing program or maybe more specifically the way in which our program views students as a peanut. Georgia is one of the nation's biggest peanut producers and as you probably

know, Jimmy Carter was a peanut farmer. I would say that we plant our students with care. We employ the best, most scientific practices that we can in order to help them grow. We expose them to a warm, fertile climate where it is possible for them to flower, but in keeping with the peanut metaphor, also to grow and develop beneath the surface in places we can't easily see. When their final ideas are harvested, what we find when we pull them out is something that's new and original and exciting. And something that possibly has never been seen before.

SR: That's great!

JW: I have a different one. This area is known as the "low country," which includes South Carolina, coastal Georgia, and here. A very popular dish here is my metaphor—the "low country boil" where they throw in corn on the cob, potatoes, shrimp and sausage. Whatever you can get. And they throw it all in a big pot and bring it to a boil. I think that we are low country boil. We have the students come from various demographics. As Michael said earlier, we've got almost half from the Atlanta metropolitan area and many from the local area. And then we have students from all over the world thrown in the pot. Ditto with faculty who come with a broad spectrum of expertise, background, areas that they're from. We have departmental differences with creative writing, linguistics, writing studies, and professional and technical writing. Throw all of this in a pot and bring it to a boil...and that leads to external mediation. No, more seriously, let it simmer for a while and it is a delicious dish. It becomes something greater than the sum of its parts.

SR: Thank you both for both of those vivid and memorable metaphors. Our summer conference isn't going to be held there on your campus, but is going to be in Savannah at the Coastal Georgia Center. So I wanted to talk a little bit about Savannah. If conference goers have extra time, what Savannah sights or experiences might be especially interesting for WPAs?

JW: Oh there's so much. The area we're going to be in in Savannah is the historic district, and you can't walk three steps without something of interest. Obviously, Savannah College of Art and Design, The Telfair Museum of Art, and River Street, which we'll be near. Clubs of all types. Restaurants like the Lady and Sons if they want Paula Dean's Southern cooking. But beyond that, Tybee Island is a beach resort that's right off the coast. The Savannah Sand Gnats will be in town if you want baseball games. But there are also historic areas outside of the historic district. There are some sites going all the way back to

the early eighteenth Century, the time of [the original founder James General James Edward] Oglethorpe, that can be visited. [For more information about the charter King George II of England granted to Oglethorpe and twenty other men to establish a slave-free colony see “Slavery in Colonial Georgia” in the New Georgia Encyclopedia online <http://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org>. Information about the settlement design Oglethorpe introduced for the City of Savannah, which continues to be an exemplar of urban planning, see “Savannah City Plan” in the New Georgia Encyclopedia online.] And, if people have extra time and want to travel to the Barrier Islands, where we talked about the Gullah Geechee cultures and all, I would highly recommend that. It’s a stone’s throw to Hilton Head, South Carolina. It’s just so rich in a variety of things to do that it’s incredible.

MP: I think the only two things that I would add to Janice’s list are that downtown Savannah is a very well laid out city in terms of urban planning, and there is a whole set of small parks or squares sometimes called the “Jewels of Savannah,” that are spaced at regular intersections in the downtown area so that it is possible to walk from small park to small park to small park and see different kinds of plants, statues, and historical architecture. The opening scene of the movie *Forrest Gump*, where Forrest is sitting on a park bench waiting for a bus to come, was filmed in one of these squares. If there are golfers, they should bring their golf clubs because there are many golf courses in the nearby areas.

JW: But be prepared for heat.

MP: It will be very hot. No doubt about that. But Savannah is also a very lovely walking community. It is not so huge a city near the rivers that you can’t walk for quite awhile in shaded lanes and see a lot of interesting stores, shops, architecture, historical artifacts and small museums. It’s a nice place to visit.

SR: I’m sure that *WPA* readers will be glad to get that advice. I’ll ask one last question. The Georgia Southern campus in Statesboro is just an hour’s drive or so from downtown Savannah where the conference is going to be so if I wanted to take a short trip to your campus in order to understand the institution’s location within the region and understand your writing programs and how they reflect the institutional location, what places on campus other than the Writing and Linguistics Department offices and classrooms should I visit and why?

MP: There are a number of show pieces that the university promotes. Those would include the Center for Wildlife Education, the Raptor Center, which is a small conservatory that has eagles and owls and falcons on

display along with regular programs and educational offerings for the community and students. There's also a small museum on campus called the Georgia Southern Museum with exhibits about the history of the local community as well as the state. We have a newly reconstructed and fabulous library that is very technologically focused and very modern. It is a tremendous resource for the students. You can't get away without seeing the football field because football is a big thing at this university. We are making a big push to move up a division.

JW: Along with a newly-erected statue of Erik Russell...

MP: ...who was the legendary former football coach here at Georgia Southern.

JW: The Garden of the Coastal Plain, the botanical gardens, is lovely. It offers educational programs as well but they're nice to just walk through and get a sense of the flora and fauna of the area. They are beautifully done. Our campus is very much a very walking campus. It is a beautiful campus. If you drive in through the main entrance you come to Sweetheart Circle, with the original old buildings from way back when this school first began, and that currently house administrative offices. There is a brick walking path that goes through the entire campus, and students and faculty are encouraged to walk. I think it is a beautiful, beautiful campus to look at. [See images at this URL: <http://www.georgiasouthern.edu/traditions/sweetheart.php>] Absolutely gorgeous. And we should have lots of flowers blooming that time of year.

MP: It's called the Sweetheart Circle because the drive is more heart-shaped than circular and this area of campus is where all of the young sweethearts were supposed to come and hang out and spoon.

JW: Back in the day.

SR: I read about Sweetheart Circle and about the "Pedestrium" walkway in an online publication produced for the GSU admissions office titled "What Can Our Campus Tell You About Georgia Southern University?" I was struck by how the Sweetheart Circle is used to illustrate tradition while the Pedestrium walkway, lined with young live oak trees, is used to illustrate opportunities for innovative interdisciplinary work because it connects the various campus buildings and the areas of study they represent. Also, thanks for the mentions of the design of the City of Savannah and the gardens there and on your campus. I suspect that many WPAs are at heart urban planners and landscape architects and they will want to see many of the places you've suggested. Is there anything else that you must tell me about the place

of Georgia Southern's writing programs in their institutional and regional context?

MP: Some of the change that is happening right now, in part motivated by our current president's agenda, is the strong push to expand online instruction. Our department has become heavily involved in that, especially recently. Janice was talking about the online courses that are offered in professional/technical writing. We are on the verge of adopting and establishing online graduate certificate programs in TESOL and professional and technical writing as well.

JW: More online instruction really does seem to be one of the directions that the university and our department are going to push and move into over the course of the next several years.

MP: Also, Georgia Southern has a campus population of about 20 to 22% African American students so it is a very diverse campus.

