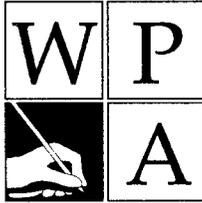


Writing Program Administration

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

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- writing faculty professional development
- writing program development and design
- uses for national learning outcomes and statements that impact writing programs
- labor conditions: material, practical, fiscal
- WAC/WID/WC/CAC (or other sites of communication/writing in academic settings) and their intersections with WPA work
- teaching writing with electronic texts (multimodality) and teaching in digital spaces
- theory, practice, and philosophy of writing program administration
- outreach and advocacy
- writing program assessment
- WPA history and historical work
- national and regional trends in education and their impact on WPA work
- issues of professional advancement and writing program administration
- diversity and WPA work
- writing programs in a variety of educational locations (SLAC, HBCU, two-year colleges, Hispanic schools, non-traditional schools, concurrent work)
- interdisciplinary work that informs WPA practices

This list is not comprehensive. If you have questions about potential work for *WPA Journal*, please contact one of the co-editors and discuss it with her. We are especially interested in publishing new voices and new topics. 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. Submissions and queries should be sent to journal@wpacouncil.org.

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

Reviews

WPA publishes reviews of books related to writing programs and their administration. Publishers are invited to send appropriate professional books to Sherry Rankins-Robertson, Department of Rhetoric and Writing, UALR, 2801 South University, Little Rock, AR 72204. All inquires about book reviews should be sent to: bookreviews@wpacouncil.org

Announcements and Calls

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

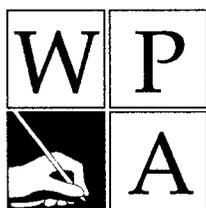
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Writing Program Administration

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From the Editors

We have come to the end of our term as editors of *WPA: Writing Program Administration*, having spent a very interesting five years learning from and working with all of our highly professional, committed and supportive members of our editorial team and with our authors. Truly, the work of editing a journal requires a concerted team effort and we are grateful for the support of many. We will use this space this time to reflect on our experience as editors, to comment on the work of our board, and to share some thoughts about the profession and organization that are a by-product of our work as your editors.

I (Alice) do think that I have learned as much from our writers as they have learned from us and from our editorial board. I have relied on the board, and in a relatively small number of cases, on a few ad hoc readers, for careful, thoughtful responses to the submissions we have received. Every part of the production of the journal relies on teamwork: all submissions are read by both of us, so there is collaboration from the very beginning. I've benefitted from the careful editorial reading and guidance of Glenn Blalock who started with us and of Debra Frank Dew; their theoretical background in combination with years of front-line WPA experience have been an essential component of the journal's quality. For the last three years, Debra's extensive background and experience coupled with high standards have served the journal and field extremely well. The editorial board reads submissions we have felt warranted review and we have relied on their expertise and judgment as well as their support for our authors. Most reviews, even in the case of rejections, have included lengthy, thoughtful commentary and constructive suggestions for improvement. Our acceptance rate has consistently been between 40 and 50%, attesting to the rigorous blind review process we have used. In addition, the book review essays in each issue have been entirely managed by Ed White, long a thoughtful and influential member of our profession.

Our squad of assistant editors, including, over the years, Lori Ostergaard, Jim Nugent, Greg Giberson, Donna Scheidt and Betsy Allan have been invaluable in helping to prepare manuscripts for publication. The

handling of ads and calls has been the responsibility first of Donna Scheidt and more recently of Jason Carabelli. Jason began his work for the journal as an undergrad at Oakland University, where he looked after permissions and contributors' bios; that work when Jason went to grad school fell to Janae Greene and most recently to Ethan Landenberger. We could not actually produce the physical journal without the steady work of production editor David Blakesley at Parlor Press; his consistent advice has helped get each issue produced, printed and ready to mail. And finally, the actual mailing and the challenge of assembling an accurate and up-to-date membership list has been seen to by the "boys at Grand Valley"—Charlie Lowe and Keith Rhodes. Every issue you have held in your hands has come to you through the efforts of all of these people and could not have been done without every one of them.

At the core of the work is the reading and reviewing of the articles submitted by members of the profession of writing program administrators. For this work, we have been lucky to have the help and support of the editorial board whose names appear at the front of each issue. With very few exceptions when reviews have been delayed or gotten side-tracked for some reason (often readers' over-work, as all WPAs will understand), members of the board have done thorough and careful readings of each piece they have received. Reviews are detailed, specific, prompt and thorough, often including line-by-line comments and suggestions in addition to full commentary. Whether an article has been accepted or rejected, the editorial board members have worked hard to help us present the best work being done in this field. If you think the journal has published useful contributions to theory and practice, please thank the members of the editorial board you may know or see at CCCC or WPA or elsewhere.

As the outgoing editors, we have a unique perspective on WPA theory and practice, thanks to the time we have spent reading submissions. The overall impression that arises from reading the research studies that have been done, the theories that have been proposed and the reflections that have been offered is that WPAs are a hard-working, concerned and committed group of professionals. At the same time, the field faces some important challenges. I have argued elsewhere that junior, un-tenured colleagues should not be serving in WPA roles, and yet this trend has continued or accelerated over the time we have been your editors. While we noted in our book the pros and cons of jWPAs, and while Deb Dew and I continue our respectful disagreement on this issue, the situation warrants continued vigilance. We have tried in various ways (such as through our symposia in early issues) to open the journal to increased dialogue among us, without as much success as we would have liked. Perhaps the new editors will find

better ways to open up more dialogue across types of institutions, across ranks, across different kinds of curricula.

Collectively, we need to continue to think more about diversity and ethics. Anyone looking around carefully at the WPA summer conference would see a fairly homogenous picture of WPAs. The population at the conferences is almost exclusively white, largely (though not exclusively) female, and seldom represents any “other” group, despite a theme addressing this concern last summer. Why is that? In addition, while WPA preparation is certainly an essential for graduate students, institutions that are generating more PhDs than will ever find work need to think carefully about this issue. And we need to continue and expand our outreach to WPAs who work in community colleges, where, by some estimates, half of all first-year writing is now being taught in the US. CWPA should continue to integrate those who oversee these programs into our organization.

So, the new editors will have plenty of work to do in supporting the research and work of new, junior, continuing and senior WPAs. Writing programs remain at the heart of undergraduate education, so this work surely remains vital to the overall goal of helping students “cross the finish line” by earning college degrees. The journal can and should continue to support this work and the organization; we are confident that the new editorial team will achieve this goal.

Finally, our thanks to you, our readers. If we didn’t have readers, we wouldn’t have an organization or a journal. And we would not have had the fun and support of this professional community for the last five years.

IN THIS ISSUE...

The opening piece in this issue reports research done by the co-founders of WPA-GO, the graduate students’ organization within the WPA organization. Elder, Schoen and Skinell’s survey of more than two hundred graduate students provides the basis for a series of useful recommendations for the organization and the field.

In “A Bird’s Eye View,” Isaacs and Knight analyze web-based information concerning 101 writing centers across the country. Their findings affirm the importance of writing centers as a central part of individualized writing instruction while suggesting that they are, for the most part, “positioned as adjunct to other educational activities on campus.”

In her discussion of assessment and institutional mission, Kristine Johnson offers teachers and administrators a thought-provoking heuristic for developing assessment programs aligned with mission that will be useful for those at many different kinds of institutions, large and small.

Don J. Kraemer entertains the co-existing possibility that activity systems are transformed by skills—understood as acts of judgment. Most important are value judgments about what is real, about which aspect of reality is to count as more real than other aspects. He asks: how are valued aspects of reality justified as similarities that matter, and how are less-valued aspects justifiably excluded as differences that do not matter, especially when the audience might well judge, or has already judged, otherwise? There are motivational advantages in engaging such questions—a claim he engages by articulating the resources of the New Rhetoric with WID scholarship, an articulation which opens each to further development.

Christy Wenger problematizes recent configurations of care-driven administration and the models of servant leadership upon which they are built to offer contemplative administration as a feminist alternative for WPA work, one that supports growing attention to the role of contemplative education within higher learning. She argues that contemplative or mindful administration preserves a feminist emphasis on relationships without the gendered weight of caring models.

Shirley K Rose has done one more in her continuing travelogue series, exploring the ways that writing program administration has developed in Joyce Walker's program at Illinois State, where our summer conference will take place this year.

In “All Things to All People’: Expanding Role of Writing Centers,” Rebecca Lorimer Leonard and David Stock review four recent books that consider how writing centers have evolved to include new media writing, to support faculty writers, to become research sites, and to challenge limiting definitions of writing center work.

Finally, the organization has recently issued an important new position statement on pre-college credit for writing; the document was assembled by a team led by Kristine Hansen. We have published this position statement in this issue because it has implications for all writing program administrators across the country.



Dear *WPA* Readers,

On the WPA website, the first published volume of *Writing Program Administration Newsletter* is Volume 1.3, published in 1978.¹ In his introductory President's message, Harvey Wiener (CUNY- LaGuardia CC), lays out the plans of the fledgling organization: to establish a clearinghouse on other programs, to "establish a system of advisory teams which could visit campuses by invitation and could evaluate existing structures," and to "produce in-depth studies on issues in writing program administration" ("WPA President's Message." *WPA Newsletter* 38.1, n.p: 4). The group worked to "call attention to the needs of WPAs and to the nature of their work and responsibilities." Harvey—if we may be so bold as to call him that—ends his message with a cheerful "Let's hear from you!"

Our vision for the journal is a simple one: to continue to publish those in-depth studies on issues in writing program administration and to call attention to the needs and work of WPAs everywhere. We recognize that *WPA* has a diverse readership, and we aim to publish a wide range of research in many different formats, research that not only helps WPAs of all sorts do their jobs, but also research that helps our discipline advance academically, institutionally, and nationally. We are tremendously excited to become the next editors of this journal and would like to share some information about the new editorial team.

Barb L'Eplattenier has always been a part of the WPA world—although never a WPA. *Historical Studies of Writing Program Administration*, a collection she edited with Lisa Mastrangelo, won the WPA Book of the Year award in 2004. This collection examines WPA work before the formation of the Council of Writing Program Administrators in 1976. Most recently, she has worked with Shirley K Rose and Lisa Mastrangelo on "Directing Writing in the 21st Century: The New Limits of Authority" which revisits the 1989 Olsen and Moxley survey on WPAs and authority.

Sherry Rankins-Robertson has served in multiple capacities as a WPA: as an assistant to the WPA during her MA program; as a Composition Specialist during her tenure at a two-year college; she served in an administrative position under the WPA while co-developing the online composition

program, the Writers' Studio, at Arizona State University. She currently serves as the WPA in her appointment at UALR. Sherry worked closely with Duane Roen, Greg Glau, and Edward White through the duration of her professional development for working as a WPA. Her scholarship closely examines intersections and application of the WPA OS.

We are grateful to Alice Horning, Deb Dew and their editorial team, for their hard work on the journal. Their vision saw the journal through 2009 to 2014, and we are proud to carry on the work that they have done. We thank them for their significant contribution to the *WPA: Writing Program Administration*.

As we embark upon this journey, we want to thank our spouses in advance for the support they will provide to us. We couldn't take on this professional role without their support. Similarly, we thank our colleagues at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock, who valued this editorial work and the journal enough to encourage us to apply for the editorship and who have contributed financially to support this endeavor.

Like Harvey, we'd love to hear from you! Feel free to contact us at bleplatt@ualr.edu and sjrobertson@ualr.edu.

Sincerely,
Barb and Sherry



NOTE

1. Its editorial board is pretty impressive: Enid E. Bogle, Howard University (1978-80); Timothy Donovan, Northeastern University (1978-80) Margaret Furcron, Rutgers University-Newark (1977-78); Winifred Horner, University of Missouri-Columbia (1978-79); Michael Joyce, Jackson Community College, (1977-78); Erika Lindemann, University of South Carolina (1978-79); Ellen Nold, Stanford University (1978-79); David Sloane, University of New Haven (1977-78); Joseph Trimmer, Ball State University (1978-79); and Nathaniel Teich, University of Oregon (1978-80). Weiner noted that Ken Bruffee was taking over the editorship of the newsletter from Bob Farrell, of Cornell.

Strengthening Graduate Student Preparation for WPA Work

Cristyn L. Elder, Megan Schoen, and Ryan Skinnell

ABSTRACT

A new generation of rhetoric and composition specialists is making WPA work an area of specialization and actively seeking WPA positions upon graduation. Recognizing this emergent narrative, we describe the research we conducted as co-founding members of the Writing Program Administrators Graduate Student Organization (WPA-GO) and call for a more robust system of WPA preparation for these graduate students. We report key findings learned from 227 graduate students from more than fifty US institutions about the kinds of WPA education and training available to them. We conclude by offering recommendations for how the field of rhetoric and composition can work to improve graduate student administrative professionalization and how WPA-GO and the Council of Writing Program Administrators might extend and build upon these opportunities.

INTRODUCTION

In April of 2013, a question posted on the WPA-L listserv under the subject heading “rhet/comp programs and admin work” elicited a flurry of responses, totaling seventy replies over the course of five days on two different threads. The question posed was this: “Does anyone know of doctoral programs in Rhetoric and Composition...that do not include WPA study of some sort?” (Macaulay, Jr.). A small number of respondents replied to the question directly, with eight people indicating that their institution did offer a seminar course in writing program administration or special topics courses that were WPA-related while six people reported they did not have access to formal WPA coursework, although they did have opportunities to do WPA work as graduate student administrators in first-year composition,

writing-across-the-curriculum (WAC), and technical writing programs as well as writing centers.

However, it was the ensuing conversation about the value of offering a WPA course as part of a graduate program that received the most commentary. A majority of respondents, including those who had completed formal coursework in writing program administration and those who had not, argued for the importance of formal coursework in WPA preparation, not only for those who intended to be administrators of first-year composition but also for those who intended to direct writing centers, professional writing programs, etc. or to teach in or work with such programs. Additional replies included suggestions for the topics a WPA course should cover. Like many of our colleagues on the WPA-L, we, too, believe that a graduate course in WPA work is invaluable to those in the field of rhetoric and composition. But we also recognize three complicating factors. First, in light of varying institutional issues, some programs simply will not develop WPA coursework. Second, within those institutions that do, programs and students may find it a challenge to reprioritize curriculum decisions for an additional subfield. Third, we believe that the development of courses, while important, is not sufficient for preparing graduate students for the work of writing program administration. Perhaps, then, as a timely response to the above listserv discussion, our primary purpose in this article is to call for a more robust system of education and/or training¹ for graduate students (and, less directly, junior faculty members) interested in writing program administration.

In part, our call comes from a recognition of the realities of the job market and the number of junior WPA (jWPA) positions being advertised: a cursory glance shows at least twenty listings for jWPA positions in the Modern Language Association's 2012 Job Information List (JIL). This article, however, is less focused on these market realities and emphasizes more a shift in the exigencies of preparing graduate students for writing program administration. As we discuss below, many of the beliefs about the importance of WPA coursework are based on the assumption that every rhetoric and composition scholar will have to take a turn as WPA. But, this assumption bears reconsideration for at least two reasons: First, greater numbers of rhetoric and composition graduates are being produced every year, thereby reducing the "everyone has to do it" nature of the job. Second, more graduate students report being intellectually and professionally committed to WPA work as an integral part of their career. Later in this essay, we discuss shifts in the circumstances that draw people to WPA work.

We begin, however, by drawing on our own experiences as graduate student writing program administrators (gWPAs), on our efforts in devel-

oping Writing Program Administrators Graduate Student Organization (WPA-GO, a national gWPA professionalization organization), and on results of research we conducted about gWPA professionalization opportunities around the country to make the case that many gWPA professionalization programs often do not reflect graduate students' developing interest in WPA work. In presenting this research, we then make the further case that the field of rhetoric and composition, generally, and WPA-GO and the Council of Writing Program Administrators (CWPA) specifically, have an opportunity to rethink gWPA professionalization in light of the changing nature of WPA work as a way of meeting the needs of graduate students who are actively pursuing careers with an administrative component.

WPA-GO: AN ORIGIN STORY

Our individual experiences as gWPAs² in graduate school helped convince us of the importance of the kinds of gWPA professionalization that we are advocating in this essay. As a result of earning PhDs at universities with relatively extensive WPA professionalization opportunities, including coursework, workshops, mentoring programs, and assistantships/internships, we developed intellectual and professional interests in writing program administration. Through our work as gWPAs, we recognized that graduate students in other institutions shared our administrative interests. However, we also realized that beyond individual institutions, there was a marked lack of resources to foster graduate students' engagement in writing program administration. Cristyn and Megan, in particular, felt the lack of graduate student engagement when during two CWPA Conferences, in 2008 and 2009, they presented on their project, "Praxis and Allies: The WPA Board Game,"³ which was directed at graduate students, to small audiences consisting mostly of faculty or alumni from their own institution. The only graduate student who attended their panel at the 2009 conference was that year's winner of the CWPA Award for Graduate Writing in WPA Studies. This experience demonstrated to them that, while there were pockets of graduate students from one or two schools who attended the conference and presented together (usually limited to those with established graduate student WPA preparation programs), it could not really be said that there was a graduate student community. Ryan came to a similar conclusion in his experiences as an Assistant Director at Arizona State University. The lack of community at the conference was indicative of the graduate community for gWPAs more broadly: it simply did not exist in any real way as a result of a lack of professionalization programs and resources dedicated

to facilitating graduate students' engagement, beyond a few individual institutions.

We were not the only people to recognize this lack of graduate student engagement. Following the 2009 CWPA Conference in Minneapolis, members of the CWPA Executive Board discussed how to better accommodate graduate students' intellectual contributions to writing program administration and enable graduate students to take advantage of opportunities for mentoring, which were becoming (and have continued to be) a central commitment of CWPA (see Walcher, Janangelo, and Roen). In an effort to consider the needs of graduate students more specifically, Eli Goldblatt, local host of the 2010 CWPA Conference in Philadelphia, contacted faculty at various institutions across the country to solicit names of graduate students involved in writing program administration who might form an ad hoc committee to do the following: (a) formulate a list of issues that matter to graduate students interested in writing program administration, (b) encourage more graduate student participation in the 2010 CWPA Conference, and (c) organize a graduate student gathering during the conference. Seven graduate students, including the three co-authors of this article, responded to Goldblatt's recruiting campaign.⁴ In order to address both the short term goals relating to the upcoming conference and longer term goals related to making the CWPA Conference a dependably graduate-student-friendly venue, the ad hoc committee developed a proposal for a graduate student organization, WPA-GO, and the WPA graduate committee (WPA-GC) that would steer and maintain the growth of WPA-GO. WPA-GO was conceived as a group any graduate student could join to find a social, intellectual, and professional community of students with common interests in writing program administration. At the 2010 Conference on College Composition and Communication in Louisville, the CWPA Executive Board, under the leadership of then President Linda Adler-Kassner, voted unanimously to formally recognize WPA-GO and the WPA-GC.

THE WPA-GO SURVEY

Our efforts to establish WPA-GO and the WPA-GC were educational in a variety of ways, but two of the enduring lessons that we learned were (1) our interest in writing program administration was shared even more widely than we imagined as evidenced by WPA-GO's quickly growing membership, and (2) WPA-GO and the WPA-GC are important but insufficient resources for meeting the professionalization needs of gWPAs. These lessons were reinforced for us as a result of research we conducted as part of our WPA-GO and WPA-GC responsibilities. In the spring of 2011, in support

of WPA-GO's mission⁵ to help prepare graduate students for work in writing program administration, we surveyed students enrolled in English or writing-related departments or programs around the US about their interests in WPA work, the kinds of preparation they are currently receiving, and what additional offerings WPA-GO might provide with the support of faculty WPAs. (For the complete survey, please go to http://wpacouncil.org/sites/default/files/wpa_go_survey.pdf.) Also, because we were aware of the important work Joe Janangelo, Duane Roen, and Sheldon Walcher were doing with the CWPA Mentoring Project,⁶ we wanted to know how the interests of survey participants and WPA-GO's suggested offerings might map onto the initiatives identified by the CWPA Mentoring Project Committee.

A link to the survey, titled "WPA-GO Graduate Student Survey," along with notice of Institutional Research Board approval, was sent directly via email, in the spring of 2011, to 2,000 individuals at institutions listed on the Doctoral Consortium in Rhetoric and Composition website as well as those subscribed to the WPA-GO email list, the NCTE (National Council of Teachers of English) Graduate Student Listserv, and the listserv for the Master's Degree Consortium of Writing Studies Specialties. Two hundred and twenty-seven graduate students enrolled in English or writing-related departments or programs from over fifty universities across the US completed the survey (giving us a response rate of 8.8%).

SUMMARY OF RESULTS AND KEY FINDINGS

The online survey we distributed consisted of both open and closed questions designed to measure participants' interest in WPA work, the kinds of formal preparation participants receive both in and outside their institution to do WPA work, and the kinds of additional WPA preparation they might find valuable. Demographic information, including student enrollment status, degree program, and degree specialization, was also collected. (Please see Figures 1-3 in Appendix A.) What the responses demonstrated in large measure is that those graduate students who took the survey wanted to know more about writing program administration, and many of those same graduate students did not have access to professionalization resources. The following is a summary of some of the key results from the survey regarding WPA professionalization.

One key finding from the survey was the confirmation that graduate student respondents were interested in writing program administration. To the first question of the eighteen-item survey—"Are you interested in Writing Program Administration (WPA)?"—76% of participants answered

“yes” while 14.2% answered they were not sure. (The 9.8% who answered “no” were automatically sent to the Thank You page and were not included in the rest of the survey or in our response rate.) As with all surveys, our results are limited by response bias: specifically, those interested in WPA work are almost certainly over-represented among participants who chose to respond to a survey titled “WPA-GO Graduate Student Survey.” However, we were surprised by the number of respondents who expressed their interest in writing program administration and who were not specializing in rhetoric and composition fields (see Figure 3 in Appendix A). Despite the bias, the response to the first question supports the anecdotal evidence that we perceived in our interactions with enthusiastic graduate students already involved in WPA-GO—evidence that there is positive interest in administrative work among graduate students. The data thus reinforce our belief that there is a sizable audience of graduate students whose interest in WPA work can and should be fostered by WPA-GO, CWPA, and the field.

