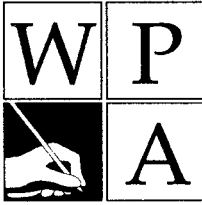


Writing Program Administration

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Council of Writing Program Administrators

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Writing Program Administration

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Council of Writing Program Administrators

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- Writing Assessment within Programmatic Contexts
- Advocacy and Institutional Critique and Change
- Writing Programs and Their Extra-Institutional Relationships with Writing's Publics
- Technology and the Delivery of Writing Instruction within Programmatic Contexts
- WPA and Writing Program Histories and Contexts
- WAC / ECAC / WID and Their Intersections with Writing Programs
- The Theory and Philosophy of Writing Program Administration
- Issues of Professional Advancement and WPA Work
- Projects that Enhance WPA Work with Diverse Stakeholders

This list is meant to be suggestive, not exhaustive, but contributions must be appropriate to the interests and concerns of those who administer writing programs. The editors welcome empirical research (quantitative as well as qualitative), historical research, and theoretical, essayistic, or reflective pieces.

Submission Guidelines

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

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

Reviews

WPA publishes reviews of books related to writing programs and their administration. Publishers are invited to send appropriate professional books to Ed White, 3045 W. Brenda Loop, Flagstaff, AZ 86001, who assigns reviews.

Announcements and Calls

Relevant announcements and calls for papers will be published as space permits. Announcements should not exceed 500 words, and calls for proposals/participation should not exceed 1,000 words. Please include contact information and/or links for further information. Submission deadlines in calls should be no sooner than January 1 for the fall/winter issue and June 1 for the spring issue. Please e-mail your calls and announcements to journal@wpacouncil.org and include the text in both the body of the message and as an MS Word or RTF attachment.

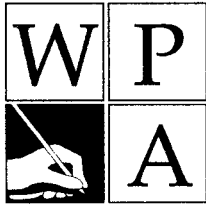
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Writing Program Administration

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Contents

From the Editors.....	7
WPAs, Writing Programs and the Common Reading Experience.....	11
Brad Benz, Denise Comer, Erik Juergensmeyer, and Margaret Lowry	
The Research Paper and Why We Should Still Care	33
Doug Brent	
When the Writing Requirements Went Away: An Institutional Case Study of Twenty Years of Decentralization/Abolition.....	54
Duncan Carter, Christie Toth, and Hildy Miller	
Taking the Long View: Investigating the History of a Writing Program's Teacher Evaluation System.....	81
Laura J. Davies	
WPA as Tempered Radical: Lessons from Occupy Wall Street	112
Casie Fedukovich	
Magic, Agency and Power: Mapping Embodied Leadership Roles	134
Tina S. Kazan and Catherine Gabor	
Creating Accessible Spaces for ESL Students Online.....	161
Fernando Sánchez	
A Queer Eye for the WPA	186
Harry Denny	

Queering the Writing Program: Why Now? How? And Other Contentious Questions	199
Karen Kopelson	
WPAs in Dialogue	
Response to Faye Halpern’s “The Preceptor Problem: The Effect of ‘Undisciplined Writing’ on Disciplined Instructors”	214
Andrea Scott	
Response to Andrea Scott	220
Faye Halpern	
Review Essays	
In the Internet Age, Who Needs Textbooks?	223
Richard Colby	
Moxley, Joseph, ed. <i>Writing Commons: The Home for Writers Rhetoric and Composition WikiBook</i>	
Multimodality in Local and Disciplinary Praxes	231
Randall W. Monty	
Bowen, Tracey, and Carl Whithaus. <i>Multimodal Literacies and Emerging Genres</i>	
Miller, Suzanne M., and Mary B. McVee. <i>Multimodal Composing in Classrooms: Learning and Teaching in the Digital World</i>	
Rowell, Jennifer. <i>Working with Multimodality: Rethinking Literacy in a Digital Age</i>	
Contributors	237

From the Editors

If you did not have a chance to attend this year's WPA conference in Savannah, you will enjoy reading the conference plenaries, two of which appear in this issue. The theme of the program was "Queering the Writing Program" and in case you want to review the call for proposals, it appears as an Appendix to Karen Kopelson's plenary text. The theme invited all of us to think, in a variety of ways, about the nature of difference and how it might inform our work as program administrators. Using queer theory as a base, the program encouraged participants not only to "think outside the box," but also to think beyond boxes of any and all kinds.

In particular, we need to be thinking about all the various directions and constituencies we work with and how we can work with them more effectively. For example, half of all first year writing instruction is now delivered in two-year institutions. CWPA had a "cup of coffee" initiative for a while to encourage conversations among leaders at two-year and four-year schools. We've also encouraged and supported CWPA members who are willing to attend local or regional meetings of colleagues at two-year institutions, where we can discuss the *Framework for Success* document and make friends in order to support one another's work. With state-wide initiatives on transfer and other matters springing up in Indiana, Michigan, Wisconsin and other states, such points of contact will provide opportunities for useful dialogue and support. While there may be a host of differences between two-year and four-year courses and programs, there is plenty of common ground and much need for communication and contact.

The conference also encouraged attendees to think about graduate programs and the job market. The energy and enthusiasm of the WPA-GO organization is driven by its members who were present in large numbers at the conference. The growth of graduate programs attests to the interest of younger people in entering the profession. However, there is a difference between the number of students who may earn graduate degrees and the number of full-time tenure-track positions that may be available for them when they finish. Here is a difference that warrants thinking beyond all current boxes, queer and otherwise.

One very well-attended session dealt with the coming of MOOCs, including MOOCs for writing. MOOCs are an entirely different way of thinking about the delivery of education; they are already making a difference in the landscape of education. Reports at the conference suggest that they will make more and more of a difference to our field and many others. Their impact is being felt in a way that led to a recent front-page article (above the fold in the printed version, space reserved for the most newsworthy items) in the Sunday *New York Times* on new MOOCs at the graduate level (http://www.nytimes.com/2013/08/18/education/masters-degree-is-new-frontier-of-study-online.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0). We will all need to think carefully about how different the landscape may look in a few years as MOOCs continue to develop. Their impact will make our work different in ways that may be positive or negative, but not the same old same old in either case.

These issues all bear on the labor conditions in which we work in different ways. How many jobs, what kinds of jobs, under what conditions, with what expectations? Higher education as a whole is changing and the differences are in our institutions, in our first-year programs, in our majors and minors in writing/rhetoric/composition, in our WAC/WID courses, in everything we do. The landscape for collective bargaining is changing as well. Writing program administrators, thinking differently and beyond any kind of box, are in an especially good place to explore these changes. Our talents as readers, writers and thinkers put us in the best position to take leadership and ownership of the ways these changes may play out. The conference presentations, conversations, plenaries and culminating riverboat ride gave us much to think about.

On a different matter, we want to thank Cynthia Haller of York College, CUNY and Sandra Jamieson of Drew University for ad hoc reviews of articles in this issue. From time to time, we ask readers who are not members of the editorial board to read submissions in areas in which they have particular expertise.

One final note: In alternating years, CWPA presents an award for the best article in the last two years of the journal. This year, that award went to Lori Salem and Peter Jones of Temple University for their article, "Undaunted, Self-Critical, and Resentful: Investigating Faculty Attitudes Toward Teaching Writing in a Large University Writing-Intensive Course Program." Lori Salem was at the conference to accept the award. The article appeared in *WPA* in the Fall/Winter issue of 2010 (34.1). If you are a member of CWPA, you can log in to the website and access the article through the journal archives under the journal tab, at this link: <http://wpacouncil.org/wpa34n1>. Enjoy!

IN THIS ISSUE

The articles in this issue continue the general theme of difference and queer approaches in a variety of ways.

Brad Benz, Denise Comer, Erik Juergensmeyer, and Margaret Lowry analyze their experiences as WPAs whose writing programs have been, to varying degrees, impacted by community book programs in “WPAs, Writing Programs and the Common Reading Experience.” Their article raises issues of writing program autonomy and visibility, as well as the potential benefits and unintended consequences of integrating campus-wide common reading experiences into writing programs.

Doug Brent helps us better understand why the activity of writing from sources (research-infused writing) deserves a central rather than peripheral place in writing programs.

In “When the Writing Requirements Went Away,” Duncan Carter, Christie Toth, and Hildy Miller provide a follow up on Sherrie Gradin’s 1997 *WPA* article “What Happens to the Writing Program Administrator When the Writing Requirements Go Away?” on the early years of a first-year composition decentralization experiment at Portland State University. The authors extend Gradin’s analytic narrative of PSU’s long-term experiment in decentralization.

Within her historical study, Laura J. Davies urges WPAs to take a long-range perspective when they assess the effectiveness of administrative systems and design administrative structures that can evolve in changing contexts.

In “WPA as Tempered Radical: Lessons from Occupy Wall Street” Casie Fedukovich reframes writing program administration, and specifically over-reliance on contingent labor, through prefiguration, a tactic that seeks to “build a new society in the shell of the old.” The article concludes with recommendations for occupying writing programs through tempered radicalism.

Tina S. Kazan and Catherine Gabor help us understand rhetorical agency as a means to enact power, influence, and authority by drawing upon scholarship in leadership studies and writing program administration from a feminist perspective to argue for an expanded and more fluid conception of the WPA as a leader.

Fernando Sánchez studied eight OWL websites in universities with large international student populations to gauge how well these sites took into account criteria pertinent to ESL students: intercultural needs, writing resource needs, plagiarism resource needs, and readability.

PLENARIES FROM SAVANNAH

In “A Queer Eye for the WPA,” Harry Denny invited us at the Savannah conference to meditate on ways that writing programs and writing centers can support and address differences. His ideas apply not only to campuses like his own that have obvious diversity of race, ethnicity and gender, but also to campuses where diversity may be much less obvious. Similarly, Karen Kopelson’s plenary “Queering the Writing Program: Why Now? How? And Other Contentious Questions” looked at the ways in which “queer” and “normal” can be provocatively useful for WPAs.

WPAs IN DIALOGUE

We have a lively exchange between Andrea Scott commenting on Halpern’s “Preceptor Problem” and Faye Halpern’s response.

REVIEW ESSAYS

Richard Colby reviews two “born-digital” online writing textbooks, *Writing Commons: The Home for Writers* and *Rhetoric and Composition WikiBook*. His analysis in “In the Internet Age, Who Needs Textbooks?” addresses the complex rhetorical challenges of authorship, audience, and purpose that complicate the unified approach to writing instruction that these non-traditional resources seek to provide. In “Multimodality in Local and Disciplinary Praxes,” Randall Monty reviews three recently published books on multimodality and the composition classroom. Through his review, Monty argues that the books suggest that composition studies has shifted its focus from defining multimodality to its pedagogical implications for the teaching of writing. We hope you enjoy this issue.



WPAs, Writing Programs and the Common Reading Experience

Brad Benz, Denise Comer, Erik Juergensmeyer,
and Margaret Lowry

ABSTRACT

Community colleges, colleges, and universities around the United States are instituting common reading programs. These programs often involve pre-matriculate first-year students reading a common text (or set of texts) and then, once on campus, participating in a range of related academic and/or co-curricular activities. While the goals and administrative roles of common reading experiences (CREs) vary by institution, nearly all intersect with writing programs and the work of writing program administrators (WPAs). These intersections are largely unexplored in writing studies scholarship, despite the fact that CREs are closely connected with reading and writing practices of first-year students. This article draws on three divergent WPA experiences with CREs (University of Texas at Arlington, Duke University, and Fort Lewis College) in order to explore the complexities informing how WPAs choose to productively respond to, strengthen, resist, and/or otherwise engage with the CRE.

INTRODUCTION

Community colleges, colleges, and universities around the United States are instituting common reading experiences (CREs), which often involve incoming first-year students reading a common text (or set of texts) and then, once on campus, participating in a range of related academic and/or co-curricular activities. CRE integration into the curriculum varies greatly across campuses: some implement CREs only in orientation; others recommend (but do not mandate) that all faculty incorporate the book into their courses; some theme-based courses link the book to the course theme; and others fully integrate the text into required first-year courses.

The goals of CREs also vary, tending to involve one or more of the following: to promote student engagement; to establish expectations for student success, especially with incoming first-year students but also with returning students; to develop community among first-year and returning students, faculty, staff, and institutional stakeholders; to promote literacy throughout the community; to model academic behavior; to foster cross-disciplinary discussions about a common topic or theme; and certainly (if implicitly) to promote retention.¹

Not surprisingly, writing programs (WPs) are often encouraged or mandated to participate in CREs by incorporating (in some capacity) the chosen text into first-year composition (FYC) and other writing courses. These relationships, however, have largely gone unexplored in writing studies scholarship, creating several questions for WPAs interested in participating in such programs: What roles can (or should) WPs have in relation to CREs? What possibilities and problems do CREs present for WPAs and our WPs? How do CREs and WPs work together (or not) to sponsor reading and writing practices of first-year students, as well as returning students, staff, faculty, and members of the larger communities?

We describe how WPAs at the following institutions have negotiated interactions between their writing programs and their respective CREs: University of Texas at Arlington, Duke University, and Fort Lewis College. We offer these narratives, situated contextually, in order to better understand the experiences, complications, possibilities, and problems presented by intersections between WPs and CREs. We hope WPAs and others will use these narratives to sponsor more conversations about how to best approach 1) integrating (or not) the CRE in their writing curricula; 2) preparing faculty and teaching assistants (TAs) to teach with the common reading text; 3) using the CRE to reach out to the broader community through, for example, service learning, local high schools, and public libraries; and, 4) assessing the integration of the CRE into their WPs. Our aim is to help WPAs consider the ongoing complexities involved with how they can choose to respond to, strengthen, resist, and/or otherwise engage with CREs.

Although composition offers robust scholarship within which to explore the complexities raised by CREs, most current scholarship on CREs comes from the perspective of the first-year experience and higher education. The most comprehensive examination of CREs is Jodi Levine Laufgraben's *Common Reading Programs: Going beyond the Book*, a 2006 monograph published by the National Resource Center for the First-Year Experience and Students in Transitions. Laufgraben begins by noting that "little has been written on what these [common reading] programs are" (ix) and

“there is not an established literature base on common reading programs” (11). While common reading programs originated in a desire to “intellectualize” new student orientation, Laufgraben examines how many “campuses move beyond the book as an orientation event to create an ongoing and engaging academic initiative for students” (ix). Drawing on case studies from a variety of academic institutions² and student success scholarship, especially research about first-year student success, Laufgraben argues that the best common reading initiatives target a broad audience of students, faculty, staff, and community members and “adapt the goals, structures, and activities to fit the unique student, faculty, and institutional culture of their campuses” (9). Adding to the conversation, Michael Ferguson’s short article—also published in 2006—“Creating Common Ground: Common Reading and the First Year of College,” provides a logistical overview of CREs; he discusses specific common reading programs, noting the variety of approaches.³ He maintains that the CRE has rich potential to “bridge divides on campus: between disciplines, between student life and academic affairs, between the orientation period and the first semester” (10).

Scholarship on the CRE also addresses how the CRE can bridge divides between campus and community. Pamela Hayes-Bohanan, for instance, explores public library partnerships and the CRE in Bridgewater, Massachusetts, as a case study for how the CRE can build community across a city, even during strained economic times (56). Similarly, during a 2011 MLA panel focusing on CREs, “Common First-Year Readings/Themes: Theory, Practice, Problems, Promise,” Harvey Michael Teres reported on One City One Book Initiatives, K. J. Peters addressed the history of CREs, Peter Michael Huk discussed common themes related to CREs such as sustainability or service learning, and Samantha Riley addressed interdisciplinary opportunities arising from CREs (Thorne, “MLA Panelists”).

Other scholarship on the CRE involves gathering and reporting data, such as the 2007 survey of over 100 common reading programs by student researcher Andi Twiton, “Common Reading Programs in Higher Education.” Ashley Thorne’s 2011 “Beach Books: What Do Colleges and Universities Want Students to Read Outside Class?” (sponsored by the National Association of Scholars [NAS]), reports CRE text selection data from “245 colleges and universities for the academic year 2011–2012” (4). Thorne then uses CRE text-selection trends to question what books do or do not adequately advance NAS notions of student learning: “[M]ost college common reading programs . . . fail to distinguish between high and low culture; they pay service to multiculturalism, relativism, popular culture, and the primacy of self; they extol books that are critical of America and the West; and they alienate students who can appreciate really good books” (23).

Although this scholarship addresses issues of concern for WPAs, more scholarship is needed—especially from within a writing studies framework—to help WPAs better understand how CREs might impact our programs and, most importantly, student writing and reading practices. Because CREs have stakeholders in writing programs, the first-year experience, faculty, administration, students, and the community at large, they clearly instantiate Deborah Brandt’s “sponsors of literacy,” illustrating how “forms of literacy are created out of competition between (or within) institutions” (562).

Reading scholarship, in particular, provides an especially valuable way of framing intersections between writing programs and CREs. Calling for the “overt teaching of critical reading skills,” Alice Horning’s “Reading across the Curriculum as the Key to Student Success” challenges faculty to promote critical literacy by asking their students to move beyond reading comprehension and into the analysis, synthesis, and evaluation of the text. Allison Harl and David Jolliffe’s scholarship on the reading habits of new college students sheds light on the greater demands that college courses place on readers. Like Horning, Harl and Jolliffe call on faculty to “teach students explicitly how to draw the types of connections that lead to engaged reading,” recommending that faculty create “curriculums, co-curriculums, and extra-curriculums that invite students to engage in their reading” (613)—all of which are hallmarks of many CREs. As composition faculty consider how to use common reading texts, the “reading-to-write” scholarship by Linda Flower et al. and Richard Haswell et al. offers insight into the foundational role that rhetorical reading plays in academic writing.

CRE texts include nonfiction and fiction, making scholarship regarding the role of imaginative literature in writing courses especially relevant. Winifred Horner’s 1983 collection *Composition and Literature: Bridging the Gap* took up this issue, one that reached a fever pitch in the early to mid-1990s in the *College English* exchanges between Erika Lindemann and Gary Tate. In her contribution to the Lindemann/Tate discussions, Jane Peterson re-frames the discussion in a way that is helpful in relation to CREs, asking readers to move away from “the classification of texts assigned to the nature of reading we expect from our students and the roles of reading in the development of their writing abilities” (311). Linda Bergman and Edith Baker’s edited collection, *Composition and/or Literature: The Ends of Education*, broadens the literature-in-composition discussion, and in her foreword, Winifred Horner notes that the role of literature in composition “remains an open one” (xii).

Beyond curricular issues, the CRE conversation also raises questions regarding the roles WPs and WPAs play in the larger contexts of our insti-

tutions. How does participating or not participating affect our contribution to other campus-wide initiatives? How will decisions about the CRE affect decisions about our future collaborations? Discussing the future of writing across the curriculum programs and their relationships to their institutions, Susan McLeod and Eric Miraglia ask similar questions of Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) programs and deftly locate these programs' various components (critical thinking, service learning, etc.) within recent trends in higher education. Attempting to work proactively instead of reactively, they acknowledge a "changing paradigm of change" that suggests individual change agents such as faculty and WAC directors can and should be at the forefront of change in higher education, an argument that applies to and raises the stakes of the CRE within WPs.

In the sections that follow, we use this first-year experience, higher education, and composition scholarship to reflect on the intersections between our own writing programs and our universities' CREs.

UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT ARLINGTON: FYC AUTONOMY AND STRUCTURE

The CRE at University of Texas at Arlington (UTA), known as the One-Book program, had a six-year run (AY 06/07–11/12), and presented a set of uniquely intertwined opportunities and challenges for FYC administrators as every benefit seemed also to pose challenges, and vice versa. A discussion of the OneBook program illustrates two key questions that can help WPAs determine whether or not—and, if so, how—to forge relationships between the CRE and FYC programs: How will required collaboration with other units affect FYC program autonomy? Are CRE goals feasible given the size and makeup of FYC program? The OneBook program illustrates the complex and often conflicting answers these questions can generate.

The CRE began as a university-wide program that involved collaboration among stakeholders across campus, most notably the Office of Student Success, the English department, and the library. The university president and provost, who suggested and funded the program, and the program co-chairs (the director of Student Success and a tenured faculty member, first in English and then in Modern Languages), had the expansive goal of "enhanc[ing] learning and campus life for the UTA community of students, faculty, and staff by promoting self-reflection and academic discourse about complex, multidisciplinary topics" ("University"). Program administrators also hoped that participating in the CRE program would increase students' involvement and identification with their entering class ("I was part of the *Maus* group") and the university. Teaching the OneBook in first-semester composition (English 1301) was, in many ways, a natural fit. The

course already heavily emphasized reading comprehension and the reading/writing relationship, and teaching the text in a course required of most first-year students meant that program administrators could count on reaching a large portion of each entering class. It is important to note that the decision to teach the OneBook in English 1301 was made in the period between the retirement of a long-time director of FYC and the hiring of Margaret, her successor. As a result, the general parameters for the collaboration between Student Success and FYC were developed without significant input from a writing studies specialist. Once those initial parameters were set, they were extremely difficult to change, particularly given Margaret's status as a full-time, professional staff member rather than a tenured or tenure-track faculty member.

Each year, a committee of faculty and staff members from across campus, including the director of FYC, selected two or three possible texts for consideration and proposed accompanying themes; the president and provost made the final decision about the text. Students received the texts for free during summer student orientation and read, discussed, and wrote about them in ENGL 1301. The CRE text was also taught in a handful of other courses, including introductory education and nursing courses. FYC administrators and instructors created a curriculum for the OneBook text each year. The program co-chairs developed co-curricular activities to support the book, including a beginning-of-year kickoff event, author visit, and a series of cross-disciplinary faculty lectures on the text and related topics. To complement instruction, a group of instructional literacy librarians provided extensive support to FYC students and instructors by creating a study guide for the text, an online library guide and instructional classes for ENGL 1301 students. Student Success also sponsored an annual writing contest related to the CRE text that featured the prompt taught in ENGL 1301.

The Push/Pull of Collaboration and Autonomy

FYC's collaboration with university administrators resulted in notable benefits for the FYC program and ENGL 1301 students, but it also posed major challenges. Importantly, participation in the CRE helped raise FYC's profile across campus. FYC served as the heart of a significant university-wide program, which meant that university administrators became more familiar with FYC goals, administrators, and instructors—unexpected and welcome outcomes. The CRE also made ENGL 1301 a richer course because of the ongoing curriculum development and the related co-curricular activities.

As Linda Bergmann reminds readers in her introduction to *Composition and/or Literature*, titled “What Do You Folks Teach Over There Anyway?,” “the relationships between reading and writing, literature and composition, must be continually reexamined and redrawn in order to maintain a vital curriculum” (10). Those relationships were revisited each year at UTA: a dedicated group of FYC administrators and Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs) created a new curriculum each year that included questions for discussion and writing, an essay prompt and process materials, readings that provided contextual information or engaged the text thematically, and a rationale for instructors explaining how the new materials functioned within the course. As well, the co-curricular activities created a campus-wide academic conversation about the CRE text in which ENGL 1301 students participated.

By synthesizing the ideas expressed in the OneBook with those in the accompanying course readings and co-curricular activities, the curriculum promoted the kinds of skills for which compositionists such as Horning, as well as Harl and Jolliffe, call. As FYC administrators and GTAs have described in an unpublished manuscript about the CRE, “English 1301, in conjunction with the OneBook program, fostered a unique opportunity for students to participate in rich, interdisciplinary discourses about texts inside and outside of the English 1301 classroom, providing English 1301 students with an introduction to discourse communities, interdisciplinary activities, and writing activities for specific audiences and purposes” (Clough et al. 3). Assessment data showed that the CRE fostered students’ interactions with one another and their involvement in campus activities. A majority of FYC students surveyed in fall 2009 reported that they had discussed the book with a friend outside of class (76%) and had attended at least one co-curricular activity (85%). The CRE also raised the stakes for students enrolled in a required class because the administration’s sponsorship of this particular literacy program made it clear to them in myriad ways that the course—and students’ overall academic literacy—was important.

But FYC’s participation in the CRE also meant that administrators sacrificed program autonomy with regards to text selection. For the first several years, a university committee selected several CRE texts and accompanying themes and recommended them to the president and provost, the program’s literacy sponsors, who made the final decision. The collaborative process was meant to gain support for the text from university stakeholders, but it left text selection to committee members unfamiliar with the goals of ENGL 1301 and debates among compositionists about text selection. In time, the selection committee grew smaller, and the criteria were geared

much more specifically towards ENGL 1301 learning outcomes; however, final text selection never rested with FYC.

Administrators and instructors worked each year to create an engaging curriculum that helped students meet course outcomes—even for texts as varied as Art Spiegelman’s *Maus I: A Survivor’s Tale: My Father Bleeds History* and *Maus II: A Survivor’s Tale: And Here My Troubles Began*, Dana Canedy’s *A Journal for Jordan: A Story of Love and Honor*, and Bill McKibben’s *Deep Economy: The Wealth of Communities and the Durable Future*—but long before the final year of the CRE, administrators and instructors felt overstretched by the task. Such regular curriculum revisions, although challenging, would be more feasible for WPs such as the ones at Duke University and Fort Lewis College because of the presence of full-time employees with smaller teaching loads and benefits, who receive compensation for professional development activities. In some ways, even as the OneBook program made FYC more visible across the university, the dynamic of shaping the course to support the book framed FYC as a service course rather than an autonomous discipline with discrete learning outcomes.

Vision for CRE vs. Realities of Composition Program

The expansive vision of the CRE program also proved to be a mismatch with the practical realities of FYC, which employs approximately 40 composition instructors, at least 90% of whom are GTAs or adjunct faculty with enormous workloads. FYC instructors teach approximately 125 face-to-face and online courses each semester. The challenge of incorporating a new book into ENGL 1301 each year was particularly difficult given the size and scope of the program. FYC administrators could have made the OneBook a less central part of ENGL 1301, but they felt it was important for the text to be a well-integrated part of the curriculum. As well, Margaret did not have the institutional clout to argue effectively for increased compensation and support for FYC instructors.

The OneBook program also created mixed professional development experiences for faculty. Participation on the OneBook curriculum committee provided beneficial professional development opportunities for GTAs; however, that particular benefit was outweighed by the burdens of the overall process. Participation on the OneBook text selection committee and development of the next year’s curriculum took an enormous amount of time and resources. The ever-changing curriculum also taxed already-overworked instructors and made assessment difficult.

The OneBook program ended after six years due to a variety of factors, including university administrators’ development of new, comprehensive

programs designed to foster first-year student retention; a 10% budget cut across campus; a lack of engagement in the CRE beyond ENGL 1301 students; and an FYC curriculum redesign that reduced the role of the CRE in the ENGL 1301 curriculum. Even as the termination of the OneBook program, with its celebration of cross-curricular academic conversations, eased pressures on FYC administrators and faculty, its absence also created a loss to the UTA community. In the long term, it may also prove to be a significant loss to FYC and the English Department in terms of visibility, integration, and stature. The story of UTA's OneBook program shows how important it is for WPAs to consider institution-, department-, and program-specific goals and limitations when considering participation in a CRE. It also demonstrates the many benefits that mid-sized and large composition programs can gain if savvy WPAs can negotiate the right deal for their programs.

DUKE UNIVERSITY: CRE AS LITERACY SPONSOR

Whereas many WPAs involved with CREs work to preserve first-year writing autonomy and cohesion amidst external pressures, Denise has a different challenge with Duke University's summer reading program because it is organized exclusively by Student Affairs and has hardly any connection to the WP. Having watched from the sidelines for nearly a decade as first-year students experience their introduction to higher-education literacy through the summer-reading program, this WPA has pondered the following questions: Should she cultivate a deeper relationship between the WP and the CRE? In what ways? Would such efforts invite unwelcome encroachments into FYC? What are the disadvantages to the current dissociation between the WP and the CRE? What might be the advantages of collaborating more meaningfully with Student Affairs and of integrating writing more effectively with the CRE?

Duke University's Summer Reading Program began in 2001. Geared exclusively to first-year students, the CRE is organized and run by the Office of Student Life, which is housed under Student Affairs. The summer reading book is primarily used during orientation for community building: "Fostering [. . .] informal, peer-to-peer exchanges is at the heart of the Duke University summer reading program" (Lombardi). All Duke faculty are invited to integrate the CRE selection into their courses; however, few (if any) do since there is neither mandate nor much incentive. The timing of the text selection makes CRE inclusion into courses even less likely since it often occurs after faculty have posted descriptions and reading lists for their fall courses. No FYC course has ever used a text in conjunction with the

CRE. The extent of the WP's involvement with the CRE has been to have a representative on the CRE selection committee for six of the past ten years.

The selection committee, comprised of twelve to fifteen students, faculty, and staff members, solicits recommendations for CRE titles from the Duke community, then makes a decision based on such factors as "readability and story line . . . number of pages and topic" (Lombardi). Past selections have predominately been book-length, fictional monographs with living authors, such as Junot Diaz's *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*; Jodi Picoult's *My Sister's Keeper*, Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner*, and Ann Patchett's *State of Wonder*. CRE activities occur primarily during the week-long August orientation and generally involve a small-group discussion facilitated by returning students and a large-group event such as an author visit. Similar to UTA, university librarians make relevant resources available to students.

Considering whether and how to forge more intersections between the CRE and FYC has been difficult because, as the narratives from UTA and Fort Lewis College indicate, many models for writing-program-CRE partnerships involve compulsory inclusion of the CRE text into the first-year writing course. While this model raises challenges on a number of levels, it could be an especially awkward fit at Duke given that it has an independent WP (IWP) without a common syllabus. Duke's multidisciplinary, full-time FYC faculty each design theme-based, one-semester academic-writing courses. Autonomous course design and multidisciplinary are cornerstones of the program, both of which could be compromised by compulsory inclusion of the CRE text.

The promises, however, of increasing collaboration between the WP and the CRE create a need to continue searching for a modified model that avoids the pitfalls of mandatory curricular inclusion. Several of these promises involve the kinds of programmatic benefits discussed by Margaret, Brad, and Erik, such as visibility, outreach, and stature. Because Duke has an IWP, the WP is especially keen to connect with the larger university community to promote conversations about reading and writing practices across disciplines and to foster effective writing pedagogies. However, a different question primarily drives the need to continue considering ways to generate more integration: What is the impact on first-year students when Student Affairs is their first academic literacy sponsor?

Asking a similar question of Oprah Winfrey's book club, R. Mark Hall emphasizes the profound influence held by such sponsors of literacy: "We must ask . . . not only what ideologies are privileged [with 'Oprah's Book Club'], but which ones are ignored—and with what consequences?" (663). Although Student Affairs is not parallel to the Oprah Winfrey Show, nor is

it what Hall labels “a ‘nonliteracy sponsor,’” Student Affairs does have a different set of priorities than the WP. Chief among these is the prioritizing of students’ lived experience. Connections between student learning, literacy, and personal lives are also central to many approaches to writing pedagogy. However, since Student Affairs acts through the CRE as the initial, and largely stand-alone, literacy sponsor for first-year students, it may in some ways inadvertently *discourage* students from cultivating the rhetorical knowledge and critical thinking, reading, and writing outcomes deemed central to FYC (“WPA Outcomes”). By not working harder to partner with Student Affairs, then, might the WPA be inadvertently reifying several crucial barriers to first-year students’ critical literacy and academic success?

Intellectual Communities

One such barrier to students’ critical literacy potentially reinforced by the CRE’s current structure is that students’ notions of academic communities are formed separately from more expansive notions of intellectual inquiry. Twiton found that the main goals of most CREs are two-fold: “to model intellectual engagement [and] to develop a sense of community.” These two goals should not and need not be mutually exclusive; however, because Duke’s CRE focuses primarily on the latter (arguably at the expense of the former), it may foster for students a sense that college-level communities are built around personal interests alone rather than around both personal as well as shared or divergent intellectual interests.

Currently, small-group conversations are the primary community-building CRE activity. These conversations occur during orientation and are led by returning students, who design and center the discussion questions around the relationship between the CRE text and students’ lived experiences and beliefs: How does [book title] intersect with your transition to college? How do you see [character name] growing up in the book? Which aspects of the book relate to/depart from your life?

Such questions are important for helping students connect personally with the text. Still, more involvement from the WP could work alongside these kinds of conversations to also help model the ways in which intellectual engagement emerges from and builds community. This enhanced CRE experience could then better prepare students for the work of Duke’s FYC, which builds intellectual communities through the exchange of competing ideas and questions as they emerge through disciplinary contexts. Perhaps a deeper collaboration between the WP and Student Affairs might also yield a more visible integration into the WP’s work of some of the more affective dimensions of reading, such as those valued by Student Affairs.

Critical Thinking, Reading, and Writing

The lack of substantive WP involvement in the CRE also may do a disservice to students and the WP by limiting the CRE's potential for helping students learn to engage critically with texts through thinking, reading, and writing ("WPA Outcomes"). Duke's FYC goals include helping students learn to "engage with the work of others [by] read[ing] closely and attend[ing] to context [and by] mak[ing] fair, generous, and assertive use of the work of others" ("Writing 101"). By including little if any writing in the CRE, students miss a crucial occasion to explore the value of writing, and the WP misses a critical occasion for encouraging others around Duke to consider the ways in which writing might enhance learning outcomes across disciplines.

The current CRE structure, whereby Student Affairs is literacy sponsor, may also encourage first-year students to associate college-level reading with cursory reading practices rather than the kinds of in-depth, engaged reading practices they will encounter in many disciplines and certainly in first-year writing. Ziming Liu differentiates between shallow reading practices, defined as "browsing and scanning, keyword spotting, one-time reading, non-linear reading" (700), and in-depth reading practices: "sustained attention . . . [a]nnotating and highlighting" (700). These in-depth reading practices are vital for helping students learn to "use writing and reading for inquiry, learning, thinking, and communicating" ("WPA Outcomes"). Horning emphasizes just how much critical reading practices are crucial to student success and learning retention: "Reading is a psycholinguistic process, involving the interaction of readers' thinking with the language of the text. It must involve getting meaning, but in addition, it must also entail moving beyond meaning to analysis, synthesis and evaluation. That is, as I and a number of other scholars have proposed, reading must function as part of critical literacy." In its current iteration, the CRE does not help students move toward this kind of vital critical literacy. With the current CRE model, in fact, savvy students could rely on shallow reading practices to glide through the small-group orientation discussions, perhaps having only read the book jacket or an online summary. Thus, in some ways, the current CRE is complicit in accommodating cursory reading practices that may contribute to what Robert Scholes identified over a decade ago as "a reading problem of massive dimensions" (165): "a failure to focus sharply on the language of the text [and] a failure to imagine the otherness of the text's author" (166).

Disciplinary Privilege

A final vector of influence that emerges from Student Affairs as literacy sponsor involves disciplinary privilege. The current CRE, in effect, privileges certain kinds of literacies and disciplines at the expense of others. As indicated above, the large majority of Duke's CRE selections have been fictional monographs written by living authors. While the CRE texts may have thematic content related to different disciplines, the experience could go farther in offering students the opportunity to examine the overlapping and disparate conventions, practices, and expectations around literacy that frame various disciplines.

Over the years, Student Affairs has indeed made genuine efforts to integrate multidisciplinary dimensions into the CRE: they organized a multidisciplinary faculty panel one year, and each year librarians create a bibliography of multidisciplinary supplemental materials. Still, since the CRE texts are mostly fictional and students initially approach them without disciplinary perspectives or rhetorical frames, students likely revert to what they may have learned about reading in high school: that fiction often trumps nonfiction and that reading is largely a humanities-based endeavor defined rather narrowly as literary analysis or personal opinion. More WP involvement in the CRE could help disrupt these paradigms before they take root in postsecondary experiences, helping first-year students learn to examine the ways that reading practices and inquiry work across and within disciplines.

The intention of sharing these potential negative consequences is not to lambast the current CRE. Student Affairs has structured the program successfully to achieve their primary goal: a community-building experience for students. And there is considerable value in retaining much of the Student Affairs approach. Colleagues in Student Affairs, as well, would likely be receptive to forging more intersections between the CRE and FYC. At times, Student Affairs has, in fact, reached out to the WP to explore creating stronger connections. However, the WPA has been hesitant to engage more vigorously with Student Affairs through the CRE out of concern for WP autonomy. Increasingly, though, it is becoming evident that maintaining distance between the WP and the CRE might not merely be missing a possible collaboration, but might actually be actively counterproductive for the work the WP and other units ask of students in FYC and beyond. Moving toward a voluntary, variegated partnership of some sort, while remaining resistant to less effective models of CRE and FYC collaboration, could yield significant advantages to the reading and writing practices of Duke's students and faculty.

FORT LEWIS COLLEGE: NAVIGATING PRESSURES

Since 2006, the CRE at Fort Lewis College (FLC) has remained an optional, but encouraged, text for faculty to incorporate in FYC and developmental writing courses. As both the former and current WPA have experienced, the CRE has created both rewards and challenges for the WP. Using the CRE seems especially beneficial for the WP's visibility, professional development, student learning, and programmatic assessment—creating important opportunities for two WPAs at a relatively small (4,000 students) public liberal arts college to demonstrate the significance of the WP to external audiences and to influence a variety of others ranging from new administration to community stakeholders (for a detailed examination of the role of influence over power for the small-campus WPA, see Amorse). At the same time, the CRE creates challenges including maintaining the WP's autonomy as we have navigated the pressures from CRE stakeholders, negotiating WP faculty resistance to incorporating the CRE, and recognizing the increased workload that results from revising curriculum each year as a new book is introduced.

The WP at FLC is an independent unit, composed of twenty experienced faculty members, most of whom are full-time employees with renewable annual contracts. The CRE selection process, sharing similar requirements as UTA and Duke, involves open submissions by both campus and community. The final choice is made by a committee of five to seven faculty and one student. The text needs to be accessible to first-year students, not over 350 pages, and written by a living author who is available and affordable. Themes generally involve humanitarian issues; however, the committee is flexible if the text appears to be promising. The CRE occurs during the fall semester, with a series of co-curricular activities that culminate in the author's visit to campus.

Finding a Space

Brad's first year as the WPA was also the first year of the CRE, which used Leonard "Red" Bird's *Folding Paper Cranes*, a memoir chronicling Bird's experience as an "atomic veteran" (xv). As an incoming WPA, Brad inherited a curriculum which had been in place for over a decade. The WP faculty viewed the curriculum, which emphasized academic reading and writing, with some ambivalence: some fully embraced it, while others felt it had stagnated. Moreover, very little direct assessment had been conducted programmatically even as pressure mounted to assess the WP more systematically—and immediately. Thus, in one of his first moves as WPA, Brad condoned the incorporation of the CRE into faculty syllabi and WP

classes if they wished. He did so for two reasons: 1) to open a dialogue about the WP's curriculum, particularly in FYC, and 2) to initiate a more formal assessment process in the WP. That first year, nearly half the faculty incorporated the CRE into their courses, usually in the form of assigning a chapter or two from the text.

That fall, the CRE and the curriculum were the focus of three faculty meetings. WP faculty also completed an anonymous questionnaire about their use of the CRE. The results helped to confirm the faculty's ambivalence regarding the existing curriculum and the CRE: some relished the opportunity to teach a book (and especially to develop and implement new writing assignments), while others—similar to Margaret's experience at UTA—focused on the challenges of creating new pedagogical materials each year. All the while, the campus had charged ahead with year two of the CRE, selecting Tracy Kidder's *Mountains Beyond Mountains: The Quest of Dr. Paul Farmer, a Man Who Would Cure the World*.

As the second CRE loomed, a new pressure emerged, this time from above: the WP's dean and assistant dean strongly encouraged further incorporation of the CRE into the FYC curriculum. The administration viewed the CRE as a vehicle to foster student engagement and retention. Encouraged by the faculty's frank discussions of the curriculum, heartened by the positive feedback from some faculty (and mindful of the resistance others felt), and fully cognizant of the benefits of cultivating a positive relationship with a supportive dean, Brad agreed to ask faculty to more fully integrate the CRE into their FYC courses. But he did so only with the dean's commitment to fund assessment and professional development activities centered on the CRE for WP faculty. As both Margaret and Denise discuss above, the CRE became a potential venue through which to enhance the WP's profile across campus and to influence—to, in Edward M. White's terms, (modestly) wield some WPA power—the programming and delivery of the CRE (3).

The third CRE, Greg Mortenson and David Relin's (at that time non-controversial) *Three Cups of Tea: One Man's Mission to Promote Peace . . . One School at a Time*, proved to be more successful—in the WP, across campus, and in the larger community—than the first two, culminating in a visit by Mortensen, who spent the day on campus and delivered a standing-room only lecture. The majority of WP faculty used the CRE text, and the CRE's integration was more fully realized, thanks in part to further discussion of the CRE during the preceding spring and summer. The CRE text also proved to be effective for our two developmental reading courses, whose curricula emphasize a sustained reading of one book. The CRE's co-curricular activities—including a weekly radio show, a film series, and

several panels—offered diverse pedagogical support to students and faculty alike, particularly when viewed with Harl and Jolliffe's, as well as Horning's, recommendations for promoting reading in the curriculum. Indeed, in the course evaluations, several students commented that the CRE was the first book they had read in its entirety.

The WP more formally assessed the CRE's integration in WP courses the following spring, with the faculty earning a small stipend as they spent a day reading, discussing, and assessing student writing that emerged from courses using the CRE. In this way, the CRE promoted professional development while also cultivating a dialogue about the text, about the relationship between reading and writing, and finally about the WP's learning outcomes. Furthermore, the WP's participation in the CRE was clearly an integral part of the CRE's success, which did not go unnoticed by the administration.

Nonetheless, the CRE was not an unmitigated success. In spite of the CRE being an optional curricular item, some faculty still resisted—and ultimately did not teach—the text, feeling that it was imposed upon them. Similarly, the largest concern was again about the pressure to create new writing assignments for each new CRE, a legitimate concern for an underpaid and hardworking faculty. In hindsight, the problem of faculty resistance could have been avoided by better scheduling. For example, CRE-resistant faculty could have been assigned to teach courses that did not use the CRE (including the sophomore-level research writing or technical writing courses) each fall, which would have pleased the instructors and enabled the WP to more successfully align with CRE curricula.

Attempting to Normalize

Upon becoming WPA at FLC two years later, Erik inherited a similar scenario: under an interim WPA, WP faculty had still been encouraged—but not required—to teach the next selections (Sonia Nazario's *Enrique's Journey: The Story of a Boy's Dangerous Odyssey to Reunite with His Mother* and Warren St. John's *Outcasts United: An American Town, a Refugee Team, and One Woman's Quest to Make a Difference*), and several faculty still resisted using the texts in their curriculum. Adding to these challenges is the obvious significance of text selection—if increased participation is the goal, it helps to have a text that faculty are interested in using. Erik joined the reading board in an attempt to better represent the WP and raise questions of 'teachability' to the text selection process, and this conversation has proven influential in text selection and WP faculty interest.

Because the CRE had been proven to be an excellent means for improving the WP's visibility on campus, Erik required WP faculty to participate in curriculum design but still did not require all instructors to include it in their courses. This was feasible because WP faculty have mandatory service commitments. Logistically, one of the largest challenges in making this program-wide collaboration happen, though, was timing. When would WP faculty be able to design curricula? The spring semester offered the only real opportunity to work together.

During the end of the fall semester, copies of the following year's text (Eric Greiten's *The Heart and the Fist: The Education of a Humanitarian, The Making of a Navy Seal*) were purchased for WP faculty, and a collaborative curriculum project was designed for the entire writing program. WP faculty partnered with each other and identified where CRE instruction could fit into a particular course's outcomes and then created sample assignments and lessons that would be shared with the entire campus. Building upon the assessment culture Brad created, each assignment was directly rooted in course outcomes, creating opportunities for faculty better assess how their assignments and curricula were satisfying the program's recently articulated outcomes. The project encouraged faculty to discuss potential themes and assignments ahead of time and, because all materials would be made public on the WP's webpage, play to faculty's strengths as curriculum designers and writing specialists. These assignments could then be utilized by the entire campus and would encourage faculty involvement. Finally, it was hoped that more WP faculty would consider using the selection in their courses as they had spent time designing instructional materials. In this situation, the CRE created an opportunity to align curriculum to recently revised outcomes and offered the WPA concrete measures for program evaluation as we documented student learning through the CRE.

Initially, the project was a success. WP instructors invested in their work, created excellent materials, and disseminated their work to a variety of audiences at on-campus events. Several faculty claimed the resources were helpful in their courses, and recently hired faculty were appreciative of the instructional materials. A brief look at assessment data confirms this success. When asked "has reading *The Heart and the Fist* made you feel part of a larger community of readers, writers, and thinkers?," 82% of the nearly 300 students surveyed responded either "agree" or "strongly agree." And, when asked "has participating in this year's Common Reading Experience allowed you to make connections between your college courses and activities and your personal life?," 85% responded "agree" or "strongly agree." However, CRE-resistant faculty still resisted both by not including the CRE text and instructional material in their curricula and by considering

the CRE as a potential interference with the academic freedom and ability to develop their own curriculum, which resulted in uncomfortable meetings and discussions that disrupted the WP's positive climate.

At present, and similar to Brad's experience, external pressures from different stakeholders to include the CRE in the WP still exist, which makes navigating the CRE a challenge. The CRE has thus become both an opportunity to bring the WP closer together by working collaboratively on a common project and a means of division that challenges individual faculty autonomy and departmental purpose. As we continue to develop ways to successfully integrate the CRE, the WP will continue to experience the challenges of fitting a common project into our curriculum, service expectations, and assessment practices.

CONCLUSION

CREs will likely remain a common part of students' first-year experiences, if not also their first-year writing experiences. Creating and revisiting deliberate conversations about the relationships between CREs and writing programs is especially important now, not only because of CREs' prevalence across campuses, but because people outside of writing programs are becoming more aware of the potential of CREs to shape first-year students' literacy practices. Recently, in her NAS-sponsored report, Thorne offers several recommendations to "make the most of the common reading experience," including: "Make reading the book mandatory, and enforce the assignment with a test" and "Require that students submit a list of new words they learn from the book" ("Beach Books" 27). While such recommendations may work in the service of NAS goals, they seem deeply problematic from the standpoint of promoting effective writing and critical reading practices among first-year students.

The shifting terrain on which we might build and renovate more strategic intersections between writing programs and CREs, however, involves complicated tensions for WPAs. Mandatory and/or intensely embedded inclusion of the CRE into FYC can reify misconceptions that FYC is a service course or a skills course without content. It can compromise FYC program autonomy and stress administrative and labor resources. At the same time, wide-scale disconnects between the CRE and FYC may engender missed opportunities—or perhaps even counterproductive ways—for WPAs to cultivate first-year student writing practices. A lack of integration may cause WPs to miss an opportunity to gain more institutional and community-wide stature and visibility. Finding productive relations between FYC and the CRE might benefit first-year students as writers,

while enhancing the possibility of increased resources as well as collaboration with units across campus, including the library, student affairs, student groups, and faculty in other disciplines. Such an alliance might have the potential to increase FYC prestige and power.

The optimal contexts through which WPAs might successfully navigate these tensions would likely include writing programs with WPAs who can argue effectively for their programs and writing-program faculty. Such leadership, in conjunction with experienced full-time faculty members, offers the most amenable circumstances from which WPAs can choose to respond to, strengthen, resist, and/or otherwise engage with the CRE. But we all know ideal situations are, unfortunately, too rare. Most WPAs continue to face variations of the “naked power” White encountered over twenty years ago when the then-dean of Humanities “soothingly” communicated a decision “beyond his control” to reroute in its entirety White’s WAC budget (3). The complexities surrounding the CRE’s relationship with FYC illustrates, yet again, just how much “power and the various uses of power are centrally important to most WPAs” (5). WPAs, moreover, must be careful of how they wield such power as different contexts naturally contain different power dynamics. As the above narratives—drawn from three different institutions with different power structures—have demonstrated, WPAs must work within their contexts to make appropriate decisions about their programs’ mission, vision, and future. We hope these narratives demonstrate how much can be at stake programmatically, pedagogically, and administratively as WPAs consider the various options for integrating (or not) the CRE into FYC.

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NOTES

1. Compare the program descriptions found in Ferguson; Laufgraben; Lombardi; Thorne; and Twiton.

2. For example, Temple University, LaGuardia Community College, University of South Carolina, Kalamazoo College, and Appalachian State University.

3. For example, Albion College, Ball State University, Northern Arizona University, and others.

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The Research Paper and Why We Should Still Care

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ABSTRACT

This article argues that, despite cogent arguments to the contrary, teaching writing from sources (often referred to as “the research paper”) is not only relevant to writing programs, but is central to the entire academic mission of the university. It draws on literature in writing studies, information literacy, activity theory and situated learning to illustrate both the importance of the task and the immense difficulties that many students experience when they attempt to build arguments based on sources. It concludes by arguing that the activity of writing from sources deserves a central rather than peripheral place in writing programs, and that teaching it requires not just traditional attention to locating and citing sources, but also deep engagement with rhetorical reading.

One of the greatest challenges of writing program administration, particularly when resources are tight, and we must depend on a handful of courses—or perhaps even one course—to fulfil the aims of the program, is to decide where to put our emphasis in terms of curriculum. What do we want students to write, and how can we best support both their own growth and their success in the institution as a whole?

In programs that have a particular focus on professional practice, we will want to concentrate on the skills and genres that will be required by the target profession or professions. Of course, it is not easy to determine exactly what those skills and genres are, which are the most important, and which are most potentially transferrable to professional practice. However, we at least have professional practice to provide some sense of direction. In more academically-oriented programs, the question of what we should teach is even more fraught. Should students concentrate on expressive genres that focus on personal development? On academic genres that they are likely to meet in other parts of the academy? On civic discourse—the more general rhetorical project of learning to argue cogently about the

problems of life? On all of the above, thereby providing proportionally less time for each? In this article, I seek to answer these questions by arguing for increased attention to a particularly controversial genre, the undergraduate “research paper.”

In order to make this argument, I review and rethink the literature on the research paper. I do so, not in an attempt to be comprehensive, but in order to map out the main threads of argument in this contested domain, focussing especially on arguments about what the form is and on why we might or might not want to teach it. I do not offer new insights on how best to teach the research paper, although I review briefly the insights of some who have suggested answers to that important question. Rather, I concentrate on issues of definition and teleology that are prior to the question of instruction, and try to locate the genre’s place in the mission of the university and of writing programs. I argue that the genre is real, if blurry and often badly defined, and also useful, if in contested ways. To do so, I draw on a set of theories that have been immensely productive in the recent history of writing studies, but which have not been brought to bear to any extent on the research paper: rhetorical genre studies, situated learning and activity theory.