JW: Very much so. There's an exciting potential at Georgia Southern. We've seen such growth and change in the thirteen years Michael and I have been here, but in the next thirteen I think we're going to see a lot more, since we are now a first choice university, a doctoral research university. We're going to continue to see change, and growth, hopefully in incredible directions with the department and the university.

SR: Thank you both. I enjoyed talking with you about the place of your writing programs at Georgia Southern University and I'm looking forward to seeing you in Savannah this July.

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## Review Essay: A Word for Peter

Chris M. Anson

Elbow, Peter. *Vernacular Eloquence: What Speech Can Bring to Writing*. New York: Oxford UP, 2012. 442 pages.

Hi, Peter. I've read your remarkable book, *Vernacular Eloquence: What Speech Can Bring to Writing*, with great admiration and fascination. The admiration comes from my abiding interest in pretty much everything you've written and said, starting in my earliest days as a graduate student at the end of the 1970s. The fascination comes from my own longstanding interest in the relationships between speaking and writing. I began using cassette tapes in 1982 to respond to my students, who would first talk to me on the same cassette about what they'd tried to do in their papers. (I also studied their talk and found features that linked to their writing abilities.) I've now extended that interest into a research project that explores screen-capture technology: five-minute, YouTube-like video clips of spoken feedback accompanied by scrolling and highlighting on the student's text.

For years I've taught language and linguistics courses with units on oral and written discourse, how children learn to talk and write, and the rich ways that speech varies across dialect groups. I've also been attracted to dialogue. I often ask students to write dialogues between two authors or theorists, or historical or literary characters, and I've experimented with my own published dialogues. I find that students do remarkable things with dialogue because they have so much experience speaking. Early on, I assigned dialogue journals extensively in my classes but now I form small blog groups where students interact in a way that resembles speech. I direct a Campus Writing *and Speaking* Program. And I teach in a PhD program in Communication, Rhetoric, and Digital Media, where we study different modes and media.

You know some of this, of course. But it still may come as a surprise that I created this review from a combination of strategies owing largely to the

ideas in your book. Part of it, the first few pages, began with very fast free-writing, from what you call “blurting onto the page.” Other parts appeared almost magically on the screen as I spoke into a MacSpeech Dictate program that created written text from my uttered words. (I even found myself closing my eyes as I spoke, forgetting about you, the journal, even review editor Ed White.) I also read the piece aloud several times after I had a draft. Later, I’ll reflect a little on how I feel about the results, because they speak to some of the ideas in your book as I practiced them. But for now, to the task at hand: a review of *Vernacular Eloquence*, in many ways your *magnum opus*, a work that pulls together and extends a life of scholarly and practical explorations of writing and speaking.

You structured *Vernacular Eloquence* in an interesting way, first with a section exploring everything that’s good about speaking and writing, but mostly about speaking. (You say that writing is the *goal* for the book, but speaking is its *impetus*.) And in this first section we learn that you’re going to focus on speaking and writing from all sorts of perspectives—cultural, historical, biological, to name a few. That leads to Part Two, an exploration of how “speaking onto the page” can help during the early stages of writing, as I tried to make it do for me in this review. Part Three is all about reading aloud, how giving voice to written text can help in the later stages of writing, especially in revision. Part Four broadens the focus to some of the ideological and sociocultural issues you’ve taken up in other recent work: how speech gets excluded from literacy and how serious writing “does not accept spoken language.” You end on a positive note about the flexibility of language, about the tug-of-war between standardization and divergence, and about the possibilities that divergence gives us in a world where we might end up accepting nonmainstream and stigmatized versions of English as “serious writing.” But this summary of the four main parts doesn’t do justice to the impressive range of your explorations—everything from the future of the world’s more than six thousand languages to the minutiae of punctuation conventions and how they relate to the sounds and rhythms of sentences. I think readers will love how much is here, how you seem to have gone on a hunt for every bit of knowledge and perspective you could find about speech and writing no matter what the source or discipline. And then how you don’t just *tell* us about it but deploy it in a highly reflective claim about the rootedness of writing in speaking.

Two innovative decisions you made about the material in these wide-ranging chapters struck me. First, you chose to include shaded boxes here and there that contain scholarship general readers may not be interested in reading but that academics might want to know. Some boxes also serve as extended footnotes elaborating on some point, or qualifying it. Second, you

end each chapter with a literacy story. These are mostly interesting historical sketches that some readers can also skip if they just want to hear the main arguments and explorations. So the result is a book that gives readers the choice to move along at a steady pace or take some time with various curiosities, reflections, and asides.

At first I was a little ambivalent about these decisions. You've done years of homework for this project, and it was clearly hard not to share material that most people would find a little erudite, because much of it supports and extends your views on speaking and writing. But you also want to reach teachers and students and even bookstore-browsing folks who want to improve their own writing. I'm a scholar, so I read all the shaded boxes and most of the literacy stories with interest. At times the main material sounded quite scholarly, and I wondered how it differed from the boxed material if this is an audience-helping device. But then there was also a lot of information in the main part of the text that I found myself thinking, well, I know all this, but I'll go along with it to follow the thread. That made for an interesting and sometimes odd journey. I'd see a building or monument that I knew well, and then you'd turn a corner and I'd learn about something I didn't know, or you'd call attention to something I hadn't ever really *seen* even though I'd passed it before. I didn't want to get frustrated by the familiar parts because I never knew when something would surprise me.

Maybe it was because of the complex and layered audiences you're invoking (too many at once?), or maybe it was because Ed White was standing on my shoulder with a calendar, but the book also felt a bit *long*. Not long-winded. Just a lot of work to get through. I think if I'd had no deadline, I'd have read it more in pieces, and that may have been one of your strategies: to make a book that people can read in chunks, and spend more time on if they want to delve into the shaded sections and the literacy stories. But then I'm not sure—and really, I'm not sure—whether I'd have plowed my way through to the end. After putting the book down for a day or two, I felt a little lost picking it up again, wondering, Where were we on the tour before we stopped for lunch? This may be as much about me. I have three or four novels and works of nonfiction stacked on my nightstand with bookmarks showing where I left off . . . two months, seven months, over a year ago. This is the sort of book that announces its destination clearly at the start, but then the voyage is more like a barge cruise down the Rhine, meandering at times and docking to explore some interesting little villages, than a nonstop flight from New York to Los Angeles.

At the beginning of Part Two, you try teasing out the differences between speaking and writing as mental activities and as physical activi-

ties. In some ways that became for me the most theoretically challenging part of your exploration. In the end, *Vernacular Eloquence* favors the physical, less so the cerebral, in its treatment of speaking and writing. I get an almost fleshy feel from your descriptions of “blurting” onto the page, reading aloud to yourself or other people, talking about writing and the role of the voice and tongue and ear. And in our hyper-technologized world, your human(e)ness gives comfort. Some scholars in our field write about the concept of *embodiment*, often in ways that make my head spin because they’re so heavily theorized and rendered in lexically dense prose with lots of those left-branching structures that you painstakingly critique (and even decry). But your approach is decidedly about the embodiment of writing. At one point, Janet Emig’s article “Hand, Eye, Brain” came to mind and you made me think, why not “Hand, Eye, Mouth, Brain”? Ultimately, it’s “body and brain” or “brain embodied.” Brain is a big part of the equation, but how big? I’ll come back to that.