Other important findings suggest that graduate students’ access to professionalization opportunities is mixed: a majority of respondents (81.5%) reported having practical (on-the-job) WPA professionalization opportunities at their institutions, ranging from serving as the assistant director of first-year composition to serving as assistant director of the writing center to serving as the coordinator of a WAC, business writing, or English as a second language program. (Please see Figure 4 of Appendix A for a complete list of the kinds of gWPA work respondents reported were available to them.) While practical opportunities for WPA work are rather plentiful, 46.6% of respondents reported they do not have opportunities for coursework in writing program administration. The apparent availability of WPA positions for graduate students is heartening; however, the absence of coursework indicates a lack of opportunities for graduate students to be exposed to influential scholarship in the field—scholarship that can help them envision writing program administration as intellectual, research-driven work.

Additionally, many of the graduate students (35.1%) who took the survey reported being unaware as to whether or not their institutions offer other kinds of support besides official WPA work positions and formal WPA coursework. Such a lack of knowledge could indicate that no such offerings exist or that institutional and departmental means of support for graduate students interested in WPA work are not well publicized. In either case, students without either access to or awareness of WPA professionalization opportunities at their institutions could benefit from additional avenues of professionalization, including those provided by WPA-GO and CWPA.

Respondents also reported high interest in mentoring opportunities, which is among Debra Frank Dew's recommendations for disciplinary progress on jWPA appointments, including gWPAs. A majority of respondents (80.4%) rated WPA mentoring opportunities as "very useful" (38.8%) or "useful" (41.6%). While the annual CWPA Conference could be one such avenue for continued mentoring, 83.4% of graduate student respondents have never attended the CWPA Conference. The reported reasons for not attending include not knowing about the CWPA Conference (34.6%) or holding misperceptions about it—including believing that the CWPA Conference is not open to anyone who doesn't currently hold a WPA position (19.0%) or that the Conference is not open to graduate students (16.6%). In addition to a lack of knowledge about the national CWPA Conference, another clear impediment to graduate student attendance is cost (which of course presents a challenge to graduate students wanting to attend any academic conference and is not limited to attending the CWPA Conference itself). A number of graduate students (12.8%) indicated that the cost of the conference and their own limited funding for travel and registration fees are prohibitive, particularly in light of the fact that the CWPA Conference occurs in the summer, when, according to some survey respondents, graduate students are less likely to receive funding or by which time they have already used up their funding.

Anticipating that respondents' inability to attend the national conference would be an issue, we also asked participants about their interest in and attendance at regional workshops related to WPA work. Participants' responses showed that attendance at such workshops is even lower than attendance at the national CWPA Conference, but 72.5% of respondents indicated they would be interested in attending regional workshops if they were available. Seven respondents answered that they have, in fact, attended regional workshops, including the Carolinas Writing Program Administrators "Meeting in the Middle" Conference. Other locations identified for regional workshops included "Michigan State" and "Spokane, Washington." A high percentage (79.6%) of respondents answered that a reason for not attending regional workshops was that they had never heard of any regional WPA workshops at or near their institutions. From this we might infer that such opportunities are not very plentiful or well publicized in most areas.

Yet the survey results indicate that WPA workshops, whether at the national conference or in regional meetings, were viewed by our respondents as potentially quite valuable. A majority of respondents (66.4%) answered that they would be interested in attending national WPA professional development workshops specifically related to graduate students

and their needs, and, as noted above, 72.5% answered that they would be interested in attending regional WPA professional development workshops specifically for graduate students. The WPA-GO survey suggested fourteen possible WPA workshop topics related to the needs of graduate students. (For the complete list of suggested workshop topics included in the survey and respondents' ratings of the usefulness of these topics, please see Figure 5 in Appendix A.) Most respondents answered that they perceived all proposed workshop topics listed in the survey as very useful or useful. Participants rated job market preparation as particularly valuable to them. This result indicates that graduate students interested in WPA work are concerned about how best to position and prepare themselves for job searches—a concern that WPA-GO has already begun to address. Other topics suggested in the survey that were ranked as highly useful by many respondents included curriculum design, program assessment, student writing assessment, WPA budgeting practices, finding program funding, building relationships across the institution, and communicating WPA work as a scholarly endeavor.

In addition to the suggested workshop topics included in the survey, respondents were given the opportunity to write in their own workshop topic suggestions. Eighteen respondents offered additional suggestions. Several respondents added workshop topics related to student diversity and working with multilingual students in writing programs. One respondent suggested the topic WPA work and social change, while another recommended addressing advances in technology and their effects on WPA work. Yet another respondent suggested a workshop on negotiating being a graduate student while also working as a WPA at a two-year college, a situation that this respondent noted as common. An enthusiastic participant wrote, in an editorial response to the fourteen suggested workshop topics included in the survey, “Wow—these topics look amazing! I checked what I thought would be useful to me now, as a grad student who hasn't yet done WPA work.” The response to our suggested workshop topics as well as the insightful suggestions generated by respondents demonstrate excitement about WPA-related workshop offerings for graduate students, prompting what we see as a needed response from WPA-GO, CWPA, and the field to offer such opportunities to graduate students.

Finally, in addition to workshops, responses indicated a strong interest in other potential WPA-GO offerings, including travel scholarships to both national and regional conferences, publishing opportunities, and social networking opportunities that would enable graduate students to meet fellow students and faculty members who share their interest in WPA work. Respondents also expressed enthusiasm about opportunities for col-

laboration with other graduate students or faculty WPAs on research, scholarly writing, curriculum design, problem solving, and conference presentations. Several participants additionally indicated a desire for increased communication and awareness about CWPA and/or WPA-GO events and activities. For example, one respondent suggested, “Greater visibility in communicating to graduate students nationally, perhaps?” while another wrote, “More visibility of WPA programs and opportunities,” and another requested “more publicity on the organization.” One lamented, “[I] haven’t had means to keep in touch. As a result, especially since my institution doesn’t offer any WPA professionalization, I feel very out of the loop.” Others suggested specific means by which such greater communication and heightened awareness could occur: one wrote, “maybe a listserv just for GTAs,” while another offered, “I’d love to see newsletter or social media posts (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn) about upcoming events, or even news regarding the accomplishments of graduate students as WPA assistants, for example.” Interestingly, one respondent stated that the very act of taking the survey brought greater awareness of current CWPA offerings: “There are none [additional programs and offerings] that I can think of at the moment, but I’m glad I took this survey and became aware of the conference!” In sum, the survey question regarding potential offerings and programs provided a wealth of information about what our respondents would like to see available for graduate students in the future. (For the complete list of WPA-GO potential offerings and respondents’ ratings of these offerings, see Figure 6 in Appendix A.)

WPA WORK: A CHANGING NARRATIVE

The responses to our survey indicate an important shift in the circumstances that draw people to writing program administration, both as a graduate focus and as a career path. The persistent statements of graduate student interest in writing program administration substantiate our belief that the narrative about WPA work is changing insofar as it was previously often characterized as work foisted upon reluctant rhetoric and composition scholars. Our respondents’ attitudes offer a stark contrast to the “usual condescending attitudes toward administration” of the beginning faculty members Edward M. White describes in “Teaching a Graduate Course in Writing Program Administration” (101) and align more with Theresa Enos’s description in “Reflective Professional Development” of graduate students “choosing writing program administration...rather than having it ordained by the job position itself” (64). In this section, we explore more fully some of the assumptions that have accompanied the expectation that everyone

will have to take on WPA work at some point in their career. We contend that this expectation is changing as more rhetoric and composition specialists are produced and as more people actively seek career paths that include administrative responsibilities early in their careers. In the remainder of this essay, then, we argue that WPA preparation should reflect the changing realities as WPA work becomes more specialized and more self-selective.

The assumption that most rhetoric and composition scholars will have WPA responsibilities or will likely take a turn is lessening as growing numbers of PhDs in rhetoric and composition are minted. According to the “2007 Survey of Doctoral Programs in Rhetoric and Composition” in *Rhetoric Review*, sixty-seven rhetoric and composition PhD programs enrolled more than 1100 students in 2007 (Brown et al. 335). Writing program administration positions, although hardly disappearing, still constituted less than a quarter of positions accepted by candidates in the field (338). As the field grows,⁷ rhetoric and composition scholars and teachers have more options than they once did that do not necessarily include administration, including positions as teachers and researchers at two-year schools, at PhD-granting institutions, and in programs with numerous rhetoric and composition faculty members.

This assumption is further diminishing as WPA positions become increasingly specialized in concert with the growing number of PhDs and as writing program administration has become an area in which formal certification is considered an asset (Enos 64; Ianetta et al.). As Jillian Skeffington, Shane Borrowman, and Theresa Enos acknowledge, in recent years “there certainly seem to be more professionals doing WPA work who have specifically prepared for this work” (19). Jonikka Charlton reinforces this view, arguing that, “While it is still true that many administrators [...] just somehow found themselves in their positions, it is also true [...] that more of us are actively choosing administrative work and deliberately preparing for and embracing its intellectual demands” (n. pag.). As more students graduate from rhetoric and composition programs, and as a percentage of these graduates seek jobs specific to WPA work, writing program administration will gradually pass from people who (willingly or reluctantly) “find themselves” in WPA positions to people who actively prepare for and pursue these positions with purposeful intent, whether in graduate school or after graduate school through other professionalization opportunities. In turn, it is likely that more institutions will seek to hire these scholars who have specialized in WPA work. Currently, however, according to our survey respondents, there are not enough opportunities among graduate programs across the US to meet the demand for graduate students who wish to prepare to do this work.

Given the changing nature of expectations about who will serve as a WPA, the assumption that graduate students and, in effect, junior faculty, need to be girded against the perils of writing program administration also bears some reconsideration. In recent years, there has been much examination within the WPA literature of the possible deleterious effects of WPA professionalization on graduate students (e.g., Charlton; Edgington and Taylor; Fontaine; Fremo; Helmbrecht and Kendall; Latterell; Mountford; Rose and Weiser; see Edgington and Gallaher for an extensive bibliography of resources relating to Graduate Student Administration issues). Narratives stressing the perils of writing program administration warn graduate students and junior faculty from taking up this work pre-tenure, some even declaring it “unethical” for junior faculty to hold these positions (Horning 40). The prohibition against junior writing program administration became a much recognized principle in the CWPA “Portland Resolution,” which states that WPAs should be a “tenured faculty member or a full-time administrator” with security of employment. This declaration cannot be disregarded, arising as it did out of historical and material exigencies. Nevertheless, while thoughtfully offered and certainly well meaning, it is also generally protective, defensive, and pre-emptive. Moreover, it assumes that all WPA positions and contexts are perilously the same and that graduate students or junior faculty cannot be effectively prepared to do this work.

Richard C. Gebhardt offers another perspective in “The Importance of Untenured Writing Administrators to Composition and to English Studies.” He writes, “[I]n a field in which administration is a subspecialty and a career track, there seems something unreasonable about building a seven-year buffer zone between the background and enthusiasm developed in graduate school and the chance to put them into practice [...] in meaningful writing program administration” (17). In their book *GenAdmin: Theorizing WPA Identities in the Twenty-First Century*, Colin Charlton et al. argue that the new generation of WPAs is no longer bound by the idea of a “chronological placement” or “cultural positioning” that dictates one must first be tenured in order to do WPA work (4). Rather, the authors recognize the know-how and rhetorical ability that pre-tenure WPAs bring to their positions. This agency, combined with the intellectual, scholarly quality of the work in which WPAs engage, makes such work largely equivalent pre- or post-tenure:

Our understanding of WPA work involves a conflation of abilities to theorize, experiment, network, act, assess, and build a community of teachers and students [. . .] When our conception of WPA work—and the people working in those positions—is defined by the power afforded by tenure alone, we cut ourselves off from a more genera-

tive conversation that attends to the ways in which the WPA can not only create power or influence without tenure, but also improve the conditions in which s/he works. This [emphasis on tenure] in turn discredits the value and importance of discursive, rhetorical acts that all WPAs engage in because of their training as rhetoricians and their disposition to work toward meaningful, pragmatic programmatic change that supports student writers. (213)

As noted in the WPA literature (Dew; Hult et al.; see also Lucas; McLeod 116-118) and on the JIL, pre-tenure WPA positions have become a fixture in higher education. Therefore, rather than simply argue against recent graduates taking on WPA positions, we must adequately prepare and support junior faculty in these positions. In other words, we are not advocating abandoning WPA professionalization programs that are designed to protect students from WPA perils. Rather, we are advocating the purposeful development of professionalization programs that exceed the goal of protecting students who are genuinely committed to writing program administration as an intellectual and professional career path.

Dew speaks to the preparation issue in “Ethical Options for Disciplinary Progress on the Issue of jWPA Appointments.” Here, Dew argues that if the field agrees jWPA appointments “are necessary, useful and thus legitimate, we should proceed with heightened attention to the educational needs of this peculiar subclass of rhetoric and composition professionals by inviting jWPAs (gWPAs, NTTTF [non-tenure-track faculty] serving as WPAs and jWPAs) to speak to the training issue” (287). We concur. The recommendations below, then, constitute our response to Dew’s invitation as we “speak to the training issue” by describing some of the ways in which the field more generally might improve these efforts, as well as how WPA-GO and CWPA, more specifically, might continue to build on their efforts to meet graduate students’ professionalization needs.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE FIELD

It is clear from our survey data that graduate students at a number of institutions have opportunities to gain experiential knowledge in WPA work through positions in first-year composition and WAC/WID programs or in the writing center, for example. It is also clear that these practical experiences are often detached, whether intentionally or not, from complementary professionalization opportunities. We believe that practical experiences are invaluable for students who expect to or want to administer writing programs, but we also believe they should be grounded in the theory and research of the field to make that experience more meaningful and effective.

Therefore, in line with many of the views expressed in the WPA-L conversation that began this essay, we hope to see more institutions begin to offer seminars on WPA theory, research, and practice.

Additionally, we would like to see the field begin to develop more comprehensive WPA specialized PhD tracks for students who want to pursue their intellectual and professional interest in writing program administration. Ideally a more developed WPA specialization would include instruction in writing-program-related concerns such as curriculum design, program assessment, student writing assessment, and placement. These topics should be examined through the diversity of lenses offered by various institution types (e.g., two-year and four-year colleges and universities; small, private liberal arts colleges; tribal colleges; Historically Black Colleges and Universities; Hispanic Serving Institutions; etc.) and take into account the various needs of different types of learners (e.g., multilingual writers, minority students, first-generation students, adult students, basic writers, etc.). Instruction in WPA work needs to reflect the diversity of the types of institutions where WPAs engage in such work as well as the diversity of the students (and faculty) with whom WPAs work. Graduate students should also learn how to communicate this work as scholarly work, as addressed, for example, by the CWPA statement on “Evaluating the Intellectual Work of Writing Program Administration.”

A WPA specialization should also include coursework on additional aspects such as hiring and supervising personnel, conducting teaching observations for professional development versus evaluation purposes, building relationships with faculty and administrators across one’s own institution and other institutions, balancing one’s time, and managing stress. Furthermore, as part of this specialization, graduate students should also be encouraged to take courses outside of their own department to help prepare them in other ways for WPA work (e.g., leadership courses or courses in conflict management). These courses could help prepare graduate students to meet the institutionally constituted political challenges of administration as identified, for example, by Roxanne Mountford in “From Labor to Middle Management: Graduate Students in Writing Program Administration,” rather than simply encouraging jWPAs to avoid these challenges, which will most likely persist after tenure. Additional course offerings related to the managerial aspects of WPA work might include budgeting and accounting while, ideally, allowing students to examine these topics through the lens of a WPA (e.g., WPA Budgeting Practices). We might turn to such curricular models as the Language Program Administration specialization offered by the Monterey Institute of International Studies, which requires coursework in language program administration,

language teacher education, and teacher supervision as well as accounting, financing, and marketing.⁸

Another possibility for buttressing graduate students' practical WPA experience would be for institutions to combine resources and offer, for example, an online WPA certificate program—one that would, again ideally, include the above course offerings and be endorsed or “certified” by the CWPA. (This certification may be akin to the CCCC Writing Program Certificate of Excellence.) In addition to providing graduate students with the possibility of engaging in coursework perhaps not offered at their own institutions, participants would also have the opportunity to network with other graduate students and faculty at colleges and universities across the country. Some of this work might also be done with the aid of locally established CWPA affiliates and could be further supported by the summer institutes offered at the annual CWPA Conference. This multi-pronged approach to WPA professionalization may address the challenge individual institutions can face when expanding curricular offerings as well as the challenge graduate students may face when attempting to fit more courses into their graduate plan of study. (Additionally, the offering of a WPA certificate could help to address the needs of those WPAs who discover their interest in this work after graduation.) Whether WPA specialization programs are offered online or face-to-face, the careful preparation of gWPAs interested in careers in writing program administration will go a long way to helping these individuals successfully meet the perils and improve on the promises of WPA work.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR WPA-GO AND CWPA

Much as we support WPA specializations, we recognize that such curricular development represents a number of complicated professional, institutional, and material challenges. And whether they come to fruition or not, it is incumbent upon extra-institutional organizations to work to address the concerns and needs of graduate students, including those concerns indicated by the results of our survey. (In fact, several initiatives, originating from informal conversations with fellow graduate students, were already under way before the survey was completed. The anecdotal evidence from these conversations was later corroborated by the survey results.) WPA-GO and CWPA are making such efforts, but there is still a lot to be done. In the absence of WPA specialization programs at universities around the US, the following is a series of recommendations for WPA-GO and CWPA that could help meet the needs of graduate students who have limited access, for whatever reason, to WPA professionalization at their own institutions.

First, as indicated in the results of the survey, a number of respondents either did not know about CWPA or concluded that it was not an organization where graduate student participation was encouraged. It is likely that, previously, graduate students were not such a welcome sight as many of our past narratives about WPA work and perhaps their authors actively discouraged graduate students from participating in this work. However, with the changing narrative about who is interested and actively engaged in this work, a major initiative of WPA-GO is to encourage graduate student participation in CWPA and the national CWPA Conference. The establishment of WPA-GO as described above was the first formal step in this direction, and the organization as well as graduate students continue to find ongoing support from the CWPA Executive Board under the changing leadership of Linda Adler-Kassner, Duane Roen, and Rita Malenczyk.

A second goal, which may contribute to achieving the first goal identified above, is to increase graduate student membership in CWPA. Between July 2010 and 2011, the number of graduate student members of CWPA grew from 40 to 160. (Even as members continue to graduate, the number of graduate student members remains steady.) At the 2011 CWPA Executive Board meeting at the annual CWPA Conference, Secretary Keith Rhodes attributed this increase in graduate student membership to the publicity efforts of WPA-GO. By continually growing graduate student membership and strengthening communication with members through the WPA-GO webpage on the CWPA website, WPA-GO email list, WPA-GO Facebook page, newsletters, WPA-GO special interest group, and a newly established GWPA-L listserv,⁹ we hope that more and more graduate students will learn that they have a place at the CWPA table. These outreach efforts, in conjunction with the WPA-GO hosted social networking opportunities at the annual CWPA Conference and Conference on College Composition and Communication, encourage interaction among graduate students interested in WPA work, as well as between graduate students and faculty WPAs. Such interaction is of particular importance to those graduate students who, like many of our survey respondents, are at institutions that do not currently offer peer-to-peer or expert-novice WPA mentorship opportunities.

Thirdly, as a majority of respondents are enthusiastic about the workshops WPA-GO has begun to organize and offer at the annual CWPA Conference, both WPA-GO and CWPA should continue to organize as well as expand on these offerings. Because professionalization and job market preparation are clearly concerns of our survey respondents, at the 2011 CWPA Conference WPA-GO and CWPA faculty liaisons Duane Roen and Joe Janangelo implemented a series of professional development work-

shops specifically for graduate students on topics that included creating a curriculum vitae, reading job advertisements, and writing a teaching philosophy. In addition to such workshops, at the 2013 CWPA Conference in Savannah, Georgia, Melissa Ianetta and Kelly Ritter led the first full-day institute dedicated to graduate students and gWPA issues. WPA-GO and CWPA should expand these offerings in order to meet the needs of graduate students at those institutions where opportunities for WPA professionalization are, thus far, limited. Institute topics would ideally reflect those outlined above under the recommendations for the field and would include issues specific to the discipline of writing program administration (e.g., curriculum design, assessment, placement, etc.) as well as the more managerial aspects of WPA work (e.g., accounting, budgeting, marketing, etc.). In addition, the current WPA-GC is examining opportunities for posting future conference workshops and institutes for gWPAs online in order to provide access to those individuals who may not be able to attend the conference. These summer workshops or institutes could be designed as part of the aforementioned WPA certificate program that the CWPA could then endorse or certify. At the same time, WPA-GO and CWPA can encourage members of the profession to begin working to effect changes in graduate student professionalization at their own institutions, while considering the varying demands of their home institutions and programs.

Finally, in addition to strengthening the preparation that graduate students receive, it may be time for WPA-GO and CWPA to create a Portland-type resolution in support of graduate students to protect them from possibly exploitive work conditions at their colleges and universities. (For important discussions of potential issues that can arise from graduate student administrative positions, see Desser and Payne; Ebest; Edgington and Taylor; Gebhardt; Helmbrecht and Kendall; Latterell; Mountford.) As the WPA-GO survey reveals, a number of survey participants hold WPA positions, and it is important to ensure that these students are receiving the departmental and institutional support they need to meet the demands of that job as well as complete the requirements for their degree program. At the same time, however, the Portland Resolution needs an amendment that better reflects the diversity of individuals (tenured, untenured, non-tenured faculty, and gWPAs) engaged in WPA work rather than simply discouraging these individuals from doing this work.

CONCLUSION

Much WPA literature supports the notion that writing program administration is challenging, intellectual work and that those who do such work

benefit greatly from thorough professional training, attentive mentoring, and collaborative support. We hope that this essay directs some needed attention to the importance of providing such training, mentoring, and support for graduate students who constitute the future of the field. Moreover, the results of our survey indicate that our members and potential members see a clear need for these services, especially when such opportunities are lacking at students' own institutions. One respondent indicated that the activities and programs suggested in the survey would have been quite beneficial had they been available earlier in this student's career: "Since this is my final year as a graduate student, I can merely say that had any of these services/offerings that you're naming here been available (or known) to me as a grad student I would have found them exceedingly helpful." Another respondent further illustrated this perceived need for professionalization preparation:

I have worked as a Writing Center AD, Comp AD (business school), and RA/GA to the Dean of Grad School[;] taking this survey made me think that I've been doing a lot of 'admin' work and so I don't know why it didn't occur to me that I should get some training, read a little, and get into the community of WPAs....Since I plan to be open to WPA work when I graduate, I should have though[t] about this earlier . . .