I will break the study into parts defined by some guiding questions: what is the research paper, why is it important to teach it, what is the role of the writing program in teaching it, and what are the particular challenges of learning to master the genre. The last point leads me into an argument that the research paper is not just one genre among genres, but is rather a fundamentally important genre that underpins the basic intellectual project of higher education itself. In short, this article is an extended argument for concentrating the scarce resources of our programs on teaching students the vast constellation of skills required to write good research papers.

WHAT IS THE “RESEARCH PAPER?”

Despite uncertainty about its identity and mission, the research paper or something like it by other names (the “library paper,” the “source paper,” or perhaps least informatively, the “term paper”) remains a staple of writing instruction. Manning traces the genre back at least to the 1920’s, and reported in 1961 that 83% of colleges and universities across the US required a paper explicitly based on the use of the library (75). In 1982, Ford and Perry found the situation little changed, reporting that the research paper was offered in 84.09% of freshman composition programs and 40.03% of advanced writing programs (827). In 2009, Melzer surveyed more widely across all disciplines, and although he did not break out an

exact percentage for the research paper as such, he found that the research paper in one form or another remained the dominant genre in his sample.

Despite its apparent ubiquity, we remain uncertain as to what exactly the “research paper” is and what it is intended to do for students. Manning’s 1961 survey allowed institutions who no longer emphasised the research paper to tick off a reason why they did not. He found that “35% answered that it did not serve the purpose for which it was intended—a rather vague phrase but perhaps necessarily so, for there is general disagreement about the purpose of the freshman paper” (77). The reason Manning gives for the vagueness of the phrase is far more interesting than the percentage of institutions ticking off this response, for it sets a tone for disagreement about the nature of this entity that persists to this day.

In 1982, Richard Larson articulates the most-cited criticism of usefulness of the term “research paper” as a label for a genre of writing. Larson argues that

The “research paper” has no conceptual or procedural identity. Research, while it can inform almost any type of writing, is itself the subject—the substance—of no distinctly identifiable kind of writing. . . . There is nothing of substance or content that differentiates one paper that draws on data from outside the author’s own self from another such paper. (813)

Similarly, the research paper has no formal identity: “I cannot imagine any identifiable design that any scholar in rhetoric has identified as a recurrent plan for arranging discourse which cannot incorporate the fruits of research, broadly construed” (814). In fact, if the definition of “research” is extended to include searching for information in any place outside the writer’s own self, then almost any writing is research writing. To represent research as a purely a matter of going to the library, taking notes, and writing them up, Larson argues, is to misrepresent the complex ways in which researchers acquire data.

Larson is simply arguing that the term “research paper,” if taken literally, denotes a wide variety of genres, not all of which are captured by the common-sense notion of the “research paper” that is sometimes employed in first-year composition (go to the library, look up three sources on capital punishment, and come back with a paper). “Research” can mean both secondary and primary research—research that sends us to the library as well as research that asks us to look at the world—and it can refer both to formal research conducted according to conventions borrowed from science, and to informal research that consists of observation and experience.

Thus Larson draws attention to the fact that the term “research paper” is a clumsy way to describe what we generally mean by it. What people generally mean when they say “research paper” in a pedagogical context is much narrower than any paper “that draws on data from outside the author’s own self” (813). The term is generally used to mean a paper that depends largely or exclusively on secondary sources arranged and integrated into the author’s text according to a varied but relatively stable set of conventions. These conventions are not merely formal—where to place the quotation marks and how to arrange a reference list—but also structural and procedural—how to use the ideas of others to construct an argument of one’s own. The paper you are reading now is, by this definition, a research paper.

If the “research paper” is not a very useful—perhaps even dangerously misleading—label, then why do we persist in using it and its synonyms? Do we do so merely from deeply ingrained habit?

The field of Rhetorical Genre Studies can give us a much more nuanced idea of what such “deeply ingrained habits” may really mean. In her seminal 1984 article, Carolyn Miller recognizes that genres are not merely a convenient way of classifying broad categories of texts based on their textual features, as the concept has traditionally been used in literary studies. Rather, a genre is a set of repeated actions in response to what is *perceived as* a repeated rhetorical exigence: “What recurs is not a material situation (a real, objective, factual event) but our construal of a type” (157). Genre is thus freed from dependence on what writers such as Bitzer see as real, material situations in the world, and is attached instead to socially constituted repeated activities.

Later writers have refined Miller’s original concept and used it to explain what genres do in the world, how they function, and how writers learn to work within them. Devitt, for instance, emphasises the usefulness of genres in helping writers understand what to say and how to say it in a given situation:

If each writing problem were to require a completely new assessment of how to respond, writing would be slowed considerably. But once we recognize a recurring situation, a situation that we or others have responded to in the past, our response to that situation can be guided by past responses. (576)

Bawarshi extends the analysis further, emphasizing the ways in which genres are not only functional but also constitutive. That is, we not only recognize a recurring situation and thereby gain valuable clues to how we might respond to it. Recognizing a situation as falling into a genre also helps an individual conceptualize the experience and see it, not as an iso-

lated experience, but as a member of a type. “This is why genres are both functional and epistemological—they help us function within particular situations at the same time they help shape the ways we come to know these situations” (340). Bazerman shows how genres can shape entire epistemological perspectives. In “Codifying the Social Scientific Style: The APA Publication Manual as a Behaviorist Rhetoric,” he argues that the gradually emerging conventions of the APA manual, if followed in its meticulous details rather than simply used as a guide to citation, guide the user into a certain view of the world as materialistic, behaviorist, and revealed through impartial observation rather than humanly constructed knowledge (275).

Later in this article, I show what the genre of the research paper does, and what students must know in order to do it. Here, I merely use the basic insights of Rhetorical Genre Studies to rebut Larson’s argument that the research paper doesn’t exist. Larson looks for a set of formal features that papers involving research have in common. But, following Miller, we can look instead at what a community—in this case, the community of people who teach writing and of students who learn to write—perceive as a commonly recurring exigence that is responded to in certain commonly recurring ways. The boundaries of the genre may be blurry, since no two people will pick out the same collection of exigencies and call them “the same,” but where there is loose agreement, there is a genre.

By this definition, then, the research paper as commonly understood is a genre because the rhetorical exigence of basing an argument on others’ texts presents special problems that are not presented by, say, an expressive paper, or one that relies chiefly on primary empirical data such as a lab report. The repeated rhetorical actions that are required by a research paper of this type—finding and focussing a topic, locating and evaluating sources, finding a point to argue based on those sources, writing an argument that incorporates those sources without turning into a book report—all present students with serious problems quite different from the problems presented by other forms. Near the end of this paper, I review some of these problems in greater detail and touch on some of the ways that scholars have proposed helping students learn to solve them. Here, I wish only to point out that these problems are indices of a unique rhetorical exigence, and therefore, by extension, of a genre.

A large part of our problem, then, might be solved by finding a better term for this genre, one that highlights its own set of rhetorical actions without spilling over into other research activities in the ways that Larson rightly objects to. In the late 1980s and 1990s, a cluster of researchers associated with the Center for the Study of Writing at UC Berkeley and Carnegie-Mellon published a string of technical reports, journal articles and book

chapters that represents the first significant, sustained outpouring of interest in the research paper. These researchers, who include Nelson, Hayes, Flower, Kantz, Ackerman, Berenkotter, and many other familiar names, seldom if ever use the term “research paper” to describe the object of their interest. Instead, they use terms such as “reading to write” and “writing from sources.”¹

This cluster of labels does two things. First, it denotes more exactly what most people mean when they use the term “research paper”—a paper that uses secondary sources in a more or less formal way. It still leaves some boundaries fuzzy—for instance, a critical exegesis of a single source, a simple summary, or an experiential paper augmented by some literary references could come under the umbrella of “writing from sources” without being what most people mean by “research paper,” or even what the Berkeley/Carnegie-Mellon group means by “writing from sources.” But the term is far clearer conceptually than “research paper.”

More important, it changes the focus from what the product *is* to what the writer *does*. In doing so, it generates new research questions. Less often do we ask what such a paper looks like, or should look like. Rather, we ask what demands it makes of the writer. What do students or expert writers do when they need to find sources? What circumstances propel them to do so? How do they select and interpret the sources they find? How do they construct a more or less original argument informed by those sources? More subtly, how do they avoid being overwhelmed by sources, producing either their own argument with a few sources tacked on or a literature review with their own conclusion tacked on? In short, what *activities* are involved in producing a source-based paper?

WHY TEACH WRITING FROM SOURCES?

Before we spend time answering those very good questions about what students have to do when they write from sources, we first need to ask why we should teach students to write this genre in the first place, despite a number of cogent arguments why we should not do so, or at least not in the composition class. In the same issue of *College English* that featured Larson’s eloquent plea for retirement of the term, Schwegler and Shamon published one of the first attempts to get a grip on what the research paper actually does for students, or is thought to do. When asked about their own research, the instructors they interviewed saw the research paper as a way to “test a theory, to follow up on previous research, or to explore a problem posed by other research or by events” (819). They saw the research paper as analytical and interpretive, in pursuit of an elusive truth but tolerant of

uncertainty, and most importantly, open-ended, contributing to an ongoing conversation. When asked about the purpose of expecting students to write research papers, the instructors were virtually unanimous: the aim of the research paper is “to get students to think in the same critical, analytical, inquiring mode as instructors do—like a literary critic, a sociologist, an art historian, or a chemist” (821). In other words, academics typically think of writing from sources as a means of introducing undergraduates not only to discipline-specific ways of writing but also to discipline-specific ways of thinking.

This view parallels that which Bartholomae articulates and critically interrogates in his foundational chapter, “Inventing the University”:

Every time a student sits down to write for us, he has to invent the university for the occasion—invent the university, that is, or a branch of it, like History or Anthropology or Economics or English. He has to learn to speak our language, to speak as we do, to try on the peculiar ways of knowing, selecting, evaluating, reporting, concluding, and arguing that define the discourse of our community. (134)

Here Bartholomae anticipates Lave and Wenger’s concept of “legitimate peripheral participation” or “situated learning.” Apprentices internalize the operations of their trade by participating meaningfully in those operations, beginning first on the margins but then operating more centrally as they become more proficient and are given greater responsibility (32–37). Or, to choose another metaphor, Bartholomae sees the university as welcoming students to the academic Burkean parlor and inviting them to put in their oar.

Importantly, Bartholomae includes ways of knowing along with ways of speaking, acknowledging that the two are inseparable. Learning to write like a scholar is learning to think like a scholar. Writing from sources is what we do in university, and if attending university is to involve more than simply banking information, students must become legitimate peripheral participants (Lave and Wenger) in the discourse community of the university. Bartholomae acknowledges that this act of invention is damnably difficult and at times next to impossible for most undergraduates, let alone beginning basic writers, but he insists that it is still worth their while to learn how to “carry off the bluff” (135).

If we see writing from sources as one way of integrating students into a research-based discourse community, the question arises: are we, in teaching research processes and research-oriented modes of thought to undergraduates, primarily preparing them to be graduate students, and ultimately, academics like ourselves?

This is a troubling question. First, casting our role as turning out little copies of ourselves, more academics ready to do academic things including educating more academics, can seem depressingly circular. It sounds more like a description of a virus than of an important academic enterprise. But there is an additional, more pragmatic problem. Certainly those who do go on to graduate school will appreciate having been eased into appropriate ways of thinking and doing from their undergraduate years. However, even in major research universities, not all students go on to graduate school. In some, the percentage is quite small. What, then, is the role of writing from sources, and the mindset that it entails, in the education of a student who will not become a copy of ourselves, preferring to go directly into a professional or other career?

There are many possible answers to this question, all drawn from variants on the argument that teaching students to engage in dialogue with other voices, including academic and discipline-specific voices, is one of the more important things that a liberal education is supposed to do. Developmental models of education that trace their origins to William Perry's work in the sixties are often founded on a belief that a liberal education should help students progress through stages of intellectual and epistemological development marked by increasingly complex engagement with the ideas of others. With this engagement comes increasing facility with "metathought," the capacity for comparing the assumptions and processes of different ways of thinking. As Perry puts it:

Many institutions of higher learning have succeeded, sometimes through careful planning, sometimes through the sheer accident of their internal diversity, in providing for students' growth beyond dualistic thought into the discovery of disciplined contextual relativism. Many would hope to encourage in their students the values of Commitment, and to provide in their faculties the requisite models. To meet this promise, we must all learn how to validate for our students a dialectical mode of thought, which at first seems "irrational," and then to assist them in honoring its limits. To do this, we need to teach dialectically—that is, to introduce our students, as our greatest teachers have introduced us, not only to the orderly certainties of our subject, but to its unresolved dilemmas. (109)

In all its complexity and messiness, writing from sources can expose students to "unresolved dilemmas" and to the difficulties of grappling with them for the benefit of an audience. To invite students to the academic Burkean parlor and thereby to invite them to think in a more complex, critical way—as Bruce Ballinger puts it in *Beyond Note Cards*, "to experi-

ence the ‘revolution in identity’ that Perry believes is a mark of intellectual growth” (74)—is arguably the chief goal of a liberal education. In short, this is an argument for finding good ways to introduce students to the process of getting in touch with the conversation of scholars and learning gradually to speak their language.

WHY TEACH WRITING FROM SOURCES IN WRITING COURSES?

If we accept that engaging students with sources is a worthy educational activity, we still need to ask why a major portion, or indeed any portion, of this task should fall to us in the field of writing studies, given that there is a strong line of argument in the writing studies literature that tells us that we shouldn’t, or even that we can’t. For example, the authors represented in Joseph Petraglia’s collection, *Reconceiving Writing, Rethinking Writing Instruction*—often called (not necessarily unkindly) the “New Abolitionists”—make a convincing case against the ability of writing courses to teach much of anything that is transferrable to other contexts, including ways of writing from sources. More recently, Dias, Freedman, Medway and Paré use activity theory to argue perhaps the strongest and most cogent case for the difficulty of transferring skills and knowledge between activity systems, as reflected in the title of their book, *Worlds Apart*. Dias et al. are particularly interested in the very large gap between school and workplace activity systems, but their scepticism about transfer applies equally to the gap between the disciplines and the writing class.

This activity theory argument against transfer is a strong one, and it has spawned a legion of WAC/WID programs that place responsibility for writing from sources, and all disciplinary writing, back with the disciplines where it arguably belongs. But one of the key arguments for WAC/WID, the argument that little or nothing we do in our classes is likely to influence what students are able to do in others, may be exaggerated.

The study of learning transfer has a long and complex history that is often overlooked by those who study it from the writing studies perspective. Many of the arguments against the notion of easy transfer of skills from writing classes to others point out that such transfer presupposes that skills are neat modular units that can be moved around and reapplied in new contexts at will (see, for instance, Smart and Brown). But this view is a caricature of transfer theory that the subfield of transfer studies—rooted in but not bound to cognitive psychology—has itself moved beyond. As I have discussed in much more detail elsewhere (Brent 2011; 2012), many of the more recent and more productive studies of learning transfer reject this simplistic notion in favour of much more complex relationships between

one field of activity and another. For instance, Hatano and Greeno argue that, rather than looking for simple transfer, we should be looking at the “productivity” of the old skills, that is, their ability to facilitate new learning in a new situation. Similarly, Hager and Hodkinson use the term “reconstruction” to describe how, on entering a new situation, people call on analogous knowledge and skills to help them relearn how to deal with more or less novel tasks (129).

These more complex notions of transfer are also seen in some of the more recent writing studies literature that calls on activity theory. For example, Smart and Brown studied a group of professional writing students on an internship. They were impressed with the speed with which many of these students picked up on the very different tasks imposed by this new activity system. To Smart and Brown, they seemed to be, not transferring skills learned in another environment, but transforming those skills by using them as a bridge to new learning. Significantly, one of the concepts that appeared to be the most helpful in mastering this new environment is general rhetorical awareness—that is, the ability to read a new situation and recognize the rhetorical moves that are called for (130).

In short, transfer of knowledge and skills is complex, elusive and hard to measure, and sometimes does not happen at all. But sometimes it does, or at least it does to the extent that students can bring habits of mind (what Bereiter calls “dispositions”) learned in one environment to bear on learning to function in a new one. The argument from transfer, then, provides no compelling reason why writing classes cannot teach students to write from sources in order to help them reinvent their skills more easily in new contexts.

But this is simply an argument from a lack of clear negatives. Are there positive reasons why we should continue to shoulder at least part of this responsibility, and perhaps a larger part than is borne by any one class in any other discipline? To understand what I believe to be the most compelling argument for teaching writing from sources in writing programs, we need to consider what students are up against when they are asked to take on this genre, for it is the sheer enormity of the task that makes it difficult for instructors in the disciplines to accomplish it on their own.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO LEARN TO WRITE FROM SOURCES?

An important, and frequently overlooked, source of information on writing from sources can be found in the literature of our colleagues, the academic librarians who often must help our students navigate the tasks which we have assigned them. While much of the literature on information literacy

concentrates on the narrow problem of how to help students locate and evaluate sources, other variants locate this problem in terms of how students approach the entire activity of writing from sources. In fact, much of the literature on information literacy calls explicitly for more rapprochement between the library and the disciplines, particularly the discipline of writing studies (see for instance Dennis Isbell, "Teaching Writing and Research as Inseparable," Celia Rabinowitz, "Working in a Vacuum," and Barbara Fister, "Connected Communities"). Some sources, such as Barbara Fister's "Common Ground: The Composition/Bibliographic Instruction Connection," even map out the writing studies literature for the benefit of librarians. On the other hand, most of the writing studies literature seems blissfully unaware of this important source of cognate studies. Since the librarians frequently are the ones to clean up our messes when we create ill-conceived research assignments, we would do well to listen more closely to what they are saying.

Some classics of information literacy scholarship of particular interest to writing studies include Fister, "Teaching the Rhetorical Dimensions of Research" and "The Research Processes of Undergraduate Students," and Rabinowitz, "Working in a Vacuum: A Study of the Literature of Student Research and Writing." Rabinowitz suggests gloomily that "Despite striking similarities in results, there has been little exchange of knowledge or effort at creating shared research agendas between the two groups of researchers. Pedagogical literature about library research written by classroom faculty reveals serious misconceptions about the role of librarians in the student research process" (337).

From this large domain of literature, let me cite in detail one article that is particularly striking for the way it points up how difficult it is for students to learn to write from sources. In "Desperately Seeking Citations: Uncovering Faculty Assumptions about the Research Process," Leckie distinguishes between the strategies of expert researchers, who use a finely-tuned information seeking strategy, and those of students, who often fall back on a coping strategy that many of us are familiar with: heading for the library at the last minute, desperately seizing the first sources available that bear on their topic, and mining them for nuggets that support a thesis conceived in advance. She argues that a significant cause is poor assignment design and a lack of support from the course instructor.

Leckie singles out assignments that require students to become familiar with a wide variety of important and unfamiliar concepts at once. She describes a student in a second-year course in resource management who turned up in the library bearing the following assignment:

Choose one of the following topics:

- Biodiversity;
- Ocean pollution;
- Transportation of hazardous wastes;
- Desertification; or
- The Tropical rainforest.

In your paper, discuss:

- The nature of the issue;
- Its natural/biophysical aspects;
- What has been done on the issue since 1980;
- What is being done on the issue currently. (203)

The problem here is not just the immensely broad nature of the topics. The problem is that the task requires students to perform a great variety of tasks in succession: read around in the general area of biodiversity to get an overall feel for the subject, then start reading in some of the more expert journal literature, reject any studies that deal in minute detail with questions of interest only to specialists, and watch for names that come up repeatedly—a likely sign of a seminal author. To do well on such a task, the student would also need to follow citation trails to map out the web of ideas that connect to these studies (rather than starting every search afresh back at a subject index, as many students do), and then sift the studies found so that “what has been done on the issue since 1980” could be narrowed from potentially hundreds of studies to a few important examples. And the student would have to do all of this before even deciding on a specific thesis. Yet these requirements are all implicit. There is nothing in the assignment itself to alert students that all of these tasks are required in order to do a good job, let alone provide guidance on how to do them.

Leckie does not assume that a student would know how to do all of this even if told—*pacé* Schweigler and Shamoan, who optimistically state that “the features of the academic research paper are easy enough to identify and convey to undergraduates” (821). Rather, Leckie suggests a radical reformation of the assignment to permit what she calls a “stratified methodology,” in which the assignment is broken up into sequential components that ask students to focus on learning only one new task at a time. Of course, some of these steps still contain an immense number of subtasks—one step, for instance, is “finding and using scholarly literature,” which alone could be the subject of many courses. But at least instructors could guide students through more manageable chunks of the process rather than simply turning them loose in the library.

Much of the writing studies literature mirrors Leckie's insistence that teaching students to write from sources needs to be a drawn-out task. As mentioned earlier, another key cluster of literature on writing from sources is that which was developed under the auspices of the Center for the Study of Writing at UC Berkeley and Carnegie-Mellon. Some of the most useful of this literature echoes the literature on information literacy in its emphasis on the critical importance of the assignment and its pacing. Nelson and Hayes' seminal 1988 study *How the Writing Context Shapes College Writers' Strategies for Writing from Sources* gives a particularly clear message for curriculum design.²

Nelson and Hayes studied a number of both novice and advanced students writing from sources. They note two very different sets of strategies: *low-investment* strategies in which students wait until the last minute and then quickly find a few sources that contain "easily plundered pockets of information" (5), and *high investment strategies* in which students use broader information-seeking strategies and then write a paper that constructs a complex argument around an issue. Although novice writers in the sample used low-investment strategies more often than the more experienced writers, the writer's level of experience only partly predicted which set of strategies she or he would choose. What seemed most strongly to predict the strategies chosen was the structure of the course itself. Students given a topic and left to fend for themselves were more likely to choose low-investment strategies. They were more likely to use high-investment strategies when instructors broke the task into portions and provided feedback on each portion, a technique similar to the "stratified methodology" that Leckie calls for. Requiring drafts, response statements, log entries and other forms of reporting increased students' sense that the assignment was a dialog rather than a simple task of evaluation. Audience also mattered: students who had to present their results orally to the class were much more likely to use high-investment strategies. Not surprisingly, then, students' willingness to invest in an assignment is proportional to the instructor's willingness to make a similar investment.

More recent scholarship reinforces the depth of the investment required, frequently by adding reading strategies to the list of things that students must master in order to write successfully from sources. The Citation Project, for instance, is the largest collaborative study of writing from sources since the Carnegie-Mellon/UC Berkeley project in the eighties. Overseen by Sandra Jamieson and Rebecca Moore Howard, twenty-one contributing researchers have coded 174 papers from first-year writing courses in sixteen institutions, identifying both the type of sources used (book, journal, encyclopedia, etc.) and the way each is used (summary, paraphrase, patchwrit-

ing, and quotation). In Phase II of the project, the researchers will expand the sample to include papers from discipline-specific courses and writing-intensive courses beyond the first year (*Citation Project*).

The full results are scheduled to be published in book form later in 2013. However, an overview of the results of a pilot has been reported in an article by Howard, Serviss and Rodrigue in *Writing & Pedagogy*, and its message is disturbing. Common wisdom usually divides the use of sources into two types: paraphrase and quotation. In keeping with the taxonomy used by the entire Citation Project, Howard, Serviss and Rodrigue divide the use of sources into four types: copying (with or without attribution), patchwriting, paraphrase and summary (181). They argue that summary consists of restating large portions of the original text, and sometimes an entire text, in fewer words. This is the form of writing from sources that is most valued in academic work, as it implies comprehending and digesting the gist of a text and then using it as part of a larger argument.

Disturbingly, in the eighteen sample papers they studied, Howard, Serviss and Rodrigue found no instances of summary. Instead they found various forms of copying, patchwriting and paraphrase in which only tiny portions of the original text were pressed into service in students' texts. In fact, they argue that "these students are not writing from sources; they are writing from sentences selected from sources" (187).

Howard, Serviss and Rodrigue conclude that students' problems with writing from sources begin long before they begin to write. Their problem begins with comprehending sources, both individually and in their broader intertextual context—their relationship to the larger discipline-based conversation in which they are embedded. When students have a slender grip on what they're reading and why they're reading it, they are more apt to cherry-pick a few sentences that seem to bear on their topic rather than applying the meaning of the whole text. Students, it appears from Howard, Serviss and Rodrigue's study, often attend only to narrow windows of text, and therefore cut themselves off from an ability to summarize the gist of an entire text. This helps to explain Nelson and Hayes' observation that many students search for "easily plundered pockets of information" (5). If they are unable to render text down to its gist, such pockets are all that is available to them. The upshot is that instruction in writing from sources, already clearly a large task, becomes even larger, for it also needs to involve instruction in reading sources as whole arguments. This in turn tells us even more strongly why disciplinary instruction can benefit from having help from the more focussed environment of the dedicated writing course. Cynthia R. Haller suggests that writing courses have a role to play in helping students to read difficult sources more strategically, including breaking

down the cognitively overwhelming task into smaller pieces reminiscent of Leckie's stratified methodology. She also underlines the need for writing program administrators to "search for programmatic ways to articulate what students do with sources in first-year composition with what they do in advanced composition courses, other general education courses, and disciplinary coursework" (55)—in other words, to co-ordinate courses so that what students learn in first-year composition is used and reinforced in advanced composition and disciplinary courses so that students can progressively build skill in understanding and using sources

Adler-Kassner and Estrem make a related argument in "Reading Practices in the Writing Classroom." Drawing on and expanding the WPA Outcomes Statement, they argue that the writing classroom should help students to:

- Use writing and discussion to work through and interpret complex ideas from readings and other texts (reading and roles)
- Critically analyze their own and others' choices regarding language and form (roles)
- Engage in multiple modes of inquiry using text (reading)
- Consider and express the relationship of their own ideas to the ideas of others (roles) (37)

Again, this is a tall order, and Adler-Kassner and Estrem use this fact as an argument for drawing reading through the entire course, despite the fact that (they claim) little instruction in reading pedagogy is woven into materials and programs that seek to train teachers of writing.

Similarly, Joseph Harris devotes all of his well-known textbook, *Rewriting: How to Do Things with Texts* to discussing a series of rhetorical moves—*coming to terms*, *forwarding*, *countering*, *taking an approach*, and *revising*—that he sees as fundamental to interacting profitably with the words of others. This book again points up the fact that, regardless of the precise context, coming to terms with the words of others is tricky business. A course that used Harris' book as I think it was meant to be used would devote an entire semester to walking students through its multi-layered advice. Harris' complex approach to reading and writing is not a technique to be touched on in a three-week unit.

This literature on the complexity of learning to write from sources brings me back to the question of why writing program instructors and administrators should still care, and should still find ways of incorporating writing from sources into our courses. All suggest in their own ways that instruction in using sources is a huge job that must be broken into smaller

tasks and pulled through an entire course, or even better, a succession of courses, if it is to be successful. Moreover, we have to incorporate instruction in how to read sources as well as in how to write from them.

Instructors in the disciplines have a major advantage over us in that, at least when dealing with majors, their students likely possess more of the disciplinary knowledge that is fundamental to comprehension. On the other hand, writing instructors are better positioned to avoid what I call “the anxiety of coverage.” An instructor in a disciplinary course may feel an immense pressure to cover a certain amount of material in order to provide students with the secure foundation of subject matter knowledge that they will need to pursue higher-level courses in the discipline. For us, the need to familiarize students with large quantities of subject area knowledge is not as powerful a driver. This is not to say, of course, that a composition course can be a “content free zone” in which students simply write on a miscellany of trivial subjects. In the next section, I review several approaches to giving composition students something consistent and important to learn about, write about, and make knowledge about with their classmates. I just mean to say that, with the writing task in the foreground and the content more in the background, we can spend a great deal of time working students through various phases of getting to know the source texts that they will need in order to answer their particular research questions, understanding how they relate to their own ideas, and drafting and revising various pieces of writing based on those texts, in ways that only the most dedicated instructor of a disciplinary course will feel able to do. As a side benefit, moving the focus away from content coverage may also reduce the temptation to assign the broad, sweeping topics that Leckie refers to, which seem to be designed to get students to deal with large swatches of subject area knowledge in a single assignment. While a robust WAC/WID program is important, the task of teaching students to write from sources is simply too big for us to hand over entirely to the disciplines.

CONCLUSION

I can remember, in my early years as a new writing instructor (now, alas, long past), assigning a wide variety of writing tasks in a first year course, of which a “research paper” was just one. My disappointment with the results and my conviction that there has to be a better way to do this has propelled me on a career-long journey to understand what this familiar assignment really entails.

In this article I have argued that students should be engaged in writing from sources both as a means of entering the academic discourse commu-

nity and of developing increasingly complex epistemological stances; that it is our job as writing teachers to take a particular interest in teaching them to do so (although certainly not on our own); and that the literature on the subject, both from writing studies and from information literacy, tells us that it is a big enough job to warrant being front and center throughout an entire course or even through an entire writing program.

There are, of course various ways to do this. I have argued elsewhere (2005) that, in institutions that have instituted them, the first-year seminar is an ideal place to introduce students to research culture. The first-year seminar, when it is focussed on academic content rather than on general orientation to the university, provides a venue in which instructors in any field can build a course around a topic that relates to their own research but is broad enough to allow students to find their own area of interest within it. The instructor of a first-year seminar on, say, the role of transportation in the development of nineteenth century North America, does not need to fret that her students may not come away with as much knowledge of the history of transportation as they might have absorbed in a lecture course. She can concern herself instead with whether students have come away with an enlarged understanding of how to find out about transportation history, including how to find sources, how to read them and compare them, and how to base an argument on them. She can also, if she wishes, build the whole course around one escalating series of interlocking assignments rather than trying to assign a range of different topics to ensure coverage. While academic content remains an important lynchpin of the course, the fact that the course is not *primarily* about banking content knowledge allows more freedom to spend time on process.

Where an institution does not use first-year seminars, or uses more specifically writing-oriented courses as well, writing instructors can do much the same thing. James A. Reither recommends turning an entire class into a discourse community in which reading and writing occur in the context of an ongoing exploration of a subject that involves all the students all the time. Another possibility is the “Writing about Writing” approach championed by writers such as Downs and Wardle. This approach has the advantage that, rather than writing on various “general interest” topics that have little relevance to the writing course other than as things to write about, students can research and write on topics that reflect an expanding conversation about writing itself, and which tap into a subject area that the instructor knows well and is well-positioned to help students with. Here, the main advantage is the synergy between what is being researched and written about and the instruction in reading sources and writing from them. While the approach as described by Downs and Wardle does not

specifically focus on the research paper as defined in this article, they insist that writing about writing is a very large tent: “What we advocate for, and what remains stable in our own classrooms, is simply the underlying set of principles: engage students with the research and ideas of the field, using any means necessary and productive” (“Reflecting,” n.p.). One of those necessary and productive means could be immersing students in the controversies of our field by asking them to engage in writing from sources—the sources in this case being some of the more accessible scholarly discussions of what it means to write, to learn to write, and to be a writer.

I have touched only briefly on these few approaches because my goal in this article is not to champion one particular way of configuring a course that teaches students to write from sources. Rather, I am arguing for a repositioning of the source-based paper in our thinking. It is not, I argue, one genre that is of equal stature with many others. It is, rather, a “master genre”—that is, a genre that gets at the heart of the entire academic project.

The lesson for writing program administrators is that we should design our programs to make space for reading and writing from sources—ample space, space that reflects the fact that when we teach students to deal with sources we are, as Lea and Street argue, teaching “academic literacy” itself. Writing from sources is central to the entire mission of the academy, and has resonance far beyond training students to be academics. It teaches them to engage deeply with complex texts and diverse ideas. The importance of the job is matched by its enormity, and if we want to do it well, we must be prepared to devote the entire, or at least most of, the resources of our courses (and by extension much of our scholarly literature) to creating environments where students can truly engage in the process of finding, understanding, and using sources. Anything less is to leave them scouring the library for bits and pieces of information without engagement in the academic community as a whole.

NOTES

1. Relatively few of these studies have been published in journals. Anyone interested in the extant research on writing from sources should look at the string of technical reports published by the Center for the Study of Writing. These may be found at <http://www.nwp.org/cs/public/print/doc/resources/techreports.csp>. Another set of studies is collected in Linda Flower et al., *Reading to Write: Exploring a Cognitive and Social Process*. (As an aside, I dearly wish I had had access to this material in 1992 when I published *Reading as Rhetorical Invention*, my first attempt to come to grips with this subject.)

2. This study is the first of a series of studies by Jennie Nelson, all of which are well worth attention. See Nelson, "Easy Assignment," *Constructing*, "Library Revisited," "Rhetoric of Doing."

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When the Writing Requirements Went Away: An Institutional Case Study of Twenty Years of Decentralization/Abolition

Duncan Carter, Christie Toth, and Hildy Miller

ABSTRACT

While composition scholars have long discussed the theoretical benefits of replacing the traditional first-year composition model with “decentralized” writing instruction, few have examined the long-term consequences of decentralization for writing programs and the undergraduate students they serve. This article presents the story of writing instruction at one public urban university over nearly two decades of decentralization. In an institutional case study that draws on the administrative and teaching experiences of several writing program administrators, as well as a range of quantitative and qualitative assessment data collected since the early 2000s, we discuss the promises, the profits, and the pitfalls of decentralization as it played out at our university. In our context, widely varying writing abilities among incoming students met insufficient institutional resources and a lack of clear programmatic responsibility for students’ writing development, resulting in broad inconsistency in both the writing instruction that undergraduates received and their writing abilities by the time they reached upper-division courses. In recent years, our university has attempted to address these issues in a variety of ways. Here, we share our lessons learned (too often the hard way), and offer suggestions for other writing programs considering decentralization in their own institutional contexts.

In 1991 Sharon Crowley provocatively called for the abolition of required composition courses. Her manifesto set off a vigorous debate in rhetoric and composition circles that continued through the mid-2000s—discussions that continue to crop up on the WPA-L listserv, at conferences, and elsewhere. Even as the so-called “New Abolitionist” debate raged (Brannon; Connors; Goggin and Miller; Miller), reformers were also proposing vari-

ous models for decentralizing writing, including linked courses, writing in the disciplines, first-year seminars, and writing repositioned as part of general education reform (Bamberg). Change was in the air, and these ideas were advanced to great fanfare; indeed, judging from persistent posts on the WPA-Listserv, such models are still being discussed at many institutions, although members of the WPA community have become considerably more wary of potential problems (for an online bibliography on the issue see Howard). But how do decentralized programs fare long term? And what are the difficulties and benefits—both expected and unexpected—that emerge along with way? Our article provides answers to these questions by offering a case study, including both quantitative and qualitative assessments of student writing abilities,¹ of how one such program has played out over nearly two decades at Portland State University, a public university serving a large metropolitan area in the Pacific Northwest.

In 1994, with compositionists pondering abolition and many institutions decentralizing their writing offerings, our institution embarked on its own experiment in decentralization. As part of a broader program of general education reform, the University ended its traditional two-term first-year composition requirement, opting instead for a more integrated four-year interdisciplinary curriculum housed within its own unit, “University Studies.” When Sherrie Gradin joined the faculty that same year, decentralization was already “a done deal” (55). Three years later, she published a rather harried article in *WPA* about her experiences as a writing program administrator under this new curriculum, an essay that exudes frustration with both her own role and the position of writing in the early years of the University Studies program.

Sherrie identifies several areas of administrative difficulty at the outset of decentralization, namely: gaining faculty cooperation for writing instruction and assessment; securing and maintaining funding for writing instruction once it is dispersed across programs and units; and addressing the needs of staff as both TA and contingent and fixed-term faculty roles become increasingly heterogeneous. In her “Post Script” to the article, dated January 1998, Sherrie cites continued problems with funding, placement, and assessment under the new curriculum, but expresses a tentative optimism about the changes that decentralization appeared to be fostering in relationships between literature and composition faculty within the English department, as well as the growing interest in composition theory among disciplinary faculty now charged with writing instruction. Recognizing that the program was still fairly new, she concludes that the “story” of decentralized writing instruction at Portland State “is still being written” (66).

As we approach the end of our second decade under a decentralized writing curriculum, it is an opportune moment to pick up the story where Sherrie left off. Twenty years ago, decentralized writing programs were heralded as an innovative approach to writing instruction. To date, however, there has been little discussion of how such curricula play out over time: whether they live up to their early promise, what kinds of problems they encounter over the long run, and how students fare as these curricula go from pilots and reform initiatives to established, mature programs. In following up on Sherrie's early report, we are helping to fill that gap in the literature. What we offer, then, is not a position on the abolition and decentralization debates, but rather, as Kevin Brooks has called for, a detailed account of the process of reform at one institution (38–40).

As co-authors, each of us holds a different piece of this story. Duncan Carter, WPA at Portland State from 1987 to 1993, and then Associate Dean for the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences from 1999 to 2010, was an important advocate for writing during the development of the University Studies curriculum in the early 1990s. First, he describes the process by which the dismantling of first-year composition took place, and the hopes that composition faculty had for decentralization as a Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) initiative. Christie Toth, a graduate student in English from 2006 through 2008, taught in both Writing Intensive (WIC) and University Studies courses while working with Duncan and Hildy on an institution-wide assessment of upper-level student writing. Christie wrote her master's thesis on Portland State's decentralized writing curriculum, and after graduating, stayed on as a staff researcher, where she continued to work on writing assessment and placement until she left to pursue a PhD in 2009. She presents a portrait of student writing experiences at Portland State based on a range of assessment data and her thesis research. Finally, Hildy Miller took over the WPA position from Sherrie in 2000, and served in that position until stepping down to develop the department's graduate-level rhetoric and composition offerings in 2008. She describes her experiences with the challenges of administering a decentralized writing program—one that, in her estimation, turned into an experiment in abolition—and offers suggestions for other institutions contemplating similar curricular reforms.

DUNCAN'S STORY: OUR VIEW IN 1994

When we launched University Studies in 1994, our point of view was one of “guarded optimism.” First, the optimism. The general education program in place prior to our reform efforts was archaic. It featured a two-term writ-

ing requirement, a one-term health and physical education requirement, and the typical “distribution requirements”: sixteen credits each in the sciences, the social sciences, and arts and letters. If one asked, “Who benefits from such an arrangement?” the answer would have to be “the departments,” who could count on a steady flow of tourists passing through in order to check off distribution requirements. It is hard to argue that the students themselves benefited. They experienced general education as a kind of incoherent smorgasbord: “Here, we’ll give you one dollop of Geology 101 and one dollop of Political Science 101, and you figure out how they fit together.” Nor was there any assurance that students graduated with the knowledge and skills we might reasonably expect of a college graduate.

The Provost tasked a “General Education Working Group” with studying this problem and making recommendations for change. From the outset, the Working Group sought something more integrative. They also wanted to improve student retention. Because Portland State is an urban campus with large numbers of part-time students, older students, and community college transfers, there weren’t many centripetal forces pulling students together. If students were going to form a sense of community, the reasoning went, it would have to happen within the curriculum itself. Finally, the Working Group wanted to capitalize on our urban location by building community engagement into the general education requirement.

What the Working Group ultimately proposed was a radically new general education curriculum—University Studies—which began with the year-long, thematically focused FRINQ course. These interdisciplinary courses were built around four goals: critical thinking, ethics, diversity, and communication. This last goal focused primarily on writing, but also included oral, visual, and numerical communication skills. The pedagogy would be student-centered, with breakout sessions led by undergraduate student “mentors,” and would make frequent use of technology. These FRINQ courses were intentionally broad in their framing, with titles like “On Democracy,” “Ways of Knowing,” and “Design and Society.”

The four goals of University Studies and the emphasis on interdisciplinarity would extend through the entire undergraduate curriculum. Sophomores were to take three SINQ courses, each on a different theme, taught by faculty who were supported by graduate student mentors teaching additional weekly breakout sessions. These SINQ courses served as the gateway to thematically focused clusters of courses from different disciplines at the junior and senior level. So-called “Upper-Division Clusters” included courses grouped around themes such as “Environmental Sustainability,” “Sexualities,” “Professions and Power,” and “Understanding Communities.” Finally, seniors would complete a two-term, six credit-hour Capstone

course, which would be interdisciplinary and community-based. Importantly, all forty-five credit hours of the University Studies program, from freshman inquiry to senior capstone, would be “writing intensive.”

In one fell swoop, this reform addressed at least four problems inherent in the old general education model. One, it permitted students to experience general education in an integrated, rather than fragmentary, fashion. Two, it addressed the problem of retention by forming learning communities. Three, it rested on four clearly articulated learning outcomes. Four, it featured forty-five credit hours of writing intensive courses. And, to top it all off, the new curriculum challenged students to deploy their knowledge and skills to, as our motto has it, “serve the city.”

A heady mix. A bold experiment. In fact, University Studies *has* had an impact on retention (although not as much as hoped). Furthermore, thanks to the Capstone program, Portland State now has more than 400 partnerships with area schools, businesses, government agencies, and non-governmental agencies, and sends more than 8,000 students a year into the community. Finally, the University Studies program has put this institution on the national map. It has attracted external funding and curious visitors from all over the country. For the last seven years, *US News and World Report* has cited Portland State’s general education curriculum under the section “Academic Programs to Look for,” listing it as among the nation’s best in five categories: first-year experiences, internships, learning communities, senior capstone, and service learning. It would seem we’re doing something right.

But what happens to writing instruction in this brave new world? Even as we were designing the new curriculum, I wondered how this could be an improvement if it meant nonspecialists teaching writing. What kind of preparation or training would equip disciplinary faculty to be effective teachers of writing? Given that service on an interdisciplinary team would, by itself, push faculty outside their comfort zone, how much time or thought would they give to writing, even if we trained them? Were we taking a giant step backward, to some kind of current-traditional, grammar-across-the-curriculum program? What provisions would be made for at-risk students? Would our writing center end up serving a safety net function, and be overrun by struggling students whose instructors and mentors did not know how to respond to their writing? Were we dealing a fatal blow to our efforts to professionalize writing instruction?

Then, too, there were the practical issues facing the English Department. Even though the department chair served on the Working Group that designed the new program, University Studies threatened the department in several ways. What would happen to our budget when we handed

our writing requirements over to this ill-defined juggernaut? What would happen to our curriculum? What would happen to the army of instructors and TAs who taught writing? Losing most—even some—of our TAs would undercut English graduate programs, literature and composition alike. And the greatest paradox of them all, or at least so it seemed to me in 1993, was that over there in University Studies we would have nonspecialists teaching writing, while over here in the English Department we would have all these veteran writing instructors sitting idle—or worse, unemployed.

We had some clues that there would be problems. When my department chair, a member of the Working Group that designed the new program, showed me an early draft of the overarching learning goals for the program, writing was listed under “Communication” but not under “Critical Thinking.” To his credit, he sensed something was amiss. He was right: The draft goals embodied an instrumental view of writing, writing as a mere conveyor belt for information that was discovered somewhere else, rather than any sense that writing is itself an act of discovery, an understanding that is a staple of post-process composition theory. But the Working Group responded to our cries of alarm, and we got this problem fixed—at least temporarily.

Then in the fall of 1993, one year before the new program was to be implemented, the Working Group staged a daylong faculty symposium to solicit reactions and criticism to the proposed program. The Working Group responded to the ideas generated by the symposium in a document entitled “General Education Working Group: Revisions and Clarifications” (October 1993). This document was seventeen pages long, four of them devoted to writing, and included several promises—in retrospect we should have seen them as aspirations—from the Working Group:

1. “Through our discussion we came to understand writing as integral to learning as well as to the communication of what has been learned.” (This addressed the question of how writing fit into the University Studies goals.)
2. “Writing and other forms of communication will become integrated into and part of the subject matter focused upon by different general education courses through *all four years* of the program.”
3. There will be mandatory assessment and, for at-risk students, mandatory placement in writing courses at the same time as they are participating in FRINQ.
4. “Faculty offering general education courses [as well as peer mentors] will be required to complete training on communication

across-the-curriculum which will have writing as the central theme.”

5. “Guidelines will be developed outlining the expectations for communications experiences for courses at different levels of the program.”
6. Some writing faculty would be assigned to the University Studies program as “writing consultants” to assist faculty in various ways, including the design of writing assignments. Given the Balkanized nature of writing instruction in the program, there would be some form of writing proficiency measure, probably in the junior year.
7. “Several have expressed concerns that because the proposed program ends the two course writing requirements . . . [they fear] there will be a decreased emphasis on writing . . . [but we have sought] to develop a program which will substantially increase student writing over what is already required.”

Such were the promises. They went a long way toward allaying the fears my colleagues and I had. If I seem too easily persuaded, it is probably because I wrote most of these promises myself. But at least we got them in writing, and as we all know, nothing is real if it isn't in writing. Of course, some of the things that *are* in writing are not real, either, but I leave that part of the story for Hildy.

To summarize: There was a list of promises. There was the willingness of the Working Group to talk with us, to adapt and change in response to our recommendations. And finally there was the promise of forty-five credit hours of integrated writing-intensive courses, versus the six isolated hours of writing requirements they would replace. How could this not be an improvement?

As Sherrie details in her 1997 article, the first several years of the University Studies program turned out to be a mixed bag for writing. Amazingly, we did not lose many instructors or TAs: we simply found new roles for them. But there were early indicators that the Working Group's good intentions would not be enough. We did do assessment and placement, but it did not include all incoming students and the placement became “recommended” rather than mandatory. Sherrie and I did WPA grant-funded research on the kind and quality of writing instruction taking place in FRINQ, and concluded that, to our delight, there was a good deal of writing to learn, but to our dismay, not much learning to write, both in terms of seeing papers through multiple drafts to a level of polish, and in terms of metacognition. Worse still, those teaching FRINQ seemed to keep us at

arm's length. The last thing they wanted was writing specialists critiquing their every move. We had become "outsiders."

By two years into the program, our guarded optimism was beginning to wear a little thin—we became more guarded, and less optimistic. Of course the program would evolve, but would the promises be honored, or would the program evolve away from solid instruction in writing? Would writing instruction cease to be a low-status enclave, or would its low status simply follow it into this new program? We very much wanted this bold experiment to work, but by the time Sherrie left in 2000, we had enough doubts that her successor Hildy and I decided to embark on an assessment of our students' writing experiences, which forms the basis of this institutional case study. This, we hoped, would give us a better sense of how well students were being served by Portland State's decentralized composition curriculum. Two years in, we were fortunate to be able to add Christie, a graduate student at the time, to our team.

CHRISTIE'S STORY: ASSESSING DECENTRALIZATION

Since 2007, I have worked with Duncan and Hildy, as well as assessment staff in University Studies and the Office of Institutional Research and Planning (OIRP), on several different projects designed to measure the impact of Portland State's undergraduate curriculum on students' writing abilities. As it turns out, however, assessing the effectiveness of our writing curriculum is a remarkably challenging task. Although the university has opted to decentralize writing instruction, the institution's mission, student demographics, and role in a regional transfer network with area community colleges mean that the actual introductory writing experiences of its students are heterogeneous to a degree that seems almost to defy measurement.

As a diverse urban campus with an access mission, Portland State admits students with widely varying levels of preparation for college-level coursework, and it does so at all levels of its undergraduate curriculum. Despite recent efforts to tighten standards, the university still has relatively open admissions requirements for first-year students, which means that many enter with gaps in their academic preparation; at the same time, Portland State's appealing urban location and well-known sustainability programs also attract high-achieving students from across the country. Furthermore, we admit more transfer students than any other university in the state—over 60% of our students transfer in from other institutions, the majority from community colleges. Thus, while students who enroll as freshmen experience our decentralized writing curriculum from day one, our many community college transfer students come to us from the more traditional

introductory writing curriculum mandated by statewide transfer degree requirements. Trying to assess the cumulative impact of our decentralized writing curriculum is therefore complicated by the fact that students have experienced a bewildering array of curricular pathways, with varying levels of exposure to both direct and decentralized writing instruction in multiple institutional contexts.

These complexities led us to adopt a variety of qualitative and quantitative assessments as we have sought to better understand our students' writing experiences and outcomes. Such measures included faculty and student surveys, student interviews, and an evaluation of student writing samples from upper-division courses across the disciplines. Taken together, the results of these studies suggest the following findings:

1. The amount and kinds of writing instruction that students receive in their lower-division University Studies courses are very inconsistent, varying widely from instructor to instructor and mentor to mentor.
2. The amount of writing that students are asked to produce at every level of the undergraduate curriculum varies, but is, on average, disappointingly low.
3. Perhaps as a consequence of instructional inconsistency and a lack of opportunities for practice, as well as the diversity of their individual academic paths, students' demonstrated writing abilities at the junior and senior level also vary widely. On average, however, our students are achieving lower levels of writing proficiency by the time they reach their upper-division courses than we would hope.

Thus, at least when these data were collected at the tail end of the 2000s, it would seem that our decentralized writing curriculum was not doing enough to bring students onto "the same page." Recent changes—both within University Studies and as part of a larger effort to establish and assess campus-wide learning outcomes—may lead to greater consistency in instruction and more attention to writing across the curriculum, and there is reason to hope that these changes will improve student writing outcomes. However, we offer our findings here to help other institutions avoid learning these lessons as we have: the hard way.

Methods

Surveys: In the second half of the aughts, we conducted two rounds of surveys with both students and faculty. During the 2005–2006 academic year, we collected 1453 student surveys and fifty-five faculty surveys from

courses across a wide swath of disciplines at all levels of undergraduate instruction. Then, in 2007, researchers in OIRP asked to use our survey instrument as part of an institution-wide assessment of student writing at the junior level, and over the course of the 2007–2008 academic year, we collected an additional forty faculty surveys and 721 student surveys from a total of forty-seven Upper-Division Cluster and WIC courses in twenty different academic disciplines. The student surveys included thirty-one multiple-choice questions and six open response items. In 2008, I (Christie) worked with fellow graduate students Elizabeth Harazim and Jon McClintick to qualitatively code all 5,199 open responses. Because we conducted surveys only in courses that were volunteered by faculty, our survey samples were opportunistic rather than representative, and our findings cannot be generalized across the institution. However, we can make useful comparisons between the responses of different groups *within* the dataset, and the survey findings helped us develop additional research questions.