Now, I’ve just said that this is a long book, and maybe a couple of pages too long. So I feel a little conflicted about talking about what’s left out. For me, there were three small gaps. First, I wondered why you didn’t do much with the speaking/writing relationship for people who can’t speak, or hear, or see. What about the good writing, writing that looks like it came from speaking on the page, that I saw at the National Institute for the Deaf in Rochester, New York? Where did that come from if it didn’t have its deep origins in the sounds of speech?

You also include a lot about reading aloud but less so about work on reading that helps us to see the relationship between speaking and writing in new ways. For example (and here’s a shaded box): we’ve all watched people move their lips as they read silently. They don’t seem to be able to read the text without first converting it back into speech, a kind of reversal of “speaking onto the page”: they vocalize the text. But there’s also a process called *subvocalization* that reading theorists and physiologists have studied at length (I realize that you know about this because you mention it in passing in your article “What Do We Mean When We Talk about Voice in Texts?”). Subvocalization is this lip/tongue/vocal cord-moving gone underground. Researchers have wired people up to sensors that measure tiny movements in the vocal apparatus. It turns out that even silent readers who don’t make any visible movements are subtly and imperceptibly moving their vocal organs in the “direction” of the speech sounds as they read. This and other research on reading only reinforces the relationships between speaking and written text. But it’s research on reading, not speaking or writing, that reveals these relationships, and I’d have liked more acknowledgment of that research.

Finally, here and there you bring up the role of technology in speaking and writing. There's a bit about voice recognition, some more bits about blogging and other speechy forms of writing, and a bit at the end about how writing may get much more diverse in our "new Wild West" because "there are no filters to enforce a standard" (380). But digital technologies are merging speaking and writing in unique and captivating ways. At times I wanted you to muse a little more about how technology complicates our thinking about writing and speaking and what role visual and auditory media play as well.

Most of the time while reading *Vernacular Eloquence*, I played the believing game, partly because of your characteristic way of doubting yourself and then working your way through those doubts and clarifying your positions. Even so, I also found myself doubting beyond your own doubts, even a little guiltily. Not what you researched: I enjoyed reading what I knew and even more what I didn't know. It was your conviction that speaking onto the page somehow produces better, more authentic, livelier, more readable, maybe even more meaningful prose. I'm completely with you about the idea, in principle. But my research side is constantly asking, is this really true for all writers? So much of what you describe seems so *you*. And you take great pains to document similar processes in other excellent writers. But who's left out? My doubting game got me wondering whether there are writers out there, dead or alive, who behave(d) in totally on-the-page, non-speech-generated ways with great results.

I also found myself doubting that left-branching structures or suspended syntax or complicated stylistic tropes or other characteristics of very "written" text always make reading harder. I wondered about the relationship between reading ability and the structures of writing—something that a number of scholars like Kintsch and van Dijk studied in the 1980s and 1990s—and I'd like to know more about this issue. Some highly complex kinds of syntax are hard to read but once we develop the ability to do so, reading becomes delightful, a kind of syntactic untangling. My own countering instinct wants to say that such prose and the ability to read it exist in textual worlds that can be inhabited with some work. And I can already hear your counterpoint, your interest in democratizing writing and helping people, especially young people, to avoid associating writing with groups they don't belong to. Part of me screams, no, don't stick up for those rarified textual worlds, go with Peter: those are worlds of the intellectual-verbal elite and all the training they get and the well-schooled language they hear at home. Or the literati, who spend their lives cultivating an interest in complex prose.

But take a look at the first few lines of Milton's "On His Blindness":

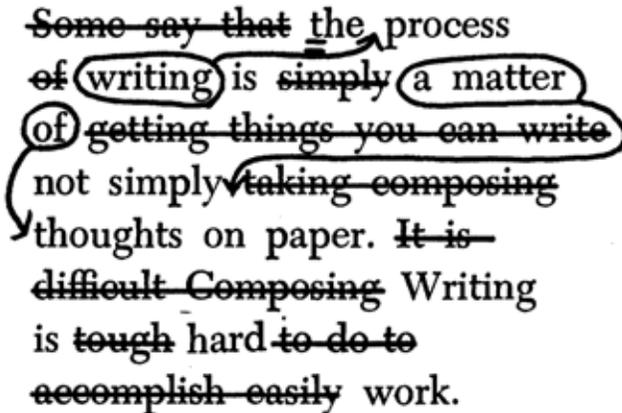
When I consider how my light is spent  
Ere half my days in this dark world and wide,  
And that one Talent which is death to hide  
Lodged with me useless, though my soul more bent  
To serve therewith my Maker, and present  
My true account, lest He returning chide,  
“Doth God exact day-labour, light denied?”  
I fondly ask. (lines 1-8)

Now, I know you could argue that there’s a spoken dimension to this piece of writing, a stacking up of ideas almost as if Milton composed them aloud. In fact, he did. He was blind, and at this stage of his life he dictated all his writing, as you note about *Paradise Lost*. So we could say that the poem has a quite literal origin in speech. But my point is really about the complicated syntax that we need to unravel—the long suspension between that opening “when,” which already signals one of those nasty left-branching structures, and the pause before the question, then the thud of those final three words that make us wonder whether we’ve unraveled it correctly. This takes the kind of *work* with text that speech rarely demands of us (and when it does, we usually say, “Huh?” and the person restructures the thought). I realize that poems often deliberately call attention to their own complex syntax because they’re language as art, not plain communication. But I think we could find other examples from non-artistic contexts.

So I’m agreeing with you about the subsequent work that writing-with-its-origins-in-speaking requires (what you call “the need for care” in Chapter 10). But I’m disagreeing with the emphasis you put on the easy-speaking part and the careful-but-almost-natural-refining part. That subsequent work is much more work-like than we want to advertise, partly because we don’t want to make writing scary or too difficult. It’s the kind of expertise the work yields that I’m favoring, the kind of work with text that Joseph Harris and others have advocated so strongly. Notice also the role of reading in that work. Not just giving voice to the text or reading aloud, as you discuss in Part Three, but doing the work of unraveling, of wresting meaning from complicated prose. The process you describe does move from blurting or talking onto the page (because it’s more genuine and natural and freeing) toward refinement, but the refinement is *harder work* and more developmental than I think you’re willing to say here, and it takes a certain disposition and motivation for the work that’s hard to inspire in classrooms. The hard work then loops back into better, more skilled speaking, writing, and reading. I’m reminded of my friend and mentor Michael Flanigan’s delightful poem “To Jackson Pollock” (Figure 1). Notice how the early starts—the lines that get revised—begin in the *written* mode and

then *move toward the spoken*. That is, instead of starting with speech-like writing and then refining it toward something more written, it moves in the other direction. It's not clear to me whether it's easier to go from speech-like writing to refined speech-like writing (with all the careful, hard work of revision) or the other way around.