A third respondent expressed an outright sense of isolation, responding thus to the survey question requesting suggestions for additional WPA-GO offerings: "Anything that might help me feel a little less like I'm floundering around on my own." It is the earnest wish of WPA-GO to ameliorate graduate students' isolation and grow opportunities for collaboration—the same needs that are expressed in the quote above, and the very same isolation that Cristyn and Megan felt at their first CWPA Conference in 2008 before finally meeting and collaborating with their co-author, Ryan, and the rest of the WPA-Graduate Committee. The survey results and recommendations above give us concrete ideas about how the field, more generally, and WPA-GO, with the ongoing support of the CWPA, specifically, can continue moving forward in helping to prepare the next generation of WPAs for successful and productive careers in writing program administration.



NOTES

1. We collapse education and training under the broader heading of professionalization in the remainder of this article.

2. Cristyn was the Online Writing Lab (OWL) Mail Coordinator and Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) Coordinator for the Purdue Writing Lab. Megan held the position of Liaison for the Purdue Writing Lab and the first-year writing program, Introductory Composition at Purdue, as well as the position of WAC Coordinator for the Purdue Writing Lab. Ryan was the Assistant Director of Writing Programs at Arizona State University.

3. “Praxis and Allies: The WPA Board Game,” co-authored by Harris Bras, Dana Lynn Driscoll, Cristyn L. Elder, Megan Schoen, Tom Sura, and Jaclyn M. Wells, earned the CWPA Award for Graduate Writing in WPA Studies in 2008. It is archived and available for free download on the website of the Council of Writing Program Administrators at the following link: <http://wpacouncil.org/praxis-allies-wpa-game>.

4. The seven charter members of the ad hoc committee were Meaghan Brewer, Tim Dougherty, Cristyn L. Elder, Steven Lessner, Megan Schoen, Ryan Skinnell, and Ryan Witt.

5. WPA-GO’s complete mission statement is as follows:

WPA-GO seeks to strengthen connections between graduate students and professional WPAs through educational development and networking opportunities. In support of graduate student WPA preparation, WPA-GO works with faculty WPAs to provide the following: mentoring activities, workshops, scholarships and awards, and social events.

6. More information on the CWPA Mentoring Project can be found here: <http://wpacouncil.org/mentoring-project>

7. There is evidence that growth in the field has slowed a bit in recent years. For instance, in the “2007 Survey of Doctoral Programs in Rhetoric and Composition,” the authors write, “Students matriculating in rhetoric and composition PhD programs show a slight decline [in 2007] at 1,181 (1,276 matriculated in 1999; 1,173 in 1994)” (335). Nevertheless, the field regularly enrolls more than 1,100 students in PhD programs and regularly graduates more than 200 students, which contribute to the overall numbers of specialists in the field. Therefore, while enrollment may have slowed to some degree in recent years, the field continues to grow at a significant pace as people graduate.

8. For a description of the Language Program Administration specialization offered by the Monterey Institute of International Studies, please see: <http://www.miis.edu/academics/programs/langteachingspecializations/lpa>

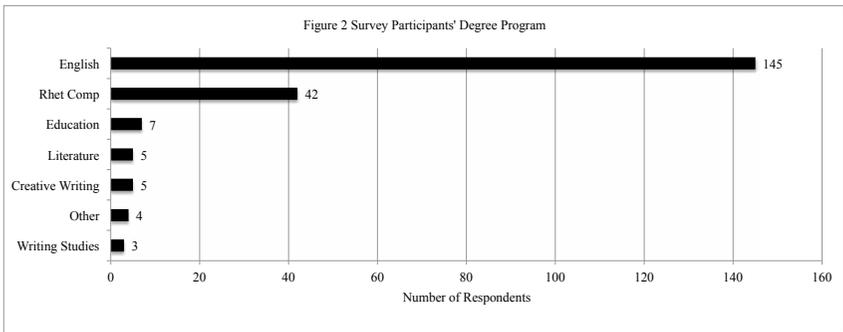
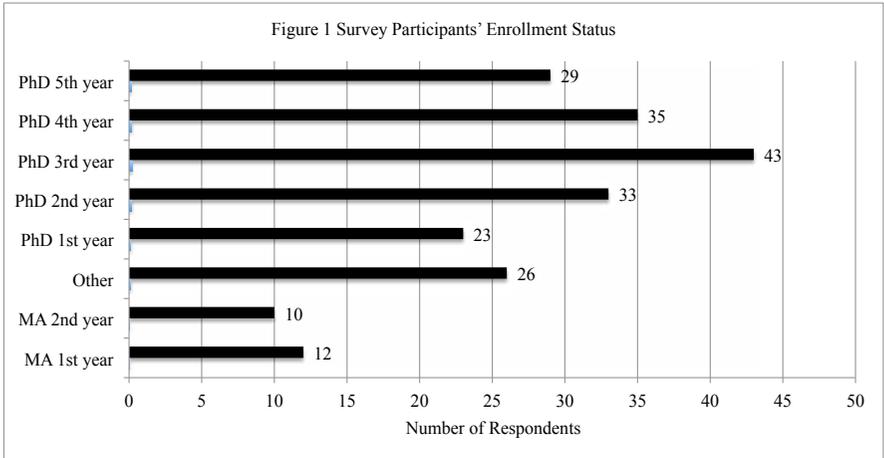
9. Information about WPA-GO, including how to join the WPA-GO email list, WPA-GO Facebook page, and newly created graduate student listserv (GWPA-L), can be found at the following link: <http://wpacouncil.org/wpa-go>.

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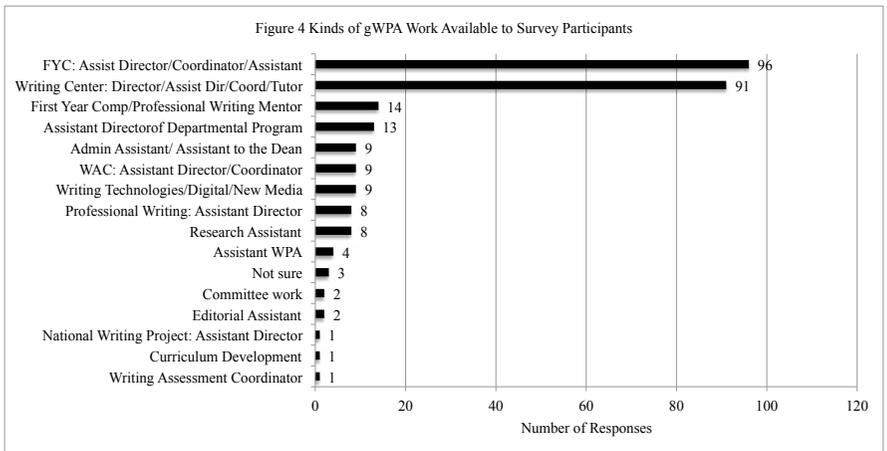
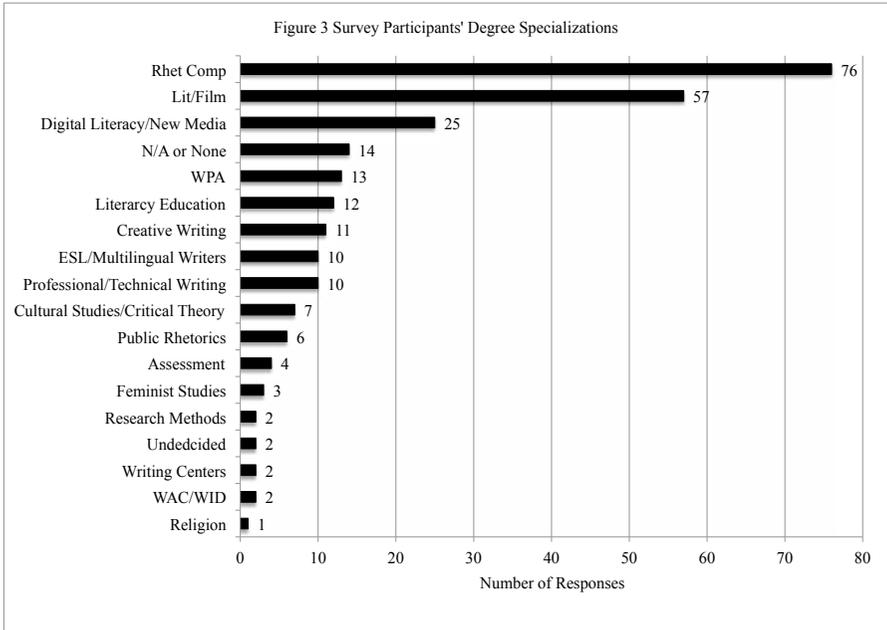
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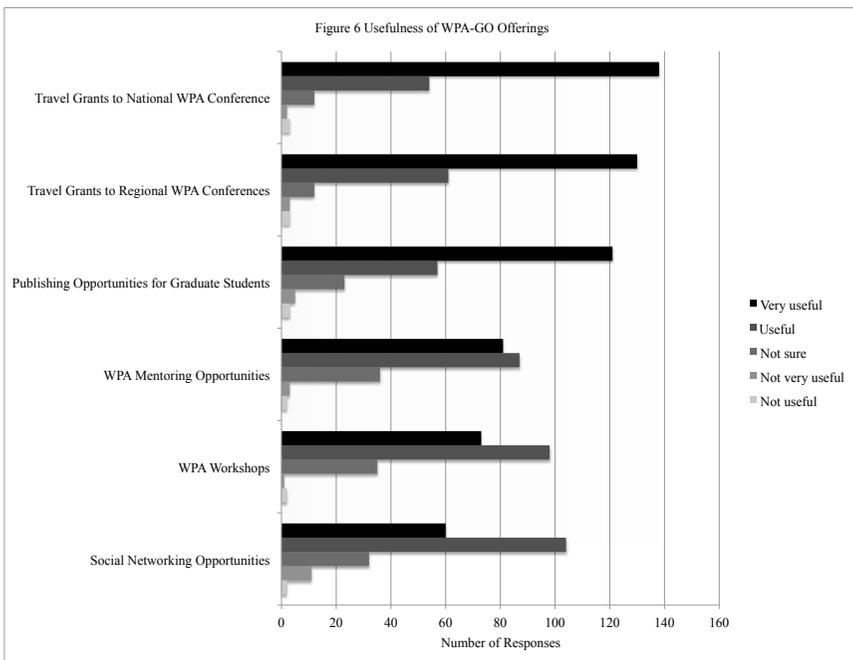
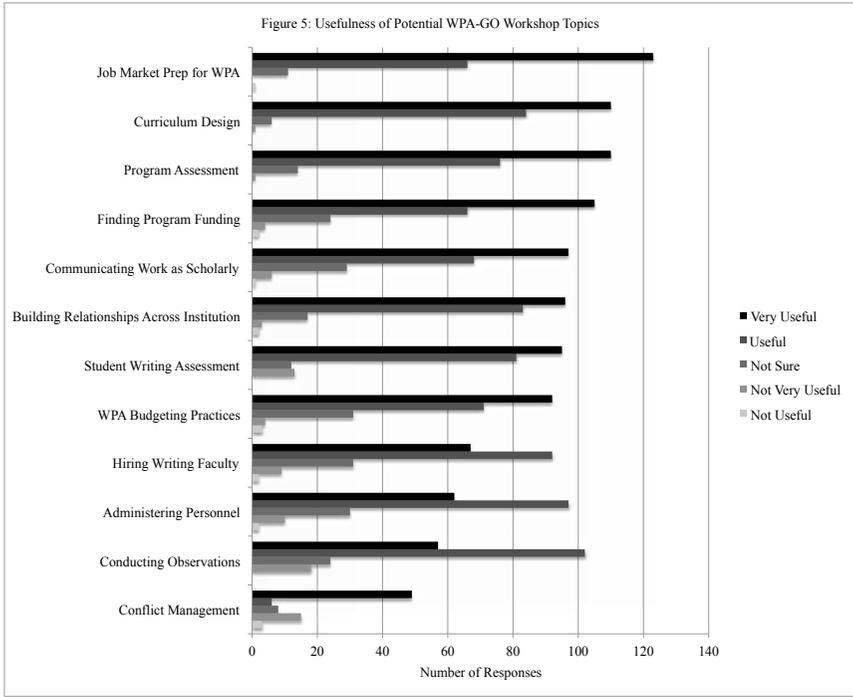
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APPENDIX A



WPA 37.2 (Spring 2014)





A Bird's Eye View of Writing Centers: Institutional Infrastructure, Scope and Programmatic Issues, Reported Practices¹

Emily Isaacs and Melinda Knight

ABSTRACT

Writing program administrators (WPAs) tasked with the responsibilities of writing center administration have complex and challenging positions that vary widely in terms of fiscal and administrative positioning, staffing, utilization of technologies, and mission yet share a common history and commitment to individualized instruction. This research report provides information that illuminates these variations in individualized writing instruction by reporting on a study of 101 US writing centers located at four-year colleges or universities identified as “top” in several categories, providing for a sample that is diversified by region, size, sector (public or private), and educational focus. Derived from a purposive sample of web-based information, the sample allows for comparison to research that is based on self-selected reporting and thus provides a broader view but also one which is from afar. Data collection was based on publicly available information and focused on writing center services, institutional and physical location, status and position of staff, use of technology, and articulated mission. Analysis reveals the persistence of variation in institutions’ approaches to this long-valued component of writing instruction in higher education. Research findings affirm the centrality of writing centers and individualized writing instruction in college and university life in the US but suggest that writing centers, with a few significant exceptions, are positioned as adjunct to other educational activities on campus. We believe these findings contribute to the need for more information about the professional conditions under which all WPAs (including directors of writing centers) work and how students are taught. This article is the first part of a series on how writing is taught in a variety of settings: traditional classes, programs, and centers.

INTRODUCTION AND NEED FOR STUDY

Writing program administrators (WPAs) often have complex and challenging management positions, overseeing, in some cases, not only the teaching of writing through traditional classes but also support services, online initiatives, faculty development, graduate training, and other functions. One such responsibility is the design and development of writing centers, which provide an important resource for college and university communities. Writing centers are often perceived as being outside the scope of a WPA's work, even though directing them requires similar expertise. Our research on writing centers at 101 colleges and universities confirms that the trend of bifurcating writing programs and centers, a trend that has privileged the former over the latter, continues. We suggest that this bifurcation and privileging may be a result of so many writing centers being located outside of academic departments but in student or academics services departments, as was the case in our sample. At the same time, our research uncovered several centers that suggest the emergence of a new model in which a writing center can serve as the focal point for establishing a culture of writing on campus and in the larger community. Beyond these few highlights, this article provides data on the means by which individualized writing instruction is provided at a range of institutions, thereby presenting a baseline against which future trends can be measured. If WPAs are able to make a case for why particular resources are needed, and for what purpose, they need to have reliable data on existing operations.

Our study draws on data from publicly available information and is focused on writing center services, institutional and physical location, status and position of staff, use of technology, and articulated mission. We examine 101 US writing centers located at four-year "top" colleges or universities. In departure from many previous studies which have relied on self-reporting, all data for this study were gathered from college and university catalogs and bulletins, faculty and staff directories, institutional organizational charts, and direct analysis of institutional websites related to writing centers, their practices, and their roles within their institutions. Research findings affirm the centrality of writing centers and individualized writing instruction in college and university life in the US and reveal significant consensus on two values: that individualized instruction in writing is best taught as a process and that writing centers are not "fix-it shops." Beyond these areas of broad agreement, our research suggests that writing centers range significantly in their scope of activities, mission, location, staffing, and public website presentation.

In this broad research study we have asked the following questions: Do these institutions have writing centers or writing tutorial services? What kinds of writing centers are they? Who runs them? Who works in them? Where are they located? In the area of self-presentation we ask: What services do writing centers publicly announce? What are their mission statements? Through our analysis of this collected data, we have striven to present a view that acknowledges and even draws attention to the broad spectrum of writing centers in our sample. Although writing centers are without a doubt a fixture in US four-year institutions of higher education, the range of services, administrative structures, and missions present suggest that, depending on the data selected for examination or the institution in which a person works, one could reasonably come to very different conclusions about what constitutes a writing center, for the breadth of what writing centers present themselves as doing is wide.

Efforts toward answering questions about the state of writing center practices have a history of being addressed through survey reports that give data on what those most active in the field—that is, people who respond to survey solicitations—report about operations of their writing centers and institutions. In our research we took a different tact, describing writing centers not from what a self-selected population reports about themselves but from what can be seen through examination of publicly available information from a cross-section of “top” four-year schools selected across the field and nation by region and institutional type. In this approach we have acknowledged the importance of disclosing information to the public, something that has now been enshrined in federal legislation. The Higher Education Opportunity Act (HEOA) of 2008, which reauthorized the Higher Education Act of 1965, imposed new reporting and disclosure requirements linked to participation in Title IV federal student financial aid programs. While the HEOA did not specifically address writing centers, it mandated provision of transparent information about what institutions of higher education offer and how they conduct business and meet their objectives. Further, our research demonstrates that although individual writing centers vary in terms of their capacities and/or interest in building their online presence and resources, university catalogs and bulletins, faculty and staff directories and institutional organizational charts enable researchers to collect consistent, baseline data about structure, staffing, and basic services offered.

METHODOLOGIES FOR ASSESSING WRITING CENTERS

In Writing Studies research, there is a strong tradition of surveys, several of which we discuss to both highlight the questions other researchers have been concerned with and to note the persistent and evolving findings that have been reported. This survey research typically uses familiar paths to find participants, and so we see calls for surveys on listservs (WCenter and WPA), fliers and announcements at conferences, and through distribution lists (mail or email) generated by professional organization membership. This methodology ensures that researchers primarily gain information from those who are most active in the field—that is, those who choose to join our listservs and professional organizations and those who respond to survey requests. Response rates may therefore say as much about those who participate as they do about actual trends. Nonetheless, these surveys are conducted fairly regularly and are a mainstay of writing center research. In addition, surveys of writing center directors and staff provide perspectives on insider-only knowledge, as well as insights and opinions not available from a public data methodology.

A prominent focus of survey research is the status of writing centers, frequently in comparison to writing programs. In 1999, Valerie Balester and James McDonald reported on their survey that compared writing center directors and writing program administrators and found that, “institutions tend to grant writing program directors more status than writing center directors, often significantly more” (71), echoing earlier survey work by Suzanne Diamond that similarly noted writing center directors’ “hybrid,” uncertain status (4). Balester and McDonald were even-keeled, emphasizing that their “survey presents an optimistic view of the working condition and working relations” (78). The final note, however, called for more respect for writing center directors: “Professional associations for composition teachers and WPAs would do well to remember that directing a writing center requires as much experience, knowledge, and professionalism as directing any other writing program” (78).

Balester and McDonald’s research suggested a slow if not satisfactory upward move for writing centers and their directors. They, like Dave Healy, who also conducted survey research to ascertain writing center director status, drew on Olson and Ashton-Jones’ 1988 survey research, which described the writing center director as a “wife”—someone whose work was not valued in the ‘real world,’ whose influence was largely confined within four walls, whose place was in the ‘home’” (26). Similarly, Suzanne Diamond described the “complicated financial derivations and reporting structures” of the writing center directors she surveyed as being similar to “fis-

cal forms of homelessness” (4), while Perkes’s survey research documented lack of standardization in goal, mission, and philosophy in writing centers and thus the impossibility of “much-needed benchmarking” (3). These surveys thus draw conclusions that reflect the view expressed by writing center historian Neal Lerner who observed the bifurcation in the field between tenured faculty directors and part-time, contingent staff directors, and the realization of his fear regarding “a two-tiered system” of enfranchised directors and a disenfranchised class of people who provide services (43).

The Writing Center Research Project (2010-11), currently maintained by the University of Arkansas at Little Rock and made available through a public website, represents a sustained effort (since the year 2000) toward collecting and disseminating data about the business of writing centers: hours of tutoring, tutoring practices, types of consultants, director salaries and release time, and other factors. This research is made available in raw form, and has also been used in two articles currently in print, providing data on how the writing centers of those active in the field—those who answer surveys—are administered. Neaderhiser and Wolfe used these data to assert that although there has been significant discussion of the possibilities of using new technologies, survey data suggests that writing centers have made little use of even widely available technologies, relying almost exclusively on traditional methods and, to some extent, email. These are findings that our own research confirms, as we will report later in this essay.

A 2000-01 report originally made available by the Writing Center Research Project (WCRP), compiled and analyzed by Christopher Ervin, broke down data about staffing and institutional associations. He reported that 42% of directors surveyed were in tenure-line positions, with the other 58% in non-tenurable faculty, staff (full-time or part-time), or graduate student positions. Further, he reported that 43% of the writing centers indicated the English department as their location, 28% defined themselves as independent, 13% were located in learning skills centers, and the rest were variously located in other departments, student services units, and, rather infrequently, in rhet-comp departments (3%) (Ervin 3). In an article that reported out 2003-04 data from the WCRP, findings were quite similar: 43% of directors were in tenure-lines, with the remaining 57% in non-tenured positions (Griffin et al. 9). In terms of institutional location, Griffin et al. reported similar findings with the exception of a greater reporting of affiliation to rhet-comp departments: up to 12% from 3% (9). Further, Griffin and her colleagues defined affiliation to the English department differently than Ervin did, with 10% of respondents following in the category of “English + a university-wide entity” and another 29% falling into the “English” category (9). Griffin et al. discussed institutional location at

some length, noting that writing center directors acknowledge “strong ties” to English and other departments yet strive to project a “non-departmental image” (9). Griffin and colleagues closed with a return to the discussion of status; they noted the “fluid” and varied configuration of writing centers as enabling growth, but also wondered if such fluidity “can also possibly restrict . . . growth by limiting their institutional cache” (21). This language reflects the concern that writing center researchers have about writing center status.