Writing samples: As part of the 2007–2008 survey, we also asked students whether they would be willing to let us collect a sample of their writing. With the help of instructors, we made copies of a major written assignment from each consenting student. Over the course of the academic year, we collected 401 writing samples, 228 of which met our criteria for inclusion in the evaluation portion of the study.² In summer 2008, Hildy and I worked with a team of trained graduate student composition instructors to score those writing samples holistically. Over the course of two days, a team of nine readers worked in pairs to assess the papers on a six-point scale, based on a rubric that the group developed inductively by reading and discussing pre-selected anchor papers representing a range of writing abilities, genres, and disciplines. This rubric took into account complexity of thinking, facility with academic forms of expression, and mastery of disciplinary discourse conventions, as well as more technical aspects of writing, such as grammar, mechanics, and organization.

Interviews: Finally, as part of my own master's thesis research, I conducted twelve semi-structured interviews with upper-division students. Using a combination of University Studies listserv announcements and snowball sampling, I recruited five undergraduates and seven community college transfer students from a wide range of socioeconomic and educational backgrounds, ranging in age from twenty-one to thirty-eight. While these students were fairly representative of the Portland State student population in terms of gender, age, parenting status, and socioeconomic status, they were less diverse than the overall student population in several other ways: all were native speakers of English, and ten of the twelve self-identi-

fied as white. This means that some particularly vulnerable student populations were underrepresented in the interview portion of the study.

While these multiple forms of data inevitably yielded more findings than we can discuss in the scope of this article, taken together, they suggest three key insights into students' experiences in our writing curriculum:

Finding 1: Lack of Consistency in University Studies

Both the student surveys and my interviews with upper-division students affirm what we had long suspected: there is enormous inconsistency in the amount and kinds of writing instruction that students receive in their FRINQ and SINQ courses. This inconsistency springs in part from variability in instructor background. Some faculty have a relatively strong grounding in composition theory and a laudable commitment to preparing their students to be successful college writers, and their students' learning experiences reflect those orientations. Others, however, bring different disciplinary backgrounds, pedagogical training, and instructional priorities to their teaching, and their students receive fewer writing assignments and little or no direct writing instruction. While our students enter the university with widely varying writing abilities, and some clearly need more help than others, whether they end up with a FRINQ or SINQ instructor who prioritizes writing is really luck of the draw.

The student responses on the 2007–2008 survey suggest that many students were not receiving what they perceived to be useful writing instruction in their FRINQ and SINQ courses. On this survey, students were asked to indicate whether they had taken FRINQ and/or SINQ, whether they had taken a writing course at either Portland State or a community college, and whether they had taken a WIC course. They were then asked, "Which of these courses did you feel prepared you *very well* for the kinds of writing you do for courses at Portland State University?" Only 51.5% of respondents who had taken FRINQ indicated that the course had prepared them very well, and just 35.9% said the same for SINQ.³ Clearly, respondents' experiences with writing instruction in their University Studies courses was a mixed bag. Based on my own experience as a SINQ mentor, I can attest to the variability of the writing instruction in those courses: in one class I mentored, students spent a month and a half collaboratively writing a 12-page research paper through multiple drafts with both peer and instructor feedback; in another class, there was no writing assigned by the instructor for the entire term.

The following open response questions on the student survey elicited commentary about writing in University Studies: "In your opinion, what change or additions to your education would improve your writing skills?"

Thirty-five (3.4%) of the 1030 students who responded to this question specifically recommended changes to University Studies. The following are just a sampling of these respondents' critiques:

Writing should be a required course. WR 121, 223 should, somehow, be worked into the current University studies general studies requirements. Or the FRINQ teachers must be taught how to effectively teach writing.

I took a writing course as an elective and it was much more helpful than the writing that is taught (jumbled with everything else) in the University Studies classes.

No University Studies. The writing part of it becomes too inmeshed [sic] w/all the other topics.

In University Studies writing needs to be taught not assigned. Everyone expects you to already know how to write a paper.

While a few students made a point of complimenting University Studies (e.g., "I believe the UNST program is helping our writing skills"), far more took the open response question as an opportunity to air their grievances. As one student wrote, "Someone at this school needs to teach students how to write. FRINQ does not do this sufficiently! It needs to be improved or another class must be added!" While it's important to note that 95 respondents (9.2%) stated that no changes to their writing instruction were needed, at least some felt strongly that the amount and kinds of writing instruction they received in University Studies were not meeting their needs.

Five of the students I interviewed had taken FRINQ, and eleven of the twelve had taken at least one SINQ course. The writing instruction in their courses seems to have run the gamut from exceptionally well done to almost completely non-existent. Two students were very positive about FRINQ's role in developing their academic writing abilities: one credited the instructor for assigning a lot of writing, both formal and informal, and responding to that writing with substantive feedback; another raved about the amount of feedback and help with revision she received from her mentor. A third student said he had received a lot of help with academic writing from his FRINQ instructor, but emphasized that he approached the instructor individually for this assistance. "Help with revision was something I sought out," he said, "not something that was built into the program." The other two students who had taken FRINQ remembered completing writing assignments in the course, but could not recall receiving

much writing instruction beyond learning about library research and going over occasional grammar exercises in mentor sessions. As for their SINC courses, students reported notably different amounts of writing—and writing instruction—from course to course. Most had taken at least one SINC that involved a major research paper, but two had taken SINCS with almost no writing component at all. A few had done peer review sessions in one or more of their SINC courses, and some received feedback on their writing from SINC faculty, but in general, as one student put it, “There was no writing instruction in my SINCS. It was assumed that you knew how to write by then.”

Taken together, these survey and interview responses suggest not that writing is a problem across the board in University Studies, but rather that—like our incoming students’ abilities—writing instruction in these courses is all over the map. Decentralization has not caused writing instruction to disappear entirely, but neither has it resulted in an even or predictable diffusion of writing instruction across the lower-division general education curriculum. As it turns out, this problem is endemic in our upper-division courses, as well, both within and beyond University Studies.

Finding 2: Lack of Writing across the Curriculum

The inconsistency of writing instruction in lower-division University Studies courses is compounded by relatively little required writing in most other courses students take during their time at Portland State. Few upper-division courses seem to demand much in the way of writing, even in the disciplinary Upper-Division Cluster courses that the Working Group intended to be writing-intensive.⁴ So while we might wish to see more writing in courses that purport to fulfill general education requirements, we see the lack of attention to writing in those disciplinary courses as part of broader lack of commitment to student writing across the university.

Among the 1446 juniors and seniors who responded to the student survey, 69% reported writing an average of ten pages or less per term in their courses, and their answers to the open response questions are even more revealing. When asked, “What changes or additions to your education would improve your writing skills?” 90 respondents (8.7%) said they needed more writing practice. Seventeen (1.7%) called for longer or more in-depth writing assignments, 54 (5.2%) wanted more opportunities for structured idea generation and/or revision, and 83 (8.1%) wanted more feedback on their writing. Thirty-one (3%) noted a need for more discipline-specific writing instruction. Taken together, these responses signal a constellation of unmet writing instructional needs among upper-division

students at Portland State. As one student wrote, “My community college teachers have taught me more about how to be a good writer than my PSU instructors. I wish teachers would feel the need to continue to teach about writing in upper-division classes.” Or, in the memorable words of another respondent, “More writing, more writing, more writing and then feedback, feedback, feedback.”

Although many survey respondents were clamoring for more writing, as well as more instruction and feedback, we also suspect that the lack of attention to writing across the Portland State curriculum makes it easy for some of our weaker writers to avoid the kinds of challenging assignments that would give them opportunities to learn and grow. Our students are often pursuing their degree amidst many other life demands and pressures—most work, and many are parents or caretakers for other family members. The ease with which writing can be dodged in our decentralized writing curriculum likely contributes to our third finding: a broad heterogeneity in student writing abilities by the time they reach their upper-division coursework, and lackluster average student performance.

Finding 3: Disappointing Student Writing Achievement

Faculty surveys revealed a pervasive dissatisfaction with student writing abilities. While faculty are notoriously disgruntled about student writing at almost every institution, a startling 94.3% of respondents said they were moderately, somewhat, or not at all satisfied with their students’ writing abilities, and 95.3% said that their students’ educations had given them only moderately, somewhat, or not at all adequate writing preparation. In the eyes of faculty, the problem resided largely with the curriculum: 30.6% of respondents said they were “not at all” satisfied with writing instruction at the university, and not a single faculty respondent indicated that she was “extremely” satisfied with the writing instruction her students were receiving. Of course, given how little writing many faculty are assigning, these survey responses suggest a chicken-and-egg conundrum: are faculty disappointed with student writing abilities because they aren’t assigning enough of it, or are they not assigning much writing because they are so disappointed with students’ abilities?

Students also expressed relatively high levels of dissatisfaction with their own writing abilities: 44.4% of junior and senior respondents indicated that they were only moderately, somewhat, or not at all satisfied with their ability to write school assignments, and 45% believed that their education to this point had been only moderately, somewhat, or not at all adequate. In the open responses to the question “What changes or additions to your edu-

cation would improve your writing skills?” students identified a number of writing-related areas in which they felt they needed improvement, including spending more time writing and revising, increasing their range of writing styles or genres, expanding their vocabulary, and, most commonly, improving their spelling and grammar. Likewise, in response to the question, “Is there something important about learning to write that we didn’t ask?” many students also specifically mentioned grammar or mechanics. As Harazim suggests, the level of student concern with grammar, spelling, and mechanics in these questions “reflect[s] a common understanding of writing as first decoding language according to rules, then buttressing with the appropriate considerations of style and content” (2). Harazim also notes that students’ preoccupation with memorizing citation styles and APA or MLA formats—mentioned by nearly 10% of the respondents—might also reflect a rule-bound, arhetorical conception of writing. This instrumental attitude toward writing could be the consequence of current-traditional pedagogical approaches among the disciplinary faculty charged with teaching writing under decentralization, or it could be the result of little discussion about writing: students may simply lack the meta-language that more direct, sustained writing instruction could provide.

Finally, our assessment of upper-division student writing samples paints a disappointing portrait of student outcomes under our decentralized writing curriculum. On a scale of 1 to 6, the mean writing score for the entire corpus of 228 student papers was 3.67. In other words, the majority of writing samples fell between a 3 (characterized in our rubric as “simplistic”: has an identifiable thesis, although it may be weak; some organizational problems; is “reaching” for original ideas or analysis) and a 4 (“serviceable”: uneven quality; structure not optimal; might deal with complex concepts but is difficult to follow in some places).

The mean scores by class standing are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Average Writing Sample Score by Class Standing

Class	Cases	Mean Score	Standard Deviation
Freshman	1	4.0	
Sophomore	13	3.04	1.35
Junior	98	3.76	1.00
Senior	104	3.68	1.11
Post-bac	8	3.94	1.24
Graduate (Master)	1	2.0	
Other	3	3.33	1.53

These scores suggest two interrelated interpretations:

1. Given the rubric descriptions of a 3 and a 4, *the Portland State students sampled in this study demonstrate mediocre writing performance at the upper-division level*. These scores are particularly disappointing given the large number of seniors in the sample.
2. The large standard deviations for each class level indicate that *there is a great deal of variation among students of the same class standing*. In other words, at each grade level, the students demonstrate a broad range of writing abilities, suggesting that instructors teaching upper-division courses are working with students who have widely varying degrees of preparation for upper-division writing.

Implications

As of the end of the first decade of the 2000s, then, it would seem that there were serious problems with Portland State's decentralized writing curriculum: the promised forty-five credits of writing-intensive courses were not in evidence, and students seemed to be suffering the consequences. The university's relatively nonselective admissions requirements, as well as its socio-economically, academically, and linguistically diverse student population, might suggest a need to provide explicit, consistent writing instruction, and many opportunities for practice. However, at least in its first two decades, the institution's experiment with decentralization has created conditions in which many students receive neither. The result seems to be a kind of chaos across the board—a chaotic writing curriculum, chaotic student writing abilities—and this chaos, we fear, has resulted in inconsistent achievement of writing standards. How, we worry, will our students be able to use their knowledge to serve the city if we haven't equipped them with the writing abilities expected of college graduates? And if we continue to send our graduates out into the community without these abilities, do we risk devaluing the degree that has been so hard-won, particularly by our many first-generation college students?

HILDY'S STORY: WHAT WE'VE LEARNED

Christie has reported on our major concern: the troubling effects on student writing of nearly two decades of decentralization in an academic climate quite changed from that in which the curriculum was initially envisaged. I pick up the story from a WPA perspective, where Sherrie and Duncan left off, reflecting on what became of their administrative hopes and fears. And I do so for the same reason that Sherrie did: "to tell a story .

. . . that may help others in similar situations anticipate what they might face within their own institutional transformations” (66). Here is what we’ve learned at our institution.

Money, Money, Money

As Duncan described, the original plan to decentralize writing instruction meant trading six credits of writing courses for 45 credits of writing-intensive courses. However, in the end, all those promised credits never materialized, thereby turning what he called a “bold experiment” in decentralized writing into what David Schwalm would call an experiment in “de facto abolition” (“Re: Choose”). Perhaps the most important contributing factor in this transformation was, quite simply, money. Though early committees made their needs known, in retrospect, those needs were not attached to actual costs. Once the writing requirement was abolished, no permanent funds were immediately reallocated for ongoing faculty development, mentor training, curriculum building, placement, assessment, an expanded writing center, and a WIC program to support writing in the disciplines. In other words, the money saved by cutting the required writing courses—roughly \$435,000 in today’s figures—was not directly reallocated into the extensive administrative structure needed to make decentralized writing work. In 1997, Sherrie wrote, “. . . I spend more time than ever before trying to convince deans that someone needs to take responsibility, tracking down elusive money, and generating budget proposals” (60). My early experience was much the same.

Why wasn’t the money reallocated? I suspect that those in upper administration did not realize that a decentralized administrative structure is likely to be far more complex and therefore more expensive than a traditional two-course writing requirement. Perhaps they had a simplified view of writing as a skill, one in which anyone who could write could teach others to write; so changing the location of its delivery appeared to them as an even exchange, perhaps even a great savings. It may be too that, several decades into the neoconservative ideological stance that has produced the corporate university, as Edward White puts it, “. . . [E]ducation [is] perceived by political bodies as an expense rather than an investment” (76). So there may have been little incentive to fund the effort fully, and no framework for attaching such an idealistic set of literacy goals to adequate funding. And, finally, Portland State itself, though it is in the enviable position of being recently ranked 10th by U.S. News and World Report’s Up-and-Coming Schools, was struggling financially. Once funded generously by the state, the University’s state support had shrunk significantly, and it was

only belatedly developing the endowments and other private resources that it needed to sustain its programs. As at so many other public schools, yearly rounds of budget cuts had become an ongoing institutional stress.

Whatever the causes—likely all of the above—our would-be decentralized writing program came to resemble, in many ways, Schwalm’s hypothetical “bad scenario”: “The . . . resources are gone, thinly distributed, never to be returned” (“Re: Choose”). In other words, it became more like abolition. It is therefore not surprising that those schools often mentioned as ones in which decentralized writing has been most successful—Cornell, Duke, University of Minnesota, and even University of Albany—are comparatively quite well heeled. If we had it to do over again, we would insist on frank discussions at the outset about the cost of such an ambitious program, and try to whittle it down to something smaller that could more realistically be supported. As Shirley K Rose observes, institutions often “go about it backwards,” launching huge programs instead of starting with small pilots (“Re: Choose”), and ours certainly followed that pattern. Then again, perhaps that argument was advanced, but simply wasn’t heeded in the excitement of the planned educational reform.

The Importance of a Workable Administrative Structure

We’ve learned a lot too about the complexity of the administrative infrastructure compositionists actually need in order to manage a decentralized writing program. It will require *more* faculty attention to oversee the process and *more* administrative time than a traditional writing requirement. Like housework, the “women’s work” of teaching writing and writing program administration can too easily be discounted as unnecessary, and thereby rendered invisible (Miller). Because of this tendency, it was not just the original Working Group planners or University Studies itself who could not see the work; we ourselves have often discounted what we do and have been far too willing to take on too much invisible work. Generally speaking, in a large university of our size, attempting to embed writing in a unified general education program would require several full-time faculty to manage all the different facets. Yet here, the director of writing, in addition to running the writing program in English, was positioned as the sole writing consultant to University Studies, expected to advise on writing from outside the unit actually delivering it. In practice, this proved to be an awkward arrangement. Both Sherrie and, later, I used the gamut of standard faculty development practices—workshops, one-to-one consultations, mentor training, shared website materials, joint committees, arranging quarter-long student tutorials in the writing center—and the sheer

amount of support we needed to provide proved to be what Shelley Reid once characterized as “boggling” (“Re: Choose”). These efforts all helped, insofar as they could, and facilitated worthwhile discussions about writing. However, as outsiders, Sherrie, Duncan, and I also found over the years that our efforts could be easily misconstrued as interference or criticism; moreover, our expertise in writing was increasingly questioned.

Duncan had wondered at the outset what would happen when non-specialists took over teaching writing, worrying that they would turn to outmoded models: indeed, some of those worries materialized. Instruction too often reverted to the current-traditional approach, the model with which faculty from other disciplines are generally most familiar. For years, scholars have suggested that this approach is one of the most limited and least effective (Berlin and Inkster; Connors; Crowley “Methodical”). The gap between these methods and the ones we advocated certainly added to our credibility problems. Ironically, the charges Crowley levies—that FYC is often taught by “haphazard pedagogy,” which contributes to the deprofessionalization of writing instruction (“Personal Essay” 156)—happened here in many of the FRINQ courses that replaced writing courses. As Christie’s work suggests, the amount of actual writing varied from one course to the next, though with average class sizes of 40 students, hardly first-year seminar size, it is not difficult to see why that happened. In addition, as Robinson observes, whatever the first-year course, it seems to become “the repository” for all study skills and institutional goals (“Re: Choose”), and that certainly proved to be the case here. And though some faculty were enthusiastically committed to the University Studies enterprise, a good many more were not particularly invested in it, and only taught in the unit reluctantly, an oft-predicted problem in decentralized writing programs (Bamberg; Roemer, et al.; Schwalm). So it was no wonder that writing suffered and that faculty found little time for the sorts of WAC workshops and materials we offered. What was most regrettable about the administrative structure of our decentralized curriculum is that it sometimes seemed to set English and University Studies at odds with one another. Whenever we overcame that barrier, we all recognized that we were struggling together in an underfunded enterprise, a mismatch between an ambitious and otherwise successful reformation of general education and a student population whose writing needs were greater than what the institution had anticipated or could afford to address.

So, for all these reasons, our influence was limited and the awkward administrative structure remained problematic. Though David Smit recently proposed sending the entire field on just such a course, envisioning future compositionists not as English professors but rather as writing

consultants to departments, we found that position rather untenable at our University. Like it or not, the present-day academy is still structured around professorial rank and department affiliation. Fortunately, four years ago, I was able to help remedy that longtime administrative problem by successfully convincing University Studies to hire a compositionist to oversee writing from within. In 2010, Annie Knepler, a faculty member with a PhD in Rhetoric and Composition and expertise in team-based composition programs, assumed the newly created position of University Studies Writing Coordinator. She not only helps oversee writing within the unit and adjacent programs, but also collaborates with those in other units that share responsibility for writing. Though we wonder whether her job really includes an adequately funded support structure around writing, we are more hopeful now that we see writing beginning to get the expert attention it deserves.

Awkward Divisions of Labor May Create Challenges

We learned too about the division of labor that can take place when writing is decentralized. Past WPA-Listserv discussions suggest that this problem is one often associated with linked courses or WID courses with an English teaching assistant, in which a lower status assistant becomes responsible for writing while the faculty member teaches content (LaFrance “Re: Choose”). Though decentralized schemes for writing are designed precisely to reconnect writing with content, it seems, ironically, that these intentions can come undone, in part because of the awkward power differential. Both mentors in University Studies and teaching assistants in the WIC program have had to contend with these traditional problems. In University Studies, a select and well-trained cadre of undergraduate and graduate students assist in FRINQ and SING, providing both general support to help allay student anxieties and specific support for writing instruction and other learning goals. In the WIC program, well-trained English graduate students assist with writing in disciplinary courses. As writing directors and designated experts, both Sherrie and I certainly had more power than a teaching assistant, yet we too were administratively divorced from the unit delivering content, thereby essentially separating writing from content.

Yet another division of labor in writing and content emerged with the writing center. Once a small service unit, the center’s size and reach expanded considerably when writing was decentralized. It began running full-steam with over 5,000 sessions per year, and, even so, had to turn away at least 800 students every year because the demand was so great. At least a third of this demand came from University Studies. Some overburdened

faculty fell into what amounted to an outsourcing model for teaching writing—they simply depended on the writing center to do it. Need to teach revision in your class? Call the writing center to do a presentation for you. No time for students with weak writing abilities? Send them all to the writing center. On the positive side, however, the center, located in the same building as University Studies, interfaced with it very effectively: faculty often stopped in for a quick consultation on a student writing problem, or to ask for a writing handout to use in class; writing consultants even joined teams of faculty working on specific FRINQ course to assist them in developing writing assignments, peer workshops, and in-class writing activities. University Studies helped shoulder the cost of this increasing reliance on the writing center by contributing substantially to its budget. However, overall funding for the writing center remains a problem, as it did for the studio-style supplemental writing courses we proposed (see Grego and Thompson). Here, too, I imagine that some institutions can better afford what amounts to rather expensive one-to-one writing instruction as a way of supporting decentralized writing; but for a public institution like ours, this costly solution has not been financially sustainable.

Different Student Populations Require Different Approaches to Decentralization

As Christie noted, our urban, public university serves a very diverse student population, including English language learners and “Generation 1.5” writers (Harklau, et al). Many of these students come from a secondary system compromised by seemingly endless budget cuts. We simply do not have a student population that can get by with little or no writing instruction. Bamberg aptly warns that the most successful abolition experiments have been at those institutions where students were well prepared before enrolling there (13). In fact, our inability to effectively serve this diverse mix of student writers evokes White’s contention that abolition is elitist, and we feared that we were perpetuating such elitism ourselves (75). A good many of our students needed a place to practice writing, to get the sort of sustained attention a writing course provides—and they needed more of both than the writing center could provide (Bamberg 15).

In order to encourage students to enroll in writing courses if they needed them, we developed a directed self-placement instrument in 2005, which was successful in helping some students place themselves into needed courses. However, unlike most institutions that adopt DSP, we had no anchor course to serve as a reliable and consistent entry point, particularly because the amount of writing instruction in FRINQ varied so widely. We

continue to tinker with DSP in order to improve it, but without an anchor course, it remains problematic in this context. Nor were we able to develop a university wide assessment, since it too was prohibitively expensive. University Studies has its own internal assessment, a successful and much admired electronic portfolio, which has been used to measure FRINQ learning goals and is now expanding into the other levels of the program. However, in the midst of so many other learning goals, the assessment of writing in these e-portfolios often seemed weak; fortunately, with Annie collaborating with University Studies' new director of assessment, writing is now receiving increased attention.

Writing Programs May Face an Identity Crisis

Finally, we've learned that composition specialists and writing programs undergo an identity crisis when the writing requirements go away. Crowley predicted that, with abolition, compositionists might gain more respect, since FYC is seen as a low-status course, and some assume these introductory courses are all the field is or does ("Comments" np). For us, ironically, the case was the opposite; without the requirement, we became for a time nearly invisible. For a long time many people—faculty, administrators, and advisers, from both within and without the English department—didn't know we were still open for business. So sometimes we were the last to hear of various writing initiatives that popped up in balkanized corners of the university whenever someone wanted to "do something about writing" because "they don't teach writing anymore in English."

Meanwhile, although the writing course requirement was abolished in 1994, the actual writing courses in the English Department never entirely went away as was expected. In fact, two decades later, they are offered in roughly the same numbers as they were when we had a two-course writing requirement. First-year writing, which, in the writing program's heyday, stood at 60 sections per year, dwindled to 12 in 1997, but as of 2012 they have climbed back up to 76 each year. The upper-division writing courses, which once stood at 85 sections per year, also declined initially, but have rebounded to 54. So it seems that, at least in this respect, Crowley was right: some students do enroll voluntarily in writing courses when they are no longer required. In our case, however, these numbers are also influenced by the DSP, as well as the fact that many departments began requiring their majors to complete one or more of our courses. Interestingly, not only do more and more individual units require composition courses, but the institution itself, under our leadership, recently passed a requirement that transfer students (the majority of our student population) complete at

least two writing courses. So, while the top-down university-level writing requirement was abolished, in its absence, new requirements have emerged over time from the bottom up, forming a sort of patchwork of different writing policies.

With so many students enrolling in writing courses, shouldn't this increase have improved student writing and faculty perceptions of student writing? Not exactly—the answer is complicated. Yes, the number of courses rebounded to previous levels: however, the overall number of students has also increased dramatically over time. So the courses serve a smaller portion of this current population than under the traditional writing requirement. In addition, the “chaos across the curriculum” approach, as Christie termed it, seems to have interrupted whatever developmental arc exists for students taking a sequence of writing and/or WIC courses, a sequence carefully designed to build from one course to the next by increasing in both intellectual complexity and expectations of more sophisticated writing abilities. Now we regularly see students in their final term of senior year who are writing at freshman levels. As an upper-division instructor once put it: “It’s hard to develop any goals or assignments for the class because half my students are writing at FYC levels and half at the level for which the course was developed.” Concomitantly, some instructors of FYC report having as much as a third of their class populated by seniors actually writing at upper division levels; the students say they are taking the class because “it’s an easy ‘A.’” Therefore, we assume that some of the problems with student writing in our decentralized program result from the way it is structured, which prevents us from forming a coherent sequence of writing instruction. Simply adding more writing courses to the mix does not in itself solve the problems.

Counter to Crowley’s predictions, providing fewer composition courses over the years for the current student population has not allowed us the luxury of staffing the remaining courses with full faculty lines, or at least something other than adjuncts and teaching assistants (“Personal” 171). The sheer number of courses to be taught makes that simply impossible, due to the demand and other responsibilities that tenure-track faculty must fill. Given the claims that abolishing the composition requirement would mitigate the reliance on non-tenure track instructors, it is ironic that, for a time, the low-status problem simply followed the first-year students into FRINQ. For many years, FRINQ was predominately taught by non-tenure line faculty with heavy teaching loads; in recent years, however, University Studies has remedied this problem by encouraging more tenure-line faculty participation, often by helping departments to fund new lines. Even so, they continue to contend with some full-time faculty’s reluctance to commit fully

to those courses. (Thus, it seems to us that, as Marjorie Roemer, et al. predicted, the low status issue is less a matter of FYC being held in low regard and more a problem shared by first-year introductory courses in general.)

As for the identity changes of the compositionists in the English department, Crowley was right in our case about the long term effect of abolishing the requirement: We have found ourselves freer than before to devote our energies to developing a rhetoric and composition curriculum rich in scholarship, research, history, and pedagogy. Over the last decade, we've begun teaching a greater variety of writing courses, some with theory-based topics and others with a disciplinary focus. And since I stepped down as director, I've helped oversee an expansion of a full slate of courses in research methods, historical surveys, and special topics such as digital rhetoric, theories of style, and composition and postmodernism. Student interest is high, and we have further plans to develop the curriculum into official tracks at the graduate and undergraduate levels. A new talented director of writing, Susan Kirtley, joined us last year. Therefore, as Sherrie predicted, we may have lost a writing requirement but, over time, we gained a writing program.

Conclusions

So this concludes our part of the nearly twenty-year story in which Portland State's experiment in decentralized writing became an exercise in abolition. As with any case study, all we can do is tell our story. We recognize that all administrative outcomes are local, and that scenarios can vary drastically from one institution to another. Certainly, we have experienced a "perfect storm," as it were—budget cuts, less-than-prescient administrative planning, and new populations of students with new needs—that often foiled our institution's best-laid plans. Yet, along with the problems, there have been notable successes: strengthening writing expertise in University Studies; discovering new, expanded roles for the writing center that made it a true center of decentralized writing; and developing a more sophisticated disciplinary identity within our department. This chaos across the curriculum, with all its apparent shortcomings in meeting the writing needs of our students, has indeed at least provided a varied set of locations and opportunities for writing for our increasingly varied student population. Our wish at this point would be for a broader institutional acknowledgment of the role of writing and commitment to funding the various units that support it. Based on what we've learned, to anyone considering decentralization, I would say, make sure your venture has sufficient funding, plenty of faculty, and a workable administrative infrastructure. If any of these compo-

nents are not available, take a step back and look for a less drastic model. Reconsider whether a traditional writing course requirement might be a more workable option, or, consider combining writing courses with writing-intensive courses. As Sherrie said in her 1997 article, “This story is still being written” (41). Perhaps in another decade, our new colleagues Susan and Annie will continue the story.

NOTES

1. We secured approval from the Human Subjects Research Review Committee for all phases of this multi-year project, including Christie’s thesis research.

2. The assignment needed to be at least four pages in length, be written in English, and fall within the essay, research paper, or lab report genres (broadly defined).

3. At 54.3%, PSU writing courses didn’t fare much better than FRINQ. However, 79.2% of those who had taken *community college* writing courses reported that those courses had prepared them very well. Although we can only guess at what might be driving this difference, it seems likely that both PSU and community college writing courses would be as uneven in their delivery of instruction as FRINQ, since both sets of writing courses are staffed primarily by adjuncts. However, the community colleges require two to three sequenced courses, so perhaps that concentrated instruction has more impact on students than anything we can offer through either English or University Studies.

4. Under Duncan’s leadership, the English Department launched a small WIC program in 1994, with the overall goal of expanding writing into the disciplines or departments themselves. This program now includes twenty-five courses, but its growth has also been stymied by lack of funding.

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Taking the Long View: Investigating the History of a Writing Program's Teacher Evaluation System

Laura J. Davies

ABSTRACT

This historical study illustrates the effects of implementing a merit-based, peer-evaluated teacher portfolio evaluation system. I constructed a 25-year history of the Syracuse University Writing Program's teacher evaluation committee through both the collection and analysis of archived administrative documents and retrospective oral histories conducted with members of this independent writing program. I argue that there are significant consequences of reflective, comprehensive evaluation for both writing programs and their members, effects that sometimes cannot be detected for years. Ultimately, my essay urges writing program administrators to take a long-range perspective when they assess the effectiveness of administrative systems and design administrative structures that can evolve within changing contexts.

So much of our work as writing program administrators involves the process of design: we design as we draft curricular outcomes, make staffing decisions, create campus initiatives, and implement systems for assessment, development, and evaluation. Design requires a balance between the global and the local, an adaptation of general principles to fit specific constraints. As graphic designer Edward Tufte succinctly noted, "Design is choice" (191). The goal of design is not perfection. Instead, designing is about making smart choices to create structures and systems that best fit a particular time and place.

An important step in the design process is determining the potential positive and negative effects of particular design choices. This attention to context and consequences is defined by Matthew Heard as cultivating an "ethos of sensibility" (43). Heard argues that writing program administrators who develop this sensibility can be more constantly aware of both how

their local material and political situations affect their decisions and the larger implications of their administrative choices. One of the challenges, though, of figuring out the consequences of administrative decisions is that the implications of our choices as administrators take time to realize in systems as complex as writing programs. The important, lasting effects of our choices aren't always apparent when we sit down to write our annual report. Writing program administrators need to be cognizant of the long-term implications of the decisions they make for their writing programs, have data and methods through which to analyze the effects of their choices, and use their analyses to argue for structures and programs that will benefit their students and teachers.

Yet much of our scholarship in writing program administration about designing programs and structures ends after the initial implementation stage. For example, we learn about the institutional challenges of creating a writing major and the early successes of it, but we don't learn what happens five or ten years later, those long-term benefits and consequences associated with choosing that particular curricular philosophy or requirements. It is true that creation stories are valuable to writing program administrators for philosophical and practical reasons. They document our goals and values and serve as advisory models for other writing program administrators, who find themselves in similar circumstances. However, most of these narratives end prematurely. One reason they end too hastily is because our profession emphasizes building: constructing new curriculum, programs, departments, and initiatives. Our attention to creation is due in part, I believe, to the can-do, practical attitude many of us bring to the job—we like to imagine possibilities and then make them realities—but it also reflects how we are evaluated as writing program administrators. As Shirley K Rose and Irwin Weiser contend, “writing program administration is very much a job dealing with the immediate” (275). In fact, this predilection towards non-stop action is cause for concern, as Laura R. Micciche pointed out in her call to writing program administrators to slow down and build in time for reflection and conversation while making administrative decisions (87). Another reason why the narratives we write end before we get to the second chapter include the lack of time and support administrators have to conduct a longitudinal or historical studies of the programs they inherit, re-design and implement. Finally, there is often recurrent turnover of people filling administrative positions, caused by a variety of forces, including institutional regulations, departmental politics, overworked burnout, and personal preferences and choices. This cycle of turnover can lead to disruption and abandonment of administrative initiatives and system.

METHODS

In this article, I investigate the long-term impact of a writing program's administrative choices through a historical study of the Syracuse University Writing Program's teacher evaluation system. The study relies on two complementary methods of research. First, I constructed a 15-year history of the Syracuse Writing Program's teacher evaluation committee through an archive of saved administrative documents. The documents I used to make this archive came from the Syracuse Writing Program's own programmatic archives, housed online and in the Syracuse University library's archive collection, and from the personal archives of three long-time members of the Syracuse Writing Program, who participated in the founding of the program in 1986 and its subsequent development: Louise Wetherbee Phelps, Faith Plvan, and Henry Jankiewicz. In total, I collected and then selected over 500 print documents, which I then scanned, named, and categorized into a working digital archive of searchable PDF files. As I created this archive, I applied the principles of archival research described by Katherine E. Tirabassi: I selected documents that could help tell a multi-voiced history of the first fifteen years of the Syracuse Writing Program; I cross-referenced documents that had no clear author to determine identifying features with contextual clues; and I developed keywords, categories, and a labeling system for the scanned PDF files of the documents (172–75). The documents in the archive include annual reports, descriptions of administrative procedures and decisions, in-house newsletters, teaching contracts, memos, meeting minutes and agendas, printed emails, letters, and correspondence with university administration. Though the documents contained in this archive are extensive, the archive is in no way exhaustive. The archive I created draws heavily on administrator and full-time faculty perspectives, as the documents corresponding to those viewpoints were the ones most likely to be saved and archived. Many of the instructors who participated in the early years of the Syracuse Writing Program moved on to other positions or careers, and the absence of the documents that they most likely created—their teaching philosophies, syllabi, assignment plans, meeting notes, correspondence—is a significant gap in this archive.

To complement my document-based history of the Writing Program's teacher evaluation committee, which included documents written and/or published from when the program was founded as an independent writing program in 1986 through 2001, I conducted hour-long oral history interviews in 2011 and 2012 with 13 former and current instructors, faculty, and administrators who worked in the Syracuse Writing Program during that same time period. Syracuse University's institutional review board

determined in 2011 that these interviews constituted oral histories and thus did not require IRB review and approval at Syracuse University. The oral histories were valuable because they helped to expand the perspective of my history, as the documents primarily derived from an administrative point of view. I was able to use the oral histories as an opportunity to ask former and current instructors, administrators, and faculty questions that could “reveal inconsistencies, gaps, and silences to produce a more candid view than some written records can supply” (Lucas and Strain 261). My methodology for this study is similar to that used by Robin Varnum in her 28-year history of the Amherst College writing program under the direction of Theodore Baird. In her study, which serves as a counter-narrative to claims of a universal “current-traditional” pedagogy at American colleges and universities in the early and mid-20th century, she both analyzes documents (student papers and assignment prompts and sequences written by Baird) and interviews Baird, former members of his faculty, and alumni from the Amherst College program in order to get a fuller picture of the kind of writing instruction and writing program administration happening at Amherst College from 1938–1966 (Varnum). Mark McBeth’s study of Mina Shaughnessy is also methodologically similar, as he too relies on both saved administrative documents and interviews with Shaughnessy’s former colleagues to construct his argument about how her administrative work informed her ideas about basic writing and literacy education.

One challenge of researching the history of writing programs is having access to both administrative records and the people involved in the administration of the writing program. Keeping good programmatic archives is one of the many responsibilities of writing program administrators, as Rose and Weiser argue, yet it can be difficult, given the onslaught of documents and data writing program administrators sift through on a daily basis, to adopt a “different orientation to information” in order to identify those documents that not only ask for immediate practical attention but also are of intellectual value for future researchers (277). It is also a challenge to implement a specific, rhetorical documentation strategy for creating and maintaining an archive in programs with a large degree of administrative turnover (281).

Fortunately, there had been some continuity in the administration of Syracuse’s Writing Program from its founding in 1986 through 2010, when I began my research project. Still, though, I quickly became aware that, as Kelly Ritter argues, “composition scholars cannot do archival work alone. . . . We need help from the inside” (184). Though I was familiar with some of the specific language the Writing Program had developed in its 20-plus years of functioning as a quasi-independent writing department,

the structure of the Writing Program I understood as a doctoral student was markedly different than the early systems of professional development, curriculum development, and teacher evaluation that had been established beginning in 1986. I needed what Ritter calls an “interpreter,” and for this project, I had many interpreters, both those people who were still working as faculty members, administrators, or instructors in the Writing Program and those who had moved on to other institutions and careers (184). My archives, though they were essentially a collection of administrative documents, were animated by the conversations I had with those intimately familiar with the foundation of the Syracuse Writing Program. Archival work depends on access, and in my case, I had access on a variety of levels: access to both institutional and personal archives of early Syracuse Writing Program history, access to former and current members of the Writing Program, whom I interviewed to learn more about the program’s history, and access to individuals who assisted me in my interpretation of the oral histories and documents I collected.

I focused my research of the history of the Syracuse Writing Program on the creation, implementation, and evolution of its teacher portfolio evaluation system. The combination of archival research and oral histories allowed me to describe how this teacher evaluation system was developed and the subsequent practical, programmatic, and personal effects of this program’s evaluation system over twenty-five years (1986–2011). Though this study is primarily historical, it does contain elements of a longitudinal approach to writing program research: the oral histories give qualitative data about the impact of the Syracuse Writing Program’s teacher evaluation system, which can be compared to the Syracuse Writing Program’s goals and objectives for teacher evaluation and professional development written during the program’s first few years. Through this study, I argue that there are long-term effects of merit-based peer evaluation for both a writing program and its non-tenure-track instructors, effects that need to be considered when designing administrative systems. This argument is valuable to writing program administrators, who are often charged with the responsibility of evaluating teachers, making staffing decisions, and justifying the costs of professional development and evaluation systems, those studying the history of writing programs and specifically independent writing programs, and finally K-12 education scholars, as the issue of teacher evaluation, accountability and merit-based pay is now an important national political debate.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This history is particularly interesting for three reasons. First, it is one of few in-depth, historical studies of writing program administrative practices at a single writing program, and so provides other writing program administrators with a detailed picture of how shifting local constraints over a twenty-five year period (1986–2011) affected administrative decisions. This history adds to our understanding of the history of writing program administration, and thus it fits in with the historical studies conducted by Varnum, McBeth, and many of the chapters included in the 2004 edited collection *Historical Studies of Writing Program Administration*. The histories written by Varnum, McBeth, Gaillet, Popken, Rudy, and Rose focus primarily on single faculty or administrators who assumed writing program administrator roles at particular institutions. Although the first six years of Syracuse's Writing Program was considerably defined by the leadership of its first director, Louise Wetherbee Phelps, this history of the Syracuse Writing Program's teacher evaluation committee is not a profile of her. Instead, this history looks at the writing program as a larger system. It includes not just the perspectives of faculty administrators, but also the viewpoints of the instructors who participated in the creation of the teacher evaluation system and those who were evaluated yearly through this administrative structure. This history, instead of focusing on individuals, is interested in tracing how administrative decisions and structures affect a writing program's culture and the individuals teaching and working in that program. Additionally, the design of the study, which uses both archived administrative documents and interviews with current and former members of the Syracuse Writing Program to construct a 25-year history of the writing program, can be used as a model by other historians, researchers, and writing program administrators who want to uncover the long-term effects of curricular or administrative structures on the people who work in a writing program.

Second, the period of study (1986–2011) coincides with an explosion of research and policy statements in rhetoric and composition concerning non-tenure-track writing instructors, who were the primary participants and architects of this portfolio evaluation system. The 1986 Wyoming Resolution and the 1987 CCCC Statement of Principles and Standards for the Postsecondary Teaching of Writing, two statements that addressed the working conditions of non-tenure-track contingent faculty, led to a flurry of research on contingent labor in the field, including conference panels and presentations, articles, a special symposium in *College Composition and Communication* in 1991, and the establishment of *Forum*, a newsletter dedicated to contingent faculty issues and voices that is published twice a

year at supported by CCCC. One of the most important collections in the field that addresses contingent labor, the 2000 edited collection, *Moving a Mountain*, was co-edited Eileen E. Schell and Patricia Lambert Stock, who worked together as faculty members in the Syracuse Writing Program beginning in 1996. It is possible to trace the impact of this national activity surrounding issues about contingent faculty labor on the choices made in the construction of the Syracuse Writing Program's teacher evaluation system.

Third, Syracuse University's stand-alone writing program was one of the first modern independent writing programs. It has been the focus of some previously-published research in writing program administration, and it was one of the two independent writing programs analyzed by Peggy O'Neill and Ellen Schendel in their chapter in the 2002 edited collection *A Field of Dreams: Independent Writing Programs and the Future of Composition Studies*. Scholarship in independent writing programs, such as the rest of the *Field of Dreams* collection and other research by Cushman, Bishop, Maid, Anson, and others, explains how stand-alone writing departments, writing and rhetoric departments established outside traditional English departments, began to be established in the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s in response to a variety of issues: local faculty or administrative tensions; a desire to assert disciplinary independence from English departments and programs defined by literature; a way to create vertical rather than horizontal writing programs; and, in some cases, an attempt to address labor problems related to the high number of non-tenure-track instructors teaching first-year writing courses. Though "breaking our bonds" from traditional English departments, to use Maxine Hairston's phrase, has been liberating for many of these independent writing departments and programs, the freedom inherent in designing independent writing programs does come with costs (272). Both Angela Crow and Barry Maid explain how tenure-track faculty in independent writing programs can have difficulty securing tenure, and Faye Halpern describes how the intellectual foundations of certain independent writing programs like the Harvard Expos program she taught in, which emphasizes the "transdisciplinary" nature of academic writing, alters how non-tenure-track instructors conceive of disciplinarity, which may affect their success in subsequent academic positions (Halpern 11, 18).

During the time period of my study, the Syracuse Writing Program faced the pragmatic and cultural issues associated with independent writing programs Crow, Maid, Halpern, and others discuss. However, even though the Syracuse Writing Program, like other independent writing programs, had to negotiate these issues, it is important to emphasize that the Syracuse Writing Program was able to experiment with how it designed its teacher

evaluation system in large part because of the freedom it had administratively and intellectually as an independent writing program. My historical study of the Syracuse Writing Program's teacher evaluation system adds a new layer to the scholarship on independent writing programs because instead of focusing on just the founding moment or first few years of an independent writing program, this study traces over time how an independent writing program, fueled by its ability to experiment outside a traditional English department, design its own curriculum, and organize its own administration, created a distinct teaching culture through administrative structures like the teacher evaluation system.

This history isn't a fairytale, and even now, current and former instructors I interviewed, who worked at Syracuse University and participated in this teacher evaluation system had widely conflicting retrospective impressions on how the teacher evaluation committee affected the culture of the Syracuse Writing Program and their own professional identities as teachers of writing. I aim not to provide an exact model of evaluation for other writing programs. Instead, this study's value is in how it illustrates, using both the archived documents and the oral histories, the long-term, complicated effects of evaluation systems designed for non-tenure-track writing instructors. In the end, I believe this case study demonstrates the need for writing programs to invest long-term in ongoing, reflective, and appropriate evaluation for their writing instructors.

A HISTORY OF TEACHER EVALUATION AT SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY

The Syracuse Writing Program was founded in 1986 as an independent writing program. The separation of first-year writing instruction from the university's larger English department was prompted by the recommendations of both an internal university faculty committee and a 1984 CWPA external review conducted by Donald McQuade and James Slevin. Carol Lipson, one of the founding faculty directors of the Syracuse Writing Program, recalled in a 2011 interview that the Freshman English program at Syracuse under the direction of the English Department was "advertised as a 'teacher-proof curriculum'" that was both "ossified" and "impoverished," lacking insights from contemporary composition theory (Lipson). Not only did McQuade and Slevin's twenty-page 1984 external evaluation report criticize the Freshman English curriculum, but it also lambasted the English Department at Syracuse for its lack of professional, intellectual, or collegial contact with the Freshman English instructors (McQuade and Slevin 17–18).

The Freshman English program was not physically located in the same building as the rest of the English Department; instead, the teaching assistants and part-time instructors who taught first-year writing were housed in an adjacent building, HB Crouse Hall, where they were crammed into small, windowless basement offices. The Freshman English program had no secretary, no central office space, and the part-time instructors shared desks and conferencing spaces (McQuade and Slevin 7–9). This structural separation from the English Department full-time faculty led to “a physical and intellectual isolation” of the Freshman English program from the rest of the department (7). Only a few full-time faculty members taught the occasional Freshman English course; the course sequence was primarily taught by English graduate teaching assistants and part-time instructors: in the fall of 1983, the 168 sections of Freshman English were taught by 39 teaching assistants and 40 part-time instructors (Brune 1).

In their evaluation report, McQuade and Slevin recommended improving the professional working conditions of the instructors by raising their salaries, instituting three-year contracts, putting instructors on 3/2 loads so they could get university benefits, putting the instructor’s name on course listings instead of “Staff,” and creating a fund for instructor professional development, which could be used for conference and workshop attendance (McQuade and Slevin 19). Furthermore, McQuade and Slevin noted that the majority of the part-time instructors they spoke to on their evaluation visit “complained strenuously of the lack of professional confidence afforded them by the Program and its Director” (12). The teacher evaluation process for these instructors mirrored the Freshman English curriculum they had to teach: it was restrictive, reductive, and outdated. The final CWPA evaluation report recommended renovating the Freshman English curriculum and teacher evaluation procedures and providing professional development that would allow the instructors to develop new, innovative writing curriculum (4–6).

Based on both the recommendations included in the CWPA external evaluation report and their own institutional survey and interview data, the university’s own internal committee issued their final report, known as the Gates Report, to the Syracuse University Senate in April 1985. The Gates Report proposed a radical change to the writing curriculum at Syracuse University: replacing the Freshman English curriculum with a Writing Program consisting of a four-year required writing sequence that would emphasize process pedagogy, critical reading, analysis, and argument. Because of the proposed new writing program’s “complexity and scope,” the report recommended that the new director of the program answer not to the English Department chair but rather to the Dean of the College of

Arts and Sciences or the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs (Gates 17). This report created a de facto independent writing program at Syracuse University.

The Gates Report states that one of its key recommendations is to improve “the working conditions, professional status, and morale” of the part-time writing instructors “consonant with their contribution to the teaching of writing at Syracuse,” but the only concrete suggestions the report gives is to encourage and fund part-time writing instructors to attend workshops and conferences (iv; 14). The report recognizes that Syracuse University “cannot, either morally or intellectually, defend building such an ambitious program on the backs of grossly underpaid part-timers,” acknowledging that the part-time writing instructors would be responsible for the majority of the writing instruction in the new writing program (18).

The top-down administrative separation of the Writing Program’s administration, faculty, and curriculum from the English Department gave the new Writing Program latitude to experiment. One of the reasons the separation of the Writing Program from the English Department was key to the development of the program’s new writing curriculum is due to the toxic professional environment in the English Department at the time. Not only was the faculty largely uninterested in teaching or designing required writing courses, as made evident through the 1984 CWPA external evaluation, but also, beginning in the mid-1980s, the Syracuse University English Department became embroiled in what became known as the “culture wars,” intense intellectual arguments among the department’s faculty and graduate students who subscribed to different literary theories (Mailloux 170). Faculty and graduate students organized into camps drawn along theoretical lines, and at times, philosophical differences grew into personal attacks. “It was like the Wild West. Duck for cover,” remembered Anne Fitzsimmons, who was a teaching assistant in the English Department at the time. Separating the Writing Program administratively from the English Department removed the new program from this corrosive atmosphere and gave the Writing Program’s faculty and instructors fertile ground—a somewhat insulated space in which to freely think about, discuss, and design a new curriculum.

The excitement of this inventive freedom was tempered, though, by the pressing need to develop new courses and prepare instructors to teach in the new program. In its first year from 1986–1987, the Writing Program had only three full-time faculty, 87 part-time instructors, and over 50 graduate teaching assistants from the English Department, all responsible for teaching over 3,000 first-year undergraduate students (“Suggestions for PTI Evaluation”).

Important to note, then, the administrative structures created for part-time instructors in the Writing Program (namely, comprehensive professional development and evaluation systems) did not emerge solely out of a philosophical desire to give part-time instructors a voice in the Writing Program. The work of recreating a writing program was too large for three full-time faculty members to do alone. The Writing Program needed the part-time instructors in order to create a viable program: the instructors knew the local Syracuse context and Syracuse students, and they were the ones who would interpret the new writing curriculum in their classrooms. The part-time instructors had to be on board if the new writing curriculum was to be more than a grand vision on paper. In this way, the professional development structures in the Syracuse Writing Program were a design solution: using the available resources of the part-time instructors and the teaching assistants, a limited budget, and intrinsic and extrinsic rewards within the constraints of a university system that relied on adjunct labor.¹

PEER EVALUATION IN AN INDEPENDENT WRITING PROGRAM

One of the signature administrative structures created during the first 15 years of the new Syracuse Writing Program was a comprehensive teacher portfolio evaluation system, called the Teacher Evaluation Committee (the TEC). Teacher evaluation was one of most hotly debated and contested attributes of the old Freshman English program. The 1984 CWPA external evaluation and Gates' own internal questionnaire noted that part-time instructor evaluation protocols seemed arbitrary, dismissive, and unfair to the instructors themselves, whose evaluations, called "file reviews," mostly consisted of appraising the instructors' marginal comments on student papers and of impressions the Freshman English director and his staff garnered through classroom observations. The part-time instructors complained that the file reviews were "demeaning and useless": they did not know what exactly they were being evaluated on, and some explained that their evaluations were docked for things not central to their pedagogical effectiveness, like their personal dress or whether or not they erased the chalkboard (McQuade and Slevin 13; Gates "Questionnaire" 4).