## To Jackson Pollock



~~Some say that the~~ process  
of writing is simply a matter  
of getting things you can write  
~~not simply taking composing~~  
thoughts on paper. ~~It is~~  
~~difficult Composing~~ Writing  
is ~~tough hard to do to~~  
~~accomplish easily~~ work.

Figure 1

I've long supported accommodationist approaches to language difference and abhorred eradicationist approaches. So the final section of your book, "Vernacular Literacy," had me nodding a lot in agreement. That section argues that no language has ever been able to stand still, that vernacular literacies have sometimes become a standard, and that speech often gets excluded in the process of standardizing writing. But I also got puzzled by a seeming contradiction about diversity and standards. Aren't you really saying throughout the book that there's a kind of genuine, authentic, honest writing that starts in speech or has affinities with speech, and that everyone can achieve such writing? And if so, that seems like a kind of standard.

That is, you're singling out writing with certain features, especially oral ones, that seems "preferable" to writing with other features. At the same time, aren't you saying that there's room for many diverse kinds of writing from diverse language traditions? ("Nonmainstream and stigmatized versions of English will be acceptable for all serious writing" (378).) And that's where I see a possible contradiction. What if a group of people finds that

some degree of nominalization and passivization suits their purposes? We might be able to show them how the kind of writing you're advocating here is "better" for them, but wouldn't that be an attempt to influence or cajole or compel them to adopt another standard? I'm wondering if we can have it both ways: push for writing that has "liveliness, natural connection with audience, intonation that magically carries meaning, and . . . other virtues" (124) but at the same time respect and value the habits and conventions of all groups and cultures.

Another shaded box: I'm reminded of a study that a couple of my colleagues at the University of Minnesota did some years ago (Brown and Herndl). They trained smart MBA-holding middle-managers at large corporations to recognize certain "bad" elements in their writing, especially some of the elements you describe in Chapter Four, "Nine Virtues in Careless Unplanned Spoken Language that Can Significantly Improve Careful Writing." The managers learned fast and started writing their memos and reports in the new way. Then the researchers went away for a few months. When they came back, these smart, well-trained managers had slipped back to their old ways. Why? Because the habits and norms of their community trumped their new practices. They looked and felt like outsiders, especially those who felt most vulnerable.

To your credit, it's these kinds of puzzles and engaging questions that *Vernacular Eloquence* raises. Your rhetorical style is to circle around the questions, to look at them from various angles and to play a kind of dialogue with yourself, doubting and believing. That's always intrigued me and made reading your work so much fun. It's especially so with this book, maybe because you've included different kinds of texts with different purposes, some informative and factual, some deliberately equivocal and exploratory, some personal and anecdotal. Every teacher should read the book for this very reason: it stimulates deep thought about the puzzles of learning to write while also educating us in a lively and readable way about the nature and history of speech and writing. And it does so constantly mindful of what happens in writing classrooms and how we can help young writers to learn their craft. It's also a must-read for all writing program administrators, who should be on the lookout for fresh approaches to their curriculums and their teacher-development programs.

Finally, I want to reflect a little on what I've done here, because I think if I've followed the spirit of your work, I've done what I think you would support. I've tried as much as possible to use the many interesting strategies that your book offers. I've tried to avoid that left-branching syntax. I've spoken my thoughts out both orally and as a "silent" composing method. I've read the text aloud a few times to get a better sense of it. In preparing the

manuscript, I also did some of the work you suggest highly speech-enabled writing requires, going back and tinkering with sentences and removing redundancies, which my ear really dislikes. I've worked with care on the blurted parts and even done a little more "writing-oriented" (or at least academic) revision, such as incorporating quotations that I couldn't stop to include while blurring or dictating. Finally, though, I'm not entirely satisfied with the text, even after these refinements. There's something about really *written* text that I'm drawn to, even when it leans toward the formal and stylized. It may be that I need to unlearn this, or that I haven't yet seen the shortcomings of such prose. But it may also be that what you gain from a strongly spoken text you also lose in the polish that formal, written prose can often yield. Strongly "written" text may not lend itself to being spoken, but it lends itself to being read, and I think that there's something in the relationship between writing and reading that may be more direct than we assume.

Personally and on behalf of everyone in our profession, thank you for this major contribution to our knowledge and our practices.

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## Review Essay

### Feminist WPA Work: Beyond Oxymorons

Laura R. Micciche and Donna Strickland

Ratcliffe, Krista, and Rebecca Rickly, eds. *Performing Feminism and Administration in Rhetoric and Composition Studies*. Cresskill: Hampton P, 2010. 272 pages.

We approach this review as an opportunity to discuss *Performing Feminism and Administration in Rhetoric and Composition Studies* (henceforth, *Performing Feminism*) and, more broadly, its significance to the current state of feminist WPA work. We have been invested in this relationship since graduate school. In fact, we had the incredible good fortune to be part of a study group led by our own WPA, Alice Gillam, in which we explored the possibility of feminist approaches to administrative work. At the time, in the mid to late 1990s, a conversation about feminist WPA work, spurred on by the wider political turn, was energetically investigating this most unlikely of relationships. Hildy Miller, in her 1996 article “Postmasculinist Directions in Writing Program Administration,” offers one articulation of “how to transfer feminist principles to an administrative domain” (49). For Miller, a feminist approach to WPA work implies “cooperation, collaboration, shared leadership, and the integration of the cognitive and the affective” (50). She sees a conflict between the traditional “masculinist” leadership style in the academy, in which self-interested arguments and hierarchical stances predominate, and a “feminist” style, in which conversation and collaborative models make way for shared leadership. She argues that making use of feminist approaches can be difficult and tricky, given that women’s authority may be always already questioned in academic settings. For her, the goal is to find ways of combining the two approaches, of blending feminist approaches with masculinist ones.

Miller’s thesis might be considered emblematic of early feminist WPA work. Indeed, when we were working with Alice fifteen years ago, the basic

assumption informing feminist approaches to WPA work seemed to be that feminist principles offered a way to break down hierarchies. Even when not explicitly feminist, the dominant model for alternative approaches to administrative work was collaboration. In 1998, for example, Jeanne Gunner edited a special issue of this journal on collaborative administration. Collaboration, whether feminist or more generically “democratic,” was the alternative approach *du jour*.