Other empirical research has typically focused on reporting on surveys of a particular population of writing centers or their staff. For example, Carroll, Pegg, Newmann, and Austin reported on their survey of small college writing centers, finding similarities between small college writing center directors and their larger university counterparts on such issues as education and salary, but significant differences in rank, with small college directors much more frequently occupying staff appointments (3). Karen Rowan surveyed graduate student administrators involved in writing center work to present “baseline” data on the use of graduate students to administer writing centers, finding widespread usage across institutional type.

In *WPA at Small Liberal Arts Colleges*, Jill Gladstein and Dara Regaignon draw on surveys sent to 137 school representatives, from which they yielded an 80% response rate (4), at small liberal arts colleges (SLAC) to portray writing program administration (including writing center administration) in this selected population. For the 100 schools that comprised the final data set, the authors conducted a website review of site documents (30) and individual and focus group interviews for all interested participants, and then individual interviews of participants from three different showcased schools. Although they argue that the nature of small liberal arts colleges is to resist “compartmentalizing or centralizing activities around the culture of writing” (46), in their analysis they report the following: 38 institutions had both a writing center director and writing program administrator (48), 29 had either a WPA a WCD (writing center director) or a WAC (writing across the curriculum) coordinator (51), and 16 had what they define as an “Explicit WCD Only” position in which the person defined his or her job entirely as in support of students, and not curriculum (55-56). In terms of status, they report that for SLAC writing center directors, 41% are tenure-track, 18% are non-tenure faculty positions, 22% are hybrid positions, and 20% are staff positions (79); they argue that their “sample challenges assumptions in the field about what kinds of status . . . are required for WPA authority” (67). In their chapter devoted to writing centers, Gladstein and Regaignon offer data on what their respondents report in terms of who staffs SLAC writing centers, how many people work in each writing cen-

ter, where these writing centers are located, and what kind of training staff are offered. They conclude by noting the strong culture of peer tutoring at SLAC schools (169) and the way that individualized writing instruction is embedded in curriculum at these types of schools.

In this review we see our enduring interest in status—of the writing centers we work in and the people who work in them. Whether at SLAC schools where writing center directors are defined as focused on student learning only, and not curriculum, or in the WCRP research that often focuses on departmental affiliation and the pull of English departments, we see in this research the driving concern to mark progress; beyond the rollercoaster rides we experience at our individual institutions where a writing center’s budget may go dramatically up or down in a given year, as professionals and researchers we wish to understand the broader context for our challenges. Another way of putting it might be: Do others struggle as I do? Am I lucky? Typical? Atypical? Conference and listserv conversation is close to the ground, bumpy, and unclear; in the research tradition that we are following, we provide an aerial view that should affirm writing center practitioners’ sense of wide variety in institutional infrastructure (as demonstrated through presence, nomenclature, and location), scope and programmatic approach (as demonstrated through leadership, staffing and clientele), practices (as demonstrated in mission, theoretical perspectives, use of technology, and innovation), and staffing.

STATE OF THE FIELD IN 101 TOP SCHOOLS

To produce a map of the state of the art in U. S. writing centers, we selected purposive methodologies that were not dependent on response rate.² We focused on the United States for several practical reasons, but we note that there are excellent models of writing centers in other countries. We based our initial pool on the annual rankings published by *U.S. News and World Report* (“America’s Best Colleges 2010”), not because we endorse their methodology and approach but because of their dominance in discussions about reputation, resource allocation, and media, and because it allowed us to rely on a third-party—one on which we have no influence—for sample selection. Thus, we did not choose schools based on representativeness, but rather the degree to which they fulfilled notions of “best in kind.” *U.S. News* used seven different indicators to measure “quality”: assessment by administrators at peer institutions, retention, faculty resources, student selectivity, financial resources, alumni giving, and the publication’s determination of graduation rate (Morse). While the “top” schools list is well known, rankings are also provided for subset categories, based on institutional type,

region, specialty area, and other categories. We derived our sample for this study from these 2010 lists: top national—ten, top public—twenty, top liberal arts—ten, top Master's—five in each region (North, South, Midwest, and West), and top BA—three in each region (“America’s Best Colleges”). With this approach, we were able to include colleges and universities across a broad spectrum of highly regarded national and regional institutions. To further enhance the scope of our sample, we also selected schools from two other *U.S. News* lists: Top Historically Black” (the top five schools in the list) and the “writing in the disciplines schools” mentioned in the list of “academic programs to look for.” Ten WID schools were not included in other top lists, though 13 already were. Finally, on the assumption that views specifically from Writing Studies professional organizations matter, we included all 20 US schools awarded the CCCC Writing Program Certificate of Excellence from 2004, when the award was established, through spring 2010. Five of the award winners were also in one of the top lists, and 6 were recognized for WID. Many institutions thus appear on more than one list. With these methods for selection, we produced a sample of 101 schools, and our data are current as of August of 2010.

Rather than using surveys, we replicated a methodology previously used to review the impact of the WPA Outcomes Statement on writing programs (Isaacs and Knight) and which was first employed by Knight in studying professional schools. Specifically, we relied on data available from publicly accessible websites in order to determine how writing centers represent themselves to all stakeholders. This methodology, as a result, is replicable, comparable across a broad spectrum of institutional types, and it also avoids the inherent problems of response rates and individual biases. Following Haswell’s call for RAD (replicable, aggregable, data-driven) research (2), we have selected this methodology while also recognizing that in our methodology selection we have excluded the direct voices of writing center directors, tutors, and others. This methodology, limitations noted, enabled us to address this question: How do writing centers represent themselves to their stakeholders?

With our focus on the “public face” of writing centers, we were able to gauge the information available for first-time writing center users who search their institution’s websites for writing resources. For our methodology, we followed a modified content-analysis approach, as articulated by Thomas Huckin and Keith Grant-Davie³, in developing units for analysis and sorting our data. As a two-person team, with support from a graduate assistant, Norman DeFilippo, we were able to confirm the reliability of emerging coding, most frequently using the presence of particular terms (e.g., “lab” or “center”) so as to produce categories and ultimately an analy-

sis that other researchers can replicate. Our method was thus quantitative and qualitative, primarily “record-based analysis” derived from “formal organizational records” (Abbott 14) that higher education institutions disseminate through the web. As a team of two we developed a method for cross-checking with high rater agreement, choosing to closely focus on “the linguistic text itself” (Huckin 28)—that is, on the words and terms that writing center administrators and other university administrators used to describe their practices and approaches. Our research is primarily reportorial—we aimed to share with others what we have seen.

CATEGORIES OF ANALYSIS AND VARIABLES

We amassed data in several broad categories of analysis: (1) institutional infrastructure—how the center fit into the college or university; (2) the center’s scope and related programmatic issues; and (3) writing center practices. Some of these data we have aggregated by number, whereas for other sets we derived trends and patterns after collecting and sifting through the data—coding and grouping—individually and then again after discussion. In conducting our research, we considered the variables shown in Table 1:

Table 1: Categories and Analysis and Specific Variables

1. Institutional Infrastructure
 - Presence
 - Nomenclature
 - Location
2. Scope and Related Programmatic Issues
 - Leadership
 - Staffing
 - Clientele
3. Writing Center Practices
 - Mission
 - Theoretical perspectives
 - Use of technology
 - Innovation

1. Institutional Infrastructure: Writing Center Presence, Nomenclature, and Location

Presence. To understand institutional infrastructure, we first discovered whether a writing center existed and for how long, and then looked at nomenclature and location. Four of the schools in our list of 101 showed no

evidence of having a writing center: Master's College, Morehouse College, the University of Chicago, and the United States Merchant Marine Academy. It is possible that one or more of these schools had a writing center of some sort, but it was nowhere apparent on the website. Nine of the centers were named: Hixon at Cal Tech, Ott at Marquette, Howe at Miami, Speer at Ouachita Baptist, Hume at Stanford, Hewitt at the U.S. Coast Guard Academy, Sweetland at Michigan, Odegaard at University of Washington, and James A. Glenn at Xavier University. Five of these naming events were the result of major gifts or endowments; one was named after a former president and another after a distinguished professor emeritus. Interestingly, the websites provided little information on the donors or the honorees (Marquette is the exception). Since completing our data collection, we discovered that the Hixon Writing Center at Caltech was "suspended" as a result of a decline in its endowment (Marzen). Historical memory was also typically absent, as only 21 of the centers indicated when they were founded; not surprisingly, the legendary center at the University of Iowa, the oldest in our subgroup, was the only one to provide a detailed history. We also found that 8 schools who do not have first-year writing requirements do have writing centers; we are reporting on the first-year writing programs and requirements for our sample of 101 schools in another article.

Nomenclature. In the early history of writing centers, two labels were prominent: lab and clinic (Moore). The term lab was used not in the sense of a laboratory where research would take place, but rather as an adjunct to a regular class of instruction. Neal Lerner, however, in *The Idea of a Writing Laboratory* (a reference to North's "Idea"), argues that when writing centers were called "*writing laboratories* they often thrived," and their lineage went "back to the 1890s when *laboratory methods* were trumpeted in a wide range of disciplines," including first-year composition (2). The word clinic, in contrast to laboratory, medicalizes the work of writing centers, with possible inferences of diagnosis and treatment. We would like to believe that "center" suggests that the activities occurring within are central to the academic enterprise.

Some 70 centers in our sample had the words *writing center* in their names, or some variation (e.g., "The Write Center" at the College of New Jersey) or the word order has been changed. Two schools included "reading" in the title, and 6 named either tutor or tutorial. We might have thought that the concept of the writing studio would have taken off (Grego and Thompson), but only 3 have called their centers studios. Reflecting past history, 3 others have maintained the word "lab" (most notably, Purdue, along with The Citadel and Georgia Tech's CommLab).

Location. We examined where a center physically resides on campus and also where it is housed within the institution’s hierarchy and administrative structure. Location conveys psychological as well as physical power. Consider how faculty offices, for example, are assigned and the significance given to windows, occupancy numbers, upper floors, views, and basement level locations. We discovered only 2 centers that identified their location as in basements, for example, although it is possible that others were housed there as well. Quite a few of the centers in our survey were housed in multiple locations. A substantial number (46) had locations in academic buildings—that is, structures housing departments, classrooms, and other academic resources. Libraries represented the second most popular location, with 31 of the sample having writing centers located in them. Seventeen centers were located in buildings whose main purpose was to provide student services (student centers and the like), and 7 were in residence halls. The “commons” concept, although prominent in discussion of reconfiguring library design, appeared in only 2 schools in our sample. We read these data on location as indicating an elevation of writing centers from the “basement” days: locations were varied, but typically centrally located, whether in traditionally academic or student life spaces.

Writing centers, like writing programs, are housed in various institutional locations for purposes of reporting and administration. Some, like UNC Chapel Hill’s, originated in an English Department and then became administratively housed outside an academic department. As detailed in Table 2, half of the schools that had writing centers housed them on the “academic side,” while one third were housed externally, most typically in student support services, and the remaining were standalone, with no discernible connection either to academic or student services units (see Table 2).

Table 2: Writing Center Location

Academic Affairs	55% (n=53)	English/Humanities Department	18% (n=17)
		Writing Program in English Department	10% (n=10)
		Independent Writing Programs	22% (n=21)
		Centers for Writing Excellence	5% (n=5)
Student Development and Campus Life	33% (n=32)	Student Support Centers	33% (n=32)
Unknown	12% (n=12)	Standalone Units	12% (n=12)

Our data raise but cannot answer the question of the effects of writing center placement in or outside of the academic area: does placement within student development, support, or success units or initiatives reinforce a “remedial” character for centers, marking them as solely designed to help struggling writers?

2. Scope and Related Programmatic Issues: Leadership, Staffing, and Clientele

Leadership. Web sites, organizational charts, and course catalogs enabled us to document and then analyze the range of staffing configurations that were used in 94% (all but 6) of our sample’s writing centers, as is detailed in the tables below. Most writing centers with an apparent organizational structure, by which we mean an indication of leadership, were led by individuals who were defined as directors, and just 8% of the schools in our sample with centers did not have a director listed at all. We wonder how the operation was managed, and we believe the absence of leadership says something about how a center is valued and perceived. In a school such as Oberlin, where the center appeared to be part of a well-established Writing Associates Program that was itself part of a separate department of Writing and Rhetoric, the lack of a director would appear not to diminish the value of a center that was housed within the entire department. At the time of data collection, Georgia Tech’s CommLab was still being developed, so perhaps it includes an administrative structure not fully apparent at the time of our data collection. But standalone centers without identified leaders would appear to have diminished academic credibility. As Table 3 reveals, in our sample we see only minor representation of the “coordinator” position, though some of these were in fact students, and one had the title of “Student Director.”

Table 3: Titles of Writing Center Leaders

Position	Percentage
Director	75% (n=71)
Coordinator	12% (n=11)
Administrator with Other Responsibilities	5% (n=5)
No Apparent Leader	8% (n=8)
Information Unclear	n=6

The issue of status as defined by position type is of enduring interest and, as the chart below details, researchers’ findings vary—a testament to some combination of trend changes and wide variations in sample selection,

both in terms of targeted population and methods for sample selection. From this sample, only 29% (n=26) of the writing center leaders were in tenure-track positions, 25% (n=22) were faculty in non-tenure track positions, for a total of 54% (n=48) of directors being in some kind of faculty position (see Table 4). By way of comparison to writing program administrators, in our sample of 101 schools, of the 92 schools that offered first-year writing, 79% (n=73) had writing program administrators running their writing programs, and of those, 47% (n=34) were in tenure-track positions. As should be clear, status and position type in writing center directors is an area in which we see variation across studies. The findings from this study suggest that writing centers are directed by people in non-tenure-track faculty positions predominantly (71%), whereas we see significantly higher reporting of tenure-track faculty directing writing centers in these other studies, with the exception of Balester and McDonald's. We suspect that the explanation for this difference lies in the self-reporting factor: through our methodology, we were able to report on institutions that did not have a leader who was likely to be on WCenter or receive a mailing as part of a faculty group. Another interesting comparison to note is the high percentage of tenure-track faculty leading writing centers in the SLAC study: here we should consider not only the 41% reported in the faculty position, but also some percentage of the 22% in "hybrid" positions, which the authors include to represent leaders whose positions straddle categories, with at least some having a kind of faculty rank. Regardless, the clear suggestion is that SLAC schools are more likely to employ faculty as writing center leaders than the "top" universities—only 14 (11.9%) of which would be classified as small liberal arts colleges—that are included in our study.

Table 4: Position of Writing Center Leaders

	Balester & McDonald; 1999	Ervin (WCRP); 2000-01	Griffin et al (WCRP); 2006	Gladstein & Regaignon (SLACs); 2012	Isaacs & Knight (Top Universities); 2009
Tenure-Track Faculty	17%	42%	43%	41%	29% (n=26)
Non Tenure-Track Faculty	41%	58%	57%	18%	25% (n=22)
Staff	40%			20%	43% (n=38)
Graduate students	0%				3% (n=3)

	Balester & McDonald; 1999	Ervin (WCRP); 2000-01	Griffin et al (WCRP); 2006	Gladstein & Regaignon (SLACs); 2012	Isaacs & Knight (Top Universities); 2009
Hybrid				22%	
Other	2%				

A related finding of similarly enduring interest has to do with gender: the gender breakout of defined writing center administrators was 65 female and 24 male, so 73% of administrators were women, remarkably similar to Healy's 1995 finding that 74% of the writing center leaders were female. In contrast, from this same sample we find that women are more likely to work as WPAs at top universities, with 56% of the WPAs identified as female, and 44% identified as male (71 of the 73 institutions had WPAs whose gender identities we could confirm). These numbers suggest significant differences, marking writing centers as more clearly the province of women whereas this was not the case with the writing programs within this sample.

Staffing. Who provides tutoring and writing consultancy services is an important indicator of what kind of writing center a college or university has developed and the extent to which it can function as an institutional force in defining, promoting, and teaching writing on campus. Our methodology for ascertaining the "who" of this question was to closely read the websites, frequently tracking individuals listed as a tutor, consultant, or administrator to other sources of data (for example, institutional directories and department lists) that presented individuals' official roles on campus, thus determining when a role was fulfilled by undergraduate, graduate, staff, or even faculty. Despite wide variation among centers and the fact that consultants represented a diverse group within particular centers, we found that a little more than a quarter of the writing centers in this sample were staffed exclusively by undergraduate students, and another quarter by both undergraduate and graduate students; 81% (n=79) of the centers in our sample included students in the mix of consultants. Only a few centers were staffed with professional writing consultants (that is, neither faculty nor student), and only 10% (n=10) of the sample's schools included faculty as consultants. Thus, we saw students as major forces in writing center work at the four-year university, a trend readers might applaud as a sign of a capable student body or deplore as a sign of the low professional status of writing tutors.

How consultants are titled is an indication of their role and how they are perceived. Of the institutions for which data were obtainable, 64% (n=56) of the centers referred to their staff as *tutors*, and another 8% (n=7) used the

title *peer tutor*. The label *consultant* appeared at 17% (n=15) of schools, and *coach* appeared once. Other titles observed were *specialist*, *instructor*, *mentor*, and *assistant*, and 10 schools did not indicate the name of their staff at all, and so are not included in these percentages. The prevalence of *tutor* as a title suggests that all the activities that will occur in a center revolve around direct tutoring. In our data on *consultant* labels, like our data on who these consultants were, we see significant variety, suggesting institutions were still responding to local conditions—local histories, local funding possibilities, and local populations of students and staff. On the one hand, we saw a move toward professionalization through the choice of the term *consultant*, and on the other hand, we saw creative staffing—which we might read as lower priced staffing (particularly if you include service-learning students who are unpaid).

Clientele. One way a writing center becomes central to the academic enterprise is access—in other words, those it identifies on its website as its invited users. In examining mission statements and other pages on the website and in catalog material to identify who writing centers aimed to serve, we found that most writing centers were explicit, with 68% of schools defining their work as serving students. More specifically, fifty schools specified that they served students only, and, of those schools, eight restricted services to undergraduates. Six centers were open to all, including the community, and fourteen were open to all writers in the college or university. For twenty-two centers, no information was available on users, and one would presume that students were the primary market. From these numbers, it seems that the majority of centers saw themselves as resources for students and did not present themselves as having a larger mission. We note that writing centers that articulated an ambitious mission for teaching writing, promoting writing, and/or fostering a culture of writing did not limit themselves to student use but deliberately identified other users from staff to alumni to community members. For example, one of the schools we identify as a “center for writing excellence,” discussed below, devoted significant website capital to its work with community writers (“Sweetland Center for Writing.”).

3. Writing Center Practices: Mission, Theoretical Perspectives, Use of Technology, and Innovation

In this section we discuss various writing center practices, as exemplified in mission statements, discernible theoretical perspectives providing the basis for the work of a writing center, the use of technology, and particularly innovative approaches.

Mission. Mission statements can be valuable indicators of an institution's public face and the practices embraced. All of the 97 schools in our sample with writing centers have posted documents that are either called "mission statement" or "about us," or appear to serve the function of a mission statement. It was surprising to find how similar many were, almost as if mission statement writers were reading each other's statements, which we can imagine happening. This may reflect shared values or perhaps a need to get something up on a website that is non-controversial. That said, general programs, centers, and even simple web pages announced a purpose, if not exactly a mission. Mission statements ideally reflect what an organization perceives itself to be doing, its goals, and how it intends to achieve these goals. The majority (59) of the writing centers in the sample, however, did not broadcast a mission per se, but rather a simple description of services. For example, Purdue, well known for the global reach of its services, emphasized directly assisting writers in its mission statement:

The Purdue University Writing Lab and Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL) assist clients in their development as writers—no matter what their skill level—with on-campus consultations, online participation, and community engagement. The Purdue Writing Lab serves the Purdue, West Lafayette, campus and coordinates with local literacy initiatives. The Purdue OWL offers global support through online reference materials and services. ("Mission, Goals, and Description")

Given the far reach of Purdue's activities, and the impact it has had on centers all over the world, we are struck by the modesty of this mission statement.

The other 38 were more typical of how a mission statement functions for an organization. Consider this mission statement from Miami of Ohio's Center for Writing Excellence:

The mission of the Howe Center for Writing Excellence is to assure that Miami fully prepares all of its graduates to excel in the writing they will do after college in their careers, roles as community and civic leaders, and personal lives. The Center's primary goals are as follows:

- To foster a culture of writing in which students welcome the writing instruction they receive in their courses, seek additional opportunities to write outside of class, and strive continuously to improve their writing skills.

- To help faculty increase the amount and quality of writing instruction and practice that students receive throughout their studies at Miami.
- To help faculty tap writing's tremendous potential for assisting students in mastering the content and thinking processes their courses are designed to teach.
- To assure that all students—from the most accomplished to the most needful—have ample help outside of their classes as they strive to improve their writing. (“Our Mission”)

This mission is comprehensive, covering one-to-one individualized instruction and other direct student services, in addition to faculty services aimed at strengthening classroom instruction and support of writing. For most writing centers, this fairly comprehensive list of services was not evident, with faculty support seldom appearing.

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

For readers of WPA, the value and need for guiding, research-informed theoretical frameworks for individualized instruction and other pedagogical activities is obvious—without the benefit of theory, writing consultants become handmaids to faculty and other academics whose understanding of writing instruction may well be entirely experiential and uninformed by research and theory. A big question we must ask, therefore, is about whether or not writing centers evidence influence from the field's developed theories for writing instruction. Although, as Crusius and many others have argued, our field does not operate from a single Kuhnian paradigm, but from several theories which only allow for broad consensus on a few principles, we can nonetheless see the influence of theory through what Crusius rightly refers to as the powerful if “commonly sloganized” process approach (105). We found that reviewing the mission statements and home pages of the sample writing center web pages gave useful indication of these centers' instructional philosophies vis-a-vis the most basic distinction between viewing writing as product or process, and, additionally, through evidence of their engagement with doing research. In terms of product vs. process orientation, a quarter of the schools emphasized that their centers were not “fix-it shops,” and 66 emphasized alignment with process writing methodologies through use of key terms that are readily associated with process writing theories and practices. We came to this determination after coding mission statements for process writing on the basic presence of these terms—further evidence, to our view, of how strongly basic approaches to one-on-one writing instruction has been assimilated in writing centers nationwide.