These ostensibly trite evaluations, coupled with the Freshman English curriculum "that had so many guidelines that a monkey could teach the course," as one instructor reported, led to sudden firings and re-hirings based on the semester-by-semester staffing needs of the program (Gates "Questionnaire" 3). George Rhinehart, who worked as an instructor in the Freshman English program, remembered getting a letter in 1980 stating he wouldn't be rehired in the Freshman English Program. "No explanation,

nothing,” Rhinehart said. “I thought, ‘What? Do my socks not match or something?’ No explanation whatsoever. So I was out of work for a year. And the following year, they sent me a letter that said they’d like to hire me again. No explanation, no nothing” (Rhinehart). Rhinehart’s experience—“no explanation, no nothing”—seems symptomatic of the lack of professional regard for instructors in the old Freshman English Program.

In the first year of the new Writing Program, from 1986–1987, it was clear to Margaret Himley, Carol Lipson, and Louise Phelps, the three full-time faculty members directing the Writing Program, that part-time instructor evaluation needed to be defined and readdressed, especially given the new curriculum that relied on inventive, interpretative work by teachers, teachers who could not so easily be let go or hired (Soper; Phelps, Himley, and Lipson).

The instructors were suspicious of any top-down evaluation, and in the fall of 1986, Lipson held a meeting with the instructors, calling on them to “forget the past, forget the file review, forget the constraints” in regards to their teaching and evaluation (Soper). One of the problems with the past evaluation was that its primary purpose was obscured: were the assessments formative (with the primary aim of staff development) or culminative (with the primary aim of making rehiring decisions) in nature? The conversation at this meeting aimed to “dispel some of [the instructors’] past paranoia” about evaluation and to begin working on a transparent evaluation process that would give the instructors an opportunity for formative development and, if necessary, provide the Writing Program with a system to determine contracts and make rehiring decisions (Soper). Lipson outlined an evaluation procedure, which included peer classroom evaluation, student evaluations, and reflective teaching portfolios in which each instructor would include their syllabi, sample graded student papers, and classroom assignments. The Writing Program also asked instructors to evaluate their own teaching portfolios by writing a short reflection about how these documents, collected together, reflected their pedagogical philosophies. Instead of just having the Writing Program director read and assess the portfolios (a monumental task, given the 137 part-time instructors and teaching assistants in the Program that year), Lipson suggested that in the future, there could be a committee, comprised of paid, appointed part-time instructors, which would put forth contract renewal recommendations to the Writing Program administration (“Suggestions for PTI Evaluation”). The director could then just approve the committee’s recommendations for renewing instructor contracts.

The first teaching portfolios were collected in April 1987 (Phelps, Himley, and Lipson). Importantly, for the first time, these writing instructors

were asked to reflect holistically on their teaching practices and present their work to an outside audience in portfolio form. Many instructors in the old Freshman English program had never been asked to think about themselves as professionals, who had an underlying purpose and philosophy for what they did in the classroom. In their memo explaining the portfolio, Phelps, Himley, and Lipson clarified the purpose of the evaluation, yet another point never clearly articulated by the old Freshman English program. The portfolios, they wrote, would be used to identify three groups of teachers: those teachers who would be offered three-year contracts, those who were experiencing problems in their teaching, and all other teachers (Phelps, Himley, and Lipson).

Phelps, Himley, and Lipson held two meetings in early March 1987 to listen to concerns about the new evaluation process. The English Department teaching assistants were especially concerned about the time required to construct the portfolio and were suspicious about the purpose of the evaluation. Thirty-seven English department graduate teaching assistants signed a memo which asked for further clarification about the evaluation, cited their workload concerns, and accused the Writing Program for soliciting the portfolios as a way to “screen” those teaching assistants who did not endorse the theories endorsed by the Program (Phelps “Petition from TA’s”; Franke). The memo stated that proposal to require teaching assistants to create portfolios was “unacceptable” and reminded Phelps and the other faculty administrators that the English Department assistantships “[were] not granted through the Writing Program, and they should not be held hostage to the Writing Program’s notion of acceptable teaching practices” (DiRenzo et al). In response, Phelps reiterated that the primary purposes of the portfolio evaluations were for individual teachers’ own professional development and to determine who would be appointed to leadership positions in the Program (Phelps “Staffing Plan for Writing Program Faculty”; Phelps “Talk to Writing Program Staff”; Temes “Summary Meeting on Evaluation”).

This dispute raises an issue that many independent writing programs face. Though these stand-alone programs may be given a certain degree of freedom over curriculum and administration, that latitude is tempered by the writing program’s built-in structural relationships with other departments and parts of the institution. Here, although the Syracuse Writing Program had the authority to design its own curriculum and had control over the hiring and development of its own part-time writing instructors, the Syracuse Writing Program’s administration was required to use a large number of English Department teaching assistants as instructors, even though the Syracuse Writing Program was considered a separate entity

from the English Department. The inclusion of the English Department teaching assistants as part of the Syracuse Writing Program's instructor pool led to this and other conflicts during the Writing Program's first few years.

This revised teacher portfolio evaluation system did do a better job than the file review of the old Freshman English Program of clarifying the components of the teacher evaluation process. The new system also gave the teachers space for critical self-reflection. However, the portfolios were a still much-debated topic in the new Writing Program. One instructor in the Writing Program, Bobbi Kirby-Werner, remembered how the discussion of teacher evaluation catapulted to the forefront of Writing Program conversations. Kirby-Werner was one of several instructors who received funding to attend the 1987 CCCC meeting in Atlanta. At that conference, Writing Program instructors met with other part-time faculty and discussed contingent faculty working conditions and the idea of instructor professionalization (Kirby-Werner). This CCCC conference was the one in which the 1986 Wyoming Resolution was unanimously endorsed at the CCCC business meeting. Contingent faculty issues, therefore, were widely discussed at this particular conference, serendipitous timing for the Syracuse Writing Program instructors who attended.

Kirby-Werner, in a 2011 interview, remembered the effects of this particular CCCC on teacher evaluation in the Syracuse Writing Program:

It was there at CCCC that I first encountered the part-time faculty organization. I began to think about issues that I didn't recognize were issues before. . . . I came back home, and somewhere along the line, whether it was from Louise [Phelps] or a combination of our conversations and conversations at CCCC, there developed this notion that if you are really professional, you evaluate yourselves. That's what the tenure system does. You are evaluated by peers. Louise was really championing this professionalization, and it just made sense that Louise should then explore the possibility of us evaluating ourselves.

In the fall of 1989, Phelps commissioned a special task force for teacher evaluation, advised by new Writing Program full-time faculty member, Patricia Lambert Stock. This task force was chaired by part-time instructor Rhinehart, and five of its eight members were current part-time instructors in the Writing Program (Rhinehart et al; *Writing Words*, Fall 1989). The task force was charged with studying assessment practices and developing a merit-based evaluation system (Stock "Report on Work-in-Progress"; *Writing Words*, Fall 1989).

Assessments have layered purposes, and the task force wrestled with how a teacher evaluation system could be of use to the teachers and the Program on multiple levels: the evaluation could be used by the teachers as a reflective professional development opportunity, by the Program as a snapshot of the kind of teaching that was happening in the writing courses, and by the administration as a way to determine future teaching contracts (Stock "Report on Work-in-Progress"; Rhinehart et al 1). Through all their work, the task force was keenly aware that the evaluation needed to be flexible in order to accommodate a variety of teaching styles and also that the criteria for evaluation the committee set were not arbitrary; they were "statements of values" (Rhinehart et al 1).

The task force's finished proposal, which included a four-step plan for evaluating the Program's teachers, was approved for teacher evaluation in the spring of 1990. The first stage of the evaluation process asked teachers to assemble portfolios that highlighted their teaching from a number of different perspectives: through reflection statements, sample syllabi and course materials, a write-up from a classroom observation conducted by a member of the Writing Program's administration, and the instructor's student evaluations (Rhinehart et al 2-4).

The portfolios, collected toward the end of the spring semester, were then read by the Teacher Evaluation Committee (TEC), the second stage of the evaluation. In order to conduct a true "criterion-referenced, holistic assessment," all members of the committee read all the portfolios, which numbered, depending on the year, between approximately 85 and 120 instructor and teaching assistant portfolios (Rhinehart et al 4). The published evaluation plan listed the fifteen proposed questions the committee would ask as they read the portfolios, questions that point to the shared local values about what good teaching in the Syracuse Writing Program looked like. The questions were far-ranging, looking both broadly and closely at a teacher's pedagogy, from asking how well a teacher's curriculum reflects the goals of the Writing Program's curricular theory to asking how they teach rhetorical principles and inquiry in their courses (Rhinehart et al 4-5). After reading all the portfolios, the TEC ranked the portfolios into five categories: inadequate, weak, sound, strong, and excellent. In addition to assigning a rank to each instructor and teaching assistant portfolio, the TEC wrote a detailed summative report that explained the reasoning behind the ranking, including references to each individual teacher's portfolio materials. The committee also used this holistic assessment to recommend instructors for leadership positions in the Writing Program (Rhinehart et al 6).

The committee's rankings and recommendations then were forwarded to an administrative advisory group, the third stage in the assessment. The administrative advisory group, including the Writing Program director and other full-time faculty and administrators, reviewed the committee's findings (Rhinehart et al 6–7). Since these administrators might have sensitive or confidential information about instructors that could have impacted their evaluation by the committee, the administrative advisory group had the authority to alter the rankings. The administrative advisory group's main task was to take the committee's findings and make merit, contract, and hiring recommendations for the director of the Syracuse Writing Program, done in consultation with the TEC's rankings and reviews (Rhinehart et al 7).

The fourth and last stage of the teacher evaluation was communicating the merit, contract, and hiring recommendations to the instructors, including explaining to them the rationale behind the decisions (Rhinehart et al 7). Instructors were sent letters in the early summer that informed them of their status in the Program, subject to final budget approval.

Four important elements weave through the 1990 teacher evaluation plan. The first is transparency. All instructors were given access to the report written by the task force on teacher evaluation, which outlined the guidelines for the teaching portfolio and the four-step review process, before they submitted their first portfolios to the TEC in April 1990. Instructors were also afforded full disclosure of the reasoning behind their ranking by the committee and also given the opportunity to appeal their ranking. This transparency of both the conditions of evaluation and the exact procedure of assessment, down to the very questions the committee would be asking when reading through the portfolios, was completely absent in the old Freshman English file review system and, to some extent, the portfolio review system put into place in the 1986–1987 school year. Transparency was crucial to regaining instructor trust in evaluation. Molly Voorheis, an instructor in the Writing Program, remembered that “The idea that everything [the evaluation system] was new was to some people totally freeing, and to others it was totally terrifying” (Voorheis). The teacher evaluation committee didn't completely dispel that fear, but the knowing the steps of the teacher evaluation process helped alleviate some of the suspicion.

Another important feature of the teacher evaluation plan is the move towards a holistic portfolio assessment process. Teachers had the opportunity to present their teaching from a variety of perspectives: student evaluations, teaching materials, classroom observations, and their own narrative, critical reflection statements. The committee, in reading all the portfolios, had the opportunity not just to review these items but to talk to each other

about each instructor's portfolio in order to construct a multifaceted portrait of that teacher's pedagogy and how it reflected the principles in the Writing Program curriculum. The portfolios were large and complex, not simple, singular snapshots. It's interesting to position the Writing Program's adoption of a holistically-scored teacher portfolio evaluation system historically with the concurrent "wave," to borrow Kathleen Blake Yancey's term, of evaluating student writing through portfolios, which was rising during this time period (483). As Edward White noted, "Writing must be seen as a whole, and that the evaluating of writing cannot be split into a sequence of objective activities" (409). It seems like the TEC was based on the same principle—teaching must be seen as a whole.

A third element that ties together the evaluation process is the value placed on critical reflection. Critical reflection was one of the foremost practices emphasized in the Writing Program's studio curriculum, and the reflective teaching statements that framed each portfolio illustrate how the Writing Program valued reflection as not just a skill their students needed to develop but one that was crucially important to effective, dynamic studio teaching. Reflection in the teacher evaluation process did not just happen inside the portfolios: in the conversations on the committee, as committee members read, analyzed, and discussed each teacher's portfolio, the committee members had the opportunity to reflect more broadly on the kinds of teaching happening in the Program and through that, construct a picture of what good pedagogical practice is. That large-scale reflection was translated into the rankings and recommendations, and since many part-time instructors served on the TEC over the years, the experience of reading teacher reflections and reflecting on them together as a group infused the Program with an underlying understanding of the central place and "community practice" of inquiry and critical reflection in teaching (Rhinehart et al 1).

A final significant element of the teacher evaluation committee was its promotion and recognition of teaching as an intellectual activity. This open acknowledgement of teaching (and administration) as scholarship was in part possible because of the freedom the Syracuse Writing Program had as an independent writing program. As argued by Stock and three other Writing Program instructors in their chapter from the 2000 *Moving a Mountain* collection, the teaching portfolios "demonstrate that the scholarship of teaching is not one among several overlapping scholarships but a holistic scholarship of discovery, integration, application, and teaching, all at once, together" (Stock et al 292). The teachers' written reflections in the portfolios, the authors contend, can be read "as evidence of the integration of new and familiar understandings of teaching and the subjects taught as

well as scholarly applications of what is known about teaching particular subjects to particular students in particular times and places” (291). The TEC not only evaluated teachers; it promoted a program-wide philosophy of teaching.

CHALLENGES TO TEACHER EVALUATION

The TEC was a tremendous financial investment for the Syracuse Writing Program. In the fall of 1989, the Program instituted a new full-time administrative position of Coordinator for Evaluation and Academic Support (*Writing Words*, Fall 1989). In addition to paying for this new position, the Writing Program also paid stipends to instructors and teaching assistants serving on the TEC, a commitment that involved dozens of hours, since all members of the committee had to read, discuss, rank, and write a summative commentary on each teacher’s portfolio.

This investment in the TEC did benefit the Writing Program in a few ways. First, it provided both the teachers constructing portfolios and those teachers reading and ranking the portfolios a professional development opportunity through which they reflected on their own teaching and saw their teaching in comparison to their peers. Bron Adam explained in 2011 the value she saw in the TEC:

The collecting of all those documents and the reading them and putting them together, trying to contextualize them: that’s professional development. Anybody can go in and go through a bunch of classes, and assign some papers, and make some comments, and send them back, and do some grades, and then go away. . . .

The whole teacher evaluation thing, while it became politically problematic, it did serve to professionalize us. It served to create a language in which we could talk about our teaching that had some common features so we weren’t using different languages to talk about teaching. . . .

Adam emphasizes that it was the activity, not the actual documents in the portfolios, which mattered. The activity, according to Adam, helped to build a teaching culture through shared language. The Writing Program became a distinct discourse community, one that held common values about teaching and writing. Adam’s observation of the professionalizing nature of the TEC was also described by Lipson and Voorheis, in their co-written 2000 essay. Lipson and Voorheis argue that “the force of the new teaching culture [in the Writing Program] was to emphasize the professional status of part-time faculty, and to underline their value to the program and to the profession” (121). The TEC, and the merit awards that

accompanied the tiered evaluation system, helped create this professional teaching culture.

A second important benefit of the TEC was that it streamlined the teacher evaluation process. Instead of asking the full-time faculty directors of the Writing Program to evaluate each instructor, the Writing Program handed that responsibility over to the instructors through the TEC. A final advantage of the TEC was that those instructors who chose to participate in it became even more integrated in the community of the Writing Program, which translated into greater part-time instructor investment in the Program, an investment and energy that was invaluable to the Program's development and was often only nominally compensated.

The first test of the TEC came immediately. The summer after the teacher portfolios were first read and ranked in April 1990, Syracuse University, due to decreased student enrollment and an economic recession, cut budgets by at least 20% (Phelps "Writing Program Annual Report 1990–1991"). The budget cuts suddenly and severely affected the Writing Program, partly because the Program's budget had never fully been put on base (Lipson and Gerace). The Writing Program had to cut its largely non-tenure-track instructional staff because of the decreased budget and the decrease in student enrollment (Phelps "Writing Program Annual Report 1990–1991; Lipson and Gerace; "Proposed Cost-Savings Measured for 1990–1991").

Faced with having to decide which instructors to let go, the Writing Program chose to use the rankings from the TEC, completed just months prior. All the instructors and teaching assistants in the Program had been evaluated and ranked, so it was, the Writing Program administration decided, the best way to decide who should stay and who should go (Stock "Writing Program Annual Report 1990–1991"). Though the language in the April 1990 "Evaluating Professional Writing Instructors" charter cast the rankings as a formative assessment, using the rankings to determine which instructors' contracts to end changed the purpose of the rankings to assessment for continued or terminated employment. .

Using the committee's rankings in this way the first time the teacher evaluation committee was implemented, in the summer of 1990, had far-reaching effects on how the evaluation process was perceived in later years. On one hand, relying on the rankings to determine whose contracts were terminated justified and strengthened the TEC. The instructors were ranked holistically in a multi-step procedure that Associate Director and full-time faculty member Stock called "a fair, rigorous, and systematic process" (Stock "Annual Report (1989–1990)"). As the administration pointed out, there was no other system for determining which instructors' positions

would be cut that was better or more transparent (Phelps “Writing Program Annual Report 1990–1991”; Stock “An Annual Report: The 1990–1991 Academic Year”). However, cutting instructor positions was not easy. Lipson remembered in her 2011 interview, “There was a mess. Threats of lawsuits. People going around complaining that we were getting rid of ‘beloved teachers’” (Lipson). Coupling the first teacher evaluations with the cuts in positions led to feelings of “paranoia” surrounding teacher evaluation, perhaps permanently undercutting the goals of formative reflective assessment (Rhinehart).

The vulnerability of the Syracuse Writing Program to large-scale university budget cuts was also a feature of its status as an independent writing program primarily focused on teaching required undergraduate writing courses. Unlike more traditional academic departments that had undergraduate majors and graduate programs and a large number of full-time, tenure-track faculty, the Syracuse Writing Program at the time had no graduate program or undergraduate major of its own, and its faculty were primarily composed of non-tenure-track writing instructors.

CHANGES TO TEACHER EVALUATION

The Writing Program’s strained budget also affected the long-term fate of the TEC. Over time, the TEC became difficult to sustain, both in terms of how much it cost and how much time it took. In the 1995–1996 academic year, then-chair of the Syracuse Writing Program Keith Gilyard asked Donna Marsh, a former part-time instructor serving as the Program’s assessment coordinator, to develop a proposal to amend the TEC, given the changing needs of the part-time instructors in the Writing Program and tightening economic constraints (Marsh “Policy Debates”).

Modifying the TEC was necessary not only for budget reasons—Lipson remembered that “the dean hit the roof” when he heard of the TEC’s \$20,000 budget—but also because “growing tensions emerged when peers became evaluators and competition between peers escalated” (Lipson; Marsh “Policy Debates” 3). Even though the TEC was meant to serve as a foundation for the Writing Program’s teaching community, a place to talk about and reaffirm the Program’s values and theories, to some part-time instructors, it became both “dysfunctional,” a source of “tension and fear,” and contributed to a “severe morale problem” in the Writing Program (Marsh “Policy Debates” 2, 4). Part-time instructors felt uncomfortable in their role as a peer evaluator, responsible for assessing their colleagues’ performance while often not fully trained nor compensated for that responsibility (O’Connor; Rhinehart). In addition, many part-time instructors felt

that the Writing Program administration played too large of a role in the assessment procedure, turning what was thought to be an evaluation by peers into one that had the trappings of a peer evaluation system but was really scripted by the full-time administration (Marsh “Policy Debates” 4–6; Lipson and Voorheis 121).

To some instructors, administrators, and faculty members, the TEC had suffered from a case of diminishing returns by 1996. Henry Jankiewicz, an instructor in the Writing Program who served on the TEC, said the instructors’ written reflections in their portfolios became so scripted that eventually, “they all seemed the same” (Jankiewicz). Also, except for the unforeseen university budget cuts in 1990 that led to some instructors losing their jobs, the Writing Program instructors weren’t in real danger of having their contracts terminated through the TEC. Writing Program instructor, Molly Voorheis, remembered the attitude many instructors had towards the TEC: “We’re doing all this work to distinguish between a 5 and a 1 [the merit-based rankings], and the reality is, whether you get a 5, 4, 3, 2, or a 1, you’re going to get hired again next year. Why are we doing this?” And finally, many people began to question if the time and money that went into the TEC were worth it. Anne Fitzsimmons, another instructor, said in 2011, “I don’t think the short or long-term benefits were worth that output on the part of the [Writing Program.]”

The revised procedure for evaluating instructors adopted in April 1996 exempted veteran instructors (those with five years of teaching in the Writing Program) from submitting yearly portfolios: they only needed to submit portfolios at the end of their multi-year teaching contracts. In addition, TEC membership was changed from a heterogeneous group of administration, full-time tenure-track faculty, and part-time instructors to an all-peer group made up of part-time instructors. The work of drafting the summative evaluation letters fell to one person, the full-time assessment coordinator (“Evaluating Professional Writing Instructors”). The TEC’s recommendations were forwarded to the program’s administration, as they were in the original TEC system, for final review and approval. Faith Plvan, one of the full-time administrators, explained in 2011 that the changes helped the Writing Program better define “what part the teachers were playing in the process and what part the administration played in the process. That helped us corral it a little more” (Plvan).

Dialing down the scope of the TEC had costs, some perceived only years later. One of the strengths of the TEC was the construction of a shared culture and language surrounding teaching, as Adam, Rhinehart, and other former and current Writing Program instructors noted in their 2011 and 2012 interviews. Fitzsimmons, who served on the TEC for several

years, recalled that through her work on the TEC, “I saw people’s teaching materials all the time. I learned immensely by getting the chance to read their reflections. I knew who to go talk to because I saw their teaching materials, and I admired what they were doing” (Fitzsimmons). Without the TEC, which was scaled back in 1996 and completely disbanded in 2008, that sense of community Fitzsimmons describes diminished. Donna Marsh O’Connor noted that the absence of the TEC, along with the reduction of other professional development structures in the Syracuse Writing Program by the late 2000s, created, for her, “this great vacuum . . . Yes, there’s no meeting that I have to go to each week, but on the other hand, there’s very little sharing of teacher work.” Although the primary purpose of the TEC was teacher evaluation, equally important corollary and long-term benefits of the committee was how it facilitated teacher development and the creation of a professional teaching community in the Writing Program.

Finally, the campus-wide unionization of part-time faculty at Syracuse University in May 2008 permanently changed teacher evaluation. Due to the sharp distinction between the roles of labor and management in a union system, the management—the administrative staff of the Writing Program in this situation—is in charge of evaluation. Professional peer evaluation, teachers evaluating teachers, what the TEC was based on in its inception in 1990, was not possible through the contract, and neither was the tiered merit system developed by the Writing Program (Plvan, Rhinehart).

It is not that the union contract destroyed a perfect peer evaluation system. After the TEC was streamlined in 1996, the Writing Program allowed instructors to choose who they wanted to observe their teaching, and many instructors asked their friends to evaluate them. As Fitzsimmons pointed out, “There’s a big difference between having a committee evaluate your work and having your office mate evaluate your class. The teacher evaluation committee wasn’t arbitrary. It was genuine, meaningful evaluation. The committee had a chance to see not just one class in isolation but 25, 30 portfolios together. You knew what a 1, 2, 3, 4, or 5 was.” The abridged peer evaluation plan, Fitzsimmons argued, “was totally meaningless. Everybody got ‘strongly agree,’ ‘strongly agree,’ ‘strongly agree.’”

By the 2000s, the Writing Program’s peer evaluation system wasn’t functioning as it had been conceived in 1990. In addition, the Writing Program itself had changed—by 2008, this independent writing program had grown from directing required writing courses at Syracuse University to housing a PhD program in composition and cultural rhetoric and an undergraduate major and minor in writing and rhetoric. The part-time faculty union contract forced an immediate change in the structure of teacher

evaluation, a structure that needed revision given the different context of the Syracuse Writing Program.

CONCLUSION: TOWARD LONG-TERM INVESTMENT IN REFLECTIVE EVALUATION

This historical study of the Syracuse Writing Program's teacher evaluation committee adds to current conversations in the discipline about the history of writing program administration, independent writing programs, and writing teacher pedagogy and evaluation.

The drafts and revisions to the TEC charter show the dynamic nature of writing programs: the design of the TEC that was adopted in 1990 did not fit the program six years later, and the revised TEC no longer was appropriate after another decade. Faculty and administrative turnover, the instructors' union contract, and the Syracuse Writing Program's growing graduate program and undergraduate major in writing and rhetoric changed the culture and altered the administrative responsibilities of this independent writing program. This 25-year study of the Syracuse Writing Program's TEC, from the situations and conversations that predated the TEC's inception, to its drafting and original implementation, rounds of revision, and eventual dissolution, traces the history of an administrative structure inside a single writing program. Understanding how structures within writing programs change over time—taking the long view instead of short snapshots—gives the field a more nuanced understanding of how administrators work and how the administrative systems within writing programs respond to shifting internal and external constraints.

The history of the TEC also shows some of the advantages of independent writing programs, especially those afforded a large amount of administrative freedom. The Syracuse University administration gave the Syracuse Writing Program a substantial degree of intellectual freedom, even when that was coupled and restrained by budgetary cuts, and this intellectual freedom helped foster task forces and initiatives like the one formed in 1989 that eventually created the TEC. Writing program administrators within larger, more traditional English departments or even those within independent writing programs not charged top-down with designing a new writing curriculum, like the Syracuse Writing Program was in 1986, may not be given the same resources, freedom, or flexibility to experiment with administrative structures such as the TEC.

This historical study also shows the advantages of combining archival methodologies with other qualitative and historical methodologies like oral histories. The oral histories I conducted in 2011 and 2012 with current and

former members of the Syracuse Writing Program, all who worked in the program during the time the TEC was first established and used to evaluate the program's writing instructors, gave me another data point through which to read and interpret the administrative documents I had collected about the TEC. The oral histories added a reflective dimension to the history of the TEC, and many of the people I interviewed noted that they only realized now, more than two decades after the TEC was first implemented, how much this particular administrative structure affected how their philosophy of teaching and their professional identity as a writing instructor. Not every historical study of a writing program has access to the people who either wrote administrative procedures and documents or were affected by administrative systems. Yet, this study of the Syracuse Writing Program's TEC shows the value of making the effort to seek out and record oral histories. The recent wave of historical writing program administration research highlights the importance of maintaining good administrative archives in writing programs, but not much has been written about collecting other forms of data through which to study how writing program administrative decisions affect people: the teachers, faculty, staff, and administrators in a writing program. Collected together, oral histories add an important affective and personal element to how we evaluate and understand what we do as writing program administrators.

The TEC is far from a perfect model of teacher evaluation: the people I interviewed were as quick to criticize aspects of the system as they were to cite what they thought was vital about it to their own growth as teachers. The TEC cannot be transplanted to other writing programs, but the principles it was built upon—including the writing instructors in the conversations about their own evaluation, encouraging the growth of a professional teaching community that shared a language and pedagogical values, inviting instructors to participate in the administrative systems of a writing program, building an assessment model that emphasizes the reflective nature of teaching, staying dynamic and responsive to changes within and outside the program—are ones that could serve useful to other writing programs.

This historical study also reiterates what we know already about teaching. Teaching, like writing, is a practice that is dynamic, evolving, personal, and time-consuming. Educational philosopher, Donald Schön, called good teaching "artistry" and "reflection-in-action," two phrases that could aptly describe writing (Schön). Though it is possible to break down the work of teaching into concrete steps and describe abstract principles of effective teaching, every teacher enacts curriculum through her own personality and perspective.

The difficulty that emerges for those who are charged with the responsibility of teaching, evaluating, and supporting teachers is how to fit together this understanding of teaching, which is experimental, contextual, and recursive, with the demands of accountability and assessment. My study here of how the Syracuse Writing Program's teacher evaluation committee worked and developed over time mirrors the observations Clyde Moneyhun made about the layered purposes of teacher evaluation. Moneyhun, a WPA who implemented a teacher evaluation system for instructors at his institution, argued that the evaluation process should spark a two-way dialogue between instructors and administrators and could be designed as both a way for administrators to assess the teaching happening in their program and as an opportunity for professional development for instructors (161–162). This history of the Syracuse University Writing Program's teacher evaluation committee is an important piece of current conversations in the field that address teacher preparation, evaluation, credentialing, and development in the context of both TA training and the support of contingent faculty (Lamos; Reid; Alsup et al; Dobrin). The history of the Syracuse Writing Program's TEC demonstrates the effects the decision to make the evaluation of teachers an integral part of a writing program's administration has on both a writing program and its instructors. This research also answers in part Shelley Reid's call to "move beyond conversation and description of 'what worked for us'" and pursue "longitudinal" studies of writing pedagogy education, which includes teacher evaluation (692). In fact, because of the design of this study—seeing the evolution of the TEC through both the lens of the archived documents and the oral histories collected of the people who either authored those documents or were otherwise affected by them—it's possible to make serious claims about the long-term effects of a peer evaluation system for teachers on both the instructors themselves and the culture and identity of a writing program. Though the study is more historical than longitudinal in nature, the data collected from the oral histories in 2011 and 2012 does give insight into how the TEC, created in 1990 and finally disbanded in 2008, affected the identity of Syracuse's writing instructors and the teaching culture of the Syracuse Writing Program. In this way, this study responds to Chris Anson's appeal to move beyond intuition and belief and instead, develop research projects that produce quantitative and qualitative evidence, data that we can use to make curricular and administrative decisions (12).

The Syracuse University Writing Program developed the TEC with the premise that reflective evaluation is not only essential for *all* practitioners, but that the evaluation process itself, on all its levels, can serve as a rhetorical act that builds a teaching culture and argues for a particular vision of

teaching. Through their evaluation, teachers develop a sense of who they are as professionals and, by sharing the products of evaluation (like the portfolios in the TEC), teachers can develop a shared language to talk about teaching and writing. In order to develop their craft of teaching, teachers need *meaningful* opportunities to reflect on and assess their pedagogy. Consequently, there must be systems designed meet the teacher evaluation needs in writing programs, and these structures must be considered a long-term, continual investment of a writing program. Many of effects of the TEC could not be measured or understood until years after the committee was first implemented in 1990. Administrators need to take a long-range perspective when designing evaluation systems, because the results can be slow and subtle.

The history of the TEC shows how powerful evaluation can be, both positively and negatively. Its particular design had drawbacks: perhaps a less ambitious system from the get-go would have reduced the strain on the Writing Program's instructors and budget, or maybe a different merit ranking could have dispelled the paranoia and skepticism that so many instructors talked about in their interviews. But TEC also had beneficial effects that outlasted its own existence: instructors spoke to how the TEC helped them become better teachers and, in some cases, move on to other careers that are daily informed by the pedagogical principles they learned through the TEC (Adam; Fitzsimmons).

I don't believe the story of the TEC is a failure, even though it was radically changed and then finally disbanded after almost 20 years. Instead, I think the history of the TEC sheds light on the nature of human systems. No administrative system is perfect: structures are designed for certain contexts, and once that context changes (and our contexts, as sociologist Bruno Latour argues, are in a constant state of flux), that structure no longer fits the people or the circumstances or the goals as well. The almost-guaranteed scheduled obsolescence of administrative systems doesn't mean that writing program administrators should shy away from creating complex and innovative programs and procedures. It means, rather, those who create administrative systems should be conscientious to the long-term effects of their choices and work to design structures that are meaningful, adapted to local contexts, and responsive to change.

NOTE

1. This orientation to thinking of administration as design is a central concept in much of Louise Wetherbee Phelps's writing about the Syracuse Writing Program and writing program administration (see Phelps "Fitting the Institution That's There"; "Mobilizing Human Resources"; "A Different Ideal"; "Telling a

Writing Program”). Phelps served as the Syracuse Writing Program’s first director and participated in the program’s administration for over 20 years.

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WPA as Tempered Radical: Lessons from Occupy Wall Street

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ABSTRACT

Beginning with Henry Giroux's assertion at the 2013 Conference on College Composition and Communication to "Write the Public Good Back into Education," this article presents the role of the WPA as one poised to take on an activist stance against the corporate university. By connecting Occupy Wall Street with writing program administration, I argue for an administrative philosophy grounded in prefigurative practices, "building a new society in the shell of the old," and tempered, or moderate, radicalism to energize the wide base of contingent faculty and begin to incrementally change programs from the inside. Specific recommendations, both pedagogical and programmatic, are grounded in these concepts to propose small-scale changes that may improve immediate conditions for non-tenure-track faculty, even while WPAs argue for more substantive reforms.

At the 2013 Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) in Las Vegas, Henry Giroux's galvanizing address, "Writing the Public Good Back into Education," called for widespread, visible, and radical resistance to the neoliberal corporate takeover of higher education. The corporate university has reframed the purpose of post-secondary education "almost exclusively on economic goals such as preparing students for the workforce" and has ideologically and relationally shifted away from its origin in training critical citizens and producing new knowledge. Further, deeply influenced by commercial models and interests, the corporate university values flexibility in resource management over providing job security, thereby "transforming faculty into an army of temporary subaltern labor" (Giroux, "Writing"). As the pool of contract labor¹ grows wider and deeper and top-down instrumentalism spreads, higher education as an institution now operates in a service function to well-funded, well-pro-

tected commercial entities. Composition, situated as a required introductory course and often employing the largest numbers of contract laborers, is cast as serving the servants.

Our institutions do not work to hide these practices; often, they are described as necessary strategies in a tough economy, responses to situations created by state-legislated austerity, or as mutually beneficial partnerships. Contract, temporary labor shares a grounding ideology with “Just in Time” (JIT) resource management, a business strategy that seeks to reduce inventory costs by generating products as needed. Product generation, analogous to contingent hiring, can be reduced without recourse when profits drop. From overreliance on JIT labor to fast assessment metrics, institutions of higher education unabashedly align their values with the capitalist tenets of efficiency, bottom-line profit, and top-down decision making.

However, higher education’s adoption of corporate practices may also provide its greatest weakness. Giroux suggests that resistance to this large-scale, well-funded takeover lives in energizing the base—students, teachers, and program-level administrators (“Writing”). As such, ideologies like those grounding Occupy Wall Street (Occupy) offer approaches for programmatic resistance.

Occupy, spearheaded by “brave young students,” has given us “a new language in order to talk about inequality and power issues [and has] attempt[ed] to create alternative democratic public spaces” (Giroux, “Writing”). Higher education is one of the last public spheres, and the growing visibility of its systemic inequities opens it to public protest strategies. If our writing programs routinely rely on contingent labor, then they support these systemic inequities and thus emerge as sites ready for Occupy-inflected resistance. This article reframes the role of the WPA as one poised to—and in many cases one which already does—take an activist stance to focus on the ethical dilemma of contingency. I connect Occupy with writing program administration to argue for administrative action grounded in prefigurative practices, practices which seek to “build a new society in the shell of the old” (Graeber 142).

As Marc Bousquet, Donna Strickland, and Sidney Dobrin have powerfully argued, WPAs are often caught in a middle-managerial double bind. Charged as resource managers and responsive to top-down demands, they are both powerless against and definitionally complicit in unethical hiring practices. Dobrin terms this relationship “the administrative imperative,” as power is not held singularly by the WPA or even by upper-administrators but instead is relationally enacted through program administration, “impl[ying] a sense of structured parameter or sequential mechanized control” (93). Program administration is a task-driven position; WPAs

carry the weight of budgets, salaries, and contracts, often at a human and humane cost. Unwillingly, they are charged to do more with less—less space, less funding, less secure contracts—in the mission shift to the corporate university.

The equation of contingent composition faculty and the metonymic ninety-nine percent is simplistic but offers traction in thinking about factors like corporate exploitation of labor and a resultant precariously employed underclass. As widely reported, 1 million of 1.5 million faculty in higher education work as contingent laborers, a boom that has led to establishment of the New Faculty Majority. Noam Chomsky cites “growing worker insecurity” and persistence of “precarious employment” as touchstone issues of Occupy (33). Further, he notes that the “precarariat,” the precariously employed, “is not the periphery anymore. It’s becoming a very substantial part of the society in the United States, and indeed elsewhere. And this is considered a good thing” (Chomsky 33). If a guiding tenant of free-market capitalism is for businesses to operate at maximum profit, then the precariat is necessary. Expendability is a strength in this model, since insecure workers may be fired in times of low profit and rehired without contracts when additional labor is needed. The specter of expendability also works to keep many of these laborers compliant.

Chomsky’s description of global economics expresses the situation in many of our writing programs. The precariously, contractually employed and the underemployed have moved from the exception to the expectation. Since first-year writing is a required course at many institutions, WPAs are thus likely responsible for staffing many of the positions held by the New Faculty Majority.

Like corporations, universities have grown into lumbering, hydra-like systems too diluted and top-heavy to regard individual programmatic needs. Dobrin, echoing Bousquet, argues that the academic labor system is far too entrenched in these traditional management structures to be changed from the inside (96). However, Occupy’s foundational ideology of prefiguration provides WPAs with a set of methods for tempered radical action to encourage incremental change from inside the system.

CONTINGENCY IN COMPOSITION: THIRTY YEARS OF FRUSTRATED APPEALS

Giroux’s address situates labor contingency as a symptom of the corporate university; however, it represents only the most recent call to action in a disciplinary history rich with activist intentions. For almost 30 years, major figures in composition have worked to focus attention on unethical hiring practices. In 1985, Maxine Hairston’s controversial CCCC chair’s address,

“Breaking Our Bonds and Reaffirming Our Connections,” identified contingency as a result of rigid hierarchies and traditions guarded by literature faculty. “Our worst problems,” Hairston argued, “originate close to home: in our own departments and within the discipline of English studies itself” (273). The enemy was nothing so abstract as neoliberalism, but colleagues who considered composition a service course unworthy of adequate compensation.

A year later, James Sledd’s exhortation at the 1986 Wyoming Conference became a rallying cry to English faculty: “We should *see and say*—see our work in its full social and educational context, speak out against the hypocrisies of our societies and our profession, even when whistleblowers take a beating and our best efforts seem ludicrous and pretentious” (qtd. in McDonald and Schell 365). Sledd’s talk and Susan Wyche-Smith’s now historical response—“I’m oppressed. My students are oppressed. Why isn’t anyone talking about this?”—led to the drafting of the Wyoming Resolution (365).

The Wyoming Resolution, crafted from an activist exigency and “cross-generational and cross-rank collaboration,” represented, according to James McDonald and Eileen Schell, “the best kind of camaraderie and social action one could possibly imagine happening at a professional conference” (360). This crowdsourced document recommended three actions: To establish professional standards and expectations for institutions that employ teachers of college writing; to set grievance procedures to empower faculty against offending institutions; and to provide a method of censuring institutions that violated professional standards. However, only the recommendation to establish professional standards survived the CCC executive committee’s revisions. The establishment of both grievance processes and censure “would require staffing and legal expenditures . . . beyond the scope of the organization” (qtd. in McDonald and Schell 370).

This truncated version of the Wyoming Resolution emerged as the 1989 “Statement of Principles and Standards for the Postsecondary Teaching of Writing” (Statement). Divided into two sections—“Professional Standards that Promote Quality Education” and “Teaching Conditions Necessary for Quality Education”—it aimed to “offer guidelines . . . for the professional recognition and treatment of part-time and temporary full-time faculty during the period when these positions are being transformed to the tenure track” (330). The Statement proved controversial, as it presented tenure-line appointments as the only professionally legitimate path for compositionists. Its sharp focus on tenure not only deemphasized immediate arguments for fair wages and job security (McDonald and Schell 372), but it also shut down the potential for establishing teaching-focused tenure-parallel tracks.

In 1991, “A Progress Report from the CCCC Committee on Professional Standards” (Progress Report) was published, evaluating the Statement and its intended consequences. The report cites “the exploitation of writing teachers [as] the most powerful evidence” in the university’s shift to corporate models (334–5). The Progress Report recommended three actions to CCCC’s members: 1) to document implementation of the Statement’s standards at their individual universities and to forward this data to the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE); 2) to define non-compliance with the standards not as disregard for them but as “an unwillingness to undertake realistic efforts of reform” (342); and 3) to raise the funds necessary for legal representation by collecting dues from members. The Wyoming Resolution’s assertion that “the salaries and working conditions” of college writing instructors were “fundamentally unfair” (qtd. in McDonald and Schell 366) had become, after six years and multiple incarnations, a request for data and financial support from already overworked and underpaid faculty. The bureaucratic process of policy making—Wyoming Resolution to Statement to Progress Report—slowly effaced Laramie’s activist spirit.

Ten years after Wyoming, five years after the Progress Report, Lester Faigley’s 1996 CCCC chair’s address, “Literacy After the Revolution,” again raised the issue of contingency with the membership of the discipline’s largest national body. Though composition had expanded by a number of metrics—growth of doctoral programs and professional journals, for example—its “success has not influenced institutions to improve the working conditions for many teachers of writing” (32). In contrast to Hairston’s local enemy ten years prior, Faigley connected labor contingency to global economics in what he called the “revolution of the rich,” the concentration of vast wealth in the hands of a few powerful individuals, an early invocation of the now familiar ninety-nine/one percent division (32–3). Struggling against these faceless enemies, Faigley argued, can only frustrate compositionists, who locate their democratic contribution in teaching and advancing literacy research to make writing—once a hallmark of public intellectualism—more accessible. Faigley concluded his address with the following directives: “You have to practice what you preach and engage in public discourse. You have to form alliances. You have to be more tolerant of your friends and look for common ground. You have to organize” (41). Echoes of Faigley’s argument can be found in Giroux’s 2013 assertion to “Write the Public Good Back into Education.”

These five moments—the Wyoming Resolution, the Statement, the resulting Progress Report, and Hairston’s and Faigley’s addresses—have not widely improved hiring conditions, nor has adoption of NCTE’s 2010

“Position Statement on the Status and Working Conditions of Contingent Faculty.” While this most recent statement recognizes the importance of “long-term security of employment,” its entreaty as a discipline-specific position paper carries little weight with austerity-minded upper-administrators.

Brad Hammer calls for a move to focus efforts of the CCCC on “contingency studies” to counter “twenty-five years of ineffectual position statements” that situate NCTE and CCCC as change agents without results (“Reframing” A1; see also Hammer “The Need for Research”).² Hammer’s assertion suggests that compositionists are poised at the edge of an historical moment they are charged with leading, supported by crowdsourced efforts like The Adjunct Project and organizations like the New Faculty Majority. Aided by digital technologies, contingent faculty can now go public with details their institutions would rather obscure. The Adjunct Project’s spreadsheet, for example, offers current data on pay-per-course, participation in shared governance, access to health benefits, and other resources contingent faculty and program administrators can use in arguing for improved conditions. The Progress Report’s solicited data sets have thus become a grassroots initiative.

URGENT REFORMS, RECESSIONS, AND THE RISE OF THE NINETY-NINE PERCENT

Viewed historically, a number of factors have influenced the current crisis in contingency: composition’s status as a discipline; gradual defunding of public education and concomitant public negativity toward educators; the Great Recession of 2008, which further reduced revenue and deepened the labor pool; and trends toward deskilling and deprofessionalizing teachers, starting in earnest in 2001 with No Child Left Behind (NCLB). In 2006, the report “A Test of Leadership: Charting the Future of U.S. Higher Education” (Spellings Report) outlined six “urgent reform needs,” focused on “a robust culture of accountability and transparency” (Ruben et al. 5). The report lists access, cost and affordability, financial aid, learning, transparency and accountability, and innovation as the most pressing issues in higher education, issues they argue deserve not only study but national- and state-level antidotes (U.S. Department of Education).

Firmly grounded in the metrics and surveillance vernacular of NCLB, the Spellings Report points to learning and innovation as urgent areas to address because of their connection to “national workforce needs” (U.S. Department of Education 4). Students enter college, the authors of the report propose, unprepared to meet intellectual expectations and “waste time—and taxpayer dollars—mastering English and math skills they

should have learned in high school” (x). Their model of reform thus begins with accountability measures to “ensure that colleges succeed in educating students” (x).

Both the six urgent reforms and the recommendations for action are supported by the language of neoliberalism and presumptions about the role of higher education as purely instrumental; colleges and universities should be given the means to be “efficient” and “cost effective” to “enhance student mobility and meet U.S. workforce needs,” not to mention legislative budgets (U.S. Department of Education 26). Absent from the report is discussion of instructor equity, improved salaries, intellectual freedom, or the growing reliance on contingent labor as “urgent reforms” that need addressed.

Shortly after publication of the Spellings Report, the AAUP released an official response identifying the report’s “dismiss[al] of the institutional foundations of American higher education” including “stability and continuity” for instructors, but like preceding statements, this response did little to improve hiring conditions (AAUP Committee on Government Relations). As long as contingency remained a local, programmatic problem, abstracted through disciplinary and institutional texts, it could be written off as business as usual.

The 2008 global recession only strengthened this sentiment. Jeffrey Bernstein, political science scholar and critical educator, writes, “Tightening state budgets and a weak global economy force schools to dramatically increase tuition at a rate far outpacing inflation,” graduating students into a dismal job market with record debt (1). The Great Recession of 2008 fundamentally influenced higher education in that large-scale unemployment, lagging state revenues, and mass financial struggle made the work of classrooms even more vulnerable to market ideologies and the deep pockets of corporate interests.

Bernstein concludes, “The days of higher education enjoying a privileged place in society, and operating largely outside the public eye, are over” (1). And while it is arguable if higher education ever maintained this golden age of autonomy—especially where public universities are concerned—his point is significant. Economic forces have necessarily impacted our classrooms. “[A]cademics,” Bernstein concludes, “increasingly find ourselves undergoing a trial of sorts in the unforgiving courts of public opinion and legislative bodies” (1). The depths of these unforgiving opinions would become increasingly more public, as the rise of Tea Party politics would infiltrate national discussions about education and craft a decidedly anti-labor agenda.

PRO-LABOR RESURGENCE

On February 14, 2011, Wisconsin's new Republican governor, Scott Walker, made national headlines when he proposed Act 10, a "Budget Repair Bill" designed to strip public workers, including teachers at all levels, of their collective bargaining rights. The governor's decision to rush the bill to a vote prompted massive marches on the capitol building in Madison, drew international attention from sympathizers in Egypt—protestors who had just deposed a tyrant—and led to eighteen Democratic senators leaving the state for three weeks to avoid a quorum. Teachers marched beside farmers in a parade of tractors to the capitol building, making visible the interconnectedness that reinforces communities. Internationally, the media framed these protests as the American equivalent of the Arab Spring, since they borrowed tactics from protestors in Egypt, Tunisia, and Libya. John Nichols, a writer for *The Nation* and Wisconsin's *Capital Times*, notes that the Wisconsin uprisings became, in the U.S., "the reference point for a renewal of labor militancy, mass protest, and radical politics" (3) and gave body to a national pro-labor movement. However, after months of dissent, Walker's bill passed on June 29, and the protestors disbanded.

Three months later, in September 2011, Occupy would adapt these tactics in establishing what Noam Chomsky has since termed the "first major public response to thirty years of class war" (9). Occupy's origin draws from a number of influences—the Wisconsin uprisings, the Arab Spring, and a series of protests throughout the spring and summer of 2011 by New Yorkers Against Budget Cuts (NYABC). The NYABC's Bloombergville, named after New York mayor Mike Bloomberg and modeled on Depression-era Hoovervilles, occupied Zuccotti Park four months before Occupy. However, the turnout—16 showed up for a June 14 NYABC rally—was deflating and NYABC fizzled out (Gitlin 14–8).

Occupy's September 2011 protest began two months' prior, just after NYABC's failure to mobilize. The July 2011 issue of the Canadian anti-consumerist magazine *Adbusters* featured a curiously powerful advertisement: a ballerina balanced on the back of Wall Street's charging bull. The copy was simple: "#OccupyWallStreet. September 17th. Bring tent" (Eifling). *Adbusters'* twitter, email, and web presence helped marshal resources, and on September 17, hundreds of protestors flooded Wall Street. Occupy has since grown internationally and spurred a number of affiliated groups, like OccupyColleges, InterOccupy, and most recently, OccupyGezi, a Turkish movement leading to the occupation of Gezi Park, one of the few remaining natural and public spaces in Istanbul, slated by the Turkish government to become the site of a shopping mall. While critics cite Occupy's

lack of leadership and inconsistent messaging as a detriment, its flexibility has allowed it to remain a locally responsive action group. However, even OccupyColleges—a site focused exclusively on higher education—neglects the unethical employment practices favored by most universities, instead directing its attention to student loan debt.³ Contingent faculty and WPAs are then left to craft their own labor movement from inside, a move grounded in the emerging body of contingency studies.

TRACING THE EFFECTS OF CONTINGENCY ON NON-TENURE-TRACK (NTT) FACULTY

To wild applause, Giroux encouraged the overflow crowd of humanities teacher-scholars at the Las Vegas CCCO to “conduct your lives standing up and not on your knees” (“Writing”). By situating Occupy’s direct action alongside contingency, he provided an energizing petition to occupy our programs. Contingency studies has emerged as a focus in disciplinary scholarship (Bousquet, Scott, and Parascondola; Doe et al.; Hammer, “Reframing” and “The Need for Research”; Peckham; Schell, *Gypsy Academics* and “Toward a New”), and Giroux voiced many of our shared concerns regarding the corporate university:

Faculty in this view are regarded as simply another cheap army of reserve labor, a powerless group that universities are eager to exploit in order to increase the bottom line while disregarding the needs and rights of academic laborers and the quality of education that students deserve . . . There are few attempts to affirm faculty as scholars and public intellectuals who have both a measure of autonomy and power. Instead, faculty members are increasingly defined less as intellectuals as they are as technicians and grant writers.

Giroux’s talk recalls the emotional origins of the Wyoming Resolution, a generative moment when transparency in unethical practices led to open discussions of the impact of contingency on faculty. Ann Penrose’s recent qualitative research has begun to trace the effects of contingency on faculty members’ professional identities, and the findings support Giroux’s assertion that higher education’s corporate culture has long-term consequences.

Ultimately, Penrose argues that the contingent nature of NTT labor leads to an ideological devaluation of faculty members’ work, particularly by tenured and tenure-track faculty, and a sense of non-membership in three areas: expertise, autonomy, and community. To be included as a professional in the composition community includes “engagement with a distinctive and dynamic knowledge base, meaningful participation in community decision-making, and continuous interchange with others as col-

league, mentor, and co-learner—all of which require investments of time and energy that few writing instructors can afford” (118). In many departments, NTT faculty operate largely outside the collective reckoning of the tenured and tenurable, their abstracted presence recognized only during times of personnel reviews and budget cuts. This isolation is materially felt in large class sizes and long work hours, restricted access to resources like copying, office space, or technology, and the need to seek supplemental employment because of inadequate pay.