As it turns out, collaboration remains a central, if not defining, characteristic of scholarly approaches to feminist administration. Reading *Performing Feminism* was something of a déjà vu for us in that respect. In addition to foregrounding collaborative strategies, we found that, much like those earlier scholars, the authors in this volume focus on situated practices, care, ethics, process, gender issues, authority and its problematics, and mentoring. We hear echoes of Sally Barr-Ebest (1995), Marcia Dickson (1993), Amy Goodburn and Carrie Leverenz (1998), Jeanne Gunner (1994), and Hildy Miller (1996). Which brings us to one of the reasons why writing this review essay is conflicted for us: the terms of reference are so familiar that we wonder how far feminist WPA work has evolved since our first encounter, even as we are grateful that scholars continue to find relevance in feminist theory and activism. And another point of conflict for us: Donna is in the odd position of having contributed a co-authored essay to *Performing Feminism*.

While her double-role here might strike some as stretching credibility, we mean to intentionally forefront the entangled relations of academic work, so often repressed in book reviews, book blurbs, peer reviews, and letters of recommendation. There’s nothing objective about our membership in various intellectual communities, as feminists have long argued, and yet professional etiquette regularly requires that we pretend otherwise. Dispensing with that performance, we take this opportunity to assess the state of feminist WPA work filtered through multiple standpoints: Donna’s doubleness, our history together, our individual experiences as WPAs, our investment in feminist theory and practice, and the publication of *Performing Feminism*—the only recent book to take an explicitly feminist approach to WPA work. Its status as such makes it especially important to us, given our linked investments, and should also give the wider community of WPAs pause, for *Performing Feminism* is a lonely book, a genuine outlier in the field (which is why this “review essay” reviews only one book).

#### (UNDER)PERFORMING FEMINISM

As noted above, we found terms in this collection to be very similar to the ones we encountered in the 1990s, both of which reflect the prominence

of second-wave feminism, particularly via practices like mentoring and collaboration. Interestingly, though, the title of *Performing Feminism* gestures toward the third wave, characterized by a rejection of prescriptive feminist ideology and affirmation of identity as flux rather than fixed categories. While the performativity of gender is a key insight from the last two decades, “performing” here mostly signifies ways of doing feminist administration (hereafter femadmin), but in general does not explicitly reference views of performance from queer theory or performance studies that might more emphatically call attention to intentional choices to refuse identity categories, the effects of contradictory embodiments, or reiterative subversiveness and its consequences.

Feminism and WPA work have always been strange, even estranged, bedfellows. High-minded principles and political commitments are nearly impossible to uphold in the seductive scene of management. Indeed, Ratcliffe and Rickly identify the dominant trope threaded throughout the volume as “oxymoron—the ability to keep two contradictory ideas in one’s mind and still function effectively” (xiv). Likewise, contributor Sibylle Gruber acknowledges the longstanding tension between theory and practice for feminist administrators, encouraging readers to embrace rather than dismiss ambivalence about this relationship.

Even the most dogmatic politico needs to staff sections on Monday, review hundreds, if not thousands, of student evaluations, deal with zealous upper administrators who view composition courses as ripe for common readings and countless other institutional initiatives, and observe classes guided by pedagogical strategies considered timely some 20 years ago (and then rehire the instructor without resources to extend professional development opportunities). Yes, this business will dull the edges of the sharpest knives in the drawer. Thus, it’s no surprise that feminism has never really gained momentum in WPA scholarship or practice, both of which have been largely guided by instrumentalist thinking, the sort of pragmatic, outcomes-based decision-making familiar to most WPAs. *Performing Feminism* affirms feminism’s constipated emergence in WPA and offers glimmers of striving toward different relations.

Focused on femadmin carried out in various locations, the book is organized into five parts that respectively address ethical and theoretical issues, collaboration and its problematics, gendered assumptions that affect administrative practices, WAC and Writing Centers as sites for doing femadmin, and other institutional contexts where femadmin is performed.

While one does not come away with a strong sense of the political edge that feminism offers these administrators, the desire to *find a way* to do femadmin, however oxymoronic, drives the volume. For example, Farris

finds her way in a lit-centric department, often experiencing her role as comp director in terms of a self-sacrificing mother-figure; Mattingly and Gillespie address power-sharing and expanding agency among writing center tutors; and Hanson, reflecting on her experiences as department chair, recounts how she sought to put feminist principles into practice. Offering a surprising take on how to find a way to do femadmin, Ronald, Beemer, and Shaver write from a context usually at odds with feminist practices—the Business School, where they serve as writing consultants. The title sets the tone perfectly: “Where Else Should Feminist Rhetoricians Be?” The authors configure their role in the Business School as partly to “challeng[e] any notion or practice that portrays business as a male pursuit” (166). They continue, “Because we claim rhetorical authority as expert consultants, we can often perform critiques that colleagues, especially untenured women colleagues, might hesitate to voice” (166).

Moving from location to principles, Leverenz urges readers to engage with feminist ethics recursively—highlighting issues related to care, otherness, and process—in an effort to develop administrative strategies guided by such thinking. Reid’s discussion of a “good enough” femadmin model in which care (of self and others) is a cautious centerpiece resonates with Leverenz’s focus on ethics. Reid offers a strategy mindful of directors’ and programs’ limits and needs: “We can enact caring in a wide range of ways that can all be good enough, manageable, flexible, and locally successful—in ways that can fully engage our feminisms to help us and our programs grow and prosper” (141).

The inclusiveness of feminist ethics has direct connections to collaboration, a subject that gets considerable attention in this volume. In their chapter, Strickland and Crawford propose interruption as a tactic for calling out status differentials among collaborative partners. Christoph *et al.* also acknowledge power variances in relation to graduate WPAs, calling for decentralized, situational mentoring that arises organically from a given administrative context. Also proposing a ground-up model of administrative work, Hea and Turnley develop a model of feminist technology administration that repudiates the mastery model; more specifically, they describe their approach to mentoring new computer compositionists as a “collaborative, praxis-based model of mentoring...[to] work against technological determinism” and to open spaces that value mentee knowledge and experience (115).

The goal of collaboration, regardless of difficulties, might be best summed up by Gaillet and Guglielmo, who write that collaborative models “create space for innovative leadership, draw on the strength of individual faculty members, allow opportunity for building problem-solving strate-

gies, encourage experimentation, and foster mentoring” (65). These laudable goals do tend to pass here (and elsewhere within Composition Studies) as feminist. Collaboration and mentoring are smart, pragmatic administrative practices, but it’s not always clear what is distinctly feminist about them. This nagging sense that feminism stands for practices dissociated from politics is an issue not confined to this book; rather, *Performing Feminism* invites us to pivot toward a broader consideration of what difference particular feminist frameworks make to the viability of femadmin.

#### PERFORMING OTHERWISE

“What works?”—a pragmatic and instrumental logic—is the pervasive mode of thought in WPA discourse, as Donna has argued in her recent history of composition (see Strickland). This orientation informs theory’s uptake too, often limiting inventiveness that might evolve from varying, and in some cases, esoteric critical standpoints. WPAs are often embattled, busily getting things done. The two of us recognize, have experienced, and understand why this reality frequently becomes the grounded location for doing theory. However, we’d like to argue for the value of theory for innovation and inspiration, not necessarily (always) for implementation. Our guiding assumption is that we all need thinking tools for rejuvenation, for learning how to ask fresh questions, for reframing the ordinary in less familiar terms so as to experience and examine it anew—something Donna has referred to as “operational” reason (what happens if we do this?) as opposed to instrumental.