Another indicator of a writing center's perceived mission is the extent to which it serves as a site for research—that is, the degree to which it actively engages in advancing knowledge about the field. Only nine centers in our model reported research activities, and only two of these reported on outcomes, suggesting that producing research was still an atypical goal for writing centers, though we did not collect research that individuals associated with the writing center were doing—quite likely, at writing centers with faculty directors, research was being done (though not necessarily on writing centers or individualized instruction), and this research, no doubt, would have an influence on these writing centers. There are exceptions, of course. For example, Purdue, a leader in so many areas, reported on usability—how its OWL serves and can better serve its constituencies (Salvo et al.). None of this discussion is meant to imply that writing centers were not offering valuable services or to suggest that they should take on a more academic role within their respective college and university communities. Yet we would suggest that the absence of the articulation of this kind of vision on websites is significant. On one hand, one could speculate that designers of websites focused on what students most immediately needed to know; however, websites typically included information for audiences beyond students—faculty, for instance—so designers were aware of faculty audiences, but still the decision was most often made to use websites to give procedural information: who, what, and when, but not so much on why or how.

USE OF TECHNOLOGY

Given how much national attention has been given lately to online education, we were interested in seeing the impact of technology on writing center practices, especially as a means of increasing access—a point made by Neaderhiser and Wolfe, as well as other scholars who have promoted digital innovations in writing centers (Inman and Sewell). One simple way to use technology is to make resources available online to all users, thereby providing 24/7 availability. Purdue's OWL started that trend over twenty years ago and has remained dominant ever since. In fact, many other centers simply linked to Purdue's OWL. We were interested in finding out to what extent centers have developed their own resources and so arrived at four categories to sort the schools' writing centers' use of technology in our model: robust (interactive, high quantity of original content, intended for active use and not just to convey information), original content, primarily links, and those which did not have any online resources (see Table 5). A more specific discussion of observable use of technology follows the table, but in general we note that technology use was less evident than we expected.

Table 5: Writing Centers' Use of Technology

Robust:	3% (n=3)
Included Original Content:	32% (n=31)
Primarily Links:	42% (n=41)
No on-line resources	23% (n=22)

Twenty-eight percent of our sample schools evidenced online consulting, either synchronous or asynchronous, a number that reflects an increase in technological use if compared with Neaderhiser and Wolfe's finding of 16% activity (58). In our sample, 9 schools offered synchronous consulting, and 19 had asynchronous consulting; within that group, 5 offered both. Notably, the majority of our sample schools showed no use of technology for tutorials, though we are not in a position to know whether this reflects lack of resources or a decision not to provide online consulting. Clearly, technology has not had as much impact on the ways writing centers conduct their work as one might expect from the scholarly discussion of technological possibilities in writing consultancy. This is another reminder that the view one gains from reading scholarship on what we might call "best practice" in writing center work is significantly different from the view gained from studying what is actually happening in writing center work nationwide.

INNOVATION

The final variable we considered is to what extent writing centers in our sample represent sites of innovation. In the past decade, a new model for writing centers emerged: what some schools have called a Center for Writing Excellence. We suspect that the word "excellence" is a deliberate choice. Our analysis of these schools suggests that a center for writing excellence (CWE) has the goal of serving all writers in the university community, not just those who could be described as "struggling." As discussed further in another article (Isaacs, "Excellence"), a CWE strives to make writing central to the academic enterprise, inseparable from scholarly activities of inquiry and research, and thus a CWE provides support for teaching and performing writing across and within disciplines, as well as for scholarship that contributes to knowledge about writing. A CWE spreads its network beyond the ivory tower campus into the larger community, and also regularly documents its activities. A CWE thus moves beyond curricular boundaries—that is, beyond services. CWEs also have a faculty director, reflecting the academic status of the unit, and are usually independent units not housed within a particular academic department, although the faculty

director has a departmental home, usually English. Using this definition and information available at institutional websites, five schools in our sample could be classified as CWEs: Miami University of Ohio, University of Michigan, University of Texas, Purdue, and Ohio State.

We classified these centers as CWEs because of their robust approach and because each of these centers fulfilled the CWE definition we have laid out, though with greater or lesser attention to individual areas. Each has its own focus. For example, Purdue's special contribution was in providing "world-class resources and services to the global community through the Purdue OWL" ("Mission, Goals, and Description"). Purdue's on-campus physical center also provided the full complement of usual writing tutorial services as well as support for teachers of writing, with particular focus on business writing, first-year writing, and second-language concerns (Bergmann and Conrad-Salvo).

The University of Michigan's Sweetland Center for Writing emphasized its instruction in writing on-campus; it had a large staff of tutors, over half a dozen coordinators and administrators, and more than twenty lecturers who taught the eight different classes, from transition classes for multilingual and other less experienced writers to courses in peer tutoring and writing in specific genre, among others. In the fall of 2010 Sweetland offered "SyncOWL," an update to the previous OWL, which drew on Google Docs and allowed communication via instant message, email, audio, or video (Khan), demonstrating its investment in finding multiple ways to reach its primary target audience—students. Sweetland also publicized its direct support and engagement with research, and presented itself as an academic unit—with faculty, courses, research, as well as "service" through workshops, tutorials, and vast academic support ("Sweetland Center for Writing").

UT Austin's Undergraduate Writing Center, under the auspices of the Department of Writing and Rhetoric, highlighted its research through hosting *Praxis: A Writing Center Journal* and an intriguing, applied research in-house "White Paper Series." The center, while serving only undergraduates, engaged in significant community outreach both on and off campus (for example, Americorps VISTA and several local high schools). The focus on research put this center in the CWE category, even though it is housed within an academic department. Another innovative feature of this center was the writing studio, which "is intended to focus on a single topic with the goal of helping faculty, graduate students, and students produce professional-level writing for publication or presentation online"; the studio "continue[s] over a long period, with stable membership, extending from a

minimum of one year to as long as members want it to continue” (“Writing Studios”).

In Ohio, we observed two different models of the “excellence” approach. Miami University put significant resources into faculty support, offering grants to faculty for training, independent studies of teaching writing, and support for research on teaching writing. The Roger and Joyce Howe Center for Writing Excellence sought to touch every student, to “assure that Miami fully prepares all of its graduates to excel in the writing they will do after college in their careers, roles as community and civic leaders, and personal lives” (“Our Mission”), and this mission is addressed through attention to changing the way writing was taught at Miami, as well as through direct student services. The Ohio State University’s Center for the Study and Teaching of Writing (CSTW) emphasized outreach off campus through its involvement in various literacy programs, and its commitment to support for state citizenry as part of its mission:

Beyond the university walls are the many faces of the CSTW Outreach program. Among them: Columbus grade school children and volunteer tutors from Ohio State who meet weekly to read and write; K-12 schoolteachers who devote a Saturday to learning a new teaching technology; high school students who spend an intense workshop week honing their critical thinking and writing skills; and adult learners seeking self-improvement and educational advancement. The CSTW reach is wide. (“Outreach”)

Additionally, the CSTW was the home of the Professional Writing minor, the WAC program, and an initiative for Digital Media and Writing that showcased and taught digital writing and media in various ways. Finally, the CSTW positioned itself as a research center and portal, listing several projects that were initiated or supported by CSTW faculty and staff, and many of which have been publicly disseminated through conference or publication (“Center for the Study of Teaching Writing”).

Some observations about these centers for writing excellence are worth noting. First, three of the centers we identified as CWEs were independent, substantial units (in people, reach, and operating budgets); they were at universities with strong faculty and programming in Writing Studies; and they were frequently working with writing faculty in traditional (most often English) departments, teaching courses, and fulfilling research and service requirements typical of other faculty in their home departments. That said, these centers were independent institutionally, and we hypothesize that part of their broadness of scope, service, and therefore impact reflects the larger budget and emphasis that is possible when a unit is focused on a writing

vision, a point that is noted by advocates of independent writing programs (O'Neill, Crow, and Burton). These centers were not distracted—nor were their budgets divided—by established majors or support for other learning areas. Additionally, these centers were striking for what appears to us as evidence of effective strategic planning and certainly a demonstration of smart public relations. For example, at Miami, board members—both internal and external—were featured, demonstrating both scholarly legitimacy and local, broad support. We saw traces of strong support for centers and their directors, all tenured faculty, from well-published, established scholars in the field, and we imagine that these scholars may have played important roles in advocating for these centers. As noted earlier, unlike most of the other centers, all of these centers also featured their research prominently, listing and describing research activities and support on their websites.

TRENDS AND IMPLICATIONS IN 101 TOP SCHOOLS

With this review of the public face of 101 top schools' writing centers, we conclude by offering the following trends observed from our analysis of the variables of this study—institutional infrastructure (presence, nomenclature, and location), scope and programmatic approach (leadership, staffing and clientele), and practices (mission, theoretical perspectives, use of technology, and innovation).

First, writing centers were clearly alive and well, even where there were no writing programs or requirements. Thus, they had become permanent parts of the academic landscape, and while budget pressures may have forced reduction of services or technological innovation, the centers themselves were not threatened to any noticeable degree. A small number were named with gifts or to honor a member of the university community. Few centers appeared to have endowments.

Second, writing centers, with some notable exceptions, have not changed all that much from their reincarnation in the 1980s. There appears to be less emphasis on the remedial, but the primary goal appears to be serving students, and not the entire academic community; fewer still see their mission as moving beyond the ivory tower into non-academic settings. The basic model for delivering services is between a student (more likely undergraduate than graduate) and a tutor (the most common name), who is usually a peer. Although some centers offered classes, the primary approach is one-on-one tutoring. The notion of “assisting” writers was prominent.

Third, technology has not had as strong an impact as we had expected. Only 19% of our centers conducted conferences in virtual environments. Thus, the face-to-face, one-on-one model was still dominant. With Pur-

due as a groundbreaking exception, most centers did not have extensive resources online, and many simply linked to other sites.

Fourth, while most centers were not directed by tenure-line faculty (and fewer were directed by tenure-line faculty than survey research would suggest), a significant minority were. One quarter of the schools in our sample considered the director's role appropriate for a tenure-track position, and typically in these schools the writing center was housed administratively as an academic, as opposed to a service, unit. Of note, Ervin's report, drawn from self-selected survey participation, reported that 42% of the WCRP sample had writing center directors in tenure-line positions. In the next report from WCRP, Griffin et al. report that the percentage has increased to 43%. Interestingly, Gladstein and Regaignon (79), in their study of SLAC schools, which they convincingly argue are institutions with history, size and mission that set them apart from large and public universities, also reported that 42% of their faculty were on tenure-track lines. We would hypothesize that our numbers are lower than the others, which are consistently between 40 and 42%, because of the sampling method differences—survey research would, presumably, often not be able to include as many writing centers that are led by non-tenure-track faculty. Most directors in tenure-track positions were housed in English departments, even if the centers operate independently.

Fifth, and perhaps reflecting the service-oriented nature of centers which were even housed in academic units, few of the writing centers in our sample documented any research activities on the web. In other words, few publicly documented a role of advancing knowledge about writing centers or serving as advocates for their place in Writing Studies as a field, even though individuals who work in these centers might have been conducting research and reporting on it through publication. Instead, these centers defined themselves more as helpmates rather than initiators of inquiry, as adjuncts to coursework rather than as central parts of the academic enterprise. At the same time, few centers appeared to be actively engaged in assessment activities, which would seem to contribute to narratives of marginalization, given how important accountability studies have become. Our data affirm Thompson's observation: "Although discussions of assessment continue to appear in writing center journals, only a few writing centers appear to have taken up the challenge to develop measures of student learning" (40). As Brian Huot writes in Ellen Schendel and William Macauley's *Building Writing Center Assessments that Matter*, a book devoted to guiding writing center directors in developing and reporting assessments of writing center practices, "using assessment as an opportunity for research positions writing center professionals to be knowledge-givers and professionals who

not only take part in professional conversations, but assume the role of setting research agenda and furthering the knowledge base” (Huot and Caswell, “Translating Assessment” 169).

Sixth, we saw little mention in the centers we included in our sample of strategies for working with second-language writers. (Purdue was an exception). In fact, the absence was so noticeable that we stopped keeping track of ESL as a category of analysis. This trend suggests that schools were not doing much to advertise or publicize what they were doing for heritage speakers of another language or members of what has been labeled the 1.5 generation. We also saw little evidence of writing centers articulating and forwarding a vision of global English rather than standard English, as Grimm advocated when she argued that writing centers would do well to “embrace multilingualism rather than monolingualism as a conceptual norm” (17).

Finally, a small number of centers countered all these trends by promoting a new model for writing center work. These centers for writing excellence are an innovation that may serve to extend and deepen the standards for missions of writing centers. In fact, these new centers can serve as focal points for establishing a culture of writing throughout their campuses and beyond.

One potential innovation that we did not discover in our study was any impact of what has been called the “emporium model.” We know anecdotally from our colleagues across the US that many colleges and universities are reconsidering the means by which students considered unprepared are helped to improve their skills in reading, writing, and math. The Math Emporium Model, first developed at Virginia Tech, has been adopted by a number of schools and reportedly “has consistently produced spectacular gains in student learning and impressive reductions in instructional costs” (“The Emporium Model”). In an emporium, students spend the majority of their time in a computer lab setting and receive help on demand. It is not inconceivable that the emporium model may well have an impact on the teaching of writing and writing centers, with “redesign” projects in the works experimentally across the country. At the same time, writing centers have always used an “on demand” model, so there are some interesting parallels that may provide opportunities for course redesigns that draw on expertise in individualized writing instruction.

In concluding this empirical study of the public face of writing centers, following Adler-Kasner’s argument in *The Activist Writing WPA*, we urge writing center leaders to take actions that will project more positive images, both in terms of their websites and other public documents. As she notes, writing program leaders need to combat stereotypes and negative perspec-

tives on student writers and those of us who teach them by becoming active story-changers” (184), to which we would add, with a long history of struggling for status and resources, writing center leaders must be especially vigilant in their work of developing a public face that projects writing centers in terms of what they do now, and also aspirationally. For example, if a writing center wishes to be a community writing center, but is not yet, it should advertise itself both within and without the institution. Another important method for increasing the capital for writing centers is through our collective research.

A review of the last two decades of scholarship on writing centers, found most frequently in *Writing Center Journal*, *The Writing Lab Newsletter*, *Praxis: A Writing Center Journal*, and various book collections, reveals the persistence of two primary tropes: first, a narrative of progress—one that chronicles and forecasts a positive future for writing centers, the people who work in them, and the students who use them (for example, Ede and Lunsford; Faigley; Kail; Lunsford and Ede, Kinkead and Harris; Owens). Second, cautionary tales that document the second-class status of writing center practice and research (Balester and McDonald; Harris, “Centering”; Healy; Olson and Ashton-Jones) and which, as Gardner and Ramsey note, occasionally if paradoxically celebrates the field’s marginality. In efforts we see as motivated by understandable concerns about the status of writing center scholars and their work, we find a third strand which moves toward work that is increasingly theorized and set within literary, cultural, and other theoretical frames (Boquet; Carter; Grimm, *Good Intentions*, “Rearticulating”; Welch). The theorizing of such issues as space, collaboration, and writing centers as an academic enterprise, often through use of theorists such as Foucault, Gramsci, and Lacan, functions to demonstrate that writing center scholarship is bona fide intellectual work while also making particular cases about future directions for writing center practice. This third strain is therefore an effort towards legitimizing the intellectual underpinnings of writing centers as a site of inquiry. These three primary strains, all theoretical or speculative (North) in nature, dominate the landscape of scholarship on writing centers and needs amplification and balance from empirically based scholarship, such as research that documents what it is that writing centers do. We believe a clearer understanding of what it is that writing centers do—see, for example, recent, excellent scholarship by Isabelle Thompson and Terese Thonus (among others) — provides current and future writing center practitioners and researchers with empirical scholarship to complement the field’s history of narrative and theoretical scholarship. By empirical, we mean Haswell’s RAD definition (replicable, aggregable, data-driven). This research, often conducted by directors of

writing centers, should be advertised, discussed and disseminated at the writing centers in which they were conducted, presented as writing center work that is accomplished alongside one-on-one tutoring, and the other more familiar work of writing centers.

We make this recommendation for writing centers to sponsor, conduct, and disseminate empirically based research, and to broadcast a broader and more ambitious agenda and scope, on the basis of our analysis of these 101 institutions which, on the whole, suggest a very modest group, one that could benefit from a more positive, even boastful—if that could be stomach—self-image. Our recommendation is reinforced by our own teaching and writing center training work, where we have observed that after new writing consultants read some of the seminal articles in writing center scholarship, they are confused and disheartened by the perceptions of low status and complaints about working conditions, and so they worry that their writing center may be ever on the brink of administrative destruction. From our research, we are firm in stating that writing centers need not be overly anxious about the road to marginalization leading to extinction, as there is no evidence that this is a likely scenario. Writing centers appear remarkably resilient, able to endure and provide writing instruction that is valued and supported, and this is cause for calm and assurance. Just as important, we urge WPAs who are not directly responsible for writing centers to find out more about how such centers on their campuses work. Given the changes in the ways which many colleges and universities are delivering basic skills courses, it is possible, in our view, that introductory and first-year writing courses may be subject to closer examination. Programs that can be seen as exemplary leaders for the teaching of writing in whatever context are likely to remain strong, but that means having the data necessary to advocate for resources.



NOTES

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2. We are using “purposive” in the sense defined by H. Russell Bernard (165-67).

3. We also were informed by Stuart Blythe’s cautionary directions on coding digital texts.

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Writing Program Assessment and the Mission-Driven Institution

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ABSTRACT

This essay argues that the current environment of American higher education asks writing program administrators to be attentive to institutional mission, particularly as it intersects with writing program assessment. When accreditation motivates assessment, two forces shape writing assessment: the accountability agenda that values comparative evidence, and the requirement that institutions demonstrate they are fulfilling their missions, even if those missions are religious or humanistic. The essay further argues that writing assessment scholarship—while it emphasizes the local and contextual—does not sufficiently address assessment in the context of an institutional mission that aims to foster moral, ethical, or religious habits of mind, attitudes, beliefs, and worldviews. Highlighting the pragmatic and ethical challenges associated with assessing habits of mind, attitudes, beliefs, and worldviews as they are revealed in writing, this essay offers teachers and administrators a heuristic for developing assessment programs aligned with the institutional mission.

Writing program administrators are perhaps familiar with the frantic request I received late one spring semester: *We are trying to keep up with our assessment for the self-study, so can you send us a bunch of papers from English 101 that we can use to assess general education outcomes? Since almost all students take English 101, we want to use this class to assess information literacy and written communication—and maybe some other outcomes. If it too late in the year to collect everything, can you go into Turnitin.com and get some samples?* This request suggests an institution struggling to develop effective assessment programs, but it also highlights the way that writing programs gain attention during institutional assessment and reaccreditation. Because they are part of general education or because they are writing intensive,

writing courses—at or beyond the introductory level—seem a natural place to find direct evidence of student learning.

The request I received envisions writing assessment as a way to help the institution establish its effectiveness and provide accreditors with evidence of quality. When writing program assessment is connected to these larger institutional purposes, WPAs face particular challenges. In terms of institutional politics, accreditation may put (sometimes unwelcome) focus on general education writing courses, particularly when administrators “interpret accrediting agency language more narrowly than it should be interpreted” (O’Neill, Moore, and Huot 78). And in terms of best assessment practices, accrediting agencies privilege numerical evidence that allows for comparisons across institutions, the kind of evidence that often seems antithetical to what we believe about writing and literacy. Writing program assessment implicated in these larger institutional purposes also presents significant challenges related to the institutional mission. I later received a follow up request that illustrates this point: *We also need to show that students are developing a sense of social justice and that they are making gains in ethical reasoning. Do you have some papers where the students wrote about that? Do we have a rubric for this?* Using writing samples to find attributes such as ethical reasoning, morality, and an understanding of social justice—and then scoring these characteristics with a rubric—raises questions not only about the role of writing programs in fostering these attributes but also about the ethics and pragmatics of this kind of assessment.

I think about the intersections of assessment and institutional mission because I direct the writing program at what is conventionally understood as a mission-driven institution. In *Joining the Mission*, Susan VanZanten defines mission-driven institutions according to three criteria, all of which describe my university: they are private, which allows them freedom to hire personnel and develop curricula; they understand their mission as inherently religious; and they intentionally keep the mission central and visible (2–3). Yet all institutions are guided by a mission, and I believe that WPAs at any institution with civic, ethical, moral, or humanistic aims benefit from examining the intersections of mission and assessment. Institutions represented by the Council of Writing Program Administrators may “undertake to educate the next generation of civic . . . leaders” (Gladstein and Regaignon 15), distinguish themselves by not defining professional or instrumental outcomes (Hartley 7), or help “students develop a sense of social responsibility” (“Liberal Education”). Our writing programs may be built on the humanistic mission Catherine Chaput advocates, or they may aim to foster habits of mind such as engagement, creativity, openness, and curiosity (Council of Writing Program Administrators, *Framework*). When

assessment and mission intersect, the challenges for WPAs are—in the language of the press and popular media—those of defending the humanities at this moment in American higher education.

My first argument in this essay is that the assessment environment in American higher education asks WPAs to be attentive to institutional mission and to the intrinsic¹ ends of our programs. And it asks for attention to mission—even religious missions or those centered on the liberal arts—in the context of an accreditation system that seeks numerical evidence of instrumental skills. Accreditation stems from an accountability agenda demanding evidence of student learning that can be aggregated and compared across institutions, an agenda predicated on the idea that perfect measurement systems should be pursued. Writing assessment scholars have largely rejected pursuing perfect psychometrics, focusing instead on local and qualitative approaches (Adler-Kassner and O’Neill; Barlow, Liparulo, and Reynolds; Broad). It is my second argument that our disciplinary focus on the local and contextual does not sufficiently address writing program assessment that is responsive to institutional mission, especially missions with religious or humanistic aims. I conclude by offering a heuristic for developing assessment programs aligned with the institutional mission that produce information for internal and external audiences.

ACCREDITATION AND MISSION IN HIGHER EDUCATION

American higher education is an industry: students and parents are consumers, institutions are corporations, and degrees are commodities. Institutions compete with one another for top rankings and top consumers, attempting to prove that their products are the most cost effective or the most prestigious. This corporate model reinforces the idea that higher education has largely instrumental ends, and it also supports the idea that more accountability and national standards will produce a better product. In 1998, the Boyer Commission Report noted that American undergraduates “can receive an education as good or better than anything available anywhere in the world, but that is not the normative experience...universities are guilty of an advertising practice they would condemn in the commercial world” (5). The testing industry unsurprisingly advocates accountability through national measures of learning: “The lack of a culture oriented toward evidence of specific student outcomes hampers informed decision-making...What is needed is a systematic, data-driven, comprehensive approach to understanding the quality of...postsecondary education, with direct, valid and reliable measures of student learning” (Dwyer, Millett, and Payne 1). Although the United States Department of Education has

not fully embraced calls to establish national measures of student learning, it certainly envisions higher education as an industry subject to regulation.