Contingency requires too many emotional, physical, and material resources of NTT faculty, creating a situation where upper-administrators and tenured/tenure-track colleagues can point to this depletion as cause for NTT faculty’s continued marginalization. If a NTT writing instructor teaching four courses a semester has no time to publish, then promise of upward or even lateral movement becomes unlikely. Lack of access to travel funds and technology may prohibit participation in professional conferences and workshops, factors that can lead to NTT faculty feeling isolated, unappreciated, and underprepared to compete for tenure lines or more stable employment. In many departments, when tenure lines do become available, NTT faculty, because they have been working in contingent positions and teaching primarily composition, may be considered less desirable candidates than those who are completing degrees or who are moving from one tenure-eligible position to another. As the AAUP noted in 1993, “[t]he teaching experience of non-tenure-track faculty members . . . may be interpreted as evidence of failed promise when measured against new PhDs who are just entering the market” (AAUP Committee on Part-Time). Contingency thus traps faculty into cycles of uncertain and unsupported employment with little potential for upward advancement.

A number of class-bound issues divide NTT and tenured/tenure-eligible faculty in writing programs. The explicit job descriptions for NTT faculty often exempt scholarly production and service in favor of policy-guided teaching. Penrose writes, “[i]n practice,” that is, teaching, “is where NTT faculty work—to a degree strikingly different from tenure-line faculty as a group” (109). Not only do contingent faculty invest most of their time teaching, in many cases to the detriment of their career goals; they are often subject to hyper-management by WPAs and critique from tenure-line and tenured colleagues, whose schedules may allocate time for scholarship. And while written job expectations for NTT faculty often exclude research and publishing, these faculty are implicitly expected to aspire to participate in academia’s reward system, long before those rewards are available.

WPAs cannot be expected to change national trends toward overreliance on contract labor or institutional hiring decisions; however, they can,

as Penrose proposes, change the way their programs frame “professional vision” as “more robust than the teaching-research-service model by which our institutions define us” (122). She suggests moving away from “partial and individualistic models” of program administration and toward “a more holistically grounded understanding of professional as collaborative and contributing” (122). In her suggestion for a collaborative culture of professionalism, Penrose seeks to correct the absence of community and lack of recognition of expertise described by her study participants. Instead of top-down measures emphasizing administrative oversight, building grassroots communities of practice and scholarship within programs may address bias against NTT faculty as “not serious about their careers” (AAUP Committee on Part-Time). WPAs may be the change agents empowered programmatically, if not institutionally, to build and support communities across tiers, reduce the NTT/tenure-track divide, encourage collegiality, and work against Dobrin’s “administrative imperative” (93).

THE SPACES OF CONTINGENCY

If, as Bruce Horner insists, “composition’s location [exists] on the border between the realms of the academic and the social” (3), then public protest strategies have much to offer writing programs. Dobrin outlines occupation as a necessary component for political and personal change. Both as we inhabit spaces and vocations, collective occupation indicates agency. Dobrin further cites a need for disruption of the status quo of composition—for WPAs to work against their own “exhaustion” and “stagnation” (110) as tradition keepers following a territorial “politic of recycling,” ever and overly concerned with disciplinary legitimacy (103). Disruption begins with upsetting the urgency of legitimation, which, he emphasizes, is “an argument about how spaces are occupied, ordered, and named” (104). The spaces and places of composition have grown troublingly routinized, unethical hiring practices accepted as inevitable, and the role of WPA iteratively reinforced in this relationship. Bousquet argues that what we have lost in the current administrative clutch is “learning to write as colleagues among colleagues” (518). Occupy’s strategic use of prefigurative politics helps reframe the intangible needs created by contingency—especially in Penrose’s three areas of expertise, autonomy, and community—and gives WPAs tools to begin to address them in their own programs.

PREFIGURATION: EVERYDAY ACTIVISM

Prefigurative politics describes the enactment of desirable, more just practices in the hopes that those practices will model new possibilities. Prefigu-

ration grounds the many disparate Occupy sites and provides an ideology from which they operate. Activists and labor theorists describe prefiguration as the pursuit of “building a new society in the shell of the old,” differing from outright revolution in that it tries to work within the bounds of systems of injustice to change those systems from the inside (Graeber 142). Occupy uses prefigurative politics, both tangibly and in social media, to produce “a new language in order to talk about inequality and power issues” and to “create alternative democratic public spaces” (Giroux, “Writing”). General Assemblies featured the “people’s mic,” which encouraged each person to speak with the understanding no one could be interrupted or asked to leave. In this way, Occupy hoped to model a true democracy prefigured to give equal weight to diverse—and often underrepresented—voices. Pure democracy, however, is a slow-moving and messy process; reports of the General Assembly’s long, contentious, and unproductive meetings became metonymic for its “inefficiencies and cultishness and the unfocused quality of the everyone-comes-everyone-participates” methods (Gitlin 78). What Occupy gained in inclusion it lost in application.

Establishing a communal outpost within sight of the imposing figure of Wall Street made an argument of contrasts, especially as the powerful ninety-nine/one percent rhetoric moved Occupy from a fringe movement to a “full-throttle cultural meme” (qtd. in Roberts 758). But Occupy’s wholesale, overzealous resistance to logistical hierarchy tangled the Zuccotti Park site in organizational knots and stalled its momentum. Occupy’s organizational failure suggests that prefiguration’s goal to work within established systems should trend toward the conservative to be more effective and sustainable.

Learning from Occupy’s missteps, WPAs should approach prefiguration cautiously, to seek places where they can operate within the culture of academia to improve the status of contingent faculty. Protest tactics like ponderous General Assemblies, walkouts, strikes, and sit-ins are dramatic and often serve to make inequality visible, but large-scale changes resulting from these tactics are the exception. Because of the assumed expendability of NTT faculty, traditional activist strategies may fail to persuade administrators or other decision-makers and only lead to mass job loss for individuals and additional negative consequences for programs.

However, by turning contingency’s site of action, the classroom, into its site of protest, WPAs may be able to leverage some of Occupy’s spirit of resistance. In 1990, amidst the controversy surrounding the Wyoming Resolution’s “emasculatation” (Sledd), Susan Wyche-Smith and Shirley K Rose proposed “One Hundred Ways to Make the Wyoming Resolution a Reality: A Guide to Personal and Political Action,” presenting a list of pre-

figurative practices over twenty years before Occupy. Noting that “the distance between the standards articulated in the Statement and the reality at our institutions can seem so great that we may be paralyzed into inaction” (318), Wyche-Smith and Rose provided a list of everyday activist actions addressed to a number of audiences, including composition instructors, part-time faculty, graduate teaching assistants, and writing program and writing center administrators.

The authors acknowledged that writing instructors and administrators must be responsible for their own empowerment. Their commitment to change from within programs is evidenced by the list’s divisions: Instructors, both part- and full-time, are given twenty-six points of action; WPAs, nineteen; and professional organizations only four, including “tak[ing] official stands and provid[ing] policy statements” (324). Yet the problem of contingency Wyche-Smith and Rose sought to address is very different from our current, corporate-influenced crisis.

Writing about Occupy tactics in literature classrooms, Allen Webb and Jason Vanfosson note, “Teachers may not be able to camp out at Pearson Publishing, or in the parking lot of ACT or K12 Inc., but we can reject their profiteering from public education” (66). While it is true that “the impetus for change is again in the hands of writing teachers” (Wyche-Smith and Rose 318), echoing the spirit of activism present in Laramie, the post-NCLB, post-American-Legislative-Exchange-Council⁴ writing classroom necessitates a reframing of programmatic micro-activism through global economic protest and grassroots action.

Prefiguration within academia must account for the kinds of failures Occupy did not consider, specifically the opportunity for effecting change by operating within accepted hierarchies. “Tempered radicalism,” defined as “grassroots leadership tactics that honor the norms, values, and mission of the academy, while simultaneously challenging its enacted practices,” provides a framework for response (Kezar, Gallant, and Lester 131). A qualitative study by educational scholars and administrators Adrianna Kezar, Tricia Bertram Gallant, and Jaime Lester⁵ found that “tempered radicals,” despite their lack of institutional power, successfully argued for justice within their academic programs, including “pedagogical changes, access, and student support” (131). These grassroots leaders resisted corporate models through their day-to-day actions, such as “working with and mentoring students, hiring like-minded social activists, and . . . utilizing existing networks” to encourage slow change from inside the system (137). Noting, like Giroux, that the role of the college president has moved from the intellectual and moral center of the institution to corporate fundraiser, Kezar, Gallant, and Lester write that self-identified tempered radicals “act

as the conscience for the organization—often bringing up ethical issues” (131). The notion of WPA-as-the-ethical-conscience of a program adds to already overburdened expectations placed on administrators and supports Bousquet’s critique of the “WPA Hero.” However, WPAs are often charged to argue for improved material conditions to department heads and other upper-administrators, while quietly subverting upper-administrative dictates. In effect, many WPAs are already working as tempered radicals to occupy contingency. Further, and more in tune with the spirit of Occupy, by creating opportunities for NTT faculty to emerge as tempered radicals themselves, WPAs may establish pockets of programmatic resistance that, when networked, could spark change.

WAYS AND MEANS OF OCCUPATION

The following suggestions draw from current and aspirational practices across institutions. WPAs support Penrose’s three areas for renovation—autonomy, expertise, and community—while at the same time managing relationships with upper-administrators. On this assumption, the tactics I describe focus primarily on the former while pointing to gradual changes that may influence the latter. These suggestions are intended to supplement, and not to replace, arguments for adequate pay, job security, and access to resources.

In Classrooms and Common Spaces

As Nedra Reynolds points out, “the kinds of spaces we occupy determine, to some extent, the kinds of work we can do or the types of artifacts we can create” (157). As our primary site of action, the composition classroom emerges as the primary site of our occupation. In terms of course content, incorporating texts on local educational issues offers a corpus of rhetorically situated and immediately relevant documents for students to explore and interrogate. Texts like course syllabi, policy websites, college-level mission statements, and speeches by governors familiarize students with the decision-making processes guiding the class and provide opportunities for analysis and response. Encouraging students to trouble the discursive realities created by such documents not only makes visible the workings of these powerful, distant entities, it also moves students away from their understanding of the course as purely instrumental. Tracing the relationships between such mysterious bodies as the College Board, led by David Coleman, and initiatives like the Common Core State Standards, designed by the same David Coleman, empowers students to think about education as culturally constructed and politically influenced. This empowerment moves

outward to faculty when discussions of time to graduation are considered, since composition is often a requirement and defunding can limit seats and delay matriculation.

Faculty may be concerned that politicizing the course will only reinforce students' negative ideas about elitism in the university or work to silence students who feel that their political beliefs will be held against them; however, the composition classroom is already thoroughly politicized. A review of material conditions and current national dialogue about the role of the humanities confirms this stance. Grounding composition in local texts and contexts embodies its relevance and puts rhetoric close at hand. Giroux criticizes faculty who seek to maintain academic detachment in both their teaching and scholarly work, arguing that "professionalism does not have to translate into a flight from moral and intellectual responsibility" ("Should Part-Time"). Focusing course texts on locally situated discussions of educational access and corporate collusion brings these relationships to the fore where students can critically address them.

We may also occupy common educational spaces using collaborative pedagogies and public writing. The National Day on Writing (NDOW) offers a recognized day of action where writing classes may choose to install themselves in common spaces, to engage in public writing, and to bring sections together in shared action. Depending on the physical layout of spaces, NDOW installations may be strategically placed in proximity to offices of deans, provosts, and presidents. By making the work of composition visible and unavoidable, and by flooding these common spaces with students and faculty, upper-administrators may begin to see the impact of these important courses. Further, as the world has witnessed with the OccupyGezi protests, common spaces encouraging open dialogue—speakers' corners—are rapidly disappearing in favor of profitable or less contentious use. Working within institutional guidelines, composition faculty may productively harness common spaces to encourage students to "talk back, talk to one another, engage in respectful dialogue with faculty, and learn how to engage in coalition building" (Giroux, "Should Part-Time"). By making ourselves, our students, and our work in the classroom physically manifest and by grounding this work in civic discourse we trouble institutional notions of prepackaged teaching and instrumentality.

Many of these pedagogical occupations are already happening in our classrooms and common spaces. The next move, perhaps left to WPAs, is to connect them intra-programmatically and inter-programmatically to build communities of support and expertise between NTT faculty and the students in their courses.

Occupying Programmatically

Programmatically, prefiguration may take a number of forms: as distributed administration that invites NTT faculty to participate in curriculum development; as a move toward academic freedom; as renovated personnel reviews favoring transparency in metrics and clear and equitable access to appeals; as encouragement of a culture of scholarship; and as support for peer-mentoring networks. I discuss each tactic in detail.

WPAs with administrative flexibility may invest in a model of distributed administration. In many cases, NTT faculty possess programmatic memory and a bulk of the teaching load. Because of their familiarity with the intricacies of classroom practices, NTT faculty are thus ideal sources for curricular reform, assessment, and policy generation, as they negotiate these bureaucratic structures more often than tenured faculty. Recognizing that NTT faculty already operate at maximum course loads, inviting them to participate in administrative service feels counterintuitive. However, arguing for single course releases or one-time stipends are small points when weighed against large-scale salary and contract initiatives.

Further, if WPAs are able to open their programs to academic freedom—instead of, for example, working from shared syllabi or textbooks—NTT faculty may feel that their expertise is valued. Prepackaged modules, long in use by NCLB and other federal public education initiatives, suggest that teacher presence is optional. Honoring academic freedom demands that all composition faculty derive their own syllabi in accordance with program objectives, choose textbooks meaningful to their pedagogical goals, and have the freedom to address curricular outcomes according to their knowledge base. By recognizing academic autonomy, WPAs must reject mandatory professional development requirements, as strict oversight manifested in this way deprofessionalizes, minimizes instructor agency, siphons away time and energy, and firmly places the program administrator in the role of resource manager.

Academic freedom also implicates a shift in the way WPAs conduct personnel reviews. Strict adherence to shared syllabi provides efficiency in instructor assessment while open course designs are far more difficult to assess, yet it is an important trade to consider. The review process connects program values—sometimes actual checklists—with practices that may contradict the methods NTT faculty may use to manage their work loads. Quantitative student evaluations, for example, can be weighted evenly with professional development, as fast metrics provide a way to quickly assess stacks of dossiers; as a result, NTT faculty may feel pressure to focus on customer-service driven models of student satisfaction. Faculty teaching

heavy course loads may develop strategies to work around time-intensive requirements like holding monthly individual conferences or responding to student drafts. These work-flow strategies make up an important part of the underlife of many writing programs and can be supported by attention to the personnel review process and its components. In the most troublesome cases, the personnel review and appeals processes for NTT faculty are occluded, relegated to mysterious behind-closed-doors WPA meetings.

WPAs can better descriptively assess the teaching that is taking place in their programs by inviting NTT faculty to work collaboratively to suggest dossier content, assessment rubrics, appeals guidelines, and methods for dossier collection. This last point becomes particularly important considering technological affordances like access to computers and software. Communally developed review and appeals processes not only empower NTT faculty in matters of professional advancement; they also encourage grassroots initiatives that may build communities for future direct action.

In rejecting a culture of oversight (through shared syllabi, common texts, and occluded or top-down review and appeals processes), WPAs could instead emphasize a culture of scholarly production. Heeding Giroux's call to move away from considering instructors as only "technicians and grant writers" ("Writing"), encouraging a culture of scholarly production may emerge as a way for WPAs to model inclusion to tenured and tenurable faculty who may not consider contingent faculty members of the profession. This community of scholarly production may include collaborative action research projects, article writing and reading groups, symposia, and equal distribution of publication opportunities.

By moving to emphasize communities of scholarship among NTT faculty, WPAs can provide opportunities for participation in the "dynamic knowledge base" of composition (Penrose 118) and disabuse shortsighted institutional notions about NTT faculty members' academic promise or commitments. Further, this scholarly production could take programs as their sites of research to begin to address the injustices experienced by NTT faculty, turning a disciplinary lens on widespread unethical employment practices (see Hammer, "Reframing" and "The Need for Research"). In this case, the role of the WPA-as-gatekeeper is important, as some of this scholarship could draw programs, departments, and institutions negatively. WPAs must then move to protect these researchers and their work by leveraging the influence they do hold.

Giroux admonishes academics who engage in politically distant scholarship, arguing that Occupy raises important questions "for faculty to rethink those modes of professionalism, specialism, and social relations which have cut them off from addressing important social issues and the

larger society” (“Should Part-Time”). Too long, he argues, have academics focused on isolated, socially and politically irrelevant scholarship. Moving from the personal to the political to the professional thus builds a base for research on contingency, complicating composition’s dynamic knowledge stores and extending the reach of professional publication to feature more work by NTT faculty.

Finally, and in service to each previous recommendation, writing programs may work toward justice by encouraging networks of peer mentors among NTT faculty. Geneva Smitherman notes, “Mentoring is a kind of nurturing whereby the mentor helps/motivates the mentee to construct a vision of possibilities beyond the present moment” (qtd. in Okawa 512). Unlike traditional novice/expert mentoring relationships, peer mentoring relies on equality in status and can become a powerful method as it supports faculty who wish to leave academia or who are considering changes like additional credentialing or moving to a different institution. WPAs can support these connections in a number of ways: by respecting “underground” networks—physical and digital—or by visibly and vocally supporting contingent faculty’s desires to organize outside the classroom, such as helping provide resources for alternative-academic (alt-ac) discussions. At a time when higher education budget cuts are daily news, the most vulnerable faculty may utilize these underground networks of communication for consolation or assistance. Discussions, however, should be grassroots initiated; that is, NTT faculty determine both content and frequency.

Noam Chomsky remarks that change “requires a mass base. It requires that the population understands this and is committed to it. It’s easy to think of things that need to be done, but they all have a prerequisite, namely, a mass popular base that is committed to implementing it” (42). Working in our individual programs is an important first step to energize this base, and there is much we can do here and now, both pedagogically and programmatically. Eileen Schell’s rhetorics of common cause and coalition building dovetail with these tactics, as she proposes a “New Labor Movement” to “resist the divisions” among tenured, tenure-eligible, and NTT faculty (“Toward a New” 109) and to build a community of engaged scholars across contract lines.

WPAs cannot change national trends in contingent labor, nor can they often immediately address inadequate material conditions. Arguments for improved compensation, more secure contracts, and access to resources may take years to see through. In the meantime, WPAs and NTT faculty can work together to make incremental, sustainable improvements in their programs. We need to “ask big questions” and “demand an alternative vision and set of policies” to guide our program administration, and we

need to ask these questions publically and collectively, in ways that cannot be routinely ignored (Giroux, “Should Part-Time”).

Moving toward collective action may also concurrently disrupt the notion of the WPA as the “central symbol of writing on campus” and the “glue” that holds the program together (Cambridge and McClelland 157). Linda Adler-Kassner encourages us to work “[t]ogether, here, now” (vii) to improve the visibility of our writing programs and to “tak[e] action to change [the] stories” of writing on our campuses (128). Reframed, instead of focusing on what contingent faculty cannot yet do or do not yet have, WPAs and NTT faculty can work as tempered radicals, within the lines already drawn, to support knowledge building, encourage autonomy, and develop community within programs in service to gradual change.

NOTES

1. There are productive distinctions between the various categories that comprise contract labor, including contingent faculty, non-tenure-track (NTT) faculty, and adjuncts. For the purposes of this article, since the focus is on precarious employment, I use contract, contingent, and NTT faculty interchangeably, acknowledging that these terms are often locally and programmatically defined in use.

2. Anne Ruggles Gere’s 2009 report found that over 88 percent of faculty teaching composition did so without the security of tenure (4). In reality, this percent may be even greater, since Gere’s survey drew from only the CCCC’s membership list, and many contingent faculty may lack either institutional or personal resources to join professional organizations or may feel that credentialing outside rhetoric and composition excludes them from membership.

3. OccupyColleges is maintained primarily by students, so this focus on loan debt is not illogical nor out of place. Though unaffiliated with Occupy, *Edu-Factory*, a U.K.-based blog, tracks and mobilizes academic protestors internationally. In addition to their web presence, *Edu-Factory* hosts an annual conference and publishes an open-source journal.

4. See Linda Adler-Kassner’s “The Companies We Keep *or* the Companies We Would Like to Keep: Strategies and Tactics in Challenging Times” for an in-depth exploration of both the range and depth of these vast and well-funded corporate bodies that dramatically influence both secondary and post-secondary education.

5. Kezar, Gallant, and Lester’s findings are based “upon interviews conducted with 165 grassroots leaders—84 staff (administrative staff) and 81 faculty (academic staff) members at five different institutions (an average of 33 individuals per institution) engaged in grassroots leadership. Faculty interviewed were from all ranks (lecturer, assistant professor, associate professor, full professor), and

staff ranged from custodial staff to mid-level staff (assistant director in a student affairs office). There were more people of color and women than their proportional numbers” (136).

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Magic, Agency and Power: Mapping Embodied Leadership Roles

Tina S. Kazan and Catherine Gabor

ABSTRACT

This article contributes to the ongoing debate about WPAs and instantiations of their leadership through power, influence, and authority. Drawing upon the metaphor of the Marauder's Map, taken from the Harry Potter series, the article presents a WPA Leadership Chart that facilitates acting in(to) leadership roles and enacting rhetorical agency through the primary activities of collaborating, imagining, proving, and conducting. Understanding rhetorical agency as a means to enact power, influence, and authority, the article contextualizes the chart in light of scholarship in leadership studies and writing program administration from a feminist perspective to argue for an expanded and more fluid conception of the WPA as a leader. The piece concludes by inviting readers to see themselves in a scenario that enables them to think through the options the WPA Leadership Chart offers, thus providing a heuristic for responsible rhetorical agency and ethical leadership.

INTRODUCTION

In J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series, a blank parchment transforms into a magical map if one possesses a wand and recites, "I solemnly swear that I am up to no good" (192). "The Marauder's Map" illustrates The Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, depicting the location of everyone on the premises at any given moment. It even discloses passwords when one ventures near secret passages. No one can escape being plotted on the map—an invisibility cloak, disguise or transfiguration offers no protection. Harry Potter is initially so concerned with others on the map and their movements that it takes him a moment to realize he, too, is plotted on the map (Rowling 194–95). On the one hand, the map allows him to see his

surroundings as an abstract representation of space and works much like an everyday map. On the other hand, he is simultaneously embodied on the map in relation to others. Given that the map captures everyone actively engaging with one another as part of their lived experiences in real time, the map functions on a material (and magical) level. To reverse its powers, one must announce, “mischief managed” (194), and the magical map returns to ordinary paper.¹ While Rowling’s language suggests whimsical disobedience, for Harry, the map becomes a way to maneuver in an increasingly complex environment while developing his own powers to accomplish good. Even though that fictional description overdramatizes our own roles and situations as new WPAs, we, too, needed a map that would help us understand our positions and power within institutional contexts and among constituencies. Our various and varied WPA duties placed us at differing locations on our institutional landscapes and we could not always recognize how we were positioned. Even when we could, we were often unsure of how to use our position (both figuratively and literally) to accomplish the goals of our programs. We found ourselves with mischief to manage, along with a multiplicity of WPA roles.

At our respective institutions, we both tried to understand how we could act in(to) our leadership roles, uphold our feminist principles, and enact rhetorical agency to improve our writing programs. Achieving these goals seemed very much like trying to “manage mischief” at both the mundane, day-to-day level and at the more conceptual level, as we tried to visualize our own tacit conceptions of ourselves as leaders of writing programs. A map would provide directions, guidance, solid information about which way to go—all things that initially felt just out of reach for us as new WPAs. Therefore, we needed a tool for charting leadership that would enable us to see how WPAs might progress through potential leadership roles to enact various kinds of power. Unable to create a Marauder’s Map, of course, we developed a WPA Leadership Chart (Figure 1). Through the chart, we present both a metaphor and a heuristic for WPA leadership. The value of our chart as a metaphor for WPA leadership lies in its theoretical power. The chart inscribes ways in which the administrative persona can be created, conceived of, and adapted. This new lens enables us to generate ideas about enacting power within the sites we occupy as WPAs. However, there is a wide gulf between seeing possibilities and knowing how to act in any given situation, which is why we argue for the chart as not only metaphor, but also heuristic.

The WPA Leadership Chart is a tool for self-reflection and decision-making/action-planning. It presents readers with roles (including combinations of roles and liminal spaces between roles) that could be enacted in

a WPA's typical day, month, year, or career—anything from mentoring a new colleague to conducting program-wide assessment to re-envisioning the writing curriculum. This heuristic is useful whether the WPA has fifteen minutes to plan a strategy before entering the dean's office for an "emergency meeting on class caps" or has a year to develop a proposal for a new media center. The heuristic value of the chart is that it takes WPAs through various roles, prompting us to ask what must we give up or give into and what might we gain—it also helps us clarify our goals vis-à-vis different possible audiences. Such a heuristic prevents us from falling into knee-jerk reactions without fully considering all of the ways we might (re) act, including modes that do not come naturally to us or are not expected given our institutional cultures. By enabling us to think through multiple leadership configurations—not just the familiar or comfortable ones—the chart ultimately can help WPAs grow into more multifaceted leaders, who will, by extension, better understand the boundaries of their power, authority, and influence.

To this end, we offer a framework for thinking about faculty leadership as a dynamic process that takes place amongst internal and external audiences and competing institutional values. First, we describe the Leadership Chart and all its nuances. Next, we explain our model in light of scholarship in leadership studies and writing program administration from a feminist perspective. We conclude with a specific scenario to illustrate how a WPA Leadership Chart generates multiple positions from which to develop and direct programs, strategize and secure improvements, and, occasionally, work magic and manage mischief.

OUR MARAUDER'S MAP: A WPA LEADERSHIP CHART

The WPA Leadership Chart (Figure 1) is our graphical conceptualization of administrative work. The vertical axis represents the continuum between progressive institutional change (Evolving) and conservation of the status quo (Preserving). The horizontal axis spans the productive tension between internal and external motivators and audiences. Each of the quadrants represents a primary activity—collaborating, imagining, proving, and conducting—that we enact as we shift among the roles of colleague, innovator, producer, and coordinator.

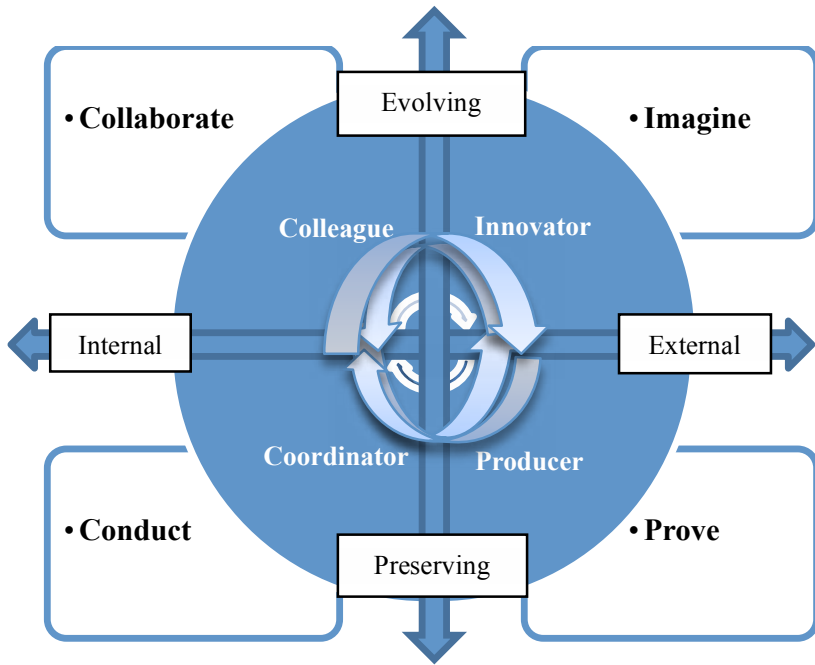


Figure 1: WPA Leadership Chart²

Ideally, the WPA moves synergistically among the four quadrants in the Leadership Chart, letting *kairos* be her/his guide in determining which quadrant to occupy when and where. New administrators in particular may not be conscious of their loci of agency, of the possible roles they could and should don³ in the various aspects of their professional duties. In fact, when we were first-year WPAs, we found ourselves falling into leadership roles before knowing why we were embracing them—moving among the quadrants of the chart “in a prereflective way” without having assessed which one(s) would be most kairotic (Thompson qtd. in Cooper 435). Thus, we developed the WPA Leadership Chart to inscribe⁴ possible stances for ourselves and others.

Administrative work, like so many other facets of faculty work, is hard to generalize from and about. Yet, “the administrative genre privileges abstraction over the complexities of local material conditions” (Gunner “Checking” 19). Jeanne Gunner problematizes the administrative genre for herself and other authors in “Checking the Source(Book): Supplemental Voices in the Administrative Genre.” Gunner’s description is apt and eloquent: “the administrative genre can perhaps be said to operate from an erotics of administration, if a perverse one—a patriarchal system that plays

to the desire for stability and control. It rises above the individual body and its material conditions and promises the pleasures of a disembodied moral order” (“Checking” 22). Like Gunner, we recognize the genre’s potential for normalization and centripetal pressure; we also hold that local enactment can counter-balance (but not erase) the Platonic pitfalls. For example, our process in developing our model was decidedly feminist and inductive, having grown out of a year’s worth of email correspondence (everything from updates and success reports to laments). As a result, the chart remains messier than models we encountered in leadership theory and WPA scholarship. So while the chart is a heuristic, its purpose is not to “promote[] a rhetoric of efficiency and efficacy” (Gunner “Checking” 21) but to intentionally serve as a centrifugal force—to attempt to supplement the options for rhetorical agency. Clearly this article is subject to the constraints of the administrative genre: readers themselves might feel interpellated by a seemingly possible perfection. However, through the WPA Leadership Chart and our process, we have tried to resist essentializing and idealizing to the extent that the genre permits. Initially desirous of a Marauder’s Map with an omniscient view, we present the chart as shorthand for potential avenues for successful leadership.

Colleague

As readers can see in the chart, the “Colleague” role calls upon us to collaborate, first and foremost. *Collaboration*, of course, is one of those fabulously slippery words. Leadership theory emphasizes the need to mentor and develop others while managing groups and leading teams (Cunha et al. 200; Komives et al. 404–05; Quinn et al. 35–6; Rost 107–23). Closer to home, Gunner reminds us: “Collaboration is not simple. It’s more than having meetings; it’s more than consultation—it’s a form of power-sharing, of recognizing unequal power relations. It’s not a means of erasing dissent or suppressing conflict” (“Portraits” 90). Disagreements and differences should take the form of *constructive* conflict. WPAs—and compositionists in general, we argue—are schooled to act upon the nuances of collaboration and listen to voices throughout the power structure: from students to adjuncts to TAs to senior faculty.

As the axes in the chart show, this quadrant tends toward the internal or personal side of a leadership role, embracing ideas and practices that are evolving. In order to collaborate and create collegial relationships, leaders need to cultivate personal relationships. Sometimes called “invisible work,” this kind of internal leadership is vital when working for and with vulnerable populations in the university hierarchy (such as adjunct faculty or TAs).

Not only do we want to earn the trust of our fellow writing instructors, we also need to be ready and able to let good ideas inform the program. This may be the most “quiet” of the four quadrants in the model, for it is based on informal conversations in the hallways, shared lunches, and unscheduled appointments.

This quadrant is most likely an easy role for us to understand and embody. Numerous studies have pointed to the feminization of composition studies and the attendant “ethics of care” (Flynn; Gillam; Susan Miller; Noddings; Ratcliffe and Rickly). The collegial qualities required in this quadrant have been long associated with our profession: listening, empathizing, working together, and employing collaborative decision-making models. Rather than advising new WPAs to practice this role, we may need to warn our counterparts (and ourselves) not to get “stuck” in this quadrant and therefore miss/avoid other leadership styles and the opportunities said styles represent.

Innovator

An Innovator’s main strength is the ability to imagine. As Gail Hawisher succinctly puts it in response to the question “What do you consider the essential qualities of a good administrator? Of a good feminist?”: “Develop a vision” (qtd. in Ratcliffe and Rickly 220). But, imagination is not the only facet of an innovative leader. The ability to create and live with change—internally and externally generated—marks this role. In addition to being an “idea person” (one who conceives of projects, program revisions, or even strategies for arguing for more resources), the Innovator can multi-task and work comfortably (or at least functionally) in the midst of change. As a leader, an Innovator can also help colleagues to reconcile themselves to fluctuating environments.

Like the “Colleague,” the “Innovator” champions ideas and projects that are moving away from the status quo, thus its position along the “y-axis”—“evolving.” For feminist administrators in particular, “[t]his desire for change is not part of our official job description, but nevertheless informs the way we fulfill our official duties” (Leverenz 4). For most of us the key task—imagining—is attractive. What may be less attractive or just simply harder is moving from imagination to innovation. New ideas generally cannot be implemented alone; the Innovator needs allies. Some of those allies may come from the collegial relationships fostered in the previous quadrant (including those among WPA teams and other collaborative administrative groups) and others will have to be cultivated. The Innovator must use rheto-

ric, of course, to attract others to her/his ideas and visions; more external work is required in this quadrant than in the previous one.

Once again, our academic training makes the “Innovator” a familiar role: researching, hypothesizing, and adding to the conversation. The romantic notion of a “pure innovator” is a solitary figure; however, like the Colleague, Innovators must work with others to implement ideas. For example, WPAs in this quadrant may join interdisciplinary projects (e.g., service-learning, WAC, technology initiatives) or become involved in seeking resources outside the university (e.g., partnerships, grants, in-kind donations).

Producer

Like the other roles in the chart, the Producer role is multifaceted. The word itself connotes output. This role hinges on tangibility more than the two preceding categories. While the Colleague and Innovator are situated in the ebb and flow of conversation and the evolution of ideas in progress, the Producer complements those roles by closing the open loop. To use the language of composing: the Producer’s leadership is embodied more in product than in process.

This role, as demonstrated by the x- and y-axes, is both external and preservative. It falls on the external side of the circle because it represents the “public face” role of the leader—in both the administrative sense (e.g., at university-wide committee meetings or in response to accrediting agencies) and in the scholarly sense (in as much as our publications serve as metonymies for ourselves as productive thinkers). Ed White reminds us that a WPA’s power and influence is tied up in the ability to prove oneself “as any other faculty member gains power, usually through publication and other professional activity” (10). While the production of scholarship could easily be categorized as “evolving” rather than as dedicated to the status quo, contributing to the larger scholarly conversation is an act of preserving the field of rhetoric and composition. In many cases, Producers fuse the categories of “scholarship” and “managerial document” to produce the kinds of texts many refer to as the “intellectual work” of administration. For example, when we create professional development texts or meaningful assessment reports, we must bring our formal training and intellectual insight to bear on these programmatic artifacts. In best-case scenarios, all of these kinds of texts and plans figure prominently in our tenure and promotion dossiers, where we *prove* ourselves worthy of institutional and economic recognition.

This quadrant might seem to most require what Laura Micciche has labeled *big agency*: “actions that intend structural results and effects,” for

example, when as WPAs we “participate in campus governance, design and lead assessment initiatives, revise curriculum, hire, train, and oversee new teachers, advocate for the writing program at college and university levels” (73–4). And while WPAs are expected to generate “results and effects” (as Producers), we may be able to do so using what Micciche calls “slow agency.” Instead of trying to reshape writing programs in our first year (prompted by the vision of the perfect program) or hurriedly reacting to all of the problems we perceive hurtling towards us as WPAs, we may “also come to see suspended agency as a valuable strategy,” producing public progress reports instead of wholesale changes, for example, thus making our incremental WPA work “visible to those outside the program” (Micciche 75, 82). Standing in the Producer quadrant, we may feel and exert traditional pressure to *preserve* the program, but we may also embrace the more radical notion of *conserving* (our own) energy: “[w]e embody raw human resources that can be depleted and hijacked as well as conserved and protected” (Micciche 76). As “producers” for our programs, WPAs may wisely prioritize a few high-profile goals over the short term and long term.

Coordinator

This role, perhaps more than any other in the chart, could be called the “multi-tasker” role. The Coordinator *conducts*. We borrow the defining verb here from music: the conductor keeps all of the parts of the whole in harmony, moving along at the same time, at the appropriate tempo. Coordinators conduct information, logistics, projects, and people to keep the various elements in sync. The Coordinator’s leadership role is most akin to a manager (as opposed to a leader), for this quadrant involves performance and quality control, focusing more on functionality, standards, and compliance than on the constructive conflict, creativity, and change in the upper half of the chart.

This quadrant can have external (outside the department or program) aspects, but it tends to be an internal role: helping the daily business of the program move along. The Coordinator also preserves or upholds the status quo, for s/he coordinates what is there. Of course a leader can act as an Innovator and Coordinator simultaneously, for example, while integrating new ideas and practices into current structures.

For some, this is a nice retreat from the performative—and sometimes combative—Producer role where one is expected to prove, persuade, convince. The Coordinator role may feel more relaxed because the WPA is working with ideas and people already set in place, just keeping all afloat. For others, this aspect of the job may feel tedious, even boring: get the

meeting minutes sent out; assign classrooms; fill out perfunctory forms. In this vein, Alice Gillam reminds us how the Coordinator role—like the Colleague—may be marked more as a feminized service role than as the power-broker White envisions (116). Gillam describes her circumscribed power as a WPA: “My role was primarily that of a caretaker, [. . . caring] for an already-formulated policy, one deeply imbricated in the local cultural ideal of certifiable writing proficiency for all. I was acting under its authority and executing my duties through its agency” (116–17). Gillam’s quote illustrates the feminized nature of this quadrant at the same time as the role underscores masculinist notions of efficacy. Feminists might encounter such tension in any of the quadrants, and perhaps especially as the Coordinator; one of the “dominant tropes” in *Performing Feminism and Administration in Rhetoric and Composition Studies* is the “oxymoron[ic] . . . tension . . . between . . . deeply held feminist beliefs and . . . daily administrative duties” (Ratcliffe and Rickly ix, vii).

Clearly all quadrants in the chart must be cultivated for—we were planning to say something like “optimal leadership”—but in these uncertain economic times, we are tempted to say “survival.” While Warren Bennis, a pioneer in the field of leadership studies, classically defined “becoming a leader” as “becoming yourself” (*On Becoming*), we see the WPA and other administrators as developing flexibility to grow in(to) and lead in the various quadrants and roles. This dynamic model is inherently strategic, perhaps even subversive, and works both within our constraints and pushes against them. Thus, when authority is denied, or when we ourselves feel limited by our own situatedness or even embodiment, we must devise creative ways of maneuvering around the institution.⁵ We can enact rhetorical agency in various ways that don’t come from the official channels or aren’t sanctioned by the institution and maybe even discover (re)sources we didn’t know we had. Now that we have laid out our “map,” we review how scholarship on issues of leadership, power, influence, authority, and agency has contributed to our understanding of the roles we might employ.

PAST MAPS: CONCEPTIONS OF LEADERSHIP AND AGENCY

In his trailblazing work, *Leadership for the Twenty-First Century*, Joseph C. Rost makes a somewhat startling claim: scholars in leadership studies cannot define *leadership* (given the range of definitions for *rhetoric* in our own field, we may not be troubled by this ambiguity). Rost not only explores various conceptions of leadership and posits his own, but he offers an excellent summary of the reigning schools of thought in leadership studies from the 1900s to the 1990s. Rost notes that the many adjectives—including but

certainly not limited to *business*, *educational*, and *political*—suggest leadership in one profession is not the same as leadership in another (1). Rost’s well-detailed literature review attests to how “leadership studies as an academic discipline has a culture of definitional permissiveness and relativity” (6), leaving “no easily recognizable school of leadership that makes sense of the concept of leadership” (8–9). It’s a cliché and

almost a ritual for authors of books and articles on leadership to make two statements at the beginning of their works. The first statement goes like this: “Many scholars have studied leaders and leadership over the years, but there still is no clear idea of what ‘leadership’ is or who leaders are.” The second statement usually takes the form of several paragraphs summarizing the popular theories of leadership: great man, traits, group, behaviorist, and situational. (13)

According to Rost, “The ethos is: Anything that anyone claims to be leadership is leadership” (16). Given this lack of consensus, “leadership” has too readily been conflated with “management.”

Even landmark texts like both of James MacGregor Burns’ books on transformational leadership, *Leadership* and *The Power to Lead*, provide a “conceptual framework [that] has been co-opted. Transformational leadership has been redesigned to make it amenable to the industrial paradigm and all that it represents” (Rost 91). This paradigm leads to definitions of leadership focused exclusively on leaders themselves and on being on top (98). Thus, Rost, influenced by Burns and the need to adapt an understanding of leadership to a postindustrial world, defines *leadership* as “an influence relationship among leaders and followers who intend real changes that reflect their mutual purposes” (102). In fact, Rost had, by the 1990s, already conceptualized all participants as leaders: “Followers are active, not passive, in the relationship. They do leadership, not followership” (112). Nevertheless, much of current leadership scholarship takes a reductive, often hierarchical approach, referring to any participants other than the leader as “followers.” While Rost paved the way for an understanding of leadership as something anyone could potentially enact, mainstream leadership theory persists with this language of “followers” and continues to emphasize a solitary leader. Like Rost, we reject the leader-follower binary, particularly when applied to WPA work, which has been heavily influenced by feminist theory and its emphasis on flattened hierarchies.

Over two decades later, Rost’s critique of his field remains valid. Leadership scholars continue to question the leader-centric literature and further complicate the models that have historically ignored how race, class and gender, among other factors, intersect with how leadership functions

in a multicultural and global workplace. Barbara Kellerman, among others, argues for “a more expansive view of leadership—one that sees leaders and followers as inseparable, indivisible, and impossible to conceive the one without the other” (“What” 91).⁶ Similarly, in her study of African American female executives, Patricia S. Parker (who relies on Burns and Rost for the theoretical base she complicates) notes the “increasingly fragmented, multicultural and fundamentally raced, gendered and classed context of the postindustrial” organization that demands “a vision of leadership that would accommodate the multicultural, racialized, and contradictory viewpoints and paradoxical situational challenges of 21st century organization[s]” (xxii). We need, Parker contends, “more dialogic both/and views of leadership and organizing” to “capture[] more completely the relationship of leaders and followers in a flow of contested and negotiated meaning production” (24). Our Leadership Chart, with its multiple mappings, facilitates a “both/and view” by revealing situated choices. It has grown out of not only the intersection of leadership studies and WPA scholarship, but of our individual experiences at both a large state university and a small private college. Despite different institutional contexts and programs, the need for mapping emerged as a strategy for development—of our programs and of ourselves as WPAs. In the spirit of this both/and view, we now move from this brief overview of contemporary leadership studies to the feminist and rhetorical considerations of power in the WPA literature.

Many of the most respected names in our field have weighed in on the issue of power. In fact, “the ‘P’ word continues to echo through our discourse” (Werder 9). Ed White has asserted in “Use It or Lose: Power and the WPA” that we have more power than we realize; we just need to seize it. In the oft-quoted excerpt from that piece, White states, “[t]o understand our situations, we need to assess where the enemies of our program lurk, what their motives and weapons are, and how we can marshal forces to combat them. We also need to see where our allies are and find out ways to strengthen them and to keep them friendly” (6). Some readers of White’s piece have found his advice unpalatable because of his military metaphor, but when we look at the underlying advice through the lens of our chart, he is suggesting a movement that requires reflecting (“understand our situations”), identifying our audiences and interlocutors along the horizontal line of our chart (“assess where the enemies of our program lurk . . . [and] where our allies are”), examining what their values are along the vertical axis from change-oriented to conservation-based (“what their motives and weapons are”) and tapping into the roles represented on each of the four quadrants on the chart to “marshal forces” both proactive and reactive.

Despite White's warning that we should grab and use power as WPAs, many in the field of rhetoric and composition have been schooled to prefer collaborative decision-making in which we influence (and are genuinely influenced by) our interlocutors. For example, Hildy Miller tempers White's advice by advocating for "the sort of bi-epistemological stance that characterizes a postmasculinist approach. It is resolving conflict from a 'both-and' rather than 'either-or' position, and exercising power from a position of equality" (59), especially in terms of balancing self-interest and the interests of others. Miller also recognizes the complexities of embodiment: "As a female teacher, establishing authority can be difficult; as a female administrator, it is even more challenging" (54). Hopefully, the WPA Leadership Chart does not represent the binaries of what Miller terms the "masculinist and feminist delivery systems" (56), however, and instead, offers—necessitates—several options. Even so, once any of the quadrants is embodied by flesh and blood, the situation is more complex—because of physical markers, ideological underpinnings, and personal preferences—than the labels might suggest.

Yet, despite these complexities, each quadrant in the chart provides a locus from which to enact potential power—by collaborating, imagining, proving, or conducting. Infused throughout the WPA Leadership Chart are access points for power, influence, and authority. In his book on political linguistics, mid-century Canadian scholar David V. Bell dissects the terms *power*, *influence*, and *authority*. While in everyday speech, we might conflate power, influence and, authority, Bell maintains that these terms are "not perfectly congruent synonyms" (15). Bell likens influence to credit; he states, "someone who 'has a lot of influence' is an individual who either has influenced many people in the past or is likely to be able to do so in the future" (18). The influential person's "analogue in the economy is the person who 'has a lot of credit,' which is not equivalent to 'having a lot of money'" (18). In this analogy, Bell avers that power is more formidable and "stable" than influence (84). By extension, authority is more institutionalized, functioning like the bank in this analogy and linked to formal titles and hierarchy (e.g., our administrative titles).

As Bell astutely points out, audience or interlocutors have a great deal to do with constructions of power. Throughout WPA scholarship we find statements similar to White's: "power is ultimately a matter of perception" (11). Likewise, scholars in leadership studies largely agree that "leaders and followers literally cocreate, coconstitute, leadership" (Kellerman qtd. in Cunha et al. 201). Bell argues that we do not "possess" power, but only "the *potential* for exercising power effectively" (17) in the same way that Michel Foucault describes power as "exercised from innumerable points"

(94). Various spaces on the chart—some of the “innumerable points”—correspond to different energy, actions, pace, and effects. These various energies—emotional energy, physical energy, and energy levels⁷—are embodied in different ways depending on the moment, the space, and our institutional culture.

In admitting that we wanted or needed power and its cousins, we felt a twinge of feminist guilt. We wanted to be able to embody the roles in the chart but not behave in a “masculinist way.” At times, we worried, like Carmen Werder, that both power and authority are “ethically suspect” (11) because they underscore control and undermine collaboration. Werder states that “[i]f we see ourselves only in terms of power, authority and influence—we risk limiting ourselves to coercive action” (21); to avoid this risk, she adds a fourth option to Bell’s framework: rhetorical agency (12). She defines “rhetorical agency” thusly: “as the potential for effecting change based on the extent to which the collective resources, titles, and expertise of a particular situation are made available for the individual and common good” (12). We argue that “rhetorical agency” does in fact operate within the so-called “controlling” categories that Werder takes from Bell, and all three categories—power, authority, and influence—*can* be used for ethical purposes. Even Werder eventually concedes that she came “to appreciate the value of all three modes of action [power, authority, and influence], not only as linguistic frames as Bell first proposed them, but also as discursive practices” (18). Rather than seeing rhetorical agency as an additional category, we see it as a means.

As a means, rhetorical agency—which may take the form of power, authority, and/or influence—has the potential to be equally effective and ethically appropriate in any of the quadrants on the WPA Leadership Chart. In fact, the Leadership Chart could not work if we didn’t enact rhetorical agency—it’s what compels movement throughout the chart and what drives others to respond and enact their own forms of leadership. In her CCC article on rhetorical agency, Marilyn Cooper complicates postmodern representations of agency, representations that constrain the possibilities for rhetoric. While Cooper is not discussing academic roles (her focus is national public persuasion, specifically a speech of Barack Obama’s), we see in her definition and defense of *agency* many resonances with our quests for situated leadership, power, influence, and authority. Leadership scholar Miguel Pina e Cunha and his co-authors offer a view of postmodern agency that dovetails with Cooper’s and sets the scene for exploring a WPA scenario through the lens of the Leadership Chart:

The individual leader is not merely a cipher being shaped by extraneous factors of culture and organization, but is a moral agent freely choosing courses of action within the discursive possibilities that appear to be available, including those deemed as ethical and those deemed as unethical by the [differing parties involved]. (192)

Our WPA Leadership Chart can be read as “discursive possibilities that appear to be available” to WPAs. Being a WPA (and even the use of the chart) is corporeal.⁸ As literary critic N. Katherine Hayles argues: embodiment is always “contextual, enmeshed within the specifics of place, time, physiology, and culture” (196). Thus, using Bell’s terms, the “potential for exercising power” is embodied as soon as the power is wielded, as soon as the “potential” is “exercised.” Just as Cooper argues that “individual agency emerges ineluctably from embodied processes; agency is inescapable for embodied beings” (443), we see power operating in a similar vein, even if that power is more akin to what Bell characterizes as influence or authority and even if the power might be constrained or run a spectrum.

We developed the Leadership Chart to bring to our own consciousness ways we could be(come) situated agents, using the rhetorical strategies associated with each role in the quadrants (collaborating, imagining, proving, and conducting). No single role—for example, the more “feminized” Colleague or the more “masculinized” Producer—can serve as the site for enacted agency in all situations. Indeed, in a study of women in academic leadership roles, “hav[ing] a wide range of possible reactions for any situations” and “adapt[ing] their leadership approach to specific strategic situations” were components of effective leadership philosophies (Madsen 262). Now, we invite you to analyze a scenario and all of its co-constructing constituents along with us. Throughout the scenario, we offer interpretations of the chart as might be mapped onto this situation, and we provide heuristics for responsible rhetorical agency and ethical leadership.

A WPA SCENARIO: A RESISTANT MINORITY

You’re in a small liberal arts school with a program staffed primarily by two dozen part-time faculty, many of whom have taught at the college for decades. Most part-time faculty regularly attend professional development workshops, share resources and ideas, and offer both thoughtful feedback and legitimate objections to programmatic changes. As a new WPA, you welcome and appreciate the department’s writing faculty, who are genuinely engaged teachers. Just as it is always the negative student evaluation that we dwell on, you (perhaps predictably) find yourself focused on one part-time

faculty member who has spent the academic year criticizing and rejecting your suggestions.