Theory can offer an interruption in the application to practice, a valuable way to slow down and think with others, which may lead to surprising (if indirect) insights. In addition, approaching theory this way can take femadmins, in particular, beyond a second wave frame of reference—so rich for practical application—to engage with a diverse range of feminist and other critical theories that invite affective dissonance. Gruber makes a similar point in *Performing Feminism* when she confides that “theoretical guideposts sometimes fall short of understanding our practices” (50). Rather than using theory to explain practices, we might approach theory less pragmatically and, in Gruber’s words, use “theoretical foundations to create a working environment” (50). In other words, theory can sometimes influence mood, feeling, or sensibility in relation to one’s work, if not always directly influencing content and frames of action. It can also engender innovative performances of femadmin that spring from theoretical insights.

A recent example of the latter is evident in Tara Pauliny's "Queering the Institution." Offering a counter-narrative to the downtrodden WPA narrative, which Laura, for example, discussed in "More Than a Feeling" (2002), Pauliny describes her queerness, coupled with her administrator status, as a productive wedge for generating institutional change. She formulates queer not exclusively as an identity or political category but as "an analytic methodology" that "has the capacity to challenge dominant ideologies and normative, repressive structures." For example, she writes, "When the APA [assistant professor administrator] chooses not to reproduce expected versions of the teacher/scholar/administrator, she is also refusing an identity-based formulation of her professional self. She makes clear the innate hybridity—and innate queerness—of her professional identity." Pauliny taps into the disruptive power and sensibility of queerness to help her construct a convincing alternative embodiment for jWPAs.

Just as Pauliny takes queer performativity to enact a different way of understanding the WPA position, so do Rebecca Dingo, Rachel Riedner, and Jennifer Wingard use a transnational feminist lens to consider the rippling out of effects that connect local writing program decisions to global economies. They take the out-sourcing to India of WAC/WID assessment at one US university as a cautionary tale and argue "if we are moving our disciplinary knowledge, practices, and commitments across borders . . . we must lay bare the relationships among material effects of labor, economic structures, institutional arrangements, ideological assumptions, and the unforeseen impact of policies and decisions made by seemingly disconnected actors." A feminism informed by transnational theory can provide the resources to reflect carefully on what happens "As universities turn 'global,' and as writing programs are built in new countries, often with the help of US-based writing program administrators."

The changing economic and geopolitical contexts of writing programs represent large-scale material realities; on a smaller-scale are economies of bodies, affect, and things. Seemingly peripheral to the workings of a program, these matters can in fact reveal quite a bit about WPAing. Laura sought to make this point in "For Slow Agency," which began to take form after some daydreaming about her doorstep, passed down from a former WPA who inherited it from once director Jim Berlin. The doorstep—a trivial thing, in some ways—became an object for meditating on administrator agency and pace through the lens of new materialism. WPA authority and agency, its abuse and its lack, have been important to feminist WPAs for some time now, and Laura's piece suggests alternative ways to conceptualize and enact both. The piece also illustrates our earlier point about the value of reframing the ordinary in less familiar terms, a key move in femi-

nist analysis, and of working with a wider palette of theoretical ideas. Both can lead to unexpected lines of thought; in this case, new materialism helps Laura address alternative work structures guided by “suspended agency,” a practice that interrupts the standard academic workflow and has implications for femadmin.

We offer these three examples of “operational” feminist reasoning, of trying out ideas to see where they take us, because open inquiry leads to surprise and inspiration, affective resources essential to the viability and evolution of feminist community. *Performing Feminism*, appearing over a decade after the high point of a feminist conversation about WPA work, gives evidence that many within the field still want to think about these possibilities, and still struggle to think beyond the apparent contradictions of such couplings. We’re suggesting that it’s time to release the worries about contradictions and to move toward new visions of feminist WPAing. We’re also suggesting that one way to do so is to expand the theoretical and critical frameworks at our disposal, aiming for what Donna Haraway calls “bag-lady storytelling,” which “proceed[s] by putting unexpected partners and irreducible details into a frayed, porous carrier bag” (160).

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## Review Essay

# To Catch Lightning in a Bottle: Quests for Responsible Writing Assessment and for Definition of Our Discipline

Chris Thaiss

Elliot, Norbert and Les Perelman, eds. *Writing Assessment in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Essays in Honor of Edward M. White*. New York: Hampton P, 2012. 530 pages.

Massey, Lance and Richard C. Gebhardt, eds. *The Changing of Knowledge in Composition: Contemporary Perspectives*. Logan: Utah State UP, 2011. 320 pages.

One of the ways by which any culture affirms its identity is to look back over the ground it has covered: to celebrate the landmarks it has built and to tell the stories of the struggles that have been endured in their making. Heroes—and villains—emerge in these stories and are, again and again, cheered and reviled.

The two books I discuss in this review are part of that recurring pattern. The culture is that of writing studies (or rhet/comp or comp/rhet, if you'd prefer), and the achievements celebrated are, respectively, the career of Edward White and the enduring influence of Stephen North's 1987 book, *The Making of Knowledge in Composition*.

Both of these new books are worthy of review not so much because of the landmarks and heroes they illuminate. Both books aspire to heroism in their own right—the one trying through its diverse storytellers to describe the ever-intensifying struggle to value properly the writing that our students produce (AKA “assessment”) and the other striving no less mightily to help its readers decide if, indeed, our vibrant culture merits the title “discipline.” I call this review “To Catch Lightning in a Bottle” because both books are striving to capture ever more complex phenomena that thoroughly resist the attempt.

The one effort, edited by Norbert Elliot and Les Perelman, is more than a celebration of White's ongoing contributions to the profession, though what comes through from article to article is how White, even in retirement, continues to be a powerful voice in the community, even as his signature volume from 1985, *Teaching and Assessing Writing* (updated and expanded in 1994), in many ways remains a current guide. Indeed, his heroic stature is proclaimed in the editors' introduction, where the story of "White's law" is retold: "a single discursive statement worthy of a stone tablet: [. . .] 'Assess thyself, or assessment shall be done unto thee'" (Elliot and Perelman 1).

Though this mantra is not repeated epic-like throughout the collection, its influence pervades this very serious agonistic anthology, with contributions from many well-known assessment scholars, numbers of whom are otherwise well-known in the writing studies culture. The anthology structure gives the appearance of a wide diversity of voices—and there is an array of well-argued points of view and well-described assessment techniques. But as one reads, there is no mistaking that there are two main camps in this struggle:

1. the writers representing the Educational Testing Service and invested in devising *reliably replicable and efficient large-scale assessment of writing proficiency*
2. the writers who live in academic writing programs and whose *collective devotion to student and faculty diversity and imaginative freedom* outweighs their sincere efforts to accommodate the pressures for mass assessment.