The regional accrediting system functions as quality control in contemporary American higher education.² Accreditation exerts tremendous influence over assessment because it accepts—and powerfully reinforces—instrumental and corporate definitions of education. Through assessment, institutions must demonstrate that students are learning (or that value has been added), and they must provide data that is persuasive in the free market: comparative evidence that can be aggregated, tracked over time, and compared against other institutions. The Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association (HLC), for example, requires that “the institution provides evidence of student learning and teaching effectiveness that demonstrates it is fulfilling its educational mission” (7). And the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACS) requires an “institutional commitment to the concept of quality enhancement through continuous assessment and improvement” (3). As I have noted, writing programs are regularly implicated in general education assessment, which often accompanies the accreditation self-study process. WPAs may be troubled by the force toward comparative evidence because it privileges outcomes that can be “assessed against an externally informed or benchmarked level of achievement or assessed and compared with those of similar institutions” (New Leadership Alliance 6). In a January 2013 discussion on WPA-L, participants questioned if the force toward comparative evidence is actually a directive to use standardized measures. Shirley Rose, who has served as an HLC consultant-evaluator, explained that although she never endorsed standardized tests, “comparative data is prized. Comparative data showing your own program’s trends in results measured in your assessment processes would be valued.” Other participants responded that they were encouraged to develop local measures but were nonetheless aiming to produce comparative evidence.

Accreditation reinforces this corporate model by exerting quality control over the claims institutions make about their missions. In the educational free market, each institution must persuade consumers that it does something best or fills a market niche others cannot. The mantra “no mission, no money; no money, no mission” has migrated into higher education, and in this era of economic scarcity, only those things that clearly contribute to the institutional mission will survive. Institutions must provide accrediting agencies with evidence that they are fulfilling their unique missions in terms of teaching and learning. SACS highlights mission as an integral part of accreditation, noting that “accreditation acknowledges an institution’s prerogative to articulate its mission, including a religious mission,

within the recognized context of higher education and its responsibility to show that it is accomplishing its mission” (3). And although it does not use the language of mission, the Western Association of Schools and Colleges charges institutions with articulating their values: “The institution defines its purposes and establishes educational objectives aligned with its purposes and character. It has a clear and conscious sense of its essential values and character” (11). At the same time that institutions must produce evidence that enables rankings and comparisons, they must also give evidence of a uniquely successful mission.

It is precisely this charge to evaluate institutional mission along with instrumental skills that prompts ethical and pragmatic questions about assessment and mission. Although the market may reduce mission to an instrumental commodity, many institutions and writing programs still view mission as something with intrinsic value. A cursory review of institutional missions reveals that many aim to do what appears unmeasurable, including student development at the levels of action, mind, and spirit. Member schools of the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities focus on academic skills and personal, spiritual attributes. Institutions prepare “graduates to serve in strategic capacities to renew minds, live out biblical truth, transform culture, and advance the gospel” (“Mission,” Bethel College) and are “committed to engaging the culture and changing the world by graduating people of competence and character, becoming people of wisdom, and modeling grace-filled community” (“Mission,” Seattle Pacific University). Within the Roman Catholic tradition, Assumption College “strives to form graduates known for critical intelligence, thoughtful citizenship and compassionate service,” and Jesuit institutions encourage “an openness of mind and heart...Graduates of Jesuit schools are expected to integrate critical intelligence with an ethical perspective that today leads to generous service of others and a commitment to help build a more just and humane world” (AJCU). And through its liberal arts mission, Williams College seeks to build civic virtue including “commitment to engage both the broad public realm and community life...These virtues, in turn, have associated traits of character. For example, free inquiry requires open-mindedness, and commitment to community draws on concern for others.” Envisioning personal attributes as ends of the educational experience adds layers of meaning to curriculum and pedagogy; doing so further asks those involved with institutional assessment to negotiate these layers of meaning.

Certainly institutional missions may aim to do more than can reasonably be expected from an undergraduate education, and indeed this expansiveness is inherent in the concept of mission. Individual institutional missions may be vague or functionally meaningless, and the idea of mis-

sion itself “may feel dated, and legitimately so, since focus on institutional mission arose in the 1970s and 1980s” (VanderLei and Pugh 105) when “countless organizations expended enormous amounts of time drafting mission statements, only to later quietly file them away” (Hartley 8). While at some institutions, missions are reduced to token words engraved on a plaque, at other institutions, mission statements are “meticulously worded,” deliberately consequential, and work to establish “their distinct identities, unique values, and distinguishing cultures” (VanZanten 2). My focus is on the way that accreditation—because it does not allow missions to be ambiguous or ignored—prompts all institutions to some level of clarity about their mission. When institutions devote attention and resources to fulfilling the mission, WPAs must negotiate not only the pressure to provide comparative evidence but also the challenges of teaching and assessing intrinsic educational ends.

WRITING ASSESSMENT AND MISSION

Writing assessment scholarship has arrived at the consensus that effective, ethical assessment should be local, contextual, and even ecological (Gallagher, “Assess Locally”; Wardle and Roozen). By relying on local expertise and responding to local questions, assessment has the potential fulfill what composition scholars have identified as perhaps its most important aim—improving teaching and student learning. In *(Re)Articulating Writing Assessment*, Brian Huot proposes five principles for writing assessment, all of which focus on the local and contextual: writing assessment should be site-based, locally-controlled, context-sensitive, rhetorically-based, and accessible (105). Contextual assessment requires understanding local values, and Bob Broad offers dynamic criteria mapping (DCM) a method for articulating these values. He defines DCM as a “streamlined form of qualitative inquiry that yields a detailed, complex, and useful portrait of any writing program’s evaluative dynamics” and produces highly *valid* assessments (13). Local information gathered through DCM is valuable for developing scoring guidelines (although he does not advocate creating rubrics), teaching materials, and professional development materials. An essential feature of DCM is its local focus, and Broad cautions that results cannot be imported from one institution to another.

Scholarship in writing program administration further emphasizes institutional context and local values, as WPAs often conduct assessments that implicate a variety of institutional stakeholders. WPAs have used DCM and other qualitative methods to investigate place and context in assessment; their work aims to honor institutional goals by uncovering def-

initions of good writing across campus and finding connections between the writing program and other places within the institution (Adler-Kassner and Estrem; Kreth, Crawford, Taylor, and Brockman). Peggy O'Neill, Cindy Moore, and Brian Huot urge WPAs to give attention to “the values, beliefs, and perceptions that characterize a particular institution, department, or program” (11). Attending to institutional context should begin with these questions: “What defines the writing program? Where do program values and philosophies come from? Who are the students? Who are the faculty? How are program values supported—or complicated—by course goals, curricula, and instruction? What does all of this mean for writing assessment?” (60–61). Administrators may answer these questions through interviews and DCM, archival research, and observations, and they should answer these questions to support teaching and learning in a specific context.

Despite attention to the local and contextual, our scholarship has largely overlooked the role of institutional *mission*. It is nearly axiomatic that administrators must be ethnographers of their own programs, but mission is not yet an integral part of the research process. Two pieces of WPA scholarship focus on institutional mission, although neither fully address the assessment issues I confront in this essay. First, in *Building Writing Center Assessments that Matter*, William Macauley encourages writing center directors to discern possible connections between their assessable outcomes and the institutional mission statement—to conduct assessments that “make sense in the space between what the institution is saying, what it is doing, and the priorities and values of the writing center” (Schendel and Macauley 75). He views aligning assessment with the mission as a politically advantageous rhetorical move. Without compromising meaningful assessment or forcing a fit between the center and the mission, Macauley argues, writing center directors should identify prominent themes from the institutional mission statement and other institutional documents that “play well” with writing center outcomes (62). From this rhetorical perspective, he helpfully details the process of analyzing a mission statement and employing it for the best institutional effects. Yet he does not examine the places where missions may not play well with assessable outcomes or where missions challenge the possibility of meaningful or reliable assessment.

Second, Elizabeth VanderLei and Melody Pugh highlight the ways that institutional mission enters classrooms and writing programs. They claim that “students experience institutional mission most immediately in the classroom, through curriculum and pedagogy” (111). In this way, if the mission “emphasizes citizenship, for example, students could reasonably expect that writing courses will emphasize the skills a rhetor will need to

participate in the forums, hearings, and conversations that fuel a robust democracy” (111). Although VanderLei and Pugh urge WPAs to consider institutional mission “especially in this historical moment of intense attention to outcomes and assessment” (105), their discussion does not extend to assessment. Fostering citizenship raises the question of how to assess citizenship: how do we demonstrate that students are becoming better or more engaged citizens? And more broadly, how do we assess other qualities emphasized in institutional missions? It is conceivable that WPAs at mission-driven institutions will find strategies to fulfill multiple aims: they may design locally meaningful assessment programs, align those programs with the institutional mission, and meet the expectations of accrediting bodies. At the same time, they must contend with the way that the intrinsic ends of education may be at odds with comparative evidence of instrumental ends.

A HEURISTIC FOR WRITING PROGRAM DESIGN AND ASSESSMENT

I have argued in this essay first that accreditation asks WPAs to be attentive to institutional mission, and second, that scholarship on writing assessment does not address mission in ways that are sufficient to guide writing faculty and administrators at mission-driven institutions. Regardless of particular institutional missions, accreditation and general education assessment draw attention to writing, written communication, and often the writing program. For example, the VALUE rubrics from the Association of American Colleges and Universities are widely used to assess outcomes such as civic engagement, ethical reasoning, teamwork, and inquiry—they depend on writing. Students demonstrate civic engagement when they tailor “communication strategies to effectively express, listen, and adapt to others to establish relationships to further civic action” and provide “reflective insights or analysis about the aims and accomplishments of [their] actions.” They demonstrate ethical reasoning by stating “a position and... the objections to, assumptions and implications of and can reasonably defend against...different ethical perspectives/concepts” (“Liberal Education”). General education assessment regularly requires written artifacts, and the majority of VALUE outcomes are most readily assessed through written communication.

Accreditation and institutional assessment further draw attention to WPAs as campus leaders. Faculty from multiple disciplines—who may have little knowledge about writing pedagogy or writing assessment—are charged with assessing writing. WPAs can provide needed leadership, and in this way, accreditation and general education assessment open the opportunity to initiate conversations across campus about writing and rhetoric.

They open the opportunity to shift the real and symbolic responsibility for teaching writing beyond the writing program. Liberal education and general education require writing across the curriculum (even in the absence of an official program), and the VALUE rubrics underscore this reality in the context of high stakes assessment.

Despite its focus on comparative evidence, assessment motivated by accreditation is highly contextual because institutional missions are widely varied and always locally enacted. WPAs at mission-driven institutions negotiate not only the realities I describe above but also missions that bring writing in contact with goals for personal, ethical, and even spiritual development. To this end, I offer a heuristic for WPAs designing program-level assessments that answer local questions and serve larger institutional purposes. A question we must ask in accreditation is how well students are fulfilling institutional outcomes, yet this heuristic affirms program assessment as a formative process toward program development. The questions I pose do not advocate particular measures or methods, and they use the vocabulary of educational measurement and literacy. They are ultimately intended to guide WPAs through the pragmatic and ethical challenges associated with fostering and assessing the personal, ethical, and intrinsic elements of the educational experience.

Curriculum Design

Accreditation regularly involves outcomes assessment, where we define outcomes and measure how well students are meeting them. Information drawn from this process ideally guides revisions to curriculum, pedagogy, and the outcomes themselves. In his critique of outcomes assessment, Chris Gallagher notes that outcomes have value: “they give teachers and students targets to shoot for. They provide focus, stability, clarity, and transparency...they allow us to measure and document students’ performances vis-à-vis expressed goals” (“The Trouble with Outcomes” 44). However, this way of thinking limits the opportunity to think about the means, consequences, and intrinsic ends of education (Gallagher, “The Trouble” 42–9). It is my argument that operationalizing institutional missions as outcomes—or worse, standards—is similarly limiting. Just as framing habits of mind as outcomes weakens their value as intellectual processes and practices (Johnson 534–6), framing elements of an institutional mission as outcomes diminishes the sense of *mission*—the personal and intrinsic aims. Although envisioning institutional mission or liberal education as a set of outcomes limits their broad nature and intrinsic value, WPAs at mission-driven institutions must be strategic about how mission enters the curricu-

lum. As VanderLei and Pugh note, when WPAs “are able to align the goals of the writing program to the institution’s mission, they position the writing program to become a valued part of the university” (112). Because my focus is mission and assessment, I add another consideration to this point: WPAs should also explore the most productive ways for mission to enter the writing program curriculum in anticipation of institutional assessment.³

Writing program administrators may align outcomes with the institutional mission by considering where existing outcomes intersect with elements of the mission. Although outcomes are motivated by a variety of factors, including the student population, the courses offered, and the place of writing in the university curriculum, they also often stem from the WPA Outcomes Statement for First-Year Composition.⁴ The statement includes outcomes such as “understand[ing] the relationships among language, knowledge, and power” and “learn[ing] to balance the advantages of relying on others with the responsibility of doing their part” (Council). These aims could align, for example, with missions that emphasize ethical behavior or creativity, and writing program outcomes that include writing for public audiences may be fruitfully aligned with missions that stress citizenship or other civic behaviors. WPAs can begin the process of aligning mission and curriculum with these questions:

- What are the existing writing program outcomes, and do any of them already clearly support the institutional mission?
- Which existing writing program outcomes might be revised or rearticulated so that they more clearly support the institutional mission?
- Does the writing program need to add outcomes where writing is explicitly used to foster some element of the institutional mission?
- Does the writing program need to add outcomes where the institutional mission is explicitly used to teach a writing skill or foster a rhetorical habit of mind?

Writing Pedagogy

Writing program outcomes influence pedagogy, and WPAs should consider how claiming particular elements of the institutional mission could be pedagogically disadvantageous. Claiming some elements may expand writing program outcomes beyond what can reasonably be accomplished, negatively influencing learning and drawing negative attention to the program if it cannot meet these outcomes. For example, many institutional missions emphasize service and aim to foster certain attitudes toward service. Although service learning has been established as a beneficial component of composition courses, framing engaged or compassionate service as a writ-

ing program outcome could be problematic. Writing faculty and administrators may decide that service learning is not beneficial for all students, or they may decide that fostering attitudes toward service is too far removed from central writing program outcomes.

While WPAs must be intentional about aligning program outcomes with the institutional mission, I also believe that they should consider how pedagogy helps preserve elements of the mission as practices and/or processes—how they help preserve the *spirit* of the mission. Institutions that emphasize developing a spiritual life do not tell students a spiritual life is a single achievement, simply acquired as a skill. In the same way, missions focused on ethical behavior want students to understand ethical behavior as not only specific actions but also a general orientation. Elements of the mission may ultimately be framed as outcomes, but WPAs can resist the idea that they should be systematized or standardized. After considering how mission aligns with program outcomes, WPAs can ask questions about practices and pedagogy:

- Which elements of the institutional mission would be disadvantageously connected with writing or located in the writing program? Which elements are far removed from writing and are things for which the writing program cannot be responsible?
- Is the institutional mission or the institutional tradition associated with a pedagogical orientation or specific pedagogical activities?
- How can writing courses and assignments offer students the opportunity to foster particular habits of mind, attitudes, beliefs, and worldviews?
- How can writing pedagogy emphasize that habits of mind, attitudes, beliefs, and worldviews are part of the rhetorical process as well as the product?

Assessment Method

Administrators choose from a variety of program assessment methods: locally developed surveys or national surveys; interviews of students and instructors; analysis of teaching materials and course syllabi; teaching evaluations; student writing in the form of timed writing prompts, course assignments, or portfolios; and outside consultant reviews (O’Neill, Moore, and Huot 123). Accreditation emphasizes direct evidence of student learning, so my focus is direct assessment of student writing. Other program assessment methods certainly complement this work, especially when they answer local questions. Interviews with students and instructors, questions on course evaluations, and analysis of course materials will elicit valuable

information about how well the writing program aligns with the institutional mission.

Assessment scholarship agrees that direct writing assessment should be rhetorical, contextual, accessible, and theoretically consistent—located in the goals and activities of writing courses (O’Neill, Moore, and Huot 57). When student writing is used in program assessment, O’Neill, Moore, and Huot explain, it “should not only be written for a particular rhetorical purpose and audience but should be embedded within the course, as a regular assignment—not required as an extra assignment for external evaluation purposes” (123). Effective assessment design begins as effective assignment design, motivated by a rhetorical purpose rather than a particular “reporting mode” (134). William Condon argues that program assessment prompts can be constructed such that they are useful and meaningful to students; these “generative prompts” produce “writing that matters, first, to the test-takers, then to their institutions” (152). Impromptu writing assignments as the one Condon describes, course assignments, and portfolios all enable writing programs to produce direct evidence of student learning while also providing students with a meaningful rhetorical purpose.

Designing writing assignments aligned with the institutional mission requires WPAs to consider how to construct a meaningful rhetorical purpose and how to elicit the habits of mind, attitudes, beliefs, and worldview associated with the mission. Using the *VALUE* or similar rubrics to assess ethical reasoning or civic engagement still requires a decision about how to elicit these attributes. Just as a random piece of student writing may not reflect specific outcomes (and thus be useful for program assessment), not all student writing helps us determine if students understand, for example, the ethics of language use or the relationship between writing and power. To the extent that specific habits of mind, attitudes, beliefs, and worldviews can be revealed or demonstrated in writing—and for the sake of assessment we may need to grant they can—WPAs should ask these questions about assignment design:

- What rhetorical tasks do we already assign in the writing course(s) that may also ask students to engage elements of the institutional mission?
- What elements of the institutional mission could offer context or content for particular rhetorical tasks?
- What habits of mind, attitudes, beliefs, and worldviews are we asking students to develop, and which rhetorical tasks will highlight them?
- Does using reflective writing along with another rhetorical task help us discern if students are developing certain habits of mind, attitudes, beliefs, and worldviews?

Reliability and Community

Assessment scholarship debates the nature and importance of reliability, yet its importance in accreditation is clear: producing comparative evidence requires WPAs to consider reliability within and across student populations. Jay Parkes suggests that reliability is an argument appealing to the values of various stakeholders, such that values should direct methodological choices (5–6). In the context of accreditation, values such as consistency and accuracy matter greatly. Habits of mind, attitudes, beliefs, and worldviews present challenges to reliability beyond the standard reliability challenges inherent in writing assessment. Writing ability—by its contextual, complex nature—is often at odds with reliability, focus, and consistency; habits of mind, attitudes, beliefs, and worldviews are not only contextual and complex but also shifting and personal.

Habits of mind, attitudes, beliefs, and worldviews first have a shifting, ephemeral nature that challenges reliable assessment. Multiple choice grammar tests are considered a reliable (though not valid) measure of writing ability because they divide writing ability into discrete, objective parts. Reliable tests such as the Collegiate Learning Assessment measure broad intellectual skills such as critical thinking through discrete tasks. Mission-driven institutions, however, have aims that are neither discrete nor objective: liberal arts institutions see their missions continuing into lifelong learning, and religious institutions see religious faith as a lived experience. Beyond the challenge of making habits of mind, attitudes, beliefs, and worldviews stable and discrete, they are also highly contextual. Reliability privileges measures that deliver consistent results, but different situations or assignments may produce divergent information about habits of mind, attitudes, beliefs, and worldviews. After designing a rhetorical task that elicits perspectives on social justice, for example, a WPA should consider how this commitment is actually manifested. Ethical behavior is by definition contextual, and people committed to ethical behavior disagree about right and wrong. Habits of mind, attitudes, beliefs, and worldviews are shifting and contextual, and any number of rhetorical tasks may not elicit consistent responses from the same student or students across the program.

Reliability further values consistency and fairness from the people involved in assessment—from the community of teachers, administrators, and readers. Consistent judgment from one or more readers requires agreement on what is being measured. Habits of mind, attitudes, beliefs, and worldviews are not easily defined, and at mission-driven institutions, these attributes are defined by the community. Discussing the mission across campus reveals power dynamics that shape how the mission is defined,

and it reveals varied interpretations of official mission documents (VanderLei and Pugh 109–13). In the same way, those involved in assessment will hold varying definitions of ethical behavior, social justice, and even religious maturity. WPAs who lead assessment programs face the challenge of encouraging multiple perspectives and promoting consistent judgments—asking readers to agree on a definition, keeping that definition stable while accounting for the multiplicity of ways it is manifested, and deciding how to respond when students offer disconcerting information. When deciding how to assess writing that offers information about how well students are fulfilling the mission, WPAs should consider these questions about reliability and community:

- What kind of rhetorical task is narrow enough to elicit evidence about how well students are fulfilling specific elements of the institutional mission but broad enough to capture the way that habits of mind, attitudes, beliefs, and worldviews exist?
- What kind of rhetorical task is specific enough to elicit a meaningful response but broad enough to provide all students with avenues through which to engage the issue?
- Would some form of Dynamic Criteria Mapping (Broad) help to discern how people within the writing program and across the university understand the mission as it relates to learning outcomes?
- What level or type of reader/interrater reliability is persuasive in this context, and to what extent should the community agree on the meaning of elements of the institutional mission and its habits of mind, attitudes, beliefs, and worldviews?

Validity and Ethics

Mission-driven institutions educate and develop persons. Assessing the mission requires making judgments about habits of mind, attitudes, beliefs, and worldviews—if not judgments about the persons who hold them. Making these judgments seems easiest and even most ethical when attributes are evident in a product; as the VALUE rubrics suggest, general education assessment relies on student products, samples, or artifacts. In writing programs at mission-driven institutions, this gap between product and person raises validity issues. WPAs should first contend with this validity question: are we interested in how well students *reveal/demonstrate* specific habits of mind, attitudes, beliefs, and worldviews in their writing, or are we interested in the extent to which students actually *hold* these things? A basic definition of validity—if the assessment measures what it intends to measure—highlights this problem. Rather than assessing what we assume

are authentic personal elements, the assessment may measure and actually encourage mere performance.