Your first major task in the fall term was to initiate an approved textbook list for first-year writing (FYW) courses and to revise the learning outcomes to comply with the new General Education Program, which you did in tandem with both full-time and part-time faculty who teach in the writing program. Your major task for the spring term is classroom observations. While junior tenure-track faculty is observed by the chair and by faculty members within and outside the department as part of the review and tenure process, the department has not been conducting regular observations of part-time faculty. The files suggest that new hires were observed during their first semester by the chair but that post-observation meetings sufficed for a documented observation report. In light of this change to observe part-time faculty on an ongoing basis, the full-time writing faculty collaborates on the observation form and offers to conduct observations themselves and thus “collective resources” and “expertise” are being used for the “common good” (Werder 12). Overall, the adjunct faculty is engaged in the observation process and actually seem grateful for feedback; the process seems to be going well and departmental culture may be slowly shifting. But then one instructor, whom we’ll call Betty and who has been at the college for over 20 years, has a strong response to curricular changes, to the observation process, and to *you*. She sends you numerous emails voicing her complaints. You later find out that she has sent even more emails to the chair airing the same concerns.

Per the new plan, you will observe Betty’s research writing course in which students have just finished a “thesis paper,” as Betty calls it, on *Dr. Faustus* and are about to begin reading Sophocles’ *Antigone*. When reviewing Betty’s syllabus and assignment sheets prior to the classroom visit, you note that Betty is off track with the course texts and the newly established learning goals. The revised programmatic guidelines require faculty to choose a rhetoric and a reader from a list of approved books, a list that you developed and that was vetted by part-time and full-time faculty who attended meetings in the fall term. Neither *Dr. Faustus* nor *Antigone* is on the list, and Betty is not using any rhetoric textbook, let alone one from the approved list. The learning outcomes for the course, which were revamped in the fall along with the approved textbook list, state that students should engage in rhetorical analysis not literary analysis. Also according to the learning outcomes, students should be finding academic sources in the library relevant to arguments of their own making, not listening to lectures on works of fiction and drama. Furthermore, during the classroom observation, you conclude that the students are not engaged. The students

are not participating in discussion or taking any notes; several students are performing other tasks, such as studying for a chemistry midterm or updating their status on Facebook. Various aspects of the course give you the impression that Betty is teaching a literature course masquerading as a first-year writing course.

At the post-observation meeting, you express your concerns about her chosen texts, over-reliance on lecture, and insufficient class time dedicated to research and drafting processes. Perhaps because of her extensive teaching experience and longevity at the college, Betty hears your points as illuminating pedagogical and disciplinary differences as opposed to incongruities between her course and the FYW guidelines. Betty's course evaluations have ranged from competent to good and she has been rehired every year, so Betty may be inclined to see your perspective as abruptly changing the expectations or as the idiosyncratic response of one faculty member. Given that classroom observations are a new initiative, the composition course is part of the new general education curriculum, and both Betty and her students have perceived her teaching and course as, overall, successful, your critical comments are unanticipated. Betty might be feeling increasingly destabilized.

Ultimately, Betty insists that you both must “agree to disagree,” that you both have a valid approach to the course and can each teach it “our way” and arrive at the same outcomes. She portrays these differences in an individual rather than programmatic sense: *you* (not you-as-WPA) are attempting to interfere with her academic freedom even though she has “always done it this way with great success.” In contrast, you value the departmental documents—written and approved by both adjunct faculty and full-time faculty during previous workshops—as something akin to a contract between the WPA and the faculty teaching first-year writing courses.

After the post-observation meeting, Betty openly disagrees with you during a professional development workshop that you are leading by simply stating that the best liberal arts schools do not use textbooks in writing courses but rely on “excellent readings” and instructor expertise instead. She explicitly argues that the college does not have the resources to “micro-manage” each section of FYW, and thus not every instructor should be required to revise their course content and assignments to adhere to the newly agreed upon learning outcomes. Betty, schooled in literature at a top humanities program, dismisses your authority on two levels—your position as WPA does not persuade her to “agree” to any of your constructive criticism, and your scholarly expertise based on a body of knowledge in rhetoric and composition is similarly ignored.

In “An Anatomy of Radical Anger in Writing Program Administration,” Brad Peters sees “radical anger” as “an explicable, recurrent action that fairly reasonable, but inexperienced people will sometimes take against shifting working conditions that they find socially or politically overwhelming” (145). Even though Betty is highly experienced, her response to the changes in the writing program can be read as a form of radical anger. Peters argues that “WPAs need to pay attention to its emergence, to consider what re-actions are most appropriate both on the personal and administrative levels” (145). Along with these emotional components, which may include fear (of change, of tenuous job status, of adaptability, etc.) are the power dynamics. While Betty might ostensibly lack institutional power or authority (in terms of title), she in fact could create a toxic environment that thwarts the recent and emerging changes. What if other adjunct faculty frames the process as she has, as an issue of “academic freedom,” or begin buying into dichotomies that separate outcomes from practices? Though she *seems* to have little power, this instructor could undermine program initiatives through her *influence*. Conversely, what options might you, the administrator, exercise: power, authority, influence? Do you seek to preserve institutional structures and/or hierarchies in this scenario, or push them to evolve?

MAPPING YOUR RESPONSE

The scenario above and the range of available responses below (certainly not exhaustive) are offered to help us and readers become better leaders. Although there are no shortcuts in WPA work, the section below is meant to serve as a momentary “Marauder’s Map,” making visible roles and locations that WPAs can occupy and enact. Working through the scenario, readers will bump up against the tensions articulated by E. Shelley Reid when she says she is “both the boss compositionist and a feminist woman . . . a ‘both/and’ woman by inclination and education” (126). The process before you act matters, for “[a]s Trevino and Brown (2004) have noted, ethical leadership is not only about doing what is right, but also about deciding what is right” (Cunha et al. 192). By moving through the quadrants below, you can explore options for enacting agency. In their case studies, Lee G. Bolman and Joan V. Gallos recognize “strong academic leaders” as “skilled in the art of reframing—a deliberate process of shifting perspectives to see the same situation in multiple ways and through different lenses” (13). The chart thus provides a framework to (re)frame this scenario in various ways.

Colleague

Attempting to collaborate with Betty keeps the dynamic internal, with the WPA and Betty perhaps scheduling informal meetings to further discuss course materials and teaching strategies. The benefits to this option include drawing upon your ethos as an instructor, engaging with Betty as a partner, and opening yourself up to criticisms of curricular and pedagogical changes and ideas. As a Colleague, you understand the anxiety that comes with observations and such an identification minimizes power differentials more so than any of the other quadrants. This response illustrates a more “feminist vision of personal power,” as Miller characterizes it, and your leadership relies on your ability “to facilitate, to share power, and to enable both self and others to contribute” (52). Professional development workshops lend themselves to collaboration both in preparation—with other faculty members, with graduate students, with participants across the campus (such as the librarians or committees on writing policy)—and in their execution—collaborating with the participants to achieve the goals of the workshop. Specific tactics for sharing power and enabling others to contribute are aspects of the scenario such as the co-authored program goals and textbook list, discussion-based meetings, and collaborative workshops.

The Colleague focuses on mentoring as the primary leadership strategy, striving to form mutually beneficial bonds. While the attributes of the Colleague are often gendered as “feminine,” Reid identifies mentoring as capable of “creat[ing] space for feminist action within the academy and within the writing program” (129). She offers the notion of two-pronged mentoring: fostering a fruitful program and “self-mentoring” by minding one’s own energy levels and capacity for giving (and one’s pace, Micciche would say). Reid’s model resists the tendency “to see mentoring as a feminist administrative cure-all” (129), while also working against the masculinist model of mentoring in which the mentor fills up or fixes a deficit in the mentee.

How do we foster rhetorical agency—what Werder defines as “the potential for effecting change based on the extent to which the collective resources, titles and expertise of a particular situation are made available for the individual and common good” (12)? How can Betty’s seemingly resistant behavior be a form of participation? How is Betty’s dissent contributing to the program? How is the conflict between the program goals and Betty’s reaction an expected facet of a healthy, collaborative process? What is our commitment to and capacity for long-term support of individual instructors? How do other stakeholders factor in (e.g., students who might benefit from the programmatic changes)?

Innovator

Imagining other ways to move forward brings external audience members into the scenario and requires the WPA to think more creatively. What are the benefits of moving across the external axis? Could you take advantage of changes outside your program or department (such as a new Dean, program, or initiative) to talk about initiatives in light of your program's (or department's) larger role at your institution? For example, Ed White recounts how after the Dean of Humanities eliminated the budget for the WAC Program, he appealed to the new Dean of Undergraduate Studies and successfully moved the entire program. White "discovered a kind of power that does not appear in flow charts, power that most WPAs have, and . . . was able to use it to save the program" (5). This creative response allowed White to adapt to change and even transform the rhetorical situation. Similarly, "naysayers" like Betty might enable the WPA to do her job even better in that listening to counter-perspectives may enable us to consider even better ideas and discover broader implications and audiences. For instance, the Chair is a strong advocate for adjunct faculty and, at a small liberal arts college, needs people who teach a range of courses. Betty's course might be a perfect fit for a different General Education category or might be used as a model in the department for a writing-intensive course focused on drama or a special topics course. The evolution might result in the WPA making a case for a new course to outside constituencies, such as the WAC program. As Kathleen J. Ryan and Tarez Samra Graban note, "even well-run programs encounter resistance that, if not embraced as a site of possibility, can lead to a quiet but perpetual programmatic undervaluing on the level of communicative and rhetorical ideology" (278). Approaching such resistance as *possibility* can lead to inventing alternatives and expanding our audiences.

How can we be receptive to the opinions of others and capitalize on the strengths the participants bring to the program? How could those alternatives improve our program or department? How do we benefit if we think beyond the current program (and even beyond a present "issue") and consider larger audiences who might see, instead, opportunities and improvements? What if the scenario is more complex than this one in that external audiences are restricting the changes (such as lack of funding for a technology initiative)?

Producer

The products in this scenario include documented classroom observations (by the WPA and the rhetoric and composition faculty) that can be sum-

marized more generally for external readers, whether accrediting bodies or audiences outside the department (a WAC Committee or a report to the Dean or Provost as examples). Departmental materials that give cohesion to the program and General Education documents that articulate learning outcomes for FYW, while they function as written products by and for the department, also serve as tangible evidence the WPA uses to support arguments to outside audiences.

Mapping yourself in this quadrant could help this scenario if the upper-level quadrants have failed to work for you. For instance, you might feel the need to document problems with Betty's performance or the assessment of her sections if they are undermining the objectives of the course or if her practices are not in keeping with the vision the WPA or WPA team has for the program. In other words, if Betty's resistance is not productive (the "constructive conflict" of the Collaboration quadrant) and if fostering change internally (through the classroom observations that would fall under the Coordinator quadrant) has stalled, then an external measure might be necessary, such as documenting lack of adherence to course guidelines, comparing assessment results in Betty's section with the departmental norm, or making the case for dismissal.

At what point does the WPA exert power (such as the decision not to renew an employment contract) if effective innovations are being hindered by resistance? When do you use your "position of power as a hierarchical advantage, for imposing order and structure" (Gruber 49)? When do you work with the administration? When do you preserve the status quo?

Coordinator

The Coordinator role moves us clockwise and back into the internal realm but still aligns with preserving programmatic goals. This role, more than the others, may make you vulnerable to the "bureaucrat within" (Goodburn and Leverenz) as it connects you to your institutional title and may feel at odds with feminist praxis. However, Amy Goodburn and Carrie Leverenz contend that these very "[s]truggles over power, authority, and leadership are not barriers to enacting feminist principles; they are the embodiment of them" (Goodburn and Leverenz 289) As the Coordinator, you function as the de facto manager of the program even as you may push against the capitalist/masculinist/patriarchal forces that conflict with feminism.

In this role, the "administrator" in the "feminist administrator" title is drawn to the principles of efficacious management. The Coordinator might exert power as a strategic move towards preservation and might need to value compliance over other responses from the group. For instance, at the

faculty workshop, the WPA might challenge Betty's objections or might even use silence as a rhetorical strategy (such as not responding to a disruptive comment¹⁰ by Betty). Even though this instantiation of the role appears bureaucratic, a Coordinator may privilege hearing from most or all of those in attendance rather than risking that one participant might dominate the discussion and/or hijack the collaboratively constructed agenda.

Conflicted between supporting all of the instructors on the composition faculty and maximizing the two-hour window devoted to faculty development, you might be experiencing radical anger or some other strong emotion. Debra Frank Dew claims that WPAs too often curtail "best practice commonplaces for WPA-adjunct faculty relations" due to "a strong measure of ideologically entrenched adjunct guilt." In this scenario could you be susceptible to foregoing programmatic changes informed by best practice commonplaces because of "adjunct guilt"? Or, could "adjunct guilt" lead the WPA to let one rogue adjunct onto center stage and end up silencing the other adjuncts in attendance? Are there enough safe channels for feedback in the program?

Can we ever give in to our "bureaucrat within" and still enact feminist leadership? In this scenario, can Betty be read as behaving in a "masculinist mode"? If so, is "feminist resistance" on the part of the WPA warranted? What might that look like? Is silence, which Cheryl Glenn classifies as a "linguistic strategy to demonstrate power" (177), appropriate in this scenario? How might silencing Betty hinder the trust the WPA is trying to build among the composition faculty? In tandem with silence, could "stillness" work as a response here? To avoid falling prey to the "perceived need to respond to a problem before [knowing] enough," could we try "residing longer than is comfortable in the complexity, stillness, and fatigue of not knowing how to proceed?" (Micciche 80). How might we serve the stakeholders (faculty, students, administrators) and best enact leadership in order to ensure cohesion without undermining morale (our own or others)?

CONCLUSION

The scenario above, rather than serving as a lesson on best practices or as a cautionary tale, provides a springboard for questions for readers and a means of further theorizing possible sites of leadership. In advocating for this chart to map the work of a WPA, we might seem to be suggesting that every decision be the "slow agency" that Micciche discusses. Instead, as noted above, we see the map as a heuristic that can and should be used whether one has just a few moments before a last-minute meeting or whether one is embarking upon a multi-year project. In any case, using

the map allows one not only a *process* for arriving at a decision but a *rationale* for the choice one ultimately endorses. That rationale seems especially important as one's professional identity evolves.

The chart does not ensure success. In *GenAdmin: Theorizing WPA Identities in the Twenty-First Century*, Charlton et al. note that

just because some WPAs were specifically prepared for WPA work in graduate school—or taught to think administratively—does not mean they won't make mistakes on the job. It is quite likely, however, that they may be prepared to treat their administrative mistakes as an opportunity for reflection and theorizing because they see WPA work as an area of scholarly inquiry, and they will look to work collaboratively with their colleagues to build consensus and a stronger program than any one person could create. (72)

Similarly, the map neither prevents “mistakes” nor guarantees the “right” or “best” decision every time. It allows one to weigh options and try to (to the extent that we can) predict results. One must ultimately decide what results to most value (or to hope to achieve) in a particular situation. Each result not only suggests a different goal, but a different level of tolerance: for conflict, for sacrifice, for accommodation, for inertia and for change. For instance, one of our outside reviewers said in reference to our previous section that “I'm one of those administrators who would not want to produce a bad review of Betty or even fire her.” Thus, that might be a choice that a particular WPA does not make. We argue that even if we are similarly uncomfortable with that alternative, we are limiting our possibilities for enacting leadership and agency if we are not willing to think about the range the chart offers. If we consistently select options in the lower quadrant, we risk stifling a program. If we consistently default to the upper quadrant, we may jeopardize having any sense of institutional identity and stability for a program. As we hope our descriptions make clear, one approach—one quadrant—is often not enough for thorny WPA work.

In their review essay, “Feminist WPA Work: Beyond Oxymorons,” Laura R. Micciche and Donna Strickland lament that they feel “this nagging sense that feminism stands for practices disassociated from politics” (173). We have had similar conversations about this chart, which is not inherently feminist but encompasses power and thus politics. For us, the WPA Leadership Chart provides a means of embracing a feminist epistemology and acting daily in our professional worlds. While the chart does not promote one worldview over another, we see our roles as WPAs as infused with feminism. In part, this infusion is due to our training in rhetoric and composition. Almost always we perceived a common ground

between the fundamental assumptions of our discipline and our understanding of feminist theory. Also influencing our enactment of the chart is the fact that we strive to shape our entire lives—professional and otherwise—around our own sense of feminist principles. Given this orientation, we see the WPA Leadership Chart as one way to push forward both WPA scholarship and conceptions of feminism.

While the chart is not necessarily feminist, it was conceived as a means to enact power as feminist WPAs. It has, we hope, the characteristics of “a feminist administrative model,” one that “shifts not just power, but understandings of power” (Charlton et al. 191). To return to the above scenario with Betty, can one reconcile one’s feminism with firing Betty? It would seem to us that for each WPA, that answer would be a personal/political one and not the same one. Micciche and Strickland write that their “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” (173). While the Innovator quadrant most requires a WPA to pause and think “big,” employing all four quadrants of the chart allows us to examine a situation or problem in these “fresh” ways, offering potential for the evolution that Micciche and Strickland see missing in recent WPA scholarship. They “suggest[] that it’s time to release the worries about contradictions and to move toward new visions of feminist WPAing,” tellingly concluding their review with a quotation from Donna Haraway that includes the metaphor of “bag-lady storytelling” (175), what Charlton et al. call “metaphoric reflecting” (119). Thinking metaphorically is crucial to thinking “anew.” Thinking spatially has been a productive way for us to conceptualize “WPAing.” Of course, “spatial metaphors,” as Nedra Reynolds memorably articulated, “have long dominated our written discourse in this field (‘field’ being one of the first spatial references we can name)” of composition (14). A chart for mapping leadership positions and enacting agency can reinforce attention to the local and the material, as Reynolds promoted (30), the very approach that feminist “WPAing” demands.

However slowly or suddenly one comes to a leadership position, the institutional landscape requires plotting. While we once sought a Marauder’s Map to figure out our campuses, what we found we needed is a map to orient ourselves as leaders. Thus, we developed a (non)magical Marauder’s Map: the WPA Leadership Chart with its interactive and dynamic quadrants for enacting agency. While the chart provides a theoretical understanding of leadership roles and helps us analyze our ethos, values, and audience(s) to strategize responses to and sources of power, the embodied reality involves complex human beings and institutional constraints that

make this work radically situated. WPA work is captivating but haunting, with tidiness and perfection as elusive as magic and just as unnecessary.

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NOTES

1. Although the Marauder's Map is meant to "manage mischief," the mischief managed is not the illegal or unethical activity discussed in managerial theory or even the shenanigans perpetrated by previous keepers of the map in the *Harry Potter* series.

2. This chart is loosely based on the work of Robert E. Quinn, Sue R. Faerman, Michael P. Thompson, Michael R. McGrath, and Lynda S. St. Clair.

3. We are tempted to use the German verb *tragen* here, which means both to carry and to wear, and also to bear; these leadership roles are like masks or clothing we wear as well as burdens and/or mantles we carry.

4. We are using inscribe to connote the discursive aspect of the chart (versus the corporeal).

5. Similarly, Harry Potter acquires the Marauder's Map as a gift from the Weasley twins, who give it to Harry to enable him to move to a new space: Hogsmeade. Harry can't leave Hogwarts for Hogsmeade because his guardians refuse to sign the permission slip.

6. Moreover, the field itself has been commercialized and commodified to such an extent that Kellerman dubs it the "leadership industry," a "catchall term for the now countless leadership centers, institutes, programs, courses, seminars, workshops, experience, trainers, books, blogs, articles, websites, webinars, videos, conferences, consultants, and coaches claiming to teach people—usually for money—how to lead" ("Leading" 136).

7. We take this description directly from George A. Kennedy's definition of rhetoric in "A Hoot in the Dark: The Evolution of General Rhetoric."

8. Our thinking about embodiment is informed by Tina S. Kazan's discussion in "Dancing Bodies in the Classroom." See that piece for a more detailed description of the discursive vs. the corporeal, what Hayles distinguishes as inscription vs. incorporation.

9. As Ryan and Graban analyze it, “the adage ‘let’s all agree to disagree’ . . . shows a lack of commitment to transgressing the disagreement and represents the disagreement as normative” (296n9).

10. We use “disruptive” here because it can have negative (destructive) and positive (subversive) connotations.

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Creating Accessible Spaces for ESL Students Online

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ABSTRACT

This essay responds to the 2012 CCCC featured session, “Access—A Happening,” in which Blackmon et al. focused on “removing barriers and confusing the discipline’s boundaries, with a focus on the bodies and minds that have been excluded.” As a presenter, Paul Kei Matsuda called on instructors and WPAs to create access for ESL students into such spaces. WPAs have long sought out opportunities to allow students to have more of a voice when it comes to policy; in this way, this study examines whether WPA documents—specifically information and support resources available on writing center websites—meet the needs of ESL students. I studied eight OWL websites in universities with large international student populations to gauge how well these sites took into account criteria pertinent to ESL students as evident in the available scholarship: intercultural needs, writing resource needs, plagiarism resource needs, and readability. The article ends with specific recommendations for WPAs to follow in creating documents—online or otherwise—that will incorporate ESL audiences. By following these recommendations, WPAs can be more attuned to the needs of more individuals and can better accommodate access to places which may ordinarily prohibit entrance to those without particular (or with divergent) physical and linguistic capabilities.

INTRODUCTION

As the demographics of the university continue to change to reflect more linguistically diverse students on campus, writing program administrators (WPAs) of all kinds—First-Year English Program Administrators, Writing Center Directors, and Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) coordinators—must adapt to the necessities of English as a Second Language (ESL) students. These perpetual changes in the makeup of our student popula-

tions, as Ana Maria Preto-Bay and Kristine Hansen argue, are seemingly small in number and degree, but taken as a whole, will eventually lead to a “tipping point” that will dramatically alter the look and feel of writing programs on campuses (51).

The influence of ESL students on how WPAs perform their jobs has already been noted. Ilona Leki and Todd Ruecker detail how our placement practices should be altered to take ESL students into account. Citing a number of problems with the traditional objective placement exam at her institution, Leki discusses the advantages of switching to a more holistic exam that eliminates the “on the spot” panic that may set in for some ESL students, obscuring what the previous placement exam truly measured (60). Based on his survey of ESL students in ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) Composition courses, Ruecker found that a majority of ESL students who enrolled in composition courses that were specifically tailored to their learning needs expressed more satisfaction with their placement. He suggests expanding the options for ESL students to self-place in the writing course that seems best for them (107), a venture which requires much proactive work on the part of WPAs.

Similarly, Vivian Zamel points out that the first and second year ESL students whom she surveyed across several disciplines at her institution mentioned that they would like their instructors to be more patient, tolerant, and encouraging. As importantly, these students wished that their instructors could provide “clearer and more explicitly detailed assignments and more accessible classroom talk” (511). Zamel notes that faculty across the curriculum should not lower standards for these students, but instead should be more reflective in how they present pedagogical opportunities to *all* students.

In the same spirit, this study looks at how we can continue to address the needs of our growing populations of ESL students on our campuses in our creation and dissemination of documents. When we create such materials as program websites, workshop handouts, and teaching observation rubrics, we should take into account how they will impact linguistically different learners, and adapt these materials to meet the needs of students who may have difficulty understanding the full complexity of the English language and the customs of Western institutions. Specifically, in this study, I focus on Online Writing Lab (OWL) websites as an example of such documents.

Because the OWL website can act as students’ first point of contact with the writing center, it seems particularly important that the website reflect the needs of its student population. This reflexivity works both ways, as it can also highlight what administrators deem most important to post

online. Indeed, as Aimée Knight, et al. note in their analysis of the rhetorical design choices for writing program websites, online spaces “present a sense of what we value theoretically, pedagogically, and technologically” (191). With that in mind, I explore to what degree OWL websites from universities with large ESL populations adhere to the recommendations and findings of ESL scholarship. More specifically, I examine whether the writing center websites in eight universities with high international student populations generally address the intercultural and writing needs of ESL students in an accessible manner. I begin with a general overview of literature on OWLs before contextualizing ESL students and the criteria that I used to examine these websites. I end with some recommendations for how to begin designing for ESL student access into our online spaces. Despite the focus on OWLs and their obvious impact on writing center directors, all WPAs can work to address these ESL needs collaboratively across the university.

OWLs

In “Online Writing Labs (OWLs): A Taxonomy of Options and Issues,” Muriel Harris and Michael Pemberton classify OWLs into two distinct types. The first are online repositories of information that hold handouts for students and general information about the writing center. The second type function as interactive mechanisms for holding conferences synchronously (chat, for example) or asynchronously (email, for example). In the large body of work regarding OWL scholarship, most research tends to focus on how synchronous and asynchronous environments change the writing lab tutoring session’s dynamic. For instance, Barbara Monroe dissects the common messages that tutors send in their feedback to students. She separates the response into the opening overview that is meant to build rapport between tutor and student, the intertextual remarks with specific recommendations, and the closing notes that encourage revision and remind students that they can come in for a face-to-face visit. Monroe sees each of these separate sections as that highly rhetorical “site where meaning and values are shared, contested and negotiated, a site that provokes and promotes new literate practices” (23). In another example, Sam Van Horne applies Vygotsky’s zone of proximal development to the online tutoring space, finding that students who write out their ideas on their topic during a tutoring session gain a better understanding of their writing processes (101).

The little that has been written on OWL websites, on the other hand, tends to focus on design decisions and models for conceptualizing these webspaces. Clinton Gardner, for instance, describes the writing center’s

experience building an OWL website at Salt Lake Community College (SLCC) and the various decisions that had to be made throughout the process. Gardner elaborates on these stylistic decisions, stating, for example, that “All information [on the SLCC OWL] is succinct in order to make the site easier to read. A table of contents remains constant throughout the reading of the site because of web-based HTML frames” (78). Similarly, Eric Miraglia and Joel Norris discuss weighing the benefits and disadvantages to creating an OWL for the writing center at Washington State University.

Lee-Ann Kastman Breuch notes that most of these early studies that discuss developing OWL websites do so through spatial metaphors, and proposes a third conceptual model of space that is based on the Burkean Parlor. She examines OWLs from writing centers at the University of Missouri-Columbia and Colorado State University, noting that they combine “images, sound, and information about writing” to “invoke the Burkean Parlor model—the idea of conversation, of writing process, or working with others” (38). As a Burkean model is built on the idea of including students in our ongoing conversations, it makes sense to extend this invitation to the growing number of ESL students, who come to our institutions and who have different needs than native English speakers.

Much like the general research on OWLs, most of the ESL literature on OWLs has focused on the interactive variety of OWLs and less on OWLs as general websites. For instance, Severino, Swenson, and Zhu compared the feedback requests from native English speaking (NES) and non-native English speaking (NNES) undergraduate students who used the writing center’s asynchronous email tutoring service. The researchers found that NNES students more frequently asked for feedback regarding grammatical issues than NES students, but there seemed to be virtually no differences when comparing requests for help with vocabulary, style, and documentation. Sara Rilling describes her experience of assisting in the creation of an ESL OWL, which required much negotiation between the Teaching of English as a Second Language (TESL) department and the composition program’s writing center. In her discussion of the asynchronous feedback that tutors would leave for ESL students, Rilling notes that ESL students may benefit from receiving feedback through directive language, as opposed to phrasing comments as suggestions (364–65).

While these studies are helpful in uncovering the dynamics of tutoring sessions online, we must not forget the important rhetorical function that websites play in communicating our ethos. In the case of OWL websites, students can get immediate information on a writing center’s priorities with a simple web search before deciding to set up an appointment online or in

person. This is particularly important to remember considering that despite the advances in technology that have opened up new ways of conducting online consultations, writing centers are still more inclined to focus on developing and maintaining simple websites online to advertise their services to the student community than to take advantage of such electronic tutoring programs (Neaderhiser and Wolfe 62–3).

As most of the resources that exist on building and maintaining OWL websites tend to be more descriptive than prescriptive, very little exists to guide us in making rhetorical decisions for including ESL audiences in our webpages. That said, certain writing and intercultural needs of ESL students do make themselves present in the extant ESL Writing Center scholarship and in usability literature. Though not standardized, these documents can offer guidelines for helping us craft our information with a larger audience in mind. In doing so, we would increase the online visibility of our multilingual student body.

DEFINING ESL STUDENTS

For the purposes of this study, I limit the term “ESL students” to international students who are studying in the United States. I used the Institute of International Education’s (IIE) 2011 ranking of the top 25 schools with high international student enrollments to create my sample.¹ Due to time and space constraints, I limited the sample to those schools with at least 6,000 international students (the highest number of international students was 8,615 at one of these eight institutions). I must also note that such universities are similar to the size and population of my own; indeed, this study originates from my own work within the context of my university’s ESL population.

I recognize that narrowing the definition of ESL students in this way is not without its limitations. For instance, looking solely at universities with a significant international student population does not take into account the large, indeed quickly growing, population of Generation 1.5 English Language Learners (ELL). These students, unlike international students, are generally ELLs in high school and/or immigrants from non-English speaking countries, who are embedded in their own cultural communities within American cities. It has historically been, and continues to be, difficult to determine who qualifies under this category, as “U.S. colleges and universities collect virtually no information about U.S. residents’ or citizens’ native language [, and therefore] we cannot say exactly how many [Generation 1.5] students there are” (Harklau 2). Typically, studies involv-

ing Generation 1.5 students require that students self-report their history and language abilities.

I should note that merely labeling all international students as ESL learners is problematic as well. For instance, due in part to British colonialism and the impact of globalization, many students from India do not need the same level of English instruction in college as students from other countries where English instruction is not as prevalent. The same can be said of many Canadian international students. Indeed, there may often be students who come in with exceptional grammar knowledge that exceeds that of their classmates or even instructors, but who have difficulty applying these rules because they have not had much oral practice with the language.²

Despite these limitations, however, using international students as a gauge for this study can be useful seeing as how many studies that have focused on ESL students' needs and their differences from NES students are based on populations from countries such as those listed in the IIE report. Indeed the report lists China, South Korea, and India as the top three countries of origin for international students, and without fail all three were represented in the top five countries of origin for each of these eight universities (See Table 1). The data were collected from each university's information online regarding its international student enrollment.

Table 1. Leading Countries of Origin of International Students in the US

Country of Origin	China	India	South Korea
Rank on the IIE Leading Places of Origin across all American universities	1	2	3
Rank in University A	1	3	2
Rank in University B	1	3	2
Rank in University C	1	2	3
Rank in University D	1	2	3
Rank in University E	1	4	2
Rank in University F	1	3	2
Rank in University G	1	2	3
Rank in University H	1	2	3

Furthermore, these institutions, like many around the country that accept international students, grant enrollment under the condition that these students receive minimum scores on various assessments such as the TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) exam, the IELTS (Inter-

national English Language Testing System) exam, as well as other measures within the institution upon acceptance. Yet, despite some of the rather high minimum scores that students need for admission into these eight universities, international students may still be admitted needing significant language instruction. For example, the Educational Testing Service (ETS), which administers the TOEFL exam, notes that its internet-based version of the test is broken down into four sections (Reading, Speaking, Listening, and Writing) with scores ranging from 0 to 30 for each section for a maximum score of 120. Universities A and B in this sample ask that students score at least 100 on the exam; University H asks that students score 100 on the exam and that they score at least 20 on each section. Even within these strictest of requirements, students can be admitted with scores that fall in the fair or intermediate skill range in one of the four tested categories (see Table 2). I use this to illustrate how students enrolled in these institutions are not that much different from those admitted elsewhere; in fact, students enrolled in other universities with more lenient requirements may have more writing and comprehension needs.

Table 2. Comparison of Minimum TOEFL Scores Needed for Admission

	TOEFL score needed (internet-based test)—out of 120
University A	100
University B	100 (Suggested)
University C	79
University D	79 with minimum subject scores of Reading 19, Listening 16, Speaking 18, and Writing 18
University E	83
University F	79
University G	88 with minimum subject scores of Reading 23, Listening 23, Speaking 21 and Writing 21
University H	100 with at least 20 in each section

CRITERIA

As I have noted, although there are no clear standards for how to create these webpages with ESL students in mind, there are general guidelines that we can stitch together scattered across ESL research, writing center studies, and website usability documents. In the following section, I detail the needs of ESL students across four dimensions that are most prevalent in writing center scholarship, writing research, and usability literature: inter-

cultural needs, writing resource needs, plagiarism resource needs, and readability. I provide a brief overview of my criteria in this next section before turning to the results of the data.

Intercultural Needs

Shanti Bruce explains that ESL students are eager to come into the writing center but experience some anxiety before their sessions because they do not know what to expect, particularly if they are international students who come from academic environments in which writing centers are not prominent or non-existent (31). Bruce states, however, that often these anxieties dissipate once the student enters the writing center and is greeted warmly by her tutor. Yet, despite this friendly atmosphere, tutors and students can often find themselves working toward two completely different aims.

This conflict occurs most frequently when ESL students come in prioritizing grammar and proofreading concerns, while tutors have been instructed to focus more closely on higher order concerns such as organization and meaning. Terese Thonus shares her experiences of “the frustrated ESL student and [the] equally frustrated tutor squar[ing] off against one another, both under pressure to meet an unrealistic deadline. The student says, ‘I want her to check my grammar, but she won’t’; the tutor says, ‘It’s against my ethics to proofread’” (21). I imagine that all WC tutors have experienced this at some point in their careers.

To ease the gridlock between tutor and student, Tony Silva and Muriel Harris recommend an open approach to communicating expectations. They write, “Tutors need to tell ESL writers that it is unrealistic for them to expect to be able to write like native speakers of English—especially when it comes to the small but persistent problems like articles and prepositions” (531). Furthermore, clearly stating that tutors do not edit should not mislead ESL students into thinking that tutors are incapable of assisting with any grammar needs, as there are numerous benefits to this type of instruction during a session. A clear explanation of the distinction between grammar instruction and personal editing would help students better understand the parameters of the tutor’s help.

Given this information, it seems that at the most basic level our documents need to communicate to ESL students the purpose and limitations of the writing center. In this particular case, writing center websites should discuss the expectations and policies for students who arrive for a session. However, students may still come in with the expectation that they can simply sit back and let the tutor do most of the work. Jane Cogie discusses the benefits of tutors and students engaging in a mutual negotiation of

meaning in a text. This involves the equal participation of both parties (53). If this type of exchange is encouraged for discussions of grammar, it would be beneficial to let students know ahead of time in what ways they will be asked to actively engage with the tutor regarding their writing.

Writing Resource Needs

In his review of second language writing scholarship, Silva mentions that ESL writers seemed to do less planning, had more difficulty understanding their instructors' assignments, and did less goal setting when compared to NES students ("Distinct Nature" 661). They also did less reviewing and rereading of their written texts, and when they revised, it was a more laborious task (668). He recommends that instructors provide "more work on planning—to generate ideas, text structure, and language—so as to make the actual writing more manageable. They may need to have their students draft in stages . . ." (671). Although there have not been many studies that look at how pre-planning strategies impact second language writers, the few that exist provide a good analysis of useful exercises. For instance, in Maki Ojima's study, ESL students were more likely to risk using a larger variety of words and expressions when they had time to plan and brainstorm before writing an assignment compared to when they were asked to compose without any prewriting activity. All this to say that if ESL students are coming in to the writing center with particular needs, it makes sense to have helpful and visible electronic resources ready for ESL students to use.

Plagiarism Resource Needs

Much of the scholarship regarding second language learners and plagiarism has started to focus primarily on the different cultural interpretations regarding the borrowing of others' ideas (Bloch 13–14). Kurt Bouman argues that students from collectivist cultures, which stress collaboration, might struggle with constructing independent arguments in Western countries, where the individual is emphasized and writers are expected to develop their own ideas (108). Such an emphasis on originality may be difficult for students to grasp, particularly if their culture primarily values the memorization and recitation of important passages in writing (Hayward 9–10).

Typically, plagiarism in broader discussions is presented as students' copying of others' ideas—whether knowingly or unknowingly—due to a lack of time or an inability to develop their own ideas. But this may not always be the case for ESL students. For instance, as Pat Currie points out, ESL students face particular challenges when it comes to plagiarism when

their instructors emphasize that they should eliminate grammatical “awkwardness” from their writing. Plagiarism here occurs not because students are short on time, but because they wish to sound as precise and graceful as the authors they read. Indeed, as Currie acknowledges, this practice of finding the appropriate phrases to patch together takes even more time than simply paraphrasing and attributing credit to the author (9). Because ESL students often do not understand the cultural underpinnings behind plagiarism, there may be a need to provide ESL students with resources that explain the institutional and cultural reasons behind our policies for improperly borrowing others’ work.

Readability

When Colpo, Fullmer, and Lucas developed their writing center website at the University of Nevada at Reno, they “conceptualized the Website as a billboard that would increase awareness of the writing center and encourage clients to come in for tutorials” (78). This approach involves keen audience awareness. In fact, the researchers are in tune with Steve Krug, a website usability writer, who states that we should design webpages precisely as billboards—with easy-to-identify information that is readable (*Don’t Make 21*). Although there are no set standards for writing for international audiences,⁴ there are several website design practices that make for more accessible sites. As it is beyond the scope of this article to look at all of the various design practices for creating usable spaces, I will focus solely on readability since it has previously been linked with ESL needs.

Specifically, in “Language Problems to Be Coped with in Web Localization” Pinfan Zhu notes that “non-native speakers feel more comfortable reading short sentences” and suggests that writers keep Rudolf Flesch’s statistics in mind when communicating with cross-cultural audiences (61). In his 1946 text *The Art of Plain Talk*, Flesch notes that sentence readability falls within a spectrum based on the number of words that are used. For instance, the average reader can process sentences that are 17 words long, while fairly difficult “literary English” sentences are composed of 21 words and *very* difficult “scientific English” sentences are 30 words long (61). This might be difficult for those of us who have spent years teaching “literary English” in English and Rhetoric programs, but as Krug reminds us, we should treat websites as billboards, not high literature.

Summary

To sum up, the criteria I chose for evaluating these writing center websites was derived from research across ESL scholarship, usability documents, and writing center theory. In particular, I looked for

- *Intercultural Needs*: clear policies on what is expected of students as well as a description of their role in the tutoring session.
- *Writing Resource Needs*: exercises and handouts that deal with the composing process and which are addressed to ESL students.
- *Plagiarism Resource Needs*: a discussion of the cultural differences regarding the borrowing of other people's work and ideas.
- *Readability*: an average word count of 17 words per sentence.

METHOD

To find the criteria above, I went to each of the eight universities' websites and typed in the keywords "Writing Center" in the site-wide search bar. In all eight instances, a page to the writing center (or writing lab) returned as the top result—although the page itself varied by site. For instance, the welcome page was the top result for some sites while the "About Us" page was the top result for another.

Intercultural Needs

As the literature suggests that ESL students have a difficult time understanding the parameters of a tutoring session when it comes to editing, I searched through each of the sites for language that indicated that tutors did not proofread papers. Understanding that each website is configured differently depending on the structure not only of the server space but also of the placement of the writing center within the university (sometimes as part of the composition program, other times as a stand-alone entity), I searched for any language discussing "editing" or "proofreading" as key terms throughout the various pages of the website. For instance, I did not limit myself to the "policies" section or page of these sites to find this discussion.

Because the scholarship also suggests that tutors be proactive in telling ESL students that tutors can teach proofreading skills in order to give students the autonomy to correct errors themselves (Silva and Harris), I also looked through the various pages for any language that spoke to this need. When a site discussed that tutors could "teach" editing skills, or mentioned that tutors "helped students learn" how to proofread and "identify errors" on their own papers, I marked the site as having communicated

this information to students. Finally, I searched for language that described the mutual participation required in a consultation by looking for words such as “collaborate,” “engage” and “participate” or phrases such as “work together” when describing what to expect during a session. I did not limit myself to these words however, as each site that discussed the collaborative purpose of a session did so with different terms.

Writing Resource Needs

To find my criteria of specific ESL resources, I examined each of the eight websites’ pages or sections, looking for any headings or subheadings that clearly demarked a section or a page as being specifically for ESL or International learners. I also searched through pages and sections of general resources to see if within those pages or sections there were any subheadings or subsections that specifically addressed ESL students. For instance, if a resource dealt with planning, I searched for any alternate way of explaining the resource that was aimed specifically toward ESL students, perhaps mentioning any cultural differences to help explain goal-setting for Western academic writing.

Plagiarism Resource Needs

I first looked through these eight websites for a tab or a section that defined plagiarism in a general manner. I then read through each of those discussions of plagiarism, searching for language that addressed any differences in the way that cultures conceptualized borrowing or stealing ideas. These sections or separate pages did not have to fall under any ESL umbrella. As with my search for ESL resources, I was open to the possibility that an ESL audience might be addressed within the broader discussion of this topic. Initial key terms that I looked for were: “culture,” “norms,” “Western,” and “values.”

Readability

To gauge readability, I performed a word count on the number of words per sentence on a page from each website. Due to time constraints (some websites have an abundant number of pages), I compared one page on each site. As each website in this sample is structured differently according to its users’ and administrators’ needs, it was challenging to find similar pages to compare, but I decided on comparing the page on each site that listed the expectations for students during their tutoring session (see Intercultural Needs). This seemed like a logical choice given that it was the only page that existed on each of the eight websites (although under different

headings such as “services,” “policies,” or “FAQs”). I copied and pasted the information from each page (excluding navigation menus and tabs) into a Microsoft Word document and used the Readability Statistics function to determine the number of words and the number of sentences on the page. The former number was divided by the latter for each website to determine the average words per sentence.

RESULTS

Intercultural Needs

All of the writing center websites in the sample clearly mentioned that students should not come in expecting the tutor they meet with to edit their paper (see Table 3). Seven of the eight sites (A, C, D, E, F, G, H) went further and explained that tutors would, however, be capable of *teaching* students how to edit and proofread their own work. Communicating this information before the first session gives students an idea of how tutors can help with grammar. Five sites (A, B, D, E, H) described the role of the student during a consultation. To show the mutual participation required in sessions, websites used words like “interactive” or “together,” or requested that students “be active, not passive.” Two asked students to prepare an agenda in order to guide the session along. One provided students with sample questions that they could use to model their own agendas for the session. As these websites indicate, there seems to be a growing need to emphasize the interactivity of a tutor/student relationship.

Table 3. How Writing Center Websites Discussed Their Policies Regarding Editing

Website	Mentioned that tutors did not edit or proofread students papers	Mentioned that tutors could help students learn to proofread their own papers	Had language describing the mutual participation required in a consultation with a peer tutor using words such as “collaborate,” “participate,” “together,” etc.
A	Yes	Yes	Yes
B	Yes	No	Yes
C	Yes	Yes	No
D	Yes	Yes	Yes
E	Yes	Yes	Yes
F	Yes	Yes	No
G	Yes	Yes	No
H	Yes	Yes	Yes

Writing Resource Needs

Only three websites (D, F, H) had resources *specifically* listed for ESL writers, but they dealt mainly with grammatical and mechanical issues, such as how to use proper punctuation, vocabulary, and pronouns, or listed links as generic “grammar help” (see Table 4). Although I had initially set out to only document the resources on each of these pages, I found that these websites had different ways of providing resources to students. For instance, websites F and H “outsourced” resources by linking to external sites. Website D was the only one that provided “in house” resources (as in, made by the tutors and staff of the writing center for their particular population). The other websites did have general writing resources but none targeted to ESL students specifically.

I also found it interesting that two of these eight sites explicitly stated that the respective writing centers were unable to assist ESL students whose language proficiency fell beneath a certain (unstated) level, and recommended that said students contact a particular department or program on campus for writing help. Although such statements demonstrate that there has been some reflection and collaboration between departments in order to determine who can provide the best services on campus for students, neither website actually linked to the departments or programs that they mentioned. Despite the fact that urls and websites can change or disappear altogether, there is a real need to provide more information rather than less regarding instruction. How do I contact a certain department? What service should I request? With whom should I speak? These are a few questions that wavering students might ask themselves before deciding not to bother with getting any help because they are unsure how to go about it.

Table 4: Websites Containing Writing Resources for ESL Students

Website	Contained “dedicated” ESL resources	If yes, type of resources listed	Students directed to a different department that could help?
A	No	N/A	No
B	No	N/A	Yes (no links)
C	No	N/A	No
D	Yes—located on their own page	In house—grammar and mechanics instruction and exercises such as sentence combining, punctuation	N/A

Website	Contained “dedicated” ESL resources	If yes, type of resources listed	Students directed to a different department that could help?
E	No	N/A	No
F	Yes—located on their own page	Outsourced—links to grammar and dictionary sites	N/A
G	Yes—located as a section of student resources page	N/A	Yes (no links)
H	Yes—located as a section of student resources page	Outsourced—links to grammar and dictionary sites	N/A

I should point out that English language centers exist at many of these institutions that also provide ESL students with opportunities to improve their writing and speaking. While that may be a reason for the lack of more abundant or better labeled resources for ESL students on these writing center websites, most of the language centers require students to apply and to pay fees for intensive English language courses. Indeed, these programs are open to anyone around the globe who feels that he or she needs help with his or her English language acquisition, but can range from \$400 to \$5,000 per semester, not counting rooming and boarding fees or insurance premiums, depending on the length and level of the program. These programs tailor their instruction to the specific level of proficiency of each student because they are able to test and assess students using their own metrics in order to place them in the appropriate course.

For example, an English language center in University A offers intensive courses that range from a few days to three months. Some of these centers also customize their courses to fit with a student’s particular field of study, such as University E’s English language center, which offers elective classes in business English, drama, and American culture. While it is beyond the scope of this essay to examine these centers and their websites, we should keep in mind that some universities have taken steps to more specifically tailor courses to, and provide explicit resources for, English language learners.

Plagiarism Resource Needs

Five websites (B, C, D, G, H) described plagiarism for students by using examples, citing university policy against plagiarism, and suggesting tips to avoid plagiarism. However, only one of these pages mentioned that there

are different cultural practices and standards when it comes to borrowing work (see Table 5). As websites with dedicated ESL spaces devote the entirety of their ESL resources to grammatical issues, plagiarism is for the most part discussed generally as a negative mechanism that students use to cope with having insufficient time or ideas to write a paper.

Table 5: Websites Containing Information on Plagiarism

Website	Defined plagiarism for students	Discussed cultural differences in the definition of plagiarism	Notes
A	No	N/A	
B	Yes	No	A discussion of plagiarism was located outside the writing center page, under the broader writing program's resources for students
C	Yes	No	
D	Yes	Yes—mentioned in one paragraph	
E	No	N/A	A note to instructors informed them that consultants would discuss plagiarism in person with new students at the start of every session
F	No	N/A	
G	Yes	No	
H	Yes	No	

Readability

Most of the websites can be considered to be readable based on Flesch's scale. Only Websites B, G, and H come close to being categorized as "fairly difficult" to read. One thing to note is the disparity of the layout of the web documents. Website A has many policies listed across 83 sentences with 1110 words, while Website C's page on proofreading contained only

16 sentences and 253 words because other information was spread across numerous other pages.

Table 6: Readability Scores for Writing Center Websites

Website	Number of words	Number of sentences	Words per sentence (17 recommended)
A	1110	83	13.4
B	857	44	19.4
C	253	16	15.8
D	1394	81	17.2
E	809	45	17.8
F	374	21	16.3
G	344	18	19.1
H	374	19	19.6

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Intercultural Needs

All eight sample websites communicated to students that their tutors did not edit during a session. That all but one of these eight sites also noted that they could teach students proofreading skills to edit their own papers can be viewed optimistically in that writing centers are adequately explaining their function and purpose to their online visitors. Even though this information is displayed online, writing instructors and WAC coordinators should continue to think of the writing center as a resource to help students learn how to identify and resolve both lower order and higher order concerns in their writing. It would also be wise to periodically check in on departmental policies regarding sentence-level errors and have conversations with faculty in other departments regarding the distinction between an “error” and a “difference.”⁵ Here, I re-emphasize Gail Shuck’s call for WPAs to reach out and educate faculty across the institution through workshops and conversations on the linguistic diversity found in ESL students’ writing (70–2).

Writing Resource Needs

It seems that the bulk of the material put online to help ESL students primarily deals with grammar help. In addition to providing ESL students with grammar instruction, we should also be teaching them to identify

other types of issues that arise in the writing process. There are, as I have mentioned, general resources on the composing process available to all students on these websites, but efforts should be made to tailor exercises to the specific needs of ESL students. We need to be more aware of the differences in learning that learners of second languages experience. On planning, for example, Rosa M. Manchón and Julio Roca de Larios find a correlation between the level of proficiency in second language writers and their time spent on planning, suggesting that different exercises pertaining to the drafting processes might need to be created for different levels of English proficiency.

Moreover, we should be cognizant of the cultural differences that come into play when developing instructional exercises for ESL students. To illustrate, in her comparison of American and Chinese OWL instruction materials on argumentation, Li Liu notes that the two groups explained the purpose and structure of an argument in similar ways, but with important differences. For instance, the American instructions emphasized the value of anticipating counter arguments while the Chinese instructions discussed the importance of engaging in “dialectical materialism,” which, as Liu explains, stems from the fact that Marxist politics and philosophy are required courses in high school and upper primary school (14). In contrast to American approaches to argument, which explained how to incorporate logical and informal reasoning, the Chinese materials in Liu’s study emphasized supporting one’s thesis with philosophical theories and principles—in particular, Marxist, Leninist, and Maoist (9). Although Liu’s research focus is more on contrastive rhetoric than on OWL development, her study is a reminder that there may be some cultural differences that need to be taken into account when creating instructional resources for ESL students.

There should also be more care given to linking to exercises and handouts for ESL students. Two of the three webpages (F and H) that had special sections or pages for ESL students outsourced their links to other websites. This approach is fine when time and resources are too limited to create one’s own handouts. However, writing center directors need to remain constantly vigilant that the links are still active, as broken links may go unreported by users. Additionally, it may be daunting for students to examine an entirely different site’s seemingly endless page of links when they are not sure what they might be looking for—particularly when these sites do not adhere to best practices in web design (such as those sites that have poor color contrast, confusing proximity, etc). Linking to specific exercises or lessons can reduce this initial disorientation. For example, when linking to an outsourced handout on pronoun usage, instead of creating a general

“ESL help” link to another website’s home page, create a link that connects directly to the “pronoun use” handout that students should see on that site.