Please note that none of the writers is so naïve (some might call it idealistic) as to claim at this late date of the assessment wars that the mass assessors should just stay away from individual teachers, who are fully capable of evaluating their own students. Even those contributors who most passionately defend the diversity of students and rhetorical environments (e.g., Mya Poe and Asao Inoue, Peggy O'Neill, Anne Herrington and Charles Moran) understand the knowledge gained by reading the work of student writers across an entire program or institution, or even trans-institutionally. This sophistication of attitudes toward assessment is why this book will become so valuable for WPAs and the administrators they work with in *designing assessment strategies that can work for their environments*.

Yes, there is a fascinating variety of perspectives and strategies here, and there are disputes about theory and methods—some quite heated (e.g., Perelman's "Mass-Market Writing Assessments as Bullshit"), but all the contributors, many of whom address arguments made by other con-

tributors, come across as sincerely and thoughtfully committed to stressful, very difficult work: creating assessments that not only respect the freedom of students and teachers but that can also provide useful information to diverse stakeholders—the students and teachers themselves, the program administrators, upper administrators, state boards and legislatures, the U.S. Department of Education. The list goes on and on.

Frankly, such is the sincerity of all the authors to build “valid and reliable” assessment apparatus that the rhetorical nature of assessment gets lost, or at least under-mentioned, in this book. I much appreciate the detailed descriptions of “dynamic criteria mapping” (Robert Broad), the praiseworthy and well-established portfolio assessments at Washington State (Diane Kelly-Riley and William Condon), and Sherry Seale Swain and Paul LeMahieu’s illuminating history of the National Writing Project’s Analytic Writing Continuum, among other fine pieces too numerous to mention individually. However, I would like to have seen some emphasis on how the data compiled and analyzed by the responsible designs described in this volume get reported:

- how the crucial choices are made of which results to report,
- how the projected readers of these reports are characterized by the report writers,
- and, more basically, *how the instruments are designed in response to the demands of certain influential readers.*

One article that is framed by reader expectations of assessment, or at least focused on reception history, is John Brereton’s close look at changes in the legendary Harvard entrance exams of the 1870s. By unearthing the major differences from year to year in what incoming students *were asked to do and expected to know* for these writing tests, Brereton shows why there might have been major differences in scores from year to year—and why conclusions drawn from the numbers, which falsely appear comparable, may have misled not only Harvard officials, but the countless policy makers in U.S. education since then who have made decisions about writing policy based on “inadequately designed prompts [. . .] confused reporting of results, [and] misleading conclusions drawn from the whole process” (31).

I especially would like to have seen greater rhetorical awareness in the essays by those representing the ETS. I would love to have seen some recognition in these essays that the testing corporations’ drive to produce simple, allegedly-comparative numbers is meant to satisfy (perhaps create?) a demand for a convenient way to make decisions about spending or large generalizations to support a sweeping point from those farthest from the

scenes of education—federal accreditors, legislators, political pundits, mass media, etc. Though we can learn much about the different scenes of their work from the essays by Paul Deane, Hilary Persky, Mary Fowles, Doug Baldwin, and Jill Burstein—they certainly do not speak with one voice on a number of issues—we do not see them questioning their basic rhetorical premise: that normative numbers are a *meaningful* way to describe to *readers outside the teaching environment* a long-term developmental process that occurs in an astonishing range of environments and that is surprisingly different (gloriously so, I'd claim) for each person. In other words, they do not question that a bottle is an appropriate device for holding lightning.

In contrast, I—as a parent, teacher, WPA, and long-time student of writing in diverse disciplinary places—particularly appreciate those essays by writers striving earnestly to create assessments that can speak *complexly, not reductively*, to audiences in the environments in which they work. The essays by Gita DasBender and by Daniel Royer and Roger Gilles (both on directed self-placement) and by Kathleen Blake Yancey (on e-portfolios) exemplify, among other articles, this emphasis in the book. An essay that I feel describes a particularly novel approach is that by Liz Hamp-Lyons on the ambitious attempt in Hong Kong to measure English-language proficiency in speaking across all high schools. What stands out for me in this Herculean effort is its goal of both respecting each teaching environment and achieving comparable results. Or as Hamp-Lyons puts it: “How could we create an assessment that would be welcomed by teachers as beneficial to their teaching, and yet would meet reliability requirements for the examination authority’s reporting requirements?” (389–90). To see if their bottle has caught the lightning, you will have to read the essay.

It is easy for me as a critic to complain about what I would like to have seen—for example, I would love to have seen much more about (1) the assessment challenges of multimedia composing and (2) how assessment of writing must change as our population becomes increasingly multilingual and transcultural. But the bottom line for me is that this book, even as it honors a legendary assessment hero, is a marvelous compendium of the current state of the assessment art and its disparate voices. It may not hold lightning, but it does provide illumination.

\* \* \*

The lightning/bottle tension in the *Assessment* volume is between the proliferating, ever more diversifying phenomena of writing versus the normative, reductive goals of external testers. In contrast, the tensions in *The Changing of Knowledge in Composition* are several. One is created by the choice of

North's 1987 book as a touchstone, hence creating a persistent obligation by the writers to compare the way North mapped the landscape of twenty-five years ago with what we see today. The nod to the past does help to show movement (or lack of movement) from then to now, but in some sense the choice of that specific landmark holds the new book back from fully realizing its goal of mapping the fertile proliferation of scholarship in writing studies. This is not to say that *The Making of Knowledge in Composition* [MKC] isn't worth remembering (even though in North's own reflections in the new book on the earlier one, he is modestly ambivalent about its value). But as a research catalyst for our field, no one can presume to say (North would not) that it has been more generative than, say, Mina Shaughnessy's *Errors and Expectations* or Janet Emig's *The Composing Processes of Twelfth Graders* or Geneva Smitherman's *Talkin and Testifyin* or Lev Vygotsky's *Thought and Language*, or any of another twenty or thirty books.

Indeed, as I look back at my own growth as a teacher, researcher, and WPA, the North contributions to writing studies scholarship most important to me were his article "The Idea of a Writing Center" (1984) and his co-founding (with Lil Brannon) of *The Writing Center Journal* in 1980. The former gave me a sharp, flexible tool to use in my own explanations to colleagues in English and to students in our grad pedagogy course; the latter provided three of my students and me a publishing venue for our own WC research in 1981 and a continuing resource. By the time MKC came out in 1987, I was so heavily focused on WID research and WAC administration, not an important subject in North's book, that I did not, I must admit, pay North's review of research much attention. The big book that year for me was Toby Fulwiler's *The Journal Book*, a collaborative testament to the value of teacher "practice as inquiry," a research approach lauded by North that, in my cross-disciplinary environment, did not need justifying.