Institutional assessment and general education assessment regularly depend on student writing, and a program at Washington State University offers an example of a rhetorical task that could elicit mere performance. Condon describes a prompt that yields institutional data by asking students to write an essay about how specific courses helped them accomplish two of the six university-wide student learning outcomes (145). Asking students about personal/educational experiences is, according to Condon, a valid assessment because it calls upon an experience that “we *know* they all share, and invit[es] them to provide responses that range as broadly as that experience allows” (145). The assessment is valid with regard to the content of the rhetorical task, certainly, but it may produce other validity concerns. Asking questions about this kind of intellectual development encourages students to demonstrate their proficiency in critical thinking and communication, yet it may also encourage performance in the interest of a higher score.

Validity and ethics intersect when assessing institutional missions, raising a second question for WPAs: is reflective writing or self-assessment a valid and ethical way to assess habits of mind, attitudes, beliefs, and worldviews? Rather than looking at a piece of writing to determine if students understand, for example, the relationship between power and language, we might ask students to reflect on their understanding of this issue. Beyond the validity question about the difference between *holding* a worldview and *reflecting* on one, ethical issues remain when assessment hinges on reflective writing. Ellen Schendel and Peggy O’Neill argue that self-assessment “does not allow much room for resistance, for the gaze stretches far—and is, in this case, internalized, becoming a means by which students self-regulate, self-discipline” (207). In the same way, Susan Latta and Janice Lauer note that self-assessment asks students to “internalize the strictures and guidelines of a system that may be discriminatory” (32). They also highlight possibilities for critique through reflection and self-assessment: “Student self-assessment, therefore, could provide students with the opportunity to clarify for themselves the differences between their understandings of academic expectations with their own, an opportunity for students to genuinely engage with the academic institution on their own terms and to offer them a possible forum for critique” (30). When students are asked to reflect on their learning in the way that Condon describes, they may benefit not only from analyzing their own development but also from critiquing institutional expectations.

When writing scholarship explores these validity questions and ethical issues, it primarily addresses writing ability or more instrumental intel-

lectual skills. But the ethical stakes are higher when students are asked to reflect on personal attributes: habits of mind, attitudes, beliefs, and worldviews. The gaze of assessment stretches beyond intellectual skills, and students are perhaps more inhibited from using self-assessment as a site of critique. Asking students to report on their habits of mind, attitudes, beliefs, and worldviews—even in the context of a mission that encourages particular attributes—and using this information for the purpose of institutional assessment certainly raises questions about the ethics and validity of such self-assessment. When deciding how to assess writing that gathers information about how well students are fulfilling the mission, WPAs should consider these questions about validity and ethics:

- Should the assessment gather information about how well students *reveal* or *demonstrate* in their writing that they have developed particular habits of mind, attitudes, beliefs, and worldviews? Or should the assessment gather information about the extent to which students actually *hold* particular habits of mind, attitudes, beliefs, and worldviews?
- How will writing courses teach students to *reveal* or *demonstrate* their habits of mind, attitudes, beliefs, and worldviews in writing? Or how will writing courses teach students to *reflect* on their habits of mind, attitudes, beliefs, and worldviews in writing?
- How will readers assess responses where students claim to have developed particular habits of mind, attitudes, beliefs, and worldviews but where their claims seem inaccurate or disingenuous?
- Should rhetorical tasks be designed to address the problem of mere performance by encouraging honest and authentic responses?
- Should rhetorical tasks allow room for institutional or personal critique, and how will readers assess responses that are critical of institutional values?

Assessment Consequences

Writing assessment ultimately produces results for various audiences and consequences for students, teachers, administrators, and even the institution. Huot argues in *(Re)Articulating Writing Assessment* that validity in writing assessment extends beyond design into the way the assessment is used; validity “scrutinizes the decisions that are based on a test—how they impact students, teachers and educational programs” (178). The consequences of an assessment should be appropriately related to the purpose of the assessment, and they should, Huot claims, primarily support teaching and learning. When institutions assess how well students are fulfilling the

mission, their purpose extends beyond academic achievement; therefore, the way assessment results are used becomes significant on a different level. WPAs conducting program assessment in this context must decide if the habits of mind, attitudes, beliefs, and worldviews students reveal should influence their grades—or should influence more high stakes decisions such as passing the course or fulfilling a graduation requirement. And because program assessment guides administrative work, WPAs must decide if the assessment process will influence personnel or curricular decisions.

While writing program assessment is not always high stakes and may serve only program development, institutional assessment often has high stakes including accreditation. WPAs who design program assessments that serve these larger institutional purposes finally need to explore the consequences of writing program assessment for program activities, identity, and status. If the writing program cannot demonstrate it successfully fosters particular habits of mind, attitudes, beliefs, and worldviews, WPAs may initiate further research or faculty development efforts focused on the mission. They may also appeal to values such as validity, reliability, consistency, or ethics that elements of the mission should not be framed as writing outcomes specifically or educational outcomes generally. If the writing program demonstrates success, WPAs should understand how they will be held responsible for elements of the institutional mission and how they may be called to campus leadership. When weighing the consequences of program assessment implicated in larger institutional purposes, WPAs should consider these questions:

- What effect will the assessment have on writing students directly, and what are the consequences for successfully or unsuccessfully demonstrating, revealing, holding, or reflecting on particular habits of mind, attitudes, beliefs, and worldviews?
- Are the consequences ethical and appropriately related to the purpose of the assessment?
- What effect will the assessment have within the writing program in terms of curriculum and faculty development?
- What effect will the assessment have on the writing program in terms of institutional status and institutional responsibility?

ENGAGING THE MISSION

Writing program administrators may question their understanding of validity, curriculum design, ethics, and reliability when assessment and mission intersect. The heuristic I have offered brings these questions to the forefront, highlighting the ways that comparative evidence competes with

the ideals of an institutional mission and the instrumental ends of higher education compete with the intrinsic ends. It is my hope WPAs will use the heuristic in ways that serve their programs and engage their institutional missions, and I do not want to detract from this process of inquiry by outlining sample assessment schemes. I will instead conclude by addressing a question implicit in the heuristic: although our assessments are necessarily incomplete or indirect, what is valuable about including habits of mind, attitudes, beliefs, and worldviews in writing program assessment?

Aligning writing program assessment with the institutional mission exposes a difficult reality: using writing to assess intrinsic elements of the educational experience is inescapably indirect. If the gaze of our assessment includes persons, this gaze is veiled by writing as a technology; if assessments are designed for students to enact (rather than simply describe or reflect upon) qualities associated with the mission, we see these qualities only through written products. For example, an assessment may ask students to enact ethical reasoning by making an argument about an ethical, societal, or moral issue. Students who successfully enact ethical reasoning might explore the complexities of the issue and examine the implications of their argument. However, students who demonstrate deep engagement with the ethical complexity of the issue may struggle to focus their argument, or they may not exercise control over all their ideas. They may clearly enact intrinsic elements that are obscured by instrumental elements that WPAs cannot simply ignore.⁵ Even when intrinsic qualities are enacted in a written product, writing teachers and administrators are permitted only an indirect or veiled gaze.

Accreditation is designed for consumers to see educational institutions clearly, and WPAs in particular are challenged to produce evidence of qualities that are not readily discernable. As I suggested in the heuristic, WPAs have several options for assessing habits of mind, attitudes, beliefs, and values. They could decide to evaluate intrinsic elements (such as ethical reasoning, in the example above) and instrumental elements separately, producing distinct judgments about the writing and the person. They could also rely on reflective writing, understanding that students are describing rather than enacting particular qualities. Representing the results to an external audience is ultimately a rhetorical act, but few options are fully satisfying. In "Fighting Number with Number," Richard Haswell admonishes writing faculty and WPAs to provide numerical evidence for its rhetorical value—to anticipate what external agencies expect and value (413–17). Yet representing intrinsic ends in hard, numerical terms seems to violate the spirit of these educational experiences: can we comfortably claim that eighty percent of students are *competent* at ethical reasoning (because they

scored four on a six point scale) or that fifty percent have *adequate* spiritual lives? WPAs could choose not to provide comparative evidence of these intrinsic qualities, but doing so risks irrelevance and lost resources.

The ethical and pragmatic challenges of assessing habits of mind, attitudes, beliefs, and worldviews often seem to outweigh any possible benefits. It is nonetheless my belief that undertaking the challenging project of mission-oriented assessment realizes pedagogical benefits. Including intrinsic ends in writing assessment helps students engage the institutional mission, first because responsible programs will align teaching, learning, and assessment by integrating these intrinsic ends and experiences in the curriculum. And further, simply performing the assessment activity—such as reflecting on a spiritual practice or practicing ethical reasoning—offers students the opportunity to explore and enact certain qualities. Condon notes in his work on general education assessment that asking students to “reflect on a complex set of experiences and to relate those experiences to a complex set of goals” helps them “produce writing that is, first, useful to themselves” (152). I would add that this assessment activity is valuable because it constructs a rhetorical situation in which students can actually enact goals such as critical and creative thinking, information literacy, and communication (153–54). When WPAs ask students to do more than demonstrate instrumental skills, they reinforce the importance of intrinsic ends and provide rhetorical spaces for students to grow and demonstrate growth in personal, moral, intellectual, and ethical terms.

Including intrinsic aims in writing program assessment also realizes institutional benefits for writing and writing programs. Another difficult reality in American education becomes advantageous for writing programs when mission and assessment intersect: only those things that are assessed receive resources and attention. The educational system focused on instrumental skills may obscure intrinsic educational ends, but those things associated with the institutional mission will remain consequential because they must be assessed. Aligning a writing program with the mission certainly makes an argument for relevance, but writing programs become more than simply relevant when the institutional mission encompasses values inherent in our discipline. Composition studies already upholds values present in many institutional missions: the humanist tradition, civic engagement, and habits of mind outlined in the *Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing* such as creativity, responsibility, engagement, and curiosity (Council 4). These values reflect many of our most deeply held reasons for teaching writing; in the context of accreditation and institutional assessment, they highlight how writing programs perform vital institutional work.

Engaging the project of mission-oriented assessment is finally a call to think more deeply about context in writing assessment and writing program administration. When WPAs discuss institutional context, we often focus on internal machinations and politics that must be negotiated: the pressures that students, teachers and staff, other programs, administrative structures, and funding put our programs. Shifting this discussion to mission gives WPAs a fuller way to think about what we and our institutions do in the world. Missions define what institutions offer to society and the world, and as I have argued in this essay, writing programs are currently challenged to align their work with the mission and articulate what they offer to society—to articulate what it means to successfully foster habits of mind, ethical communicative practices, and broad intellectual growth. By understanding what our programs and institutions aim to do in the world, we begin to theorize and perform the administrative work that represents and fulfills these missions.



NOTES

1. I use the term *intrinsic* in contrast with *instrumental*. In *Academe*, Howard Brody argues that “the humanities have both instrumental and intrinsic value... The wrong sorts of evaluation tools focus solely on the instrumental value and ignore the intrinsic value, threatening the future of the humanities in higher education.” Intrinsic educational elements—those described by Gallagher in “The Trouble with Outcomes,” Catherine Chaput, and the *Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing*—are part of the rhetorical tradition and many college writing programs. The testing industry problematically describes these intrinsic elements as “soft skills” or “noncognitive skills” (Dwyer, Millett, and Payne 14).

2. Two types of accreditation exist: institutional accreditation and specialized accreditation. Entire colleges or universities are given institutional accreditation by one of six regional agencies; specific programs and/or institutions such as medical schools, rabbinical schools, and performing arts schools are given specialized accreditation by a different group of specialized accrediting agencies.

3. In this essay, I am exploring the question of how to demonstrate that students are meeting outcomes aligned with the institutional mission or fulfilling elements of the mission. I do not consider what is certainly the far more complex issue of demonstrating student *growth* in these areas.

4. In Chapter 4 of *Building Writing Center Assessments that Matter*, Ellen Schendel provides an excellent discussion of how to adapt writing center outcomes

from the WPA Outcomes Statement for First-Year Composition and the LEAP initiative from the American Association of Colleges and Universities. WPAs developing outcomes related to the liberal arts in particular will certainly benefit from consulting this chapter.

5. I am implying a dichotomy between content and form (or intrinsic and instrumental) in this point. Although it is not my intention to separate these elements of writing, I would argue that our concerns about writing do exist on a continuum from instrumental (issues of usage and form) to intrinsic (issues of intellectual complexity and creativity). Determining the relative weight of these elements is a challenge in any writing assessment.

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To See What's Real and Sell It: The New Rhetoric, Writing in the Disciplines, and Value Judgments

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ABSTRACT

The WPA and WID communities share an interest in rhetorical situations: from one situation, context, or activity system to the next, can the similarities and differences that matter be recognized? To address this question, WID has used some of the resources of the New Rhetoric, those of the New Rhetorical approach to genre, which inquire into how skills are transformed to meet the needs of different genres—indeed, of different activity systems. In this paper, however, I wish to entertain the co-existing possibility that activity systems are transformed by skills—understood here as acts of judgment. Most important are value judgments about what is real, about which aspect of reality is to count as more real than other aspects. How are valued aspects of reality justified as similarities that matter, and how are less-valued aspects justifiably excluded as differences that do not matter, especially when the audience might well judge, or has already judged, otherwise? There are motivational advantages in engaging such questions—a claim I engage here by articulating the resources of the New Rhetoric with WID scholarship, an articulation which opens each to further development.

To keep writing instruction in contact with context, members of the Writing in the Disciplines (WID) community have benefited from studies in the New Rhetoric, which directs attention to how the rhetorical situation differs from one disciplinary context to another. Anyone so attuned can then think more resourcefully about the differences that matter most. The contention this essay will advance is that further resources are available in that form of the New Rhetoric WID has passed over: i.e., the New Rhetoric associated with Chaïm Perelman (and his collaborator, Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca) and developed in journals like *Philosophy and Rhetoric* and in col-

lections like 2011's *The Promise of Reason: Studies in "The New Rhetoric."* This version of the New Rhetoric can add—significantly, I believe—to WID's interest in, and growing knowledge of, the *rhetorical* side of rhetorical situations.

The rhetorical side of rhetorical situations is marked by *action*. Writing of the New Rhetoric that is already a key part of WID, David R. Russell and his colleagues note that the approach “sometimes termed ‘New Rhetorical’” advocates that genre be taught “explicitly, but in the process of performing a *rhetorical action* in its target context of use—which is the situation in disciplinary classrooms, typically” (“Exploring Notions of Genre” 461; emphasis added). In another study of disciplinary writing, the New Rhetoric is similarly represented:

A third approach to genre, New Rhetorical or North American, traces its origins to Carolyn R. Miller's (1984) understanding of genre as social action, a typified response to an often-repeated social situation. Scholarship in this area has been largely focused on ethnographic studies of generic contexts and the ways those contexts define and are defined by generic responses. Because of their emphasis on generic contexts, advocates of the New Rhetorical approach tend to be skeptical that genre can be explicitly taught, arguing instead that genre knowledge must be acquired organically through *active participation* in authentic generic contexts. (Carter, Ferzli, and Wiebe 396; emphasis added and internal references deleted)

Thus far, the New Rhetoric is manifest as “active participation” in authentic situations, such as using genres to do what they'd *actually*, repeatedly be used for in disciplinary classrooms. (Appealing to the *actual* is the characteristic move of this form of the New Rhetoric, as the next section will show.)

In her 2011 book *Everyday Genres: Writing Assignments across the Disciplines*, Mary Soliday invokes this version of the New Rhetoric, remarking on both its accuracy as diagnosis and its limitations as pedagogy. The accurate diagnosis that comes out of genre studies is that “students cannot cross easily (or at all) between situations because learners do not learn to write by applying general strategies to specific situations”; rather, learners “must acquire genres by participating in the situations from which these strategies originate. Especially for those influenced by the New Rhetoric, a guiding principle is that if we learn the content and language of a field, we'll acquire its rhetoric, too” (6-7). But a field's rhetoric goes pretty deep, deeper than active participation only. As Soliday puts it, “Ordinary genres like the article and its humble cousin the lab report play powerful roles in

sustaining our disciplines because, as Mikhail Bakhtin argued decades ago, their typical words carry with them significant ethical and social values and ways of being in the world” (1). Genres are not just an epistemological medium, then; they are axiological and ontological, constituting our value-laden disciplinary selves.

It is because of this situational depth that Soliday claims the New Rhetorical “view can be limited if it defines the term *situation* so narrowly it excludes a writer’s possible movement between contexts” (7). Interested in other resources of, and agents of, rhetorical depth, she defines “*situation* more broadly to include the expectations of both immediate and more distant social groups” (8). For reasons that shall be elaborated, this definition of “*situation*” is promising. There is promise in “expectations,” implying not just scenic agency but an audience’s. There is even more promise, I think, in “more distant social groups,” implying a writer’s relations not just with academic, professional, and civic stakeholders but also with those the writer has, for purposes peculiar to her, chosen to associate with, however publicly distant from the rhetorical situation. Thus I find congenial Soliday’s Bakhtin-influenced conclusion that “students are more likely to achieve this typical authoritative speech when they can participate in the rhetorical situation in some meaningful way” (12). Active participation, then, must be *meaningfully* active—action that addresses what matters, that negotiates the potentially generative tension between our obligations and interests.

For the project underway here, meaningfully active participation denotes action attributed not only to constitutive elements of exigence and invention—such as media and tools, genres and contexts, and network upon intertextual network—but also to the agency of authors (whose interests, whose commitments to their *good* are not entirely scenically subsumed) and audiences (who, as part of the scene, embody the *right*, the obligations, that authors engage). Why emphasize this point when it seems obvious, when the belief that “competing interests must negotiate the good in a very social, very human, very rhetorical process” is already WID lore (Russell, “The Ethics of Teaching Ethics” 171)? One motive for such emphasis is to distinguish one practitioner’s good, or one learner’s good, from a discipline’s. Even the most technical of disciplines is committed to its good, understands itself in terms of, and aims itself toward, the good it must rhetorically negotiate with competing interests. The good of a discipline’s rhetorical domain can render mute an individual’s good, even in accounts that stress disciplinary writing’s *transformative* quality. Consider the recommendation that “we should attempt to account for the ways in which knowledge and skills are *transformed* across contexts; otherwise, we risk overlooking manifestations of skills that have been adapted to meet the needs of a new

activity system” (Wardle 69). Although there is welcome focus here not on recurrent features of a situation but on, rather, a person’s active adaptation to, and transformation of, that situation, the transformation is motivated by the new activity system’s “needs” only, not by other needs that person may have. If referring to a person’s needs seems insufficiently rooted in disciplinary scenes of learning, let me put it another way: in Wardle’s account, the activity system’s needs are not transformed by acts of judgment regarding how to manifest knowledge and skill, but such acts of interpretation and judgment are transformed by an activity system’s needs. To assert the transformative power of a given activity system is a claim well documented and, to my mind, persuasively documented. But if we develop what should also be persuasive—the claim that acts of judgment as well have appropriate transformative power—we will see that the two claims work better in co-existence than in contradiction.

In developing the claim that individual acts of judgment have transformative power, I heed Rebecca Nowacek’s caution that we not prematurely “normalize value judgments made about the usefulness and appropriateness of a given act of transfer” (37). Transfer can be an exchange in which students and teachers have voice. But for anyone (let alone students) to get heard in that exchange is unlikely to just happen. Framing “transfer as a rhetorical act,” Nowacek recommends that students be encouraged not just “to ‘see’ connections among previously disparate contexts”; they need to be encouraged “also to ‘sell’ those connections, to render them appropriate and convincing to their various audiences” (39). That a connection exists and has been seen, that a connection is possible to make—to justify these realities will likely not satisfy the criteria for “appropriate and convincing.” Rather, what has to be justified is “the value of the connection” (53).

With respect to these rhetorically useful terms, “seeing” and “selling,” I plan two moves. The first move is to show that to see is already to judge. If so, then appeals to the real that we see must be justified. Seeing, then, is selling. In *Learning to Communicate in Science and Engineering: Case Studies from MIT*, Mya Poe, Neal Lerner, and Jennifer Craig write suggestively of the relations between seeing and selling. Of students struggling at the beginning of a course in Quantitative Physiology, Poe et al. say students “did not consider methodological choices used in gathering data as a series of rhetorical choices. Persuasion is left to the interpretation of data, not its collection,” but by semester’s end, students had come “to a deeper understanding about the relationship between audience and reception and the presence of persuasion throughout the scientific process” (121). Argument and persuasion, in other words, do not enter the process after data have been identified and collected but much earlier, in the very process of “col-

lection and analysis. Every methodological choice in data collection and analysis is a decision that allows researchers to foreground certain results and not others" (144). Seeing and selling imply each other. Improving performance in one area should improve performance in the other.

The second move, then, is to consider whether the New Rhetoric being promoted here can help improve performance. It can help, I think, by redeeming questions about judgment that risk getting begged in calls for inquiry into "meta-awareness"—into "how *exactly* individuals *recognize* similarities and differences between contexts" (Nowacek 17; emphasis added). How individual writers do what they do is legitimate inquiry, to be sure, but we must be careful. For it is possible to infer, from the words just cited, the assumption that similarities and differences are self-evident (there is recognition, perhaps exact recognition) and that the similarities and differences that matter are self-evident. From this inference it is reasonable to infer another: that what matters for scholars are not the various ways in which data are constructed as meaningful—in the presence of an audience—but rather the variety in how individuals access these activity-independent data about contexts. Other inferences with pedagogical implications might then be that certain contextual similarities reliably assert themselves, that certain contextual differences can be counted on, and that such knowledge and know-how should be banked for further use.