Plagiarism Resource Needs

Clearly more needs to be done to discuss plagiarism as a cultural construct. A key suggestion in the Council of Writing Program Administrators’ “Defining and Avoiding Plagiarism: The WPA Statement on Best Practices” notes that WPAs can help students avoid plagiarism by “[p]roviding support services (for example, writing centers or Web pages) for students who have questions about how to cite sources” (4). Although most of the websites in this sample clearly discussed plagiarism and its consequences, thus following the suggestions in the WPA Statement, hardly any engaged with ESL students on the different ways that cultures view the borrowing of others’ ideas and words. We must keep the “CCCC Statement on Second Language Writing and Writers” in mind, which states that “[t]extual ownership and the ownership of ideas are concepts that are culturally based, and therefore not shared across cultures and educational systems.” Although the CCCC Statement does state that we should teach and reinforce expectations on citation and borrowing, it notes that students may not “philosophically grasp and perfectly execute these practices.” Part of this teaching and reinforcing should include a conversation that deals with this philosophical difference.

One website (D) did provide this, by having a resource specifically on Plagiarism and ESL writers. Unlike the other resources on plagiarism on the site, this one explained the rationale that American universities have developed against uncredited or gratuitous copying of others’ work from a cultural perspective, and engages with some of the literature by scholars such as Pat Currie and Alastair Pennycook, who have written much on the subject of ESL writers and plagiarism. While no one resource can speak to all perspectives, this discussion is a sign that writing centers are paying attention to the needs of their non-native English speaking students regarding plagiarism. Similar to website D, we should continue to present a more nuanced description of plagiarism to help our ESL students understand how plagiarism is embedded into Western culture.

Readability

None of the websites contain sentences that fall into the difficult category in terms of Flesch’s scale of readability. It seems that these writing centers have done a good job of making sure that their websites remain readable. Something to keep in mind is that these results are averages, so there

may be longer sentences in this sample that could be trimmed to increase readability.

SUMMARY

Based on this research, I recommend that WPAs across all contexts:

- take ESL students' intercultural needs into account and make space to address those needs in policy documents, whether they be in print or posted online;
- continue to hold conversations with department faculty regarding their departments' policies on sentence-level errors;
- create or locate resources tailored to ESL students' particular needs as noted in the extant scholarship. These should be in addition to grammar-based help;
- provide students with clearly labeled links to specific exercises and handouts, not direct them to broad websites with multiple links, which may be overwhelming;
- discuss plagiarism from a cultural perspective, noting the different ways that cultures view the borrowing of words and why, in particular, it is looked down upon in Western academic institutions;
- create documents that fall within the readability range that is appropriate for their students. Although 17 words per sentence is considered readable for the "average" reader, it might be necessary to use more or fewer words depending on student needs.

Limitations and Areas for Future Research

In this small study, I looked at the writing center websites of the eight American universities with the largest population of international students, as listed in the 2010–2011 Open Doors Data, published by the Institute of International Education ("Top 25"). Although ESL students have traditionally been seen only as international students, Harklau, Losey, and Seigal note that there are other populations of English Language Learners, such as Generation 1.5 students, with different needs than their international peers. Because it is difficult to identify Generation 1.5 students or other resident non-native speakers, this study does not take into account the various ways that writing centers may be developing their websites to meet the needs of these learners. There are opportunities for WPAs in such institutions who have more immediate knowledge of these students' needs to develop proper documents based on the criteria above. Given the large number of immigrant students at community colleges, it also makes sense to examine the

accessibility of webpages and web documents for NNES students at two year institutions.

There are also many opportunities to investigate the design usability of these websites as well. I have focused here mainly on the content that we produce for our ESL students, but it would be just as beneficial to study how closely our webspaces conform to usability standards in general. Although I have briefly touched on readability concerns, opportunities exist for exploring further issues dealing with alt text compliance, the use of headings and bullets, and proper alignment.⁶

Finally, it is important to note that ESL students are not monolithic. As Paul Kei Matsuda states, “The needs of ESL students differ from individual to individual and from institution to institution, and it is not possible to create one solution that fits all situations” (“Composition Studies” 717). Choices regarding website content are inherently rhetorical—that is, they require careful attention to the situated context within and constantly altering student bodies for which such decisions are made. Specific content and exercises may be needed in one geographic site to serve the needs of a particular community, but may be less important in another place. WPAs hoping to create more usable documents should perform usability testing. Krug’s text, *Rocket Surgery Made Easy*, is a sufficient, general place to begin and deals with the nuts and bolts of efficient, cost-effective methods for conducting usability tests. Many scholars in composition have also discussed the importance of usability testing from a rhetorical standpoint. Salvo, et al., for instance, focus on the collaborative aspects of redesigning the Purdue OWL to meet the needs of various stakeholders (108). Part of their goal in this project was to create a website that was not only user-friendly but also user-centered. Although the report focuses largely on the design aspect of the OWL, it may also help WPAs create usable documents in terms of content given the authors’ focus on reaching out to student constituents to determine the changes that need to be implemented online.⁷

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NOTES

1. This survey lists the top 25 American universities with international student populations as reported by various educational organizations and associations across 746 institutions (Institute of International Education, “Fall 2011” 2).

2. There is not enough space to detail just how varied students who are labeled “ESL” truly are. Beyond those nuances that I bring up, there exist many other categorizations for students whose “first language” is not English. Many acronyms have been established that capture the wide array of teaching English to students. Aside from English as a Second Language (ESL) and Generation 1.5 students, there are also other classifications such as Second Language Learners (L2), English for Specific Purposes (ESP), English for Academic Purposes (EAP), English as an Additional Language (EAL), English as an International Language (EIL), English as a Second Dialect (ESD), English as a Foreign Language (EFL), and Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CLD) students, just to name a few. Time and space constraints do not permit me to discuss the nuances of each label, but it is important to note that each of these classifications was developed to describe the specific needs of a particular type of (English) Language Learner.

3. In an attempt to keep these sites as anonymous as possible in this study, I label them A-H, and refrain from quoting their pages verbatim to prevent hits on internet searches.

4. Indeed, because writing for international audiences assumes that readers do not share a similar language, organizations such as the International Organization for Standardization (ISO), recommend creating and using cross-culturally recognizable symbols to reduce confusion—in the ISO’s case, specifically for promoting safety in potentially hazardous situations. See www.clarionsafety.com for examples of safety warning labels developed with ISO standards.

5. As I have noted, many students come to American universities from countries where English is spoken as a second (or first) language. As a result, one can expect that several differences in vocabulary, style, and mechanics will have emerged between the English they speak and the English that we encounter in the United States. There is nothing deficient about these linguistic and lexical differences in that they are accepted in students’ home nations.

6. Jakob Nielsen, a usability expert, explains these and other practices for usability in various articles located on his site, <http://www.nngroup.com>.

7. The full OWL usability report is available at owl.english.purdue.edu/research/OWLreport.pdf.

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A Queer Eye for the WPA

Harry Denny

Across America beginning in the summer of 2003, hapless hetero men, the women who love them, and a good number of gays tuned into Bravo cable television to watch *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy*. This series offered up a panel of five comfortable/comforting gay men who performed their identities in ways that would not threaten either their “clients” or the audience of presumed mainstream straight people. Diamonds-in-the-rough could be remade into metrosexuals with gentle tutoring on personal grooming, home design, culture, food & wine, and fashion. Suddenly the everyday schlub could bend it like David Beckham and have an easy style that’s as at home in Yankee Stadium as Pier 1 Imports. Turning to the world of writing program administrators, I suspect the Fab Five could get some work done:

- Mock turtlenecks and patched-elbow jackets traded for smoking jackets and untucked oxfords with sweater vests
- Hard candy for writers thrown out in place of hand-made lozenges from Jacques Torres.
- Chairs & desks from surplus arranged in a circle for writing workshops swapped out for modular furniture with soothing pastels and rolling casters
- Summer reading lists now found with cool iPad apps
- Savannah pub crawls abandoned for yoga for WPAs.

This list of makeovers is endless and fun, and the possibilities are endless.

But embedded in the cultural phenomenon of the Fab Five and *Queer Eye* is a history of transformation and evidence of a shifting set of values and priorities that are instructive, oddly enough, for those of us invested in how we teach writing or those of us who act as administrators of academic units that facilitate writing to learn and learning to write. *Queer Eye* also represented the culmination of change happening throughout the popular culture: Ellen had come out, *Will & Grace* was must-see TV, and *Queer as*

Folk had taken Showtime by storm. What we don't remember is that the same summer that *Queer Eye* premiered, the Supreme Court issued a landmark decision in *Lawrence v. Texas*, decriminalizing same-sex sodomy. So it seemed society was shifting along with the culture, beginning to challenge and reinvent what had been taken as hegemonic, conventional, or as the Call for Papers (see Appendix to Karen Kopelson's plenary for the Call) for this year's conference invited us to think about, the notion of the norm or normal. And yet, we were in the midst of the second Bush administration whose War on Terror provided cover for assaults just as meaningful on the home front: The beginning of the Spelling Commission which advanced a whole set of discourses that have naturalized a corporate-assessment-education industrial complex, policies that have further eroded support for higher education and the humanities, and law suits that have made access to education and civil participation more difficult than ever before.

Yet as a mainstream conservatism has steadily owned the terms of debate in our national discussions, the country continues to complicate the very diversity around which we each operate on an everyday basis. To channel Linda Adler-Kassner in the *Activist WPA*, our American jeremiad is always already a paradox of an exceptionalist mission toward homogenization and assimilation that's also constantly under threat of disorder, dysfunction, and diversity. For people who identify with the queer community, the question of what is meant by "normal" has been crucial to identity formation, organizing, activism, and inquiry. As I read the 2013 CWPA conference call for proposals, that frame also seems to serve us well as we think about what it is we do as professionals in writing program administration. To that end, that's where I'd like to focus my comments: Connecting the history and key concepts that gave birth to queer theory to our work as WPAs. Namely, I want to focus on what we mean when we invoke the signs "normal," "performance," and "identity."

For queer people, the question of normal has been a long, critical project. As Michael Warner wrote in a *Chronicle of Higher Education* retrospective last year, sexuality has been a site for the interrogation, not so much to find its genealogical roots or to uncover some great origin story of its beginnings, but more importantly, the exploration of sexuality is about the mechanics and operation of power. While some in the community might be in search of great sexual minorities from yesteryear or they hope to recover a hidden history of queers from the ages, others of us are more interested in how we began to name and inscribe sexual identity with meaning. Foucault taught us that the appearance of the homosexual coincided with the discovery, invention, and proliferation of identities that continues through today. The production of sexuality has accelerated, has

become ever more complex, and gradually has embedded itself into nearly every aspect of contemporary ways of thinking about human activity. Specifically, it wasn't enough, for example, to invent a personage that we came to name as the homosexual; social science had to imbue the figure with meaning and a sort of pedagogy that in some ways we continue to use. In the production of meaning, the figure had to speak, as Foucault argues, but the significance and truth of that talking and performing was granted from beyond, from the psychologist or later a teacher. But the meaning was never intrinsic to the homosexual's words or body; it arose from a sort of translation dynamic. As more and more began to be known about the homosexual, this figure gave meaning to its opposed/unmarked companion: The heterosexual. Put differently, gay and straight began this never ending Fred-and-Ginger sort of dance with one another. And the tango represented a sort of dynamic that has structured so much of who we are and how we do society. The Other is made legible and possible by The Same. Marked bodies enable the Unmarked. These binaries are everywhere and powerful.

For a young gay man growing up in Iowa during the early days of what would come to be called AIDS, I ate up this scholarship coming out of cultural studies and contemporary continental philosophy. My world was rocked because all these theories began to help make sense of what was happening around the community. All the talk and writing about homosexuals being abnormal that began to appear in the nineteenth century and accelerated in the twentieth never went away once we had been invented and served our purpose. In our naming and the dissemination of that knowledge, people began to learn they weren't alone, they began to find each other, they began to carve out networks of support and communities of relative safety. Eventually, they organized and began to fight against oppression and challenged that label of abnormal and its negative ideological and material consequences. But when HIV hit the community, our enemies thought they had the right ammunition to re-inscribe us not just as abnormal, but also as a health menace that required suppression, if not eradication. AIDS was used to signify a moral lesson and justify governmental inaction early on. And I think we could argue that whenever an object of normalcy is juxtaposed to the abnormal, almost always the lesson is that normal is better, that the abnormal is to be avoided and resisted.

Of course, it never quite works out so easily because some of us embrace the abnormal and begin to question our positioning. In the case of AIDS, the queer community organized and coalesced with other communities, often communities of color, and challenged the notion that sex was bad, that gay sex was toxic, that people of color were somehow different sexual creatures than white people, that injecting drug users could clean their

works and not transmit HIV. In other words, those stigmatized, those othered, those who were supposed to be silent took action and challenged the dominant, the institutional, the governmental.

When we turn to our own programs, I would like us to think about how the normal/abnormal doublet plays out in our own everyday interactions and how we might begin to think and do our work differently. The example that comes to mind most immediately is the role that norming plays in what we do, whether we're aiming for reliability in our grading practices or we're working toward consensus about what we value in our programs. Embedded in that notion of the norm is that which is not. Or to flip it, we depend on the outliers to give texture to the middle, the adequate. But in those conversations, we are marking a same and other that has real consequences for the people who are the objects of those discourses.

In the world of writing centers, I see this same/other, normal/abnormal play out powerfully. Here I'm talking about the face of the writing center as well as its voice. At St. John's, we are proud to be situated in one of the most linguistically and ethnically diverse places in the country, if not the world. We started thinking about the politics of face and began to realize we had internalized practices of homogenization that were reproducing sameness and creating an environment where people were Othered in the midst of this great diversity. Just a couple of examples. Table 1 presents a comparison of students who come into the writing center to the larger population at the university, and they look relatively similar.

Table 1. Ethnic Diversity, Fall 2011

Ethnicity	UWC Clients	University Wide	UWC Staff
Two or More Races	3.2%	2%	0.0%
American Indian/Alaska Native	0.1%	0%	3.6%
Asian	23.8%	15%	10.7%
Black/African American	21.2%	13%	13.1%
Hispanic/Latino	15.9%	14%	7.1%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	0.3%	0%	0.0%
Unknown	4.5%	4%	0.0%
White	31.1%	44%	70.2%

Note: The university-wide data comes from the St. John's University's Office of Institutional Research. Client and staff racial coding comes from information pulled from the university information system.

Yet when we begin looking at the students who staff the center, the numbers are very different. The staff at the point this data was collected was far whiter than the larger student population and clients that came into the center. As a WPA and a white person, that surprised me, but it's pretty typical for white people to overstate or over-represent diversity; we often see a greater range of bodies than actually exists. Digging further into that profile, we began to realize that while we see writers from across the campus in numbers and variety that mean we are ostensibly a WAC Writing Center (as opposed to an English-centric/serving Writing Center), yet the staff at the time were by and large coming from the ranks of our English department, with all the biases about writing out in the other disciplines that could be imagined.

Beyond the ethnic, racial, and disciplinary diversity of our writing center, we also wanted to "queer" the linguistic face of our writing center, to challenge what's normative and privileged. Again, on the Queens campus with its urban geography of linguistic and cultural diversity, the writing center, we have been oddly monolingual. We realized the situation wasn't quite as bad as initially imagined it, but what we discovered was nevertheless troubling. We learned that we had actually hired a number of writing consultants who were, in fact, multilingual but didn't think they could "come out" as that or even conduct sessions in languages other than English. One consultant even asked, "Are we an English-only writing center?" Nancy Grimm pushes us to think about these sorts of situations and examine how our everyday practices can cultivate ways of doing, beliefs, and values that lead people to reify a monolingual view of the world. She advocates that we perform in our centers and programs ways that foster a multilingual culture that better equips our students (and our consultants, I'd add) for the reality of the world they're entering.

To raise awareness and begin to challenge the face we're creating as a writing center, however we understand it, the staff St. John's and I go forth into it through our recruiting, hiring and on-going education practices. Our charge to one another is to think about what sort of a community we want to create, what and who we are normalizing and to what effect (who are we privileging, who are we marginalizing, who is marked, what's left uninterrogated?). We're also informing our conversations with this field's scholarship because the staff values practitioner inquiry, so we're reading Vershawn Young ("Should Writers Use Their Own Language" & *Your Average Nigga*) and Suresh Canagarajah's writings on code-switching and meshing and beginning a dialogue about what sorts of Englishes, vernaculars, genres, conventions, and literacies we support, privilege and marginalize. I'd like to say we have all our problems fixed and utopia has arrived on

campus. It hasn't, but at least we're talking and doubting and believing and trying to make progress.

Embedded in what I'm saying here is a subtle sleight of hand that gets at the next element of queer theory that I want us to think about. That move from the normal to normalizing is about action and performance. Over the years, I've always been aware of just how lucky and privileged I've been to come of age and be a gay person in spaces more or less welcoming to who I am, to all the identities that I claim as well as those of which I'm less aware. Because I'm out in professional life, I've always figured that my sexuality was a non-issue, and I have come to assume that spaces are safe because I somehow magically decide to occupy them. My colleague Anne Geller once teased me about this rhetoric of "safe spaces;" the notion is a non-starter because spaces are only ever more or less safe. But the idea that writing centers or writing classrooms are safe harbors, as Anne points out, is tricky because they must be made more or less safe, they can't just exist in such a state. If you were to walk into the Stonewall Inn back in the Village, there's nothing intrinsic to the brick, mortar, bar, stools, and lingering scent of spilled beer and cocktails. Instead, Stonewall has its significance in gay liberation history that is socially constructed and struggled over; the people have inhabited the space and made use of it and contested its meaning. Spaces in that sense, safe, not-so-safe, and even scary, need to be enacted or performed by the people within them, a mash-up of individual and collective action. Spaces and people both become performative—we can't just signify in some static or ahistorical way, our signifying has to involve a kind of action of doing, reading and expressing.

Now I knew this lesson—that spaces don't do or signify in and of themselves—so Anne's insight was a kind of bonk upside the head. In the early years of HIV education, we knew that the notion of "safe sex" was a false moniker; no form of sex was intrinsically safe, but different activities led to more or less risk. What we tried to teach the community was that sex wasn't bad or unsafe; it wasn't an either/or situation, but a both/and dynamic where partners could negotiate what they do in ways that reduced risk. People could reclaim sex through how they performed it and how they embedded meaning into what and how that sex signified. There's a lesson here for us as WPAs: Our spaces are not domains that we can claim or pronounce meaning on for a collective of colleagues, students, or some combination. These people and the spaces they move in or occupy are not problems to be fixed. Instead, we need to think about how our spaces make possible tactics that we either intend or that people using them find on their own and through which become empowered. From our leadership and abilities to make things possible, we can create spaces where people

feel encouraged to challenge, to research, and to engage in inquiry-based practice. Right now in back in my writing center, two graduate students are deep into an amazing interview study to go forth into the question of the environment for multilingual consultants. What they're finding is the situation around multilingual values in the center isn't simply reduced down to easy binaries, but instead is revealing quite a bit of complexity about larger institutional and social values.

One of the graduate students' insights is that multilingualism isn't easily legible on the bodies of people, or to flip it a bit, because bodies don't always signal their multilingualism it's assumed not present. Some nebulous form of "academic" or "standard" English becomes de facto, not because there's a cabal of administrators, faculty or WPAs out to squash diversity. Instead, in our everyday practice, we don't take time to question what's invisible, what's not heard or seen, especially in relation to what's always legible and already perceived. In these ordinary practices, we reinscribe the dominant, the hegemonic, and by not intentionally pausing and questioning, we enable it all to build up a sort of inertia that's really hard to challenge or resist. It's the classic vacuum where the exercise of power is orchestrated by those who benefit the most and have the least the lose. That's the trouble with normal—as much as it depends on difference, it paradoxically crowds out any expression of diversity.

I was giving a talk a couple of months ago about the politics of diversity and challenging the participants to go beyond representational notions—just counting bodies as doing diversity—but to think about how diversity becomes meaningful and tangible to our students. At some point, I began to speak about my partner to use the pronoun "he" in reference to Courtney. A faculty member in the audience later said, "I thought you were just another WASP taking advantage of students of color to advance your career, but now I know you're not just speaking from a position of privilege, you understand what these students really experience." My takeaway in that moment wasn't that WASPs or men or people with privilege can't speak, or that people of color, sexual minorities, working-class people or other marginalized people must now displace those historically at the center. Instead, we need to have on-going conversations, talks that are inclusive as well as cognizant of the material reality of those occasions. Or, beyond speaking and representation, as Victor Villanueva pointed out so well, we need to think deeply about the distinctions between listening and hearing, or whether and to what degree we internalize the messages that challenge domination and oppression.

That exchange in the talk is important to reflect on because we're all constantly performing our identities, coming out, and eliding who we are

(or what some might name as passing). That calling me out (albeit incorrectly) as a WASP, represented a reading of my identities on so many levels, some of which were spot on, others not so much. My “coming out” moment was a critical juncture, a performance that queer studies asks us to attend to. By invoking my same-sex partner, I was using talk to put a sexual identity into discourse that might otherwise be misread or rendered transparent. Just as I was doing or enacting my identity through discourse, that colleague represented the flip-side of performance, a hearing and responding. That professor’s initial misreading and re-reading of my identities alludes to a whole other set of possible performances of identity that we don’t usually talk about, a whole range of bodies and identities that in our culture are rarely interrogated, what Donna Haraway once named as unmarked bodies, namely white bodies, male bodies, heterosexual bodies, middle-class bodies, American bodies, all bodies that possess ideological, material, political, social, cultural, and economic privilege. And so, in that moment, a third possible performance becomes available, one that I can in many ways continue to do in front of you all tonight: I can pass, because I have the bodily and cultural privilege to do so. That means I can defer the power and presumption of normativity and refuse to embody and signify the codes of dominance and domination, or I can pass as the unexamined mainstream. I press this point to draw attention to the reality that many cannot pick and choose their privilege: Some queers can’t pass, some working-class folks can’t, many women can’t, and most people of color can’t. Their identities are read, combined, and judged in an instant, in ways that just don’t have the same consequences as those of us with the presumption of privilege. This insight has really been brought home to me as I’ve followed the conversations and debates about Gabriella Muhs’ *Presumed Incompetent* (Gutierrez y Muhs).

This discursive reading of performance—of thinking about the encoding and decoding, of becoming aware of how we signify and of how signs are read—is especially relevant to writing centers, where we need to coach and mentor consultants or tutors on how to negotiate that very terrain in sessions. The *Everyday Writing Center* (Geller et al.) is now a classic text that helps us explore those very negotiations whether it’s the consultant who finds themselves morphing in persona, improvising from moment to moment and client to client, or reflecting on ways that systems of domination and oppression seep into ordinary interactions. Questioning performance is an important socio-cultural set of tactics or form of capital for writers to acquire and be encouraged to develop—whether in the writing center or in our writing classrooms. These very practices of critical self-reflection as well as supporting and challenging conversations, whether

in writing, cross-talk, and whatever venue, about assumptions and values, seem to me to be at the heart of the “high-impact” practices that more and more of us are talking about on our campuses at the prompting of the American Association of Colleges and Universities.¹

In the wake of all these thoughts about identity and performance, I wanted to close with two final sets of thoughts of where we are right now. The election in 2008 and the re-election of Barak Obama as President set off debates about whether the US has somehow finally gotten past race and any other number of flash points around identity politics in the country. Yet, as I speak, we’re witnessing the end of the Trayvon Martin trial, where the stereotyped threats of an unarmed black teen were warrants for the use of a “stand-your-ground” law to justify murder. In New York City, “Stop and Frisk” harassment of young people of color is cited as a primary cause of the decline of crime, with little attention to the shifting economics and demographics of the urban area, as more and more people are simply priced out of the five boroughs and poverty and the consequences of it are hidden from the eyes of masses of tourists, the hordes of gentrification, and the flood of suburban commuters. Throughout the country, women and their healthcare providers find their bodies subject to ever greater state-sanctioned scrutiny and invasion by virtue of geography and politics. In Wisconsin, Michigan, and Ohio, the rights of workers to collectively organize and challenge management are the most restricted that they have been in almost one hundred years. And, of course, in thirteen states in our country, same-sex marriages now have greater equity with their opposite-sex analogs, but in the rest of the country, queer folks still have to worry in a thousand large and small ways whether their relationships will be acknowledged, respected, or whether they’ll be the targets of increased suspicion and harassment. Our landscape couldn’t be more foreboding and promising at the same time. New sorts of role models keep popping up that inspire and make us pause at the same time, maybe even making the YouTube “It gets better” sensation more and more plausible for our young people. In the last few months, the “coming out” performances of professional boxer Orlando Cruz, WNBA player Brittney Griner, Major League Soccer player Robbie Roberts, and the NBA’s Jason Collins have spurred huge conversations about pop culture and sport and the politics of identity. When I consider their narratives and plights, I wonder whether we can get past identity and what it might mean in our writing centers and writing classrooms to presume to ever be past or beyond identity in our country, to elide it.

These athletes—gay athletes, and gay athletes of color—underscore the themes that I’ve tried to draw out. That is, for each of them, aspects of who they are are legible while others have to be put into discourse and negoti-

ated with a range of audiences for innumerable ends. Each of these people are also celebrities and have immense economic and cultural privilege in ways that sports figures in our country have always had. But we all have students in our writing centers and writing classrooms and colleagues in our units or departments whose identities play out on any number of registers, who embody norms, who pass, who are oppositional, all of whom need space, opportunity and occasion to challenge and question in productive ways. The Supreme Court last month handed down a series of decisions that force us all to think about the landscape of our campuses in the years to come. In *United States v. Windsor*, the federal government must recognize the same-sex marriages sanctioned in thirteen states, but left the status of sexual minorities in other states still precarious and vulnerable to the whims of the majority. The Voting Rights Act is gutted as a result of *Shelby v. Holder* and is already having an immediate impact in states that are moving forward with voter ID laws that are intended to restrict ballot access for people of color and college students in particular. Gerrymandering of congressional districts, now no longer subject to judicial scrutiny, will further dilute the voting power of significant blocks of people. And the decision *Fisher v. The University of Texas at Austin* left affirmative action hanging by a thread.

The very demographics of colleges and access to higher education will continue to depend on the “critical mass” rule of affirmative action law. Embedded in that very notion is a set of values about representation in and access to higher education, and we need sustained dialogue about their importance and implications for our institution and the politics of teaching and learning. What’s a “critical mass” and what impact does it have in a variety of contexts, and what happens when we lack it? My gut response is that we will revert to bias of the proximal, the assumption that what or who conforms to our frame of reference, must necessarily extend everywhere. In our writing centers or our writing classrooms, if only context or geography drives our ability to have critical conversations or difficult dialogs about diversity, what happens when we no longer have “critical masses” or when “critical masses” exist in isolated spaces? That reality of homogenous campuses exists in many places already, so our curricula must begin to take on the challenge of teaching diversity as a set of intellectual practices that can serve a variety of academic purposes. As we debate and underscore the meaning of a “critical mass” and the virtue of diversity in education, we must also be aware that our institutional missions face a crossroads: One direction continues a facile practice of tolerance where institutions and mainstream society grudgingly includes those who have been historically marginalized, and another direction represents a commitment to education

as generative of critical citizenship that is performed through a pedagogy that challenges social space and naturalized discourses and hegemonic performances of dominant values.

To finish, I have to echo the thoughts of Melissa Harris-Perry, who gave a commentary on her MSNBC show the morning after George Zimmerman trial acquitted him in the murder of Trayvon Martin. She captured so well what the decision means to so many and to me and her commentary has lessons that ought to linger throughout our conversations at this conference and everyday work beyond it:

In his turn of the century treatise, *The Souls of Black Folk*, W.E.B. Du Bois wrote,

Between me and the other world there is ever an unasked question: unasked by some through feelings of delicacy; by others through the difficulty of rightly framing it. All, nevertheless, flutter round it. How does it feel to be a problem?

Everyone has problems. It is the human condition. No amount of wealth. No racial privilege. No righteousness of purpose and action leads to a life without problems. Everyone has them.

But Du Bois was pointing to something different. Not just having problems, but being a problem. How does it feel to be a problem? To have your very body and the bodies of your children to be assume to be criminal, violent, malignant.

How does it feel to be trapped on the roof of your home as the flood waters rise and be called a refugee?

How does it feel to wear the symbol of your faith and be assumed to be a terrorist threat to your own nation?

How does it feel to have the president who looks like you demanded to produce proof of his citizenship?

How does it feel to know that when you speak the language of your parents, you will be assumed to be illegal?

How does it feel to know that if you marry the person you love, some will say you are destroying the very fabric of the nation?

How does it feel to fear sending your son to the 7-Eleven for a bag of Skittles on a rainy night?

Du Bois wrote of black men,

He simply wishes to make it possible for a man to be both a Negro and an American, without being cursed and spit upon by his fellows, without having the doors of Opportunity closed roughly in

his face. This, then, is the end of his striving: to be a co-worker in the kingdom of culture, to escape both death and isolation, to husband and use his best powers and his latent genius.

This is the dream that will guide us as we continue the struggle.

(Melissa Harris-Perry Show)

Harris-Perry holds the threads of identity politics together and underscores how any occasion for oppression and domination is an affront to anyone, anywhere. And just as important, she asks us to consider what it must be like, what it must feel like, to be a problem, the object of consternation, of speculation, of resolution. We must ask ourselves, how often do we reproduce this very rhetoric, this ideology, those practices, that position people as wistful problems, if only, if only, if only? In our moments when we manufacture and reify our identity politics as a politics of problems, we need to ask what and who are we normalizing, how do we naturalize and pathologize sets of performances, and what are the identities we foreground and elide? What might it mean to queer our impulses around the problem student, the troubled teacher, the flawed program? What's it mean to flip, or to queer the moment, and think about the possibilities we find ourselves lucky to engage like no other on campus? We have access and opportunity and resources, to channel Du Bois and Harris-Perry, to engage the struggles of our moment because we can, we must, and we will.

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NOTES

1. See, for example, the AACU's website on Liberal Education and America's Promise (<http://www.aacu.org/leap/vision.cfm>).

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Queering the Writing Program: Why Now? How? And Other Contentious Questions

Karen Kopelson

Though my title alone should go pretty far toward suggesting that this talk is doing the (always) negative work of critique, I'd like to forewarn you further before I start that the talk is written in the critical spirit of "queer pessimism," which Sara Ahmed characterizes as "a refusal to be optimistic about 'the right things' in the right kind of way," but not thereby a refusal of hope all together (162). The "embrace of negativity" in queer pessimism is not just for the sake of the embrace but for the sense of "possibility opened up by inhabiting the negative" (161–62). In other words, saying no over and over, as it may appear I am doing today, is ultimately an affirmation of an Other way, even if that way is not yet found (Ahmed 107, 207). To put this queer pessimism into the context of this conference, I see this talk as an extended response to the invitation in the call for proposals to acknowledge and give voice to "what we cannot bear to know" (Winans qtd. in CWPA 2013 CFP. See Appendix for text). Specifically, the talk responds to the two central questions posed in my title: Queering the Writing Program—why now? And how? Despite queer theory's commitment to problematizing linear time, I will go ahead and take them in order.

Queering the writing program—why now? Not only are we two full decades removed from queer theory's heady heydays of the early 1990s, but we are also several years beyond multiple declarations of being, or needing to be, "after" or "post" queer theory. Before the 1990s had even concluded, special issues of journals began to appear which posited boredom, frustration, or general angst over the present and future state of queer theory and research, a trend which continued throughout the next decade. In perhaps the earliest of these, 1999's "Anti-Queer" special issue of *Social Semiotics*, editor Alan Mckee asked in his introduction, "how many times can one read that Queer offers a way of deconstructing the binary categories by which heterosexuality sustains and reproduces itself, and still feel excited?"

(166). In 2005, a special issue of *Social Text* appeared, edited by David Eng, Judith Halberstam, and José Esteban Muñoz, which asked, “What’s Queer about Queer Studies Now?” and worked from the premise that the “contemporary mainstreaming of gay and lesbian identity” urgently demanded a renewal of queer studies (Eng, Halberstam, and Muñoz 1–2). 2007 gave us *South Atlantic Quarterly*’s “After Sex: On Writing Since Queer Theory,” where editors Janet Halley and Andrew Parker acknowledged both that “the activist energies that helped to fuel queer academic work in the United States in the early 1990s have declined sharply” and that many founders of queer theory (e.g., Judith Butler, Michael Warner, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick) were investing their scholarly energies elsewhere (421–22). They wondered whether queer theory, “if not already passé, was rapidly approaching its expiration date” (421).

Finally, in 2010, Susan Talburt and Mary Lou Rasmussen co-edited an “After Queer” special issue of the *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, their introduction to which reviews much of the same literature as I just have and then goes on to worry over the past agendas of queer education research—particularly a “restorative agenda” dependant on the “regulatory narrative of progress”—and to locate and propose more “fruitful,” and perhaps *more appropriate* (their word is “proper”), approaches for future research (1–3). With this review of queer theory’s “afters” and “posts” in front of us, or behind us, it is not surprising that on New Year’s Day of 2012, preeminent queer theorist Michael Warner wrote in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* that there seems to be a “widespread impression that queer theory is a thing of the past.” Warner calls this impression “tragically mistaken,” yet intimates that queer theory largely does seem to be carried on in the divergent but “vital work that [it has] enable[d]” and often “under other rubrics.”

Meanwhile, in Rhetoric and Composition Studies—home discipline to many of us—there seems an equally widespread impression *not* that queer theory’s “moment in the spotlight” is long past (Warner), but that its light never truly shone on our discipline at all. Jonathan Alexander and Jacqueline Rhodes wrote in 2011 that the “queer turn” in rhetoric and composition studies “never actually happened”; that “[s]cholarship about the intersections among queerness, literacy, and writing instruction remains sparse and under-read” (178; see also Alexander and Wallace). So, I am suggesting, by way of this introductory review, that this seems an odd time indeed—a strangely *non-kairotic* moment—to be raising the question of “queering the writing program.” If we’re just now entering the proverbial parlor, we’ve not only come late, the party is over. Or, if it’s a Rhet-Comp shindig, and we

agree with Alexander and Rhodes, there was no party here to begin with; we may be at the wrong address.

Though I am working from a position of negativity, we could, of course, read the belatedness of this year's CWPA conference theme more generously: as a late but hopefully not last ditch effort to invigorate "queer" for the field. Or, we could actually take the conference organizers at their word and understand the exigence for this year's conference to be what the call for proposals said it is: that the conference is "approach[ing] Normal"—that is, Normal, Illinois, the site of the 2014 conference—and that this coming destination provides an early impetus to think about normality/normativity in ways queer theory does best.

Yet, predictably, I would like us to think about this phrase, "approaching normal," in another more skeptical way as we consider the timing of this year's conference. In a sense, it has never been safer to "be queer"—or at least never more innocuous to invoke the term—and this too has been a cause for much lamentation and aggravation among queer theorists. Warner, in the *Chronicle* article, rues the day when "queer" became "a cable-TV synonym for gay," recalling (and reminding us) that the term "was manifestly provocative" and "carried a high-voltage charge of insult and stigma" at queer theory's founding in the early 1990s. Perhaps most vocal, if not vitriolic, in response to queer's domestication is Jasbir Puar. In her own manifestly provocative 2007 book, *Terrorist Assemblages*, which Warner cites as exemplary of "queer theory's ambivalence about itself," Puar contends that not only has there been a cultural sanctioning of the term "queer," but an "emergence and sanctioning," an "incorporation," of "queer subjects" into the social fabric as we have moved—or been moved—"from being figures of death (i.e., the AIDS epidemic) to becoming tied to ideas of life and productivity (i.e., gay marriage and families)" (xii).

Perhaps more often, queer theorists oppose queer/queerness to—and suggest queer (and queer theory) must be mobilized *to oppose*—the ever-growing "homo-normative" investments of "the contemporary LGBT movement [in] . . . the flawed and toxic ideological formation known as marriage" (Muñoz 21) and also in military service and other forms of national and nationalist belonging (e.g., Warner; Muñoz 121; Halberstam 72–73). But, whether we understand queer as that which struggles to keep alive an alternative to an increasingly constrained gay and lesbian political imagination, or as participatory in that imagination, there seems to be general consensus in recent queer theoretical work that it is now possible both to invoke the term to no particularly provocative rhetorical effect and to *be* "properly queer" (Puar xiii), "the right kind of queer" (Ahmed 106; see also Talburt and Rasmussen 12)—at the expense, of course, of those who are

not and only through what Puar describes as “a parallel process of demarcation from [other] populations targeted for segregation, disposal, or death” (xii). As Lee Edelman has explained of this process, “those of us inhabiting the place of the queer may be able to cast off that queerness [or have it cast off of us] and enter the properly political sphere, but only by shifting the figural burden of queerness to someone else. The *structural position* of queerness, after all, and the need to fill it remain” (27, original emphasis).

Puar’s specific contention and concern is that, since 9/11, this position is being filled by the “queerly raced” and scapegoated “terrorist bodies” of “South Asians, Arab Americans, and Muslim Americans” (xii-xiii). My contention and concern is admittedly less global and certainly less urgent: it is that we must keep these contentions and concerns about queer’s *normalization* in the forefront of our minds as we talk about “queering the writing program” in 2013, especially those of us who wish to retain, or perhaps reclaim, if that is possible, some of queer’s once provocative force. Queering the writing program? Why now? What are the current rhetorical effects—or lack thereof—of using this term, “queering,” as we do indeed “approach Normal?” in more ways than one and perhaps as never before? What happens, in *this time and place*—and what does not happen—when we use “queering” essentially as a synonym for: “disrupting,” or “troubling,” or “destabilizing,” or “reading against the grain,” or “interrupting business as usual,” or “questioning received practices,” to cite some verbs and verb phrases I’ve heard repeatedly at this conference (and read repeatedly in queer-themed scholarship)? In the language of the CWPA conference’s call for proposals, what happens when we use queer as a synonym for “unsettl[ing]”—in this particular case, “what we think we know about pedagogy, programming, and educational systems” (CWPA 2013 CFP; see Appendix)? These questions give me pause; I hope they give you pause, and they lead me directly to the next central question posed by my title and my talk: queering the writing program—how?

While it may seem counterintuitive and even “anti-queer” to attempt to determine or rethink “the proper subjects, aims, and locations” of queer projects (Talburtt and Rasmussen 1), as Talburtt and Rasmussen attempt to do in their introduction to the “After Queer’ Research in Education” special issue, I agree that this is important work—again, especially if we agree that “queer” is running out of steam and that some kind of renewal or redirection or departure is therefore in order. To return once more to the language of the call for proposals for this conference, an overarching purpose of the 2013 CWPA gathering has been to “call upon some of the key considerations of queer theory” to “invigorate our thinking about the administrative possibilities of our writing programs and our writing classrooms.”

Let me assure you from the outset that, while I know I am going to veer dangerously close, it is not my intention now to rehearse questions about whether or not we can “apply” queer theory to “practice,” both because I think questions about the relationship between theory and practice in our field have been asked and answered to death and because, importantly, I do not think we’ve been invited to entertain such questions at this conference. Instead, and again, we’ve been asked, quite carefully I think, to “consider,” to “unsettle” and “invigorate our thinking about . . . administrative possibilities.” But, still, are the “key considerations of queer theory” a “proper” lens or intellectual apparatus for such tasks, for thinking about “programming,” “policy,” and “institutionalized systems” as we’ve been asked to do this weekend (CWPA 2013 CFP-see Appendix)?

Warner, in the same re-visitation of queer theory’s glory days from which I was quoting earlier, reminds us that queer theory (and activism too) “maintained a skeptical distance from legitimate political processes,” and, we might say, from the “legitimate” more generally. In some of its most radical versions and visions, queer theory has positioned both itself and queerness as “anti-social” and/or “anti-relational.” Edelman, for example, who is certainly the best known, if not best-liked, propagator of the anti-social thesis, maintains in 2004’s *No Future* that “queer theory . . . marks the ‘other’ side of politics,” and that “the queer must insist on disturbing . . . social organization as such” (7, 17). Even those queer theorists who object to Edelman’s apolitical and “notoriously cranky theories” (Halberstam 149) or his “Anglo-normative pessimism” (Muñoz 96), arguing that we need to hold on to such ideals as relationality, collectivity, futurity, and hope (Muñoz 11), tend to be adamant that queer desire for some kind of better future does not eventuate in a pragmatic response. Muñoz, for instance, notes that “pragmatism has only ever failed us” and is precisely what “has led us to a historical moment” wherein marriage rights and military service have become the gay movement’s chief concerns (121). Relatedly, queer theory has long abjured traditional and regulatory notions of agency (Talbur and Rasmussen 2), and, as Talbur and Rasmussen have already suggested, has similarly rejected the “regulatory narrative of progress” (2–3). Halberstam’s 2011 book, *The Queer Art of Failure* is notable in this respect, as she describes an “ethos of resignation to failure, to lack of progress” as a potentially “crucial part of a queer aesthetic” (96).

Certainly, these are far from the only key considerations (or contentions) of queer theory, but they are central considerations which would seem to have little to offer us in our considerations of *administrative possibilities*. Theories (or postures or aesthetics) which maintain distance from the legitimated, reject social organization and institutionalization, refuse

pragmatism, and rebuff agency to celebrate lack of progress make strange bedfellows with questions and issues of “programming,” “policy,” and “institutionalized systems.” We could, of course, see this as an excitingly queer disjuncture, a kinky combination, even. Yet, I would and will argue instead that this conjoining—this marriage, if you will—is dangerously domesticating of queer at a particularly perilous time in queer’s evolution, or perhaps devolution.

Because I am myself on some dangerous turf here, taking the risk, with Talburt and Rasmussen, as I said before, of determining queer’s proper subjects, aims, and scope, and running the risk now not only of policing “what queer theory is and is not” (Talburt and Rasmussen 1), but whether it can or can not *inform our thoughts*, I will call quickly on some queer compatriots in my home discipline of rhetoric and composition for help, if not rescue. Alexander and Rhodes, in the same 2011 article where they note that a “queer turn” in rhetoric and composition never happened, suggest that the sparseness of queer scholarship in the field may not be such an unhappy circumstance but an inevitability and the result of *impossibility*. Alexander and Rhodes say they have begun to question “what, if anything, queerness has to say to composition” (179), and they conclude that the answer may well be, and perhaps should be, *nothing*. “Our field asks, consistently,” they write, “for the right answer, for the best practices, for the way to do things to satisfy different ‘stakeholders’” (190), while “[q]ueerness is a disruption in the service of nothing, pure in its joyful enraged body, sexed up and inappropriate” (186, see also Edelman 5). Criticizing themselves for having “started to forget the power of the queer” in their own previous efforts to bring queerness from the margins to the fore in rhetoric and composition, Alexander and Rhodes assert now that “[q]ueer composition is impossible; the excess and disorientation of one disrupts the containment of the other” (190, 196).

William P. Banks and Alexander make much the same claim about WPA work in particular in “Queer Eye for the Comp Program,” when they point out that “a *program* . . . is inherently normative in structure and definition” (97, my emphasis). Thus, not only does queer theory “challenge WPA work significantly [;] WPA work . . . challenges the antinormative impulses of queer theory” in ways that may be irreconcilable with and “antithetical to [its] missions” (97). While Banks and Alexander leave open the possibility for what they describe as local and individualized (that is, *non-programmatic*) “queer guerrilla tactics” which WPAs may be in a position to support and encourage (97), and while Alexander and Rhodes leave open and attempt, yet again, to forge spaces for queer writing and writing instruction, I would actually like to stick much more stickily with the

impossibility and irreconcilability these authors initially posit, and suggest that the potential irreconcilability between queer or queer theory and writing program administration need not trouble us overmuch; that perhaps reconciliation should trouble us more.

To be sure, we have worried over, and many would say, overcome—we have troubled until we have untroubled—similar potential irreconcilabilities before. I am thinking about the happy relationship that came to exist between “queer” and “pedagogy.” In the mid-to-late 1990s, a few years before teacher-scholars in Rhetoric and Composition did, renowned Education scholar Deborah Britzman began asking if there could, indeed, *be* a queer pedagogy (see “Is There” and “Queer”). In “Queer Pedagogy and its Strange Techniques,” Britzman reminded us that “education is a structure of authority” and thus wondered if it can “become the gathering grounds for ‘deconstructive revolts’” such as those mounted by queer theory (79–80). Queer theory’s “bothersome and unapologetic imperatives are explicitly transgressive [and] perverse,” she writes, sounding much like the queer theorists I’ve quoted earlier; “they turn away from utility” and “attempt to confound instituted laws and practices” (82). “In thinking of a queer pedagogy,” then, Britzman questioned if we could do so in a way that would “still hold onto” what she calls queer’s “first referent, namely transgression . . .” (81). Britzman would ultimately answer her own query in the affirmative, as would many rhetoric and composition scholars who succeeded her: Whether we have understood queer pedagogy as a mode of inquiry for students or as a performative, embodied mode of teachers’ self-presentation, there seems general consensus that, yes, despite pedagogy’s inevitable locatedness in a structure of authority, there can be queer pedagogies—pedagogies that uphold the transgression imperative and “unsettle[] normalcy’s immanent exclusions” (Britzman, “Queer” 80).

In retrospect, the reasons for this seeming consensus are various and may reveal as much about our fantasies and desires about teaching as they do about teaching itself. Scenes of teaching in popular films, Banks and Alexander point out, make it very possible for us to imagine ourselves as “campus radical” (89), for example, and we have an equal number of cultural narratives affirming the existence of the (also transgressive) eccentric professor, or “nutty professor,” or “mad genius” professor. It is easy for queers to project ourselves into any of these roles marked by difference and encouraging of further difference, to imagine ourselves as fringe figures involved in what Halberstam romantically calls “the pedagogical project of creating monsters” (20). Alluring though these scenes and narratives and imaginings are, and precisely because they are so alluring, we might

question how, how much, and to what effects they have informed and constructed our belief in the compatibility of queer with pedagogy.

Though our lived experiences, as students ourselves and then as teachers, as well as a vast amount of scholarship, may insist that pedagogy, and education more generally, can be unsettling, provocative, and radicalizing, and though these experiences are “true,” it is also inescapably true that pedagogy works toward and in the service of normalization and assimilation (e.g., Strickland 93; see also Worsham, “Going”) and that any transgressions that take place, or that we enact, in our classrooms are literally institutionally sanctioned and contained. Further, though it pains me to do so, we may even need to question the usually unproblematized, exalted “first referent” and “imperative” of “queer” itself—transgression. Puar is helpful here, when she argues that the “focus on transgression” posits queerness as somehow free (or at least freer) from norms, thus equating queerness with exceptionalism and individualism and making the “ideal queer” nothing more, and nothing less, than the “fully self-possessed speaking subject, untethered by hegemony or false consciousness” (22–23)—the very “subject” that queer and numerous other theories have long struggled to *deconstruct* if not *destroy*. It is the very subject we see in cultural images of heroic teachers passionately creating all of our little monsters.

Puar’s dismantling of transgression and likening of the “ideal queer” to the ideal subject of US individualism and liberal humanism stops me in my tracks. I do not know if I am able to go there with her, but the fact that I am so resistant to going there with her actually gets me to where I want to go next, and that is to this assertion: Our theoretical investments are libidinal investments. I want, I desire intensely, to hold onto (and exalt) transgression as queer’s first referent and, yes, to notions of the “ideal queer” subject as fre(er) from norms. Likely (and perhaps because), I even fancy myself *to be* this “ideal queer,” living outside of—or maybe the more telling descriptor is “above”—those “ensnaring bonds” of marriage, children, or even companionate coupledom (Puar 23), proceeding in some sort of theoretical and political purity while other dupes know not what they do or, worse, know what they do but do it anyway.¹ Exceptional; “queerer than thou”! (Warner).

To move from the individual back to the aggregate, I am asking by extension and implication here, what desires and fantasies have we fulfilled and perpetuated by so happily conjoining queer with pedagogy in a larger culture caught in a long romance with the figure of the radical teacher, and in a field, moreover (Composition Studies), which, as Donna Strickland notes, has for decades liked to envision itself as “radically democratic,” “uniquely counterhegemonic,” and thus in a position of “radical difference from the rest of the university curriculum and the rest of society” (6).

Exceptionalism rears its head again. What desires and fantasies do we fulfill and perpetuate now—about ourselves, about our institutional roles—by attempting to marry queer, at long last, with administration? Are the answers to these questions something we can bear to know?

Whether WPAs conceive of themselves as researchers, theorists, intellectuals (managerial or otherwise) or all of the above, and regardless of whether they consider pragmatism to be an epithet or a progressive intellectual tradition that enables them to be activist WPAs,² I agree with Thomas P. Miller and Jillian Skeffington that—to be done to any effect whatsoever—administration demands “a practical, results-oriented mindset concerned with what can be achieved within a given set of constraints” (127). Theories which help us here are those that enable us to “understand more about the nature of institutions and how to change them” (Fox 15), and so it is little wonder that some theories which have flourished in scholarship on administration are materialist theories, pragmatism itself, and, though not without “troubled intersections” (Ratcliffe and Rickly, “Introduction” vii), certain forms of feminist theories—theories concerned with daily struggle and real change—while other poststructuralist or postmodernist theories have flourished somewhat less so (see Rice 6),³ and while queer theory has made nary an appearance (Banks and Alexander 88).

Again, perhaps this dearth of inquiry arises not from some failure of imagination—or radicalism—on our part but from the simple, inevitable irreconcilability of queer theory’s aims, scope, and locations with the aims, scope, and locations of administrative endeavors. To frame this irreconcilability as Irwin Weiser and Shirley K Rose might, perhaps queer theory is a “bad theory”—in that it has little “explanatory power”—for writing program administration (185, 190). Perhaps this is not a bad thing. Again I will ask, what do theories (or aesthetics or postures) which deliberately turn away from pragmatism or utility, from the legitimate and legitimated, from institutions and social organization and progress have to say about administrative possibilities? How do we queer a writing *program*? But, more importantly, even if we can, what I’ve really been asking is why do we want to? In rhetorical terminology, this question about our desires is one of motives and effects: what do we want from our relationship with queer, and, perhaps most important of all, what will happen if we get it?

In examining her relationship as WPA to “postmodernist, modernist, structuralist, feminist, postcolonialist, womanist, or cultural theories,” Sibylle Gruber has advised that we “ground our theories more fully and honestly in the realities of our practices,” *not* to understand that, and chastise ourselves when, our practices may “fall short of . . . theoretical guideposts,” but, conversely, to acknowledge that “theoretical guideposts sometimes fall

short of understanding our practices” (49–50). This “practical” honesty is part of what I am advocating—an honesty that would allow for a potential irreconcilability of queer theory (or queer or queerness) with administration—but I am also advocating, in a spirit that I think can be conceived as queer—for intrepid *honesty around our desire* for reconcilability; for an acknowledgement that our theoretical investments are libidinal investments and for a *willingness to explore* what these investments may be.