Hence, the new volume comes across to me as, to some extent, working at cross purposes. Much of the collection seems to me to be reflecting uneasily on the legacy of this one controversial book—and perhaps too little on describing and analyzing the subject of the title: *The Changing of Knowledge in Composition*. Indeed, if the collection had not been constrained by its looking backward to North's argument, it could have been retitled something like (but better than!) *The Changing of Knowledge in Writing Studies: Current Trends and Future Directions*. As it stands, ten of the nineteen chapters in the collection deal mostly or almost exclusively with personal or critical reactions to MKC itself, to its time, or to its influence on later work (the introduction by Massey and Gebhardt, the essays by White; Lynn Bloom; Victor Villanueva; Sarah Liggett, Kerri Jordan, and

Steve Price; Brad Lucas and Drew Loewe; Richard Fulkerson; Massey; and two of the three contributions by North himself).

As history, these are valuable documents, and our field is the richer for the incisive commentary they provide. However, they seem to be part of a different book, one that might be titled more directly *The Legacy of Stephen North's The Making of Knowledge in Composition*. As part of the actual book, which one expects to have a different, more forward-looking energy, the references to the past seem, in some cases, a distraction. For example, the fine chapter by Lucas and Loewe on the potential value of the tool of bibliometrics in tracing the impact of research over time argues thoughtfully for this research method. But using the tool to map the inevitably declining influence of *MKC* over twenty years takes the emphasis off the tool and places it on the example. Similarly, the excellent review of writing center research over twenty years by Liggett, Jordan, and Price is constrained by their using North's eight categories from his research taxonomy in 1987. Developing their own paradigm based on a vision of what WC scholarship needs now and into the future might have given the essay a different spirit.

That other, more future-focused, aim of the collection has its own driving tension: between a definition of composition constrained by English department politics and the broad concept of writing studies at work in 2013 and imaginable in years hence. I began this review by saying that this book strives mightily "to help its readers decide if, indeed, our vibrant culture merits the title 'discipline.'" One conclusion reached by this book is that in those places where the writing studies community is still dominated by English department literary studies, composition cannot be a discipline. Just as in North's 1987 book, there is a profound goal of disciplinary self-justification in this new collection, as if someone in authority outside our own community is constantly calling that into question. Kristine Hansen in her essay concludes that "we aren't there yet" (258), because, citing Richard Ohmann, writing studies in many places does not yet sustain privileged labor positions, control content and resources, hire its own personnel, and demonstrate other forms of power held by enfranchised academic units. Moreover, her own partial survey of research approaches from 1987 to 2007, published in *CCC*, shows a preponderance of articles conforming to the historical, philosophical, and critical research methods privileged in literary studies versus methods, qualitative and quantitative, privileged in social sciences.

Similarly, David Smit, reiterating themes from his 2004 *The End of Composition Studies*, begins his essay here by describing and seemingly lamenting the "fragmentation" of composition studies into diverse stances

and priorities and research subfields, and compares it unfavorably to what he speculates is the greater uniformity of such established fields as medicine and law. Though at the end of his essay he shifts his tone and says that we should proclaim the diversity of our methods as appropriate to the diversity of genres and environments in which students write, there remains the sense that this argument for proliferation will be a tough sell in any academic climate that sees composition's main venue as first-year writing.

A quite different vision, however, moves Patricia Webb Boyd's chapter on ecocomposition, a true interdisciplinary effort, as a spur to writing studies research; Joyce Kinkead's chapter on undergraduate research in the writing studies major; and Patricia Dunn's argument for a reinvigorated teacher-research that restores the synergy that thrived in the 1970s and 1980s between practitioner writing research pre-college and in collegiate years. In these chapters, almost a third book emerges: one not needing to refer to a particular point of view from 1987, nor oppressed by certain English department interests, but energized more by recent growth of independent writing programs and multi-level and interdisciplinary writing studies initiatives. I find the Dunn chapter particularly intriguing in this regard, because she pays homage less to North's 1987 book than to her own rich experience as a graduate student of his and to the inventiveness of his teaching. This example becomes the touchstone for her, and it sparks her bold call for renewed respect for teachers and for rejection of the anti-teacher assessment politics that brought us the disaster of *No Child Left Behind*.

Overall, what speaks to me most clearly from this book is not its angst about the past and about who is looking over our shoulder. What shouts from the "third book" and other places in the collection is its positive outlook on what the future can be, and for me that lights up the whole. As to the question "Are we a discipline?", I invite you to look at all the uses from chapter to chapter of the tiny words "we," "us," and "our," and the slightly longer and never defined phrase "the field." Of course "we" are a discipline and have been for many years; despite the legitimate anxiety about the so-much we still have to achieve, we have a strong sense of what holds us together and drives us forward—even if that bond is not always easy to name. Sometimes we just don't know when we're holding the lightning and how we do it.

In my reading these two books together, a key trait of our lightning also becomes obvious to me: our variety and imagination, our fertile tendency to spin forth and elaborate in a remarkably short time a daunting range of program types, research sites, interdisciplinary collaborations, and hybrid research methodologies. Smit gives one such and very partial list, just of models in teaching first-year college writing and just from the

categories of the first edition of *A Guide to Composition Pedagogies* (2001; a second edition is forthcoming, by the way, with even more paradigms!): “process pedagogy, expressive pedagogy, rhetorical pedagogy, collaborative pedagogy, cultural studies pedagogy, critical pedagogy, feminist pedagogy, writing across the curriculum, writing centers, basic writing, and writing based on technology” (223). Anyone hoping for a dominant pedagogy to rise up and submerge the rest will be more and more disappointed. That would be like hoping for the concept of WPA to mean only, as it at one time did, coordinator of a first-year writing course and not to include directors/coordinators/chairs of writing centers, National Writing Project sites, WAC/WID programs, developmental writing, writing minors, writing majors, advanced writing, multilingual writing, professional writing, technical communication, writing with technologies, departments of writing (and rhetoric, etc.), MA programs, PhD programs, and so forth. Is it any wonder that the other new volume in this pairing, *Writing Assessment in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, includes a wide array of designs and scenes of assessment, and leaves me looking for more?

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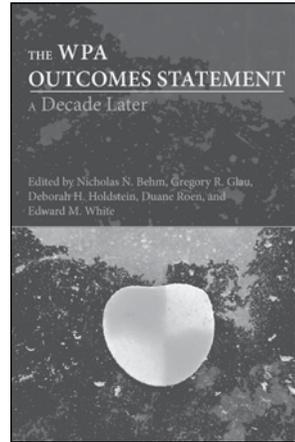
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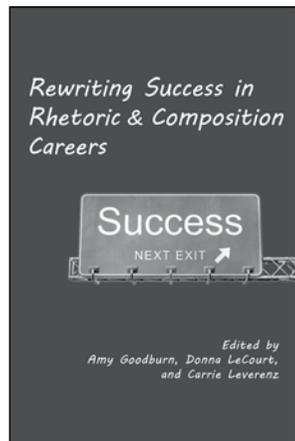
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