Why are we determined, if we are, to make “queer” work in the interest of administration (as we have made it work in the interests of pedagogy)? Might our desire be for a safe flirtation, a little “experimentation,” with queer now that the high voltage charge of insult and stigma has receded and the once utterly contradictory notion of being “properly queer” has become a mundane cultural reality? Or, conversely, might our desire be for “mastery when confronted by . . . the enigmatic other that exceeds and threatens . . . system[s] of meaning”? (Worsham, “Writing” 83). If we (still, somehow) conceive of queerness as Edelman does, and as Alexander and Rhodes have begun to, as an abjected social positioning that accepts and revels in its abjection (Edelman 25, 22), necessarily “unrepresentable” and “illegible” (Alexander and Rhodes 181; see also Muñoz 72), then it would behoove us to remember that queerness “does not want to be brought, from its position on the margin of official culture, into the university” (Worsham, “Writing” 93).

The warnings and admonishments I’ve just been offering are the self-same warnings and admonishments Lynn Worsham offered in 1991 when she wrote that the excessive enigmatic otherness of *écriture féminine* could “not be brought within the university as we know it” (other than in utterly neutralized form) because—quite like Edelman’s conception of queerness—as what is “truly ‘other,’” “[i]t insists on passage out of the system, any system, every system” (92–3). Written when rhetoric and composition was just beginning to contend with postmodern theories, Worsham’s oft-cited “Writing against Writing: The Predicament of *Écriture Féminine* in Composition Studies,” advised us, ultimately, to “exercise prudence” in our attempts to incorporate or appropriate *écriture féminine* for the field; to “conserve some of its energy by realizing,” essentially, what it could *not contribute*. Similar to what I have been doing, Worsham urged us to focus our own energies on questioning our disciplinary “desires that would rather not be questioned,” such as those that compel us toward incorporation and appropriation of otherness in the first place, and suggested, moreover, that if *écriture féminine* had relevance for the field it was as a heuristic for “call[ing] into question [these] needs and desires” (97–98).

Clearly, in resurrecting Worsham's twenty-something year old essay I intend to make an argument that we have been here before and are at risk of losing our way if and as we lose our disciplinary memory. Significantly, for those of you who are finding my "queerer than thou"/older-and-wiser than thou attitude offensive, Halberstam finds much that is queer in such "looping," "losing," and "forgetting" (54). While she admits there is a good deal of cultural and political "damage done by forgetting," she makes a case nonetheless for "the power of forgetfulness in creating new futures not tied to old traditions" (83). Perhaps, then, despite my most strenuous efforts to tie you down, you will not be bound or even bothered by Worsham's and my admonishments, or by memory, and will go home from Savannah with your thinking about programming, policy, and institutionalized systems fully unsettled and invigorated and with queer administrative possibilities in sight. It is, after all, a new time and place. I would have to agree with you there. It is not 1991 and queer theory is hardly "the latest scandal wrought by a postmodern temperament," as Worsham said *écriture féminine* was when she hoped we could resist our desires to discipline it and instead conserve its force (86). Indeed, if you agree with the catalogue of lamentations I offered at the outset of this talk, queer theory is hardly the latest scandal wrought by its former self, and "queer" is hardly scandalous at all. Yes, now might be the perfect time indeed—a *kairotic* moment after all—to talk about queering the writing program, to marry queer, at long last, with administration.

To a certain extent our arrival here, and what has happened to queer, was inevitable. "Dominant culture," after all, "develops and depends on elaborate strategies of containment"[:] "the fate of every practice of resistance may be incorporation and neutralization" (Worsham, "Writing" 94, 101). That is what Worsham wrote in her conclusion to her *écriture féminine* essay, but she also concluded that "it is still possible to set resistance in motion as such"—that is, new cultural practices of resistance may evolve or erupt—and that, as individuals, "all of us have the responsibility to invent our own styles of resistance" (101). I am frankly unsure if "queer" can any longer do this work of resistance or set itself back in motion. Perhaps it has brushed up too close against Normal and its fate is sealed. But if and as and to the extent that we can invent our own styles of resistance, I am suggesting this other way: Though it might seem counterintuitive or even anti-queer, the most resistant approach, the most renewing approach, the most radicalizing approach we might take to queer at this juncture is to "exercise prudence" once more in order to help conserve what little energy and provocative force queer may have left. Rather than seeking reconcilia-

tion between queer and administration, we might simply leave queer to its own proclivities.

APPENDIX



CWPA Conference 2013: Queering the Writing Program Savannah, Georgia July 14-21, 2013

(Workshop July 14-17, Institutes July 18, Conference July 18-21)

Queerness is a structuring and educated mode of desiring that allows us to see and feel beyond the quagmire of the present. The here and now is a prison house. We must strive, in the face of the here and now's totalizing rendering of reality, to think and feel a then and there. ...Queerness is essentially about the rejection of a here and now and an insistence on potentiality or concrete possibility for another world.
—José Estéban Muñoz

The 2013 CWPA Conference in Savannah will be one year away from its 2014 conference in Normal, Illinois. As we approach Normal, we'll take this opportunity in Savannah—city of gardens, Girl Scouts, ghosts—to consider what it means to be “normal” as a WPA, as a program, as a policy, or as an institution. The nineteenth-century *école normale* was formed to provide a model school with model classrooms and model teaching practices: teachers, student teachers, and students worked together to establish teaching standards (or “norms”). Today, in an era that herds students and teachers to conform to rigid sets of standards, it is crucial to examine what “normal” means and evaluate whether “normal” is what we want. Has education become more about discipline than about the messy process of knowledge-making that it “abnormally” is?

Munoz's musings may inform and invigorate our thinking about the administrative possibilities of our writing programs and our writing classrooms. This CWPA conference will call upon some of the key considerations of queer theory: acknowledging what, in the words of Amy Winans, we “cannot bear to know;” creating community, advocacy, and activism; arousing the desire to know; flirting with ideas; refusing “straight” (or linear) concepts, methods, and systems; discovering where and how normalcy exists and how it stultifies. We invite presentations, panels, and conversations that unsettle what we think we know about pedagogy, programming, and educational systems. Some possibilities:

- How do our current institutionalized systems keep our students and teachers from fully comprehending (and thus managing) the educational process?
- What do we not teach in our classrooms and how does that perpetuate ignorance?
- What are the things about bureaucracy, education, and learning that we “cannot bear to know”?
- How do we arouse our students' (and our colleagues') desire to know?
- With what new ideas about administration should we flirt?
- What “straight,” linear concepts pervade our institutional systems and how do they inhibit teaching and learning?
- What normalizing institutional policies should we identify and then provoke?

The CWPA Conference 2013 will challenge its membership to consider how we may deepen and shift the pedagogical, administrative, and institutional work that we do. Come flirt with ideas in Savannah.

Keynote Speakers:

Harry Denny, St. John's University, author of “Queering the Writing Center” and *Facing the Center*
Erica R. Meiners, teacher and activist, Northeastern Illinois University and St. Leonard's Adult High School, author of *Right to Be Hostile and Public Acts* (<http://www.neiu.edu/~ermelner>)
Karen Kopelson, University of Louisville, winner of the CCC Richard C. Braddock Award

Institutes:

--“Writing Assessment and Diversity: What Do We Know? What Should We Know? What Should We Be Doing When We Assess Writing?” Leaders: Bill Condon, Asao Inoue, and Mya Poe

--“The ‘Pro-Labor’ Writing Program Administrator: Conditions, Relations, Practices.” Leaders: Seth Kahn and Michèle LaFrance

--“Effective Faculty Development Workshops: Design and Delivery.” Leaders: Carol Rutz and Steve Wilhoit

--“Theoretically Prepared? A Day-Long Boot Camp for Graduate Students.” Leaders: Melissa Iannetta and Kelly Ritter

NOTES

1. As Joe Marshall Hardin explains in a different context—in fact, in a discussion of WPAs and complicity with structures of power—this is generally the

distinction drawn between “false consciousness” (knowing not what we do) and “enlightened false consciousness” (knowing but doing it anyway) (142).

2. As readers likely recognize, I was/am invoking here the titles of Rose and Weiser’s 1999 and 2002 edited collections. I am also invoking debates about the term “managerial intellectual,” summarized nicely in Strickland’s introduction to *The Managerial Unconscious* (see, especially, page 8). On differing views (and connotations) of pragmatism, see, for example, Strickland and Gunner (especially xv) and Miller and Skeffington. Finally, “activist WPAs” is meant to invoke the title of Linda Adler-Kassner’s 2008 book.

3. Two qualifications here: One, I realize there are exceptions to this trend in the form of many individual essays, book chapters, and even entire edited collections, such as 2005’s *Discord and Direction: The Postmodern Writing Program Administrator* (McGee and Handa). Two, Jeff Rice’s take on the absence of certain postmodernist or poststructuralist theories from WPA theorizing and from official WPA statements is different from, in that it is more “suspicious” than, mine—though he does seem to allow for the possibility of irreconcilability: He writes, “Without these or similar theories [he names those of Derrida, Foucault, Stuart Hall, among others], can we think about programmatic moves without falling back on the familiar? How can we think about programmatic decisions in terms of those theoretical positions that have done much work to challenge status quo positions in language, ideology, politics, and even administration? Or can we?” (6).

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WPAs in Dialogue

Response to Faye Halpern's "The Preceptor Problem: The Effect of 'Undisciplined Writing' on Disciplined Instructors"

Andrea Scott

The pedagogy of multidisciplinary writing programs has been the focus of renewed criticism this past year. In her 2012 CWPA keynote address, Linda Adler-Kassner urges members of the organization to return to first principles by enforcing a “no vampires’ policy” (132) ensuring that “writing classes focus on the study of writing within particular contexts, the values reflected in that writing, the implications of relationships between writing and values. Not vampires” (134). In the last issue of *WPA*, literary scholar, Faye Halpern adds momentum to such criticism by problematizing the theoretical underpinnings of programs like Harvard’s Expos and Duke’s Thompson Writing Program (TWP), where vampires abound in the form of theme-based writing seminars. In “The Preceptor Problem: The Effect of ‘Undisciplined Writing’ on Disciplined Instructors,” Halpern draws on her experience teaching in Expos to highlight what she sees as the contradictory status of disciplinarity in such programs. In the 1990s, Expos’ directors redesigned the curriculum of the first-year writing program to align it more closely with the writing students were asked to do in their majors. Instructors from across the disciplines were recruited and trained to draw on their disciplinary expertise to teach topic-based writing seminars that introduce students to the elements of academic writing common to all disciplines. This resulted, she argues, in the creation of 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” (12). She calls this approach to teaching writing “transdisciplinary” in its emphasis on teaching *beyond* the disciplines. It’s a method, she asserts, that “attends to

what writing in different disciplines shares rather than what distinguishes it" and it "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" (14). While she found this approach generative to her teaching in the program and her scholarly writing, it led to problems for her when she became a WPA in a writing program that recruited faculty from across the disciplines to teach within it and when she eventually returned to her disciplinary roots as an assistant professor of American literature in an English department. In both those contexts disciplinary—not transdisciplinary—expertise was privileged, leading her to question how transferrable her experience at Expos was to teaching writing in other contexts.

As an outgoing lecturer and WPA in the Princeton Writing Program (PWP), a program modeled somewhat closely on Expos, I read Halpern's article with great interest. I find the pedagogical model of programs like Expos, TWP, and my former institution innovative and effective in their local contexts. And like Halpern, I suspect that after teaching in such a program for five years, I'll never think about writing assignments and my own scholarly writing in quite the same way. While it's too soon to know how my experience in the PWP will inform my teaching and administrative work elsewhere, I still find myself agreeing and disagreeing with some points in Halpern's argument. The article serves, I think, as a particularly productive counter-narrative to some aspects of Joseph Harris' "Thinking Like a Program," which privileges the perspective of WPAs and relies on a rather negative definition of disciplinarity to legitimize a multidisciplinary approach to the teaching of first-year writing. While I admire Duke's program and Harris' scholarship, I think he misses an opportunity to think more expansively about disciplines when he describes them exclusively as "conservative structures—both politically and intellectually" whose "point [. . .] is to define turf, to limit what can be said, to regulate the work of its members" (358). In doing so he elides the powerful role that disciplines play in bestowing institutional authority and protections, which junior scholars in programs like Expos, TWP, and PWP tend to care a lot about. Program teachers are often working to build a body of scholarship that will make their disciplinary expertise visible to scholarly communities, presses, and hiring committees. Halpern's article, in this regard, productively shifts the scholarly conversation to address the perspectives of instructors teaching in the programs created by WPAs.

Halpern's critique of the problematic conceptualization of disciplinarity in Harris's genesis narrative resonates with aspects of my own experience and the experiences shared by some of the faculty in our program. In fact,

when faculty and WPAs in our program gathered to discuss Harris' article as part of a writing studies reading group, we, too, questioned the idealized portraits of multidisciplinary as "not a theoretical ideal but lived reality" (360) and teachers' motives for joining such programs. Like Duke's program, we have a community of scholars committed to teaching and learning, but a number of exigencies—personal and structural—inform faculty decisions to take up this line of work. Harris' account, "Fellows join our program because they want to work intensely on their teaching before moving on to other academic positions" (360), struck some faculty as condescending or just plain off-the-mark. Positions in the program may not be "dead-end jobs" (360), as Harris argues, insofar as they provide respectable resources and opportunities for professional development, but contracts are generally not renewable after five years in our program, which creates both stress and real challenges for some faculty in our program.

While I was excited to see the article point to the reductive definition of disciplinarity used to theorize multidisciplinary writing programs, I'm less convinced that these programs are as dismissive of disciplinarity as Halpern's article suggests. The essay's most provocative question, "Could programs like Expos and Duke's help its preceptors understand how disciplinarity does not stymie the teaching of writing but can enable it?" (24) strikes me as an oversimplification of what happens in the classroom and faculty development workshops. Likewise, her article's final call to action—"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" (24)—misrepresents, I think, the extent to which WPAs are often aware of the challenges faced by instructors and strive to mitigate them. Like Halpern, I'll write from my own experience in my response.

I'm not sure it's helpful to think about WPAs and faculty in such starkly binary terms—particularly now that at least a decade has transpired since the creation of programs like Expos and TWP. A number of current WPAs in these programs first served as teachers in the programs. This is true in my case, and it's given me a double perspective that makes me more aware of the challenges faced by full-time instructors. It's also made me more cognizant of the special opportunities that such programs provide to belong to a community of innovative teachers and scholars that offer each other feedback on everything from drafts of lesson plans to scholarly articles. Our disciplinary differences make for productive (and sometimes contentious) conversations at works-in-progress colloquia, faculty development workshops, and the annual essay competition. At these venues we see how our disciplinary training informs our values about writing.

It also seems to me that many WPAs in programs like Expos, TWP, and the PWP have taught in other programs before joining our home institutions, giving us a less insular perspective than Halpern implies when she claims that "Perhaps one of the hardest things for a program to do is to acknowledge its own partiality" (23). In my own experience, these multiple double perspectives (in addition to engagement with the scholarly literature) have better positioned me to collaborate with others to advocate for resources to advance my colleagues' work as scholars and teachers in their fields. In the PWP my colleagues and I have actively pursued opportunities to make our faculty eligible for fellowships and teaching opportunities in departments and interdisciplinary programs. We've created faculty development programs and committees responsive to faculty requests for professional development. And we've regularly supported faculty applications for university research grants and assistantships, which they secure in high numbers. I recount these efforts, not to paint an idealized picture, but to suggest that I suspect that many WPAs like myself have done our best to work within institutional constraints to facilitate opportunities that faculty have said they'd like to pursue.

I wonder, too, whether working in multidisciplinary programs "may inadvertently hamper the professional advancement of their departing instructors" (24). It's definitely true that faculty can feel isolated from their home disciplines when teaching in a multidisciplinary program, but as I've suggested (and others have argued) such programs provide strong resources to support teaching and research. It's true that, as Halpern suggests, faculty must find a way to make visible to hiring committees how their experience teaching in such a program will make them an asset to a department, but many faculty have been successful at securing competitive postdocs and tenure-track positions while teaching in the program—and not just at institutions that privilege teaching. Many faculty have reported that the experience of teaching writing in a multidisciplinary program has given them a nuanced way of communicating how they structure their classrooms to invite students to participate in the work of a discipline. Of course, there are exceptions to these success stories reflective of structural inequities of the job market, but faculty alumni of our program secure tenure-track positions at a rate that far exceeds the national average and some have turned down tenure-track positions elsewhere for personal reasons or because the conditions for teaching or research have been more favorable in our program. For this reason, I'm not sure that the risks of teaching in such a program are as great as the article implies—or even greater than a number of other professional possibilities scholars pursue outside of the tenure-track. We're not operating in a perfect system by any means, but I think we've

done a good job of making the positions attractive and productive for those who accept them.

If WPAs are mindful of the challenges faced by disciplined faculty on the job market, they also run multidisciplinary programs that are often complex in their negotiation of disciplinary authority. I greatly appreciate Harris' "Thinking Like a Program" for making the case that, with institutional support, faculty from across the disciplines can do an excellent job teaching writing. Such programs attempt to realize—however imperfectly—the ideal that writing is a shared responsibility because it's an important means by which disciplinary knowledge is communicated. Calls for "no vampires" obscure, I think, the extent to which multidisciplinary programs often share the same pedagogical values as programs that design their first-year writing sequence as writing-about-writing. And I recognize that such a model might not work everywhere, as was Halpern's experience as a WPA at a small liberal arts college. In the PWP, we think of our approach to teaching writing not as "transdisciplinary," as Halpern describes, but "metadisciplinary." Like Expos, the program is based on the principle that teaching students the elements of writing common across disciplines—motive, thesis, analysis, structure, etc.—helps students develop a heuristic for understanding writing, which facilitates transfer. On the surface, such an approach may appear to obliterate disciplinary differences—to attempt to transcend them by moving beyond them, as Halpern argues. Yet in my experience something more complex happens on the ground. The writing seminars at Princeton, which are interdisciplinary and research-oriented, give students an early opportunity to see how conventions of academic argument play out in different disciplines. The interdisciplinary nature of the writing seminars provides a testing ground for students to recognize and practice these differences and to make more informed choices about the kinds of disciplinary conversations they want to join in their research. Such a program cultivates in students—and in instructors—a "meta" awareness of disciplinary practices by attending as much to similarities as to differences in intellectual practices.¹ Through my experience teaching in the PWP, where lively and sustained conversations about disciplinarity are a regular part of conversations about teaching, I've become aware of the extent to which my own disciplinary training informs—and has limited—my understanding of what scholarly writing is and can be.

I'll be moving to a new position and disciplinary home this fall. I know from writing studies scholarship that learning doesn't transfer easily to new contexts. New institutional cultures require different teaching and administrative practices. Yet I also think I've benefitted tremendously from the opportunity to teach and serve as a WPA in a program that supported my

development as a teacher, administrator, and scholar. In my case, the program provided me with the much needed time and research support to begin developing expertise in writing studies, which I now consider my home discipline. Thanks to the insights of my colleagues from across the disciplines, which triggered a research interest in genre theory and writing-in-the-disciplines, I'm leaving the program with greater insight into how disciplinary knowledge is constructed and shared. I'm a better teacher for it, I think, and a better and more disciplined scholar in my new field.

NOTE

1. I thank my former colleagues, Amanda Irwin Wilkins (director), Keith Shaw (associate director for the writing seminars), and Judy Swan (associate director for writing in the sciences and engineering) for helping theorize the concept of "metadisciplinary awareness," which we've been using to describe the program's pedagogy. This pedagogical approach owes much to the innovation of former director Kerry Walk, who relocated from Expos to rebuild the program in Princeton in 2001, and current lecturer Kristin Dombek, whose leadership in creating the curriculum for Ways of Knowing Seminars for incoming freshman has informed the program's approach to teaching disciplinarity.

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Response to Andrea Scott

Faye Halpern

I want to thank Andrea Scott for taking the time to respond to my article and for the care she took in trying to understand my point of view. To some extent, our seeming disagreements are only that and result from a confusion in my original article.

So let me begin by describing how much I agree with what she says. Like her, I'm not convinced that what Adler-Kassner has dubbed "writing about vampires" should be abandoned, having seen, firsthand, how effectively a writing course whose topic is not writing itself can teach academic writing. Fangs dripping, I also agree about the value of writing programs like Expos and the Princeton Writing Program (PWP), not just to students but to the people who teach in them, many of whom do, indeed, go on to get jobs in their original disciplines. I fear that my article, committed as it is to laying bare a problem I see with such programs, might make it seem that I don't think they help their instructors; this is the confusion that I referred to above. But I agree with Scott completely that they enrich those who teach in them, both pedagogically and in terms of their scholarship—and that the PWP should be especially commended for how seriously it takes the professional development of those who teach in it. I have never regretted my time at Expos, not just because it allowed me to live in Cambridge, with my partner (the kinds of practical considerations that perhaps Harris pays short shrift to), but because of how much it taught me about writing pedagogy and helped me improve my own scholarly writing.

Yet I think some disagreement between us remains: I do not think the problem that I tried to elucidate in my article about first-year writing programs like Expos and the PWP is fully resolved by Scott's response. As implied above, I was trying less to lay bare the difficulties these programs cause for the employment prospects of writing program faculty than to articulate a set of puzzles that they can bequeath to their alums. As Scott confirms, the experience of working in such a program can be transformative, and much of the problem lies in my ambivalence about that transformation. I became committed to what I termed "transdisciplinarity": a way of teaching academic writing that attends to what different disciplines have in common and teaches those commonalities; it's a way of teaching beyond a single-disciplinary focus, which makes a lot of sense in programs like Expos and PWP because contained within a single class will be students destined for many different disciplines. Yet "transdisciplinarity" can lead to problems when instructors return to their home disciplines or even when they try to transfer this model, as a WPA, to a differently structured writing program. Yet is the problem

“transdisciplinarity” itself, or is it, instead, the resistance this approach often meets outside these writing programs, in my case, from the faculty at a small liberal arts college whom we recruited to teach first-year writing courses? And what can these writing programs do to help its soon-to-be alums navigate the often difficult legacy it leaves us?

Scott suggests it might be “transdisciplinarity” itself that is the problem when she suggests another (better) model of teaching writing, “metadisciplinarity,” which “give[s] students an early opportunity to see how conventions of academic argument play out in different disciplines.” Presumably, this better model does not leave the same problematic legacy for PWP alums to contend with. Yet if I may be permitted a moment of against-the-grain reading, I believe Scott might not be as opposed to “transdisciplinarity” as she believes herself to be. Scott remarks that she finds Harris’s ideas of disciplinarity limiting, that, like me, she thinks that disciplinarity enables knowledge, that it does not just stymie it.¹ Yet in the paragraph explaining metadisciplinarity, she, as I do, puts syntactical emphasis on how the PWP teaches the similarities between disciplines: “Such a program cultivates in . . . instructors . . . a ‘meta’ awareness of disciplinary practices by attending as much to similarities as to differences in intellectual practices.” Moreover, Scott comments on how a single disciplinary focus can “limit” knowledge, a claim remarkably similar to the one Harris makes, which she seemingly disagrees with earlier in her piece. I hope I’m being more attentive than nitpicky here: these instances highlight a commitment to “transdisciplinarity” that I think such programs as we’re both the products of produce.

Is “metadisciplinarity” so different from “transdisciplinarity” with their provision of a peak from which to view different disciplinary conventions and emphasize what they have in common? Seemingly, both of us like this approach and the views it affords. It is in this agreement, then, that our disagreement might really lie. I’m not sure “transdisciplinarity” (or “metadisciplinarity”) is an unmixed blessing to those who teach it and who will go on to teach in conventionally disciplined departments or even head writing programs taught not by recent PhDs but faculty who are not given (and who might not necessarily want) the ample training provided by Expos or the PWP. The problem with “transdisciplinarity” might be its very seductiveness, the way that it makes the idea of a single disciplinary approach seem “limited.”

In other words, Scott may share my own ambivalence about disciplinarity: whether it really is just as good as “transdisciplinarity.” Perhaps I made it too easy to think that I wanted to move beyond “transdisciplinarity,” back to a more orthodoxly disciplinary view. But I’m not sure I do. Scott seems to suggest you can have both at once in this idea of “metadisciplinarity,” access to a broad vista without losing sight of the specificity (and value?) of a

particular disciplinary lens.² She suggests that you don't have to choose. But I've found that you do: even at Haverford, where you would think vampiric, topic-based writing classes would be a natural home for "transdisciplinarity," this approach was a difficult idea to get the faculty teaching writing courses to adopt, and I'm not sure that "metadisciplinarity" would have worked much better: these faculty did not want to teach the similarities (or differences) between writing in different disciplines; they just wanted to teach writing based in their own. Programs like Expos and PWP, no matter how much they also emphasize disciplinary differences and provide opportunities for the people who work in them to advance in their home disciplines, also depend, quite fundamentally, on teaching what disciplines share. They emphasize "argument" and "evidence" as concepts that are meaningful in more than just local manifestations. I still love the idea of "transdisciplinarity," and it's precisely this love—and the awkward positions it put me in once I had left these programs—that I grapple with. I needed my program to help me understand not the idea of disciplinary difference (Expos did that, too), but the way that our jobs after we left might not be all that interested in this perspective. I was, frankly, shocked when I realized this. Should I have tried harder to get my current colleagues in the English department, when we were trying to design a first-year writing course, to see the light?

After I left Expos, I found I had to abandon—or at least hide—my commitment to "transdisciplinarity"—and I think the same would have been true of "metadisciplinarity." Should I still champion these concepts? Is a single disciplinary view limiting in some way? Or is there, indeed, a way to have it all? It sounds like the people at Princeton spend a lot of time theorizing just what they want their students to learn about the disciplines; I hope, too, that they also include in the professional development they offer their instructors a chance to think about how deeply their choices as a program will shape them.

NOTES

1. I think Harris is quite aware of how disciplines provide protection; he's quite aware, for example, of how literature professors can marginalize those who teach and research composition as existing outside the discipline of English, even when these people inhabit the same department.

2. It seems to me, rather, that it's the multidisciplinary nature of the classes at PWP (which distinguishes them from Expos' classes, at least while I was there), that might be the thing that teaches disciplinary difference. If a class itself is multidisciplinary rather than the program taken *in toto* than it has the chance to show students how at least two different disciplines might consider the same issue. Expos itself has moved in this direction in recent years, with at least one unit that draws from different disciplines and discusses them comparatively.

Review Essay: In the Internet Age, Who Needs Textbooks?

Richard Colby

Moxley, Joseph, ed. *Writing Commons: The Home for Writers*. Joseph Moxley, n.d. Web. 1 July 2013.

Rhetoric and Composition WikiBook. N.p., n.d. Web. 1 July 2013.

Forty-five years ago, James Moffett wrote, “a lot of what is in textbooks should be in books for teachers, and is in fact partly there to educate them, not the students” (209). His argument then was in response to what he saw as the lack of widespread expertise in the teaching of writing, so he reasoned that as our understanding of writing and its teaching improved, the textbook would become less central. After all, for Moffett, textbooks muck up the works when what a writing class should focus on entirely is students’ writing (210). However, he predicted that textbooks would become more powerful rather than less because the investment was too great by all involved—publishers’ incentive for profit, faculty’s familiarity with a particular textbook’s approach, and administrators’ normalizing of curricula (210).

Today, textbooks still permeate higher education, whether in the writing classroom or in other disciplines. According to the National Association of College Stores, an “average of \$420 was spent on new [\$296] and used [\$124] course materials” per student for the 2011–2012 school year (“Higher Education”), and this, of course, does not account for offsite sales of textbooks, either used or new. Moffett’s prediction seems to hold true. That said, precise numbers on composition textbook sales and use is complicated. There is no comprehensive study on how textbooks are used in composition classrooms, and very little data exists from specific studies; the 2011 WPA-CompPile Research Bibliography only lists two studies from the 1990s (Rendleman). So many studies have analyzed composition textbooks

as texts—their approaches, their histories (e.g., Connors, “Textbooks”; Connors, “Rise and Fall”); their theoretical underpinnings (e.g., Gale and Gale; Knoblauch)—that it is peculiar to see so little published about how the intended audience actually uses the textbook. However, if the intended audience still is the teacher, the textbook exists as a record of the discipline and could account for why these studies look at the text rather than how it is used.

I open with these two issues—the composition textbook’s role and its audience—because they are wrapped up in the self-perpetuating circle of complicit publisher, student, teacher, and administrator that Moffett argued should, but would not be, broken. However, there is a new challenge in how information is delivered to students, and it is beyond the traditional classroom. In fact, the recent Chapter 11 bankruptcy filing from Cengage Learning specifically blames the “consistent decline over the last decade in demand for new printed materials, which traditionally was the primary driver of profitability in the Company’s industry” (5). It might sound quaint or naïve to call what has been evolving over the last two decades a “new” challenge, but that is often how cultural change occurs—slowly over time. The recent Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) interest is a response not only to the increased efficiency of accessing information online, but also to a generation that has grown up accessing information with “immediacy and hypermediacy” (Bolter and Grusin 5–6). At last count, 83 universities, libraries, and museums have partnered with Coursera, an online education company that hosts lectures and content on a variety of topics (“Partners”), and this says nothing of those universities that host their own course content or have developed their own services such as Harvard and MIT’s edX. The medium of learning is shifting from the required textbook to the Internet-at-large.

Such a challenge offers many opportunities in changing the textbook’s role and its audience, but most relevant here are the promising opportunities for the online textbook. The most obvious opportunity is that the online textbook is not bound by the page: it can link outside/within itself. The online textbook is also native hypermedia, so video, audio, and images can be more actively embedded. The online textbook also provides opportunities for more fluid revision through commentary and collaboration. The online textbook more easily affords customizing the book for a particular course or group of students. There is much promise within these opportunities, not the least of which is the possibility for the online textbook to be free for students, even as we might recognize that this removes what little financial incentive exists for those who write these books.

There are two open and online textbooks of note, neither of which is new, but both of which are newly relevant for the pedagogical shifts that are occurring in higher education. There are other online textbooks; to be sure, many others, depending on how one defines a textbook. After all, searching YouTube for “how to write an essay” will net 487,000 results. And there are online textbooks specifically for writing such as *The Informed Writer* by Charles Bazerman, *The Process of Research Writing* by Steven Krause, and two volumes of *Writing Spaces: Readings on Writing* edited by Charlie Lowe and Pavel Zemliansky, but these are instances of print materials placed online for ease of access and not written for the web. My interest here is in two web-based, open online textbooks that are intended to have a unified approach to writing, in this case instruction based on procedural or experiential knowledge: *Writing Commons* and *Rhetoric and Composition WikiBook*.

Writing Commons began as *College Writing Online*, an online text of over 300 webtexts written by Joseph Moxley and published by Pearson in 2003. When the copyright was returned to Moxley in 2008, he decided to make the text freely available, additionally opening it up as a crowd sourced or peer produced website, consisting now of a twenty-person editorial board and sixteen-person review board (*Writing Commons*, “FAQs”). Currently, the website holds over 500 webtexts that cover topics in seven major categories: information literacy, research methods and methodologies, writing processes, collaboration, genre, new media, and style. It also notes, under its Applications page, that it has been used in three writing MOOCs.

The Summary page situates the approach of the text as rhetorical instruction: it lists “thinking rhetorically,” “common organizational patterns,” and “format rhetorically.” Although Richard Fulkerson classified such rhetorical genre instruction as “procedural rhetoric” (671), this term has been more widely used to refer to the rhetoric of rules and procedures in game studies. I prefer “procedural knowledge” (Fulkerson 671), which captures the axiology of *Writing Commons* more precisely. Within each of the primary sections, there is an overview and then a series of internal webtext links that connect additional articles within that particular section and across sections. For example, within the “Information Literacy” section, there are articles on the Aristotelian rhetorical appeals, namely logos, ethos, and pathos. In various places across the other sections of the website, there are occasional links back to this definition of ethos. However, there are oversights that lead to confusing moments in the website for readers. Within the section on Genres, under Business Proposal, logos, ethos, and pathos are defined anew in a more limited way than the major sections on these appeals in the Information Literacy section. This issue is a problem with

peer produced texts, and while an ideal argument might be that the diversity of voices leads to an enriched text, it more often leads to an inconsistent and contradictory text—after all, in the case of ethos above, the definition that appears on its webtext offers at least two approaches, intrinsic authority and borrowed credibility and an additional link on fallacies of ethos, none of which the section on business proposals even considers. However, as a website claiming to offer a unified rhetorical approach, it might be more interesting for it to provide additional discussion of approaches to ethos that are consistent, or at least link to one another, rather than offering yet another definition. In either case, the focus of ethos that the authors present seems limited. They describe intrinsic authority and borrowed credibility well but neglect discussing those parts of ethos like establishing goodwill or common ground, additional ethical concepts that would seem important for a business proposal if not other texts.

Writing Commons holds many external links as well. Throughout the webtext, there are links to videos hosted by YouTube on topics ranging from research from UCLA or Emory University, to remix videos from the *Journal of Undergraduate Research* hosted at UT Austin, to articles on writing topics from eHow. These videos are hodgepodge. What is most problematic in this hodgepodge is that there is usually no commentary from *Writing Commons* about these videos; they merely appear within the flow of the text. There is neither context nor indication as to how a student or a teacher should read these videos. For example, the introduction of genres reasonably discusses how genres, even those we think of as common, have evolved over time and will continue to evolve. However, the video link in that section is from eHow and defines genres as Alexander Bain might—that is, the modes of discourse (e.g., descriptive, expository, narrative, persuasive, poetry and technical writing). Once again, this contradiction disrupts the webtext in a negative way. Given the open nature of the website, a new video might be included or even designed expressly for this section. At least, some context about the modes of discourse and their relationship to genres of practice might be included for the video.

Writing Commons also offers a rubric of suggestions for student writers called “Common Comments.” There are seven common categories of such comments, based on a 2012 study of teacher comments from 26,000 essays at the University of South Florida: Focus, Evidence, Organization, Style, Format, MLA, and APA. Such things as “clarify vague pronoun references” and “avoid the use of unsupported opinions as evidence” lead to parts of the website that provide further information on such topics. But these comments, despite their origins from the study of common feedback on students’ texts, are oddly arhetorical given the rhetorical focus of the

website in general. After all, what amounts to evidence or style or format is entirely based on the rhetorical situation, so a “common” comment seems to miss the point.

These inconsistencies might be compensated for in a classroom setting with discussion and much needed context, but if *Writing Commons* represents a textbook that might be used for a MOOC or for improving one’s understanding of writing before or in lieu of a college education, then the message is no different than the open web in general—that is to say, a fragmented and contradictory cornucopia of ideas about writing with little evidence save just another link. Unfortunately for *Writing Commons*, there are the occasional errors in spelling and grammar so that, even as a clearing-house of sorts for writing instruction, there appear to be problems with its own ethos. This issue is acute given that Moxley writes that the text is for students and faculty (*Writing Commons*, “FAQ”). If, as Moffett suggested, one purpose of composition textbooks is to inform teachers who want to learn more about writing, the incongruities, problems with credibility, and lack of context in *Writing Commons* may undermine that goal by inscribing writing and its instruction more as advice and lore rather than as a carefully studied field of practice and research.

The other noteworthy online textbook, *Rhetoric and Composition Wikibook*, was started by Matt Barton, designed as a wiki project for an “upper-level undergraduate course called Computers and English” that Barton was teaching (187). Barton, aware that textbooks had a significant audience problem in that they were written for teachers rather than students, decided that having students write for students could alleviate some of the audience problem that textbooks had (187). He set up the project through Wikibooks, itself a project associated with Wikipedia to provide freely available and open textbooks for educational uses (*Wikibooks*, “About”). The *Rhetoric and Composition Wikibook* has since evolved and expanded its authorship in an unusual way. About fifty percent of the listed authors of the textbook are graduate students, twenty-five percent undergraduates, and twenty-five percent faculty (*Rhetoric and Composition Wikibook*, “Rhetoric and Composition Authors”). What makes this distribution of authors unusual is that now the website belies the intention of a site by and for undergraduate students. There are many moments where disciplinary assumptions about composition-rhetoric, holding little relevance for students, are inserted without context. Without citations, the website suffers the same problems as *Writing Commons* does for teachers.

The *Rhetoric and Composition Wikibook* textbook is divided into six sections: The Writing Process, Genres, Writing Applications, Advanced Topics, Grammar and Mechanics, and Teacher’s Handbook. There are over 70

webtexts on various subtopics. While *Writing Commons* offers numerous internal and external hyperlinks, *Rhetoric and Composition Wikibook* follows the familiar organization of Wikipedia. The wikibook includes some additional links at the end of many webtexts, but it provides very few internal links to pages within the site. Images are used, many with captions describing their source (a useful addition), but no videos or audio are present. Of course, such multimedia additions would not transfer to *Rhetoric and Composition Wikibook's* beneficial “print” feature: the website provides a link to download the entire book as a PDF for offline or ebook viewing of what amounts to a 346-page textbook with internal and external links preserved.

While *Writing Commons* offers a rhetorical focus, *Rhetoric and Composition Wikibook* seems to be a loose connection of standard textbook tropes, ironically mentioning very little about rhetoric save the means of writing a rhetorical analysis. The Writing Process section entails a familiar set of fixed steps from planning to publishing, yet it proclaims, “Since the 1970s, writing instructors have been teaching writing not as the following of fixed rules but rather as a dynamic process.” The modes of discourse, called Writing Applications here, are also presented in very familiar fashion. For example, the section on Description, as an application of writing, is extended here with advice on showing through descriptive language. Exposition is presented simply as an introduction, body and conclusion—a structure that might satisfy some rhetorical purposes but none of which is given any concrete example. In these cases, there are sample essays with analysis of what works well in each essay, but little seems to be connected to a particular assignment or purpose. The Advanced Topics section appears to be a place for certain genres of writing, covering writing in business, the humanities, and the sciences, but the specifics in the latter section amount to writing thesis-driven essays rather than actual science genres such as IMRAD (Introduction, Method, Results, and Discussion) reports. While *Writing Commons* offers fairly approachable coverage of various types of field research (e.g., surveys and interviews) and the ethics associated with such research, *Rhetoric and Composition Wikibook* describes the processes of research as very much connected to traditions of text-based interpretation and synthesis. As a collaborative text with a version history page that lists pseudonymous Internet usernames rather than common names, it is difficult to surmise whether these familiar textbook moments are representative of the authors’ own experiences with writing for certain courses, their familiarity with textbooks about writing, or just general assumptions and lore about writing. In any case, the wikibook suggests an opportunity for further study as to how students perceive writing in different disciplines,

and whether the content that appears in these sections are actual threshold concepts or merely assumptions about what it means to write in the university.

The Internet age and open, online textbooks offer the potential for a significant shift in how we might approach the rhetorical situation, specifically, authorship. Both of these textbooks represent an opportunity for the reader to revise the textbook, thus, becoming another author. That I am writing this review rather than actively revising either of these editable texts illuminates a peculiar moment not only in the evolution of the textbook, but also in how and for whom we review such works. Our roles as teachers or WPAs have clearly been shown to be significant in changing what might appear in the traditional writing textbook (see Miles; Barrios), but these roles might become even more active and immediate with these or other online textbooks. *Writing Commons* and *Rhetoric and Composition Wikibook* are, by their very nature, works in progress, but that nature also entails the potential for them to become even more fragmented texts that might prove unusable without a great deal of context from teachers. Despite their intentions, these textbooks still fall into the problem of the two audience conundrum and a confusion of roles. Who are these textbooks written for, and what are those audiences supposed to do with them? The online textbook offers a still under-researched topic: that of how students (and faculty) use these textbooks. For example, online metrics derived from hotspot analysis, time spent reading, or linking/social media sharing might offer an interesting type of empirical evidence for how students read and interact with these texts. Although the potential for a textbook richer in media, more diverse in authorship, and free to students is a grand intention, the unrealized opportunities still outnumber the actualities—at least for now.

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Review Essay: Multimodality in Local and Disciplinary Praxes

Randall W. Monty

Bowen, Tracey, and Carl Whithaus. *Multimodal Literacies and Emerging Genres*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2013. Print. 356 pages.

Miller, Suzanne M., and Mary B. McVee. *Multimodal Composing in Classrooms: Learning and Teaching in the Digital World*. New York: Routledge, 2012. Print. 161 pages.

Rowse, Jennifer. *Working with Multimodality: Rethinking Literacy in a Digital Age*. New York: Routledge, 2013. Print. 173 pages.

The argument for multimodality's inclusion within composition studies, and to a more specific extent, the writing classroom, should at this point be settled. The conversation has, at the disciplinary level and in local practice, moved away from arguing for the inclusion of multimodal discourses within its curricula; composition, most now agree, should empower students to analyze and write with emergent technology, modes, and media. Writing Program Administrators now find themselves surrounded by suggestions and best practices for teaching, assessing, and sustaining this multimodal work. By turning the focus away from definition and to pedagogy, curriculum design, and assessment, local writing programs, including individual instructors, are able to develop their own contextually-based multimodal projects. For WPAs, it is a good moment to take stock of the current ways that key terms surrounding this concept are being defined and used in real contexts. The three books under review in this essay provide insights as to how multimodality is addressed in different contexts and at different points in the curriculum design process. While each book approaches the topic from a slightly different position, all are useful for WPAs and instructors looking to introduce and develop multimodal pedagogies.

A detailed study expanding the range of what multimodality can mean, Jennifer Rowsell's *Working with Multimodality: Rethinking Literacy in a Digital Age* is written for "policy-makers and educators to adopt these very same old and new traditions of practice to teach literacy and communication" (2). Each chapter focuses on a single mode, discussed through a set of interviews with professional writers, designers, and performers. Interviewees' stories reveal unique traits embedded within the composition process of the respective mode, and Rowsell situates these findings within the context of composition instruction, opening the discussion of how using these various modes helps students become better writers. This narrative thread, that reminds us of the interdisciplinary research of Ann E. Berthoff, provides the foundation on which to effectively build multimodal instruction, pedagogy, and curricula.

In the composition course, word, sound, visual, and even film modes are often combined in the creation of multimodal pastiche, but according to Rowsell, students need to learn the rhetorical strengths and limitations of each, an objective that can be more effectively met through isolated study. For instance, discrete studies of film and space help learners understand how lighting "impacts characterization and setting" (19). Similarly, learning to compose a videogame causes students to consider how players will "strategize, communicate, interpret context, solve problems, analyze characters, possess hand/eye coordination, have patience, understand semiotic tools, use their spatial sense" when engaged in the virtual environments (79). Modes of communication that predate contemporary composition instruction (or, for that matter, the written word), include movement, space, and textile, and according to Rowsell, employing these modes can have the added benefit of creating an entry point for discussions of access and multiple rhetorics.

Despite its brevity, *Working with Multimodality* is expansive and ambitious. Rowsell approaches the concept of multimodality by first taking the concept apart and then examining each component individually. This not only allows for fair and equal assessment across modes, it creates a space for the interviewed experts to discuss their work from their own disciplinary perspectives. The reader, in turn, becomes an active participant in the multimodal composing process, remixing the content of the book itself to fit the audience's context. While at times it does not read like a traditional academic text, *Working with Modality*, particularly with its suggestions for incorporating modality into the classroom, is very much a book for WPAs, instructors, and students.

Geared towards a primary audience of elementary and secondary educators, *Multimodal Composing in Classrooms*, edited by Suzanne M. Miller

and Mary B. McVee, expands the extra-disciplinary conversation of multimodality to include multiple literacies. To that point, David L. Bruce reminds us that access to certain modes should not be mistaken for expertise of use, and as such, students need to be taught how to manipulate particular media in order to achieve desired rhetorical effects. To help mediate this concern, Nancy M. Bailey challenges reluctant and late-adapting teachers to “familiarize themselves with the kinds of new literacies that their students regularly utilize” (45). Further aligning student success with teacher preparedness, Mary B. McVee, Nancy M. Bailey, and Lynn E. Shanahan assert that increasingly, teachers of writing at all levels do so coming from this digital native generation, and like their students, “need a supportive and transformative learning environment within which to experiment and explore” (16).

The varied chapters reinforce the notion that creating an environment that allows students to draw on their lived experiences and knowledge, both technical and (pop)cultural, provides those students with real opportunities to “connect traditional forms of writing with their lived experiences” (77). Occasionally, sections are focused on how multimodality can be applied in K-12 contexts, but with modification these examples could also be valuable at post-secondary levels. In a move that is shared across the focuses of particular chapters, Miller and McVee’s advocacy of “[r]eading across school contexts, subject-matter, grade-level, and varied means of multimodal composing” in order to develop more refined understandings of the ways new literacies are taught and developed at elementary and secondary levels is evident (9). Without directly addressing the pedagogical concerns of post-secondary composition classrooms, *Multimodal Composing in Classrooms* manages to provide serious insights into the ways meaning is made in pre-college writing contexts, information that remains valuable for WPAs.

While the first two books offer adaptable resources for WPAs, *Multimodal Literacies and Emerging Genres*, edited by Tracey Bowen and Carl Whithaus, presents multimodal pedagogies and theories actively used in postsecondary writing programs. In Part I (Chapters 1–5), the complex expectations of multimodality have changed the roles of WPAs and instructors. Making the case for increased student autonomy, Cheryl Ball, Tina Scoffield Bowen, and Tyrell Brent Fenn discuss how self-directed multimodal assignments allow students to demonstrate technological literacies through transfer, while Erik Ellis notes that when students freely to compose across modes, they become emboldened to create “compelling multimedia essays that challenge and transcend conventional academic discourses” appropriate for their individualized rhetorical situations (38). Challenging the overreliance on emergent (and often expensive) technol-

ogy, Jody Shipka aligns with Rowsell to critique the problematic trend of characterizing multimodality as exclusively digitized. Susan Katz and Lee O'Dell discuss how the oral presentation—a staple assignment across disciplines at the postsecondary level—functions as a profoundly rhetorical event. Jemore Bump moves even further outside the composition classroom to interrogate the ethical and legal concerns that emerge as students compose across networked, digital environments.

Part II (Chapters 6–9) oscillates between practice and theory to discuss the unique challenges faced by instructors developing multimodal pedagogies. Nathaniel I. Cordova encourages teachers to craft assignments that allow students to embrace literacy as a function of democratic performance, while Julia Romberger argues that the recent revaluing of socially constructed knowledge is in fact an updated variation of the ancient canon of memory. Taken together, these perspectives provide opportunities for open discussion of and inquiry into what counts as usable knowledge, while also affording students the intellectual freedom to make decisions based on their own defined rhetorical situations. Penny Kinnear explains that multimodality allows students to invoke a particular type of audience awareness that cannot easily be developed without a firm understanding of the rhetorical situation and how it is manifest through multimodality. Similarly, Donna Reiss and Art Young show how intellectual autonomy helps foster an environment that “increases [students’] motivation to learn and to communicate” (165–166). These moves fortify the idea that multimodal pedagogy should support students’ development as rhetorical agents.

Part III (Chapters 10–13) sees the discussion expand to consider how WPAs use multimodality to reshape entire programs. Providing a strong philosophical foundation, Tarez Samra Graban, Colin Charlton, and Jonikka Charlton present mutivalence as a way “to theorize writing and teaching in terms of the multiple charges we face instead of in terms of an expertise we hope to achieve” (250). Mary Leigh Morbey and Carolyn Steele establish multimodality as the frame through which students (and increasingly, instructors) interpret the world, while Chanon Adsanatham, et al. explore larger, institutional changes that would make the adoption of multimodal curricula more viable and effective. Finally, serving as an unofficial coda to the entire collection, Traci Fordham and Hillory Oakes define multimodality as inextricable from the study of rhetoric. With its usable assignment frameworks based on accessible theories, WPAs will be able to approach the many concepts presented in *Multimodal Literacies and Emerging Genres* the same way the chapters’ authors expect their students to approach multimodal assignments: not as products to be consumed and

analyzed, but as tools for repurposing and applying to their own specific contexts.

A unifying thread running across *Multimodal Composing in Classrooms*, *Working with Multimodality and Multimodal Literacies and Emerging Genres* is the emphasis on autonomy of the student, instructor, and administrator. In the multimodal classroom, the instructor's role becomes one of a facilitator and enabler, introducing students to different discursive genres, inviting them to bring in their own discourses into the classroom, and then pushing them to distribute their products in public realms.

Multimodality's student-centeredness emphasizes the transfer of skills, a concept that rests on the assumption that skills developed in one situation will lead to the awareness of similar expertise when applied in other contexts. However, there remains an absence of convincing evidence demonstrating exactly *if*, *how*, and *why* this transfer takes place. Subsequent scholarship into the areas of transfer will need to include verifiable evidence culled from reproducible experiments in order to effectively and convincingly demonstrate the viability of transfer for students working across multimodal genres.

With local contexts and individual assignments presented as accessible and transferable, *Multimodal Composing in Classrooms*, *Working with Multimodality and Multimodal Literacies and Emerging Genres*, have much to offer writing program administrators and instructors. Rather than positioning these books as narrative collections or as summations of completed sets of work, a more useful approach would be to envision the current generation of multimodal scholarship as pedagogical resources. This modified way of seeing multimodality appropriates the theoretical foundations that contemporary praxis is built on, while also honoring the actual experiences of the students and instructors doing these new kinds of composition work.



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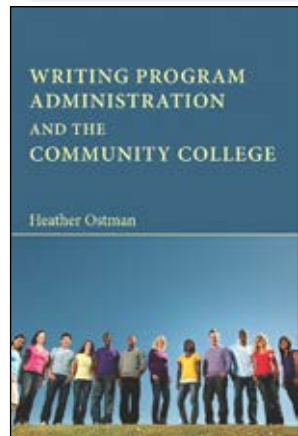
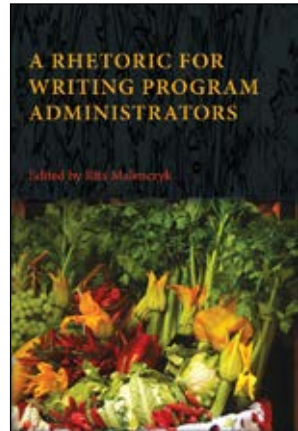
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