But such inferences overly minimize judgment. Reading the call for inquiry into meta-awareness differently, we might take it in a problem-posing way: What are the similarities and differences that matter for the writer, that matter for the audience, and that matter in the context that has brought them together? How is the naming of a similarity justified when the audience's sense of the similar is different? How is the exclusion of a potential similarity justified as a difference, especially when the audience believes the difference is a similarity? These are questions of practical reasoning—reasoning which occurs when the demonstration of *certain* knowledge is not available or appropriate, reasoning which occurs when we act on behalf of our good in the company of conflicting goods and value judgments. So understood, practical reasoning, as central to the disciplines as it is to General Education, is the kind of "rhetorical awareness" that Wardle (among many others) claims is "one of FYC's most important contributions" (81):

Transfer research from other fields, [as] well as the findings of this study, suggest that *meta-awareness about writing, language, and rhetorical strategies* in FYC may be the most important ability our courses can cultivate. We cannot prepare students for every genre, nor can we know every assignment they will be given or the genre

conventions appropriate to those assignments across the disciplines. That knowledge—and the supports for learning it—must be gained in discipline-specific classrooms. What FYC can do, however, is help students think about writing in the university, the varied conventions of different disciplines, and their own writing strategies in light of various assignments and expectations. (82)

Hear, hear. But the question remains: of all that might come under the heading of “rhetorical strategies,” what most warrants cultivating into meta-awareness? I say, rhetorical awareness of the practical written judgment that is the charge of FYC to teach—rhetorical knowledge that has a place in disciplinary writing and beyond. In trying to model such judgment, this project aims to join the work of developing the resources of the New Rhetoric. These are audacious resources, for while they are not “in conflict with disciplinary conceptions of rhetoric,” they will, as James Crosswhite puts it, “help to interpret and explain and to some extent even justify and strengthen them” (28). The New Rhetoric, so proposed, exceeds disciplinary rhetoric:

The discipline of questioning and inquiring is not a natural or social science or a specific field of humanistic study. It is not a method or a logic or a theory of rationality or a calculus of probability or a cognitive science or a decision theory. It is the conversation of reason itself understood as argumentation, something on which every field of study depends, originally and ultimately and pretty much all along the way, too. (214-15)

For the New Rhetoric to exceed disciplinary rhetoric *in this way*, however, it must exist in practitioners—in students and professors, apprentices and professionals, as individual agents who are ever balancing their personal interests with their civic, institutional, and disciplinary obligations.¹ It is a real question whether our colleagues can be open—properly open, on terms they find reasonable—to this proposal, that the continuity between FYC and disciplinary discourse be framed in terms of reasoning with others. But first this proposal must be made reasonable here, which I will begin doing by trying to make it real.

APPEARANCE AND REALITY

In “A Humanistic Rationale for Technical Writing,” Carolyn Miller criticizes disciplinary rhetoric for its commitment to “the skill of subduing language so that it most accurately and directly transmits reality” (16). After surveying technical writing textbooks, which “have in common a conviction that content (that is, ideas, information, facts) is wholly separable from

words,” Miller concludes that these texts “presuppose what has been called the ‘windowpane theory of language’: the notion that language provides a view out onto the real world, a view which may be clear or obfuscated” (17). Miller returns to this naïve view, suggesting that “definition in terms of the window itself may be more promising than definitions in terms of what is outside” (19). By no means do I wish to fault this suggestion. What I want, on the contrary, is to pursue its promise a little further. If we do look at the window itself, at what Kenneth Burke called “terministic screens,” then to call the screen “clear or obfuscated” is neither an illogical inference nor metaphorically untrue; rather, as a logical extension of the metaphor, it ramifies “windowpane,” one of many possible terministic screens, any one of which would be incomplete yet generative: “We *must* use terministic screens, since we can’t say anything without the use of terms,” and “any such screen,” Burke adds, “necessarily directs the attention to one field rather than another” (50). A screen that directs attention to the screen itself as a field of vision may lead to acts such as cleaning the screen: by recursive experimentation and assessment, say, or by a process of copyediting. Are screens that imply clarity/obfuscation somehow less real than screens that imply, say, interesting/boring or useful/useless or elegantly constructed/clumsily constructed?

I think not, yet we value some screens more than others. We want our theories of literacy, for example, to reflect the complex realities that scholars like Bakhtin, Bazerman, Heath, Russell, Soliday, and Swales have taught us to recognize. We strive to make our pedagogies do justice to what it takes to learn. And whether our students are really learning is not something about which we are indifferent. The teachers I know would change their pedagogies if those pedagogies were found to be based on arbitrary fictions rather than on data-based research and on what justifies that research, i.e., the good sense our discipline holds in common.

To say this another way: we do what we do because it seems real to us. But to say this yet another way, the way it *should* be said: What if what seems real to us seems that way because that way is the way we think it should be? To refine this rhetorical question (and to dissociate it from the bias confirmation it seems to endorse), let me use an appeal Soliday makes to reality. She writes that faculty in the disciplines should be urged “to consider the *actual* behavior of genres in the wild” rather than let their students contend with the less-actual behaviors of “the fainter, domesticated shadow of a wilder case-study essay,” i.e., the generic college essay (13). Soliday is not actually arguing that the behavior of genres like the generic college essay is not *actual* or *real*. For sure, it is real enough and often enough we don’t like it. Her (actual) argument is that our students would be better

served by a helping of the greater variety of acts genres in the wild help constitute and of the greater variety of relationships genres in the wild sustain. If we care about the quality of learning, we should value some ways of experiencing genres more than we value other ways.

This strategic appeal to reality is prominent in the rhetoric of Mikhail Bakhtin, who, as it seems to me, is one of the founders of the New Rhetoric as it is figured in WID. A review of his argument about language will further help me clarify the rhetorical priority of value over reality. Bakhtin's argument is that language is cognitively meaningful only in context, a context that is dialogical:

No cognitive value whatever adheres to the establishment of a connection between the basis and some isolated fact torn from the unity and integrity of its ideological context. . . . Only on [the condition of contextual analysis] will analysis result, not in a mere outward conjunction of two adventitious facts belonging to different levels of things, but in the process of the *actual* dialectical generation of society. (53; emphasis added)

The term I wish to pull out is “actual.” What is actual is process, the process of the dialectic that comes out of, maintains, and transforms the social: “a ceaseless flow of becoming” (32). There is little doubt that Bakhtin sees this process as definitive reality. Consider his question that leads to the answer that reality is “a ceaseless flow of becoming”: What “is the *true*-center of linguistic reality: the individual speech act—the utterance—or the system of language? And what is the *real* mode of existence of language: unceasing creative generation or inert immutability of self-identical norms?” (31; emphasis added).

While it is true that the reality in question is *linguistic* reality, the reality of linguistic reality is otherwise unqualified. What is real about linguistic reality is that its meaning comes from, and contributes to the changing meaning of, different spheres of reality. The “expressiveness of individual words,” for example, “is not inherent in the words themselves as units of language, nor does it issue from the meaning of these words.” Rather, “in reality the situation is considerably more complicated” (85). The complicating reality is that words that communicate are linked “in the chain of speech communication of a particular sphere,” and because they are so enchained, each “utterance is filled with echoes and reverberations of other utterances to which it is related by the communality of the sphere of speech communication. Every utterance must be regarded primarily as a *response* to preceding utterances of the given sphere” (85). On this reading of reality, words are already filled with content that comes from others in particular

situations. Linked in communication, we take a word from someone—the other's word, a word that the other has filled—and, for that person and others, fill up the word anew, a process that is situated in time and space. In this co-creation of reality is *actual* thought itself: the “role of the *others* for whom the utterance is constructed is extremely great. We have already said that the role of these others, for whom my thought becomes *actual* thought for the first time (and thus also for my own self as well) is not that of passive listeners, but of active participants in speech communication” (87; emphasis added).

Notice that “thought” exists in reality, but it does not become “*actual* thought” until it is for others. There is rhetorical significance in Bakhtin's distinction, and that is the complication added by *evaluation*. Our words, that is, are animated in a process of evaluation, an especially considerable complication because evaluation expresses our “attitude toward others' utterances and not just [our] attitude toward the object of [our] utterance” (86; see also 57). Even the simpler form of relatively monological utterances, such as Bakhtin's example of scientific writing, is “filled with *dialogic overtones*” (86). In words filled with tones writing teachers will recognize, Bakhtin draws attention to “struggle”: “After all, our thought itself—philosophical, scientific, and artistic—is born and shaped in the process of interaction and struggle with others' thought, and this cannot but be *reflected* in the forms that verbally express our thought as well” (86; emphasis added). Here is another reality, then: writing *reflects* thought, the linguistic made real by our sweat. Such impassioned, embodied investment accounts for the stakes Bakhtin sees in evaluation: “In point of fact, the linguistic form, which . . . exists for the speaker only in the context of specific utterances, exists, consequently, only in a specific ideological context. In actuality, we never say or hear *words*, we say and hear what is true or false, good or bad, important or unimportant, pleasant or unpleasant, and so on. *Words are always filled with content and meaning drawn from behavior or ideology*” (33).²

In a WID context, the behaviors and ideologies that fill words are discipline specific, community specific, form-of-life specific, activity-network specific—a principled commitment (and therefore a source of recalcitrance) I will have to engage below. Here, however, I would like to more generally comment on the behaviors and ideologies Bakhtin says are inseparable from the meanings reality has for us. On the one hand, Bakhtin's insistent faith in reality seems positivistic: there is actual, factual reality—a process, a struggle—that our linguistic reality reflects. On the other hand, this reality cannot help but be ideological, which means it cannot help but be endorsed as “true or false, good or bad, important or unimportant, pleas-

ant or unpleasant, and so on.” Reality, like bad ideology, can be apparent, can be thought that is unearned. Or reality can be actual, can be earned by thought that is actual.

Although WID professes allegiance to the project of distinguishing the actual complexity of discursive reality from unrealistically simple conceptions, the judgment that this project entails has not been sufficiently realized. In Bazerman’s “From Cultural Criticism to Disciplinary Participation: Living with Powerful Words,” for example, the project is to extend traditional rhetorical critique—to push it beyond its characteristic acts of revelation and evaluation at a distance into its other (under-realized) capacity: participation in socio-cultural reproduction (239-40). If we attend only to traditional critique, we risk “*missing* the detailed processes of rhetorical struggle, may make disciplines *seem* purveyors of hegemonic univocality rather than the locales of heteroglossic contention that they are” (240; emphasis added). We risk missing, in other words, the *reality* of disciplinary discursive struggle—the considerably complicated real situation that is there for all to see. A similarly positivist note is struck in Bazerman’s presentation of critical ethnography. Unlike traditional ethnography—“with its authoritative representation of the primitive other, denied direct voice through the suppression of the active role of the native informant in representing the way of life and the elevation of the foreign anthropologist as the objective authority”—critical ethnography is marked both by its disclosure of the dynamic nature of ethnographic texts and by its “rejection of the social/economic relations of dominance thereby *revealed*” (242; emphasis added). The presence of domination can be revealed, objectively, by an act of authoritative reading that is better than the authoritative reading that elevates another kind of “objective authority.”

I have no objection to the values that drive this project, only to how far this project has followed what these values imply for ways of talking about disciplinary discourse. Compare Bazerman’s appeals to reality with his value-laden account of representation: “People still have multiple needs, both individually and institutionally, to represent their own and each other’s lives to each other and for themselves” (242). The qualification “to each other and for themselves” is powerfully suggestive, reminding us not only of Bakhtin’s point about collective interdependence but also of each person’s distinctive interests. This qualification’s suggestiveness for my project grows more powerful when Bazerman applies it to the disciplines:

One’s goals and activities influence one’s idiosyncratic placement and interpretation of that intertextual field. When a modern physicist reads physics articles, he or she reads through the goals of advancing his or her own research project within a competitively structured

argument over what claims are to be considered correct and important and how the literature should be added up and moved forward. (243-44)

A physicist must read from an interested perspective, even when she is fulfilling her obligations to the community of physicists. Even if a physicist could read everything there is to read in her field, her reading would still be selective, motivated by her multiple needs, both disciplinary and institutional and individual, to represent her project and those of others in some way. As with a modern physicist, so with Bazerman, so with you and me.

Why, then, the pattern of distancing ourselves from this commitment, as when Bazerman writes, "It is as important for an ecology activist or a community planner to *see into* the complexity of the discourse of biologists, geologists, and petro-chemical engineers as it is for those professionals to have command of their own discourses" (244; emphasis added)? Yes, it is important, and for the reason Bazerman gives: because by "understanding how knowledge is constructed, they in their professional lives can best judge what knowledge it is they wish to construct" (244). But for Bazerman to say this understanding can be *seen* and can be seen because it's *real* is to shortchange the judgment he is calling for. If it is objected that I am making too much of "see into," consider Bazerman's elaboration of judgment:

Seeing through the appearances of the discourse, they can always keep in mind the fundamental goals of the fields in front of them, asking what kind of communication structures, patterns, and rhetorics will best enable the fields to achieve those goals, how they can contribute to those ends as individuals, and in what way the goals achieved through a single disciplinary discourse coordinate (if at all) with other social goals from other forms of social discourse. (244; emphasis added)

While I once again appreciate the dialectical commitment here—that between the rational and the reasonable, that is, between individual goals (whether those of an individual person or field) and social obligations, any of which can be in conflict with other goals, other obligations, and/or some combination of goals and obligations—I must question the familiar appeal to the real, to the reality underlying discursive appearance, the effect of which is to figure "the fundamental goals of the fields in front of them" as something unaffected by discourse.

The rhetorical maneuver Bazerman makes is "dissociation." Recall Bazerman's presentation of "ethnography," which he dissociates into an Appearance/Reality pair: "traditional" ethnography and "critical" ethnography. Ethnography as traditionally understood and enacted seems to

be real but is not; it is only *apparently* real. Critical ethnography, on the contrary, reveals *reality*. In the following account of dissociation's typical dynamics, think of traditional ethnography as "Term I" and critical ethnography as "Term II":

Term II provides a criterion, a norm which allows us to distinguish those aspects of term I which are of value from those which are not; it is not simply a datum, it is a *construction* which, during the dissociation of term I, establishes a rule that makes it possible to classify the multiple aspects of term I in a hierarchy. It enables those that do not correspond to the rule which *reality* provides to be termed illusory, erroneous, or apparent (in the depreciatory sense of this word). In relation to term I, term II is both normative and explanatory. (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca 416)

The key implication is not that gold is dissociated from dross but that reality itself is made responsible for providing the rules that render gold valuable. Or to point this implication toward us: it is not that the complex reality of discourse is dissociated from its simple appearance; it is that reality has been made responsible for providing the rules that render discourse complex—and hence, for us, valuable. As Perelman says, the very process of dissociation "develops through a series of value judgments" (*Realm of Rhetoric* 129), positing a selective construction of reality's properties that are more highly valued than some rival construction's. In our classification of discursive qualities, for example, we might place, on the plus side, heteroglossia, intertextuality, dialogic relations among self and others, judgment; on the minus side, univocality, representation, monologic meaning, reproduction.

Always such classification is motivated by value judgments: "The fact that the process [of dissociation] can be reduced to a schematic form does not mean that the result is, on that account, purely formal or verbal. The dissociation expresses a vision of the world and establishes hierarchies for which it endeavors to provide the criteria" (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca 420).³ Providing criteria serves to justify the dissociation. Dissociation is just one of the techniques the New Rhetoric has developed for "the justification of the possibility of a human community in the sphere of action when this justification cannot be based on a reality or objective truth" (514). Only rarely will justification ever be based on reality or objective truth, yet the communal action it enables is fundamental—insofar, as Michael Carter says, "writing may be understood as a meta-doing: particular kinds of writing are ways of doing that instantiate particular kinds of doing by giving shape to particular ways of knowing in the disciplines" (214-15). Whether

a kind of writing is this or that particular kind of doing, when that doing has to be justified, that justification is an action general to the disciplines.

VALUE JUDGMENTS AND JUSTIFICATION

The “possibility of a human community in the sphere of action when this justification cannot be based on a reality or objective truth” (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca 514) is based on value judgments, which in turn are based on the Rule of Justice. Before I say a little about how such judgments might apply to disciplinary learning in which students are expected to base their justifications on “a reality or objective truth,” thus becoming members of the human communities so based, I need to discuss a particular way in which the communities so based, such as science and engineering, also represent the possibility of the other kind of community. In this, I will begin by following Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca’s case for adherence to reasons whose certainty and validity, whose goodness, cannot be demonstrated using the logical methods of mathematics or the experimental methods of science:

But if essential problems involving questions of a moral, social, political, philosophical, or religious order by their very nature elude the methods of the mathematical and natural sciences, it does not seem reasonable to scorn and reject all the techniques of reasoning characteristic of deliberation and discussion—in a word, of argumentation. (512)

If it is not reasonable to diminish argumentation, nor is it reasonable to assume that “questions of a moral, social, political, philosophical, or religious order” that “elude” the methods of certain disciplines are *absent* in the practice of those disciplines, whose methods in turn may have been designed to deemphasize such questions.

Insofar as “deliberation and discussion” in science and engineering involve other people—involve the competing concerns people embody—moral and social issues are implicated. “Values enter, at some stage or other, into every argument. . . . One appeals to values in order to induce the hearer to make certain choices rather than others and, most of all, to justify those choices so that they may be accepted and approved by others” (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca 75). When demonstration of a truth is not appropriate or possible, we turn to argumentation. Ray Dearin’s commentary helps explain a key difference between demonstration and argumentation: “*arguments are not used to justify propositions but behaviors*. Justification, for Perelman, concerns choices, actions, intentions, and decisions. One does not justify statements or individuals but their actions (adherence being a species of

action)” (177). At play in the realm of “behaviors,” argumentation is already social. Entangled in questions of how we *should* behave, argumentation is always moral. Even in the most technical and/or impersonal disciplines, then, where there is argument, social and moral issues will be present.

Consider the writing engineers do for other engineers—“test plans, test reports, procedures, design standards, operating instructions, etc.” (Ding 298)—writing that tends to be technical and impersonal. In Daniel Ding’s study of four engineering documents, the documents were found to be even more impersonal than expected. They were, in fact, object-centered, where *object* “refers to tangible things we can see and touch, the so-called material things such as metals, liquids, tools, machines, parts, and so forth” (297). In Ding’s analysis, this tendency helps account for an anomaly in the engineers’ writing of operating instructions. Whereas in most instructional writing, we might expect to see instructional steps given “in imperative mood such as ‘Remove the rear cover,’” what Ding saw was that “most of these instructions consist of sentences in indicative mood instead of in imperative mood” (303). In the case of an instruction we might expect to read as “Stabilize the pressure system when the pressure is between 13.5 to 14.5 inches of water,” we read instead, “The pressure system should be stabilized when the pressure is between 13.5 and 14.5 inches of water” (303). This anomaly is perhaps even more noteworthy, inasmuch as “The pressure system should be stabilized” is arguably more ambiguous than “Stabilize the pressure system.” Without more context, the former can be taken to describe a condition (i.e., by this point the pressure system will have achieved a stable state) rather than give an instruction to be followed (i.e., when a certain point is reached, you should stabilize the pressure system).

To make additional sense of this anomaly, Ding makes an inference and addresses the question of context. His inference is that the documents he examined use “indicative sentences because these sentences contain grammatical subjects that refer to objects” (303). Context then explains this object-centered preference: when engineers write for other engineers in the same organization, the context is not only spatial; it is ethical. Ding phrases his observation carefully, yet suggestively: “Any individual engineer writer cannot violate the normative features without violating engineering conventions and defeating reader expectations. An engineer who violates the normative features of engineering writing may fail to communicate her meanings effectively” (307). Engineering conventions are “normative,” Ding says; they are what an engineer *should* do. Why should an engineer observe these conventions? The reason Ding gives is that if she does not, if she “defeat[s] reader expectations,” she risks failing “to communicate her meanings effectively.” At the risk of being less careful than Ding, I would

amend his reason as follows: “she risks failing to communicate her meanings effectively *even if her audience understands her clear meaning*.” If this translation is fair, there are two different issues here: the importance of precise language for engineers and the important need engineers have to be, and to be perceived as being, precise.⁴

These issues are evident, I think, in the special case of the engineering instructions Ding analyzed. I would like to extend these issues more generally, taking as a case in point an interview conducted by some of my students. Responding to my students’ question about what he expected *his* students’ writing to do, a professor of the second physics-specific lab required for Physics majors said this of his students’ lab reports:

Some of them say [in their reports], “We took the laser in the lab and put it on an optical table.” [I always think] What laser? What wavelength? If someone wanted to be able to reproduce that, they would not know. Would it be any laser? Lasers come in different colors—which one? Is it a gas laser or a semiconductor laser, a laser pointer? Which one would be the one to use?⁵

The physicist’s professor’s expressed need for precision and accuracy is clear. Anyone wishing to test for himself the results of the lab would need to know which laser was used originally; trying to replicate those results with a different laser would invalidate the effort. Compare this particular need for procedural reproduction with a different “need” expressed in the same interview, the need for social reproduction:

If a student says, “Seeing the laser light being polarized was amazing,” what do you mean? To you it might be amazing; to me it’s an ordinary thing. I’ve been looking at those things for 20 years. It’s an ordinary thing, so they should just say what it is and nothing else. . . . That should be all removed. If they can [walk] away from this course with one thing, [I hope it would be], “Oh, I should be very clear in my purpose, very clear about how I did it, and why I did it, my results and my interpretation, and nothing else, just what it is.” That will be very useful for them in their following courses and in their jobs. *Nobody wants fluffy things, they just want to the point; what it is*—except maybe in entertainment, in movies, in novels, fiction. There could be a lot of other places, but not in the job we are doing here.

Here there is a specific job that *we* do, the professor says. I don’t want to know what some unimportant thing means to you, just what the results mean to you. Even if you have already given me the necessary specifications, I want to know only the results that matter, not immaterial impres-

sions. Forget the fluff and entertainment. Just get us to the point. If you can help us get to the point, *clearly*, maybe you can be one of us.

My colleague's emphasis on clarity stands out for me. When writing up lab work, students need to be clear about everything, my colleague seems to suggest, at least clear about everything related to the point. But can we be more clear about the point? An interview with another colleague, also a professor of physics, suggests that we might. Asked what she expected student writing to do, she said, "There is no emotional tone [in student writing, but] there is certainly opinion, but that opinion needs to be justified. [The main purpose of their report] is to justify [their opinion]."⁶ Students' opinion of what their results mean must be "justified"; their opinion must be made into argument; it is the argument for their opinion that must be justified. The justification is made for others; its purpose is to convince those others (and oneself) that, as Dearin says above, one has behaved appropriately—for instance, that how a student treated the results was a good way to proceed, was justifiable action.

It could be that the actions are justified not merely as a good way to proceed but as, better yet, the right way to proceed, and if so, such justification is the point about which to be most clear. What I find most suggestive in the following testimony—taken by Jennifer Craig, Neal Lerner, and Mya Poe at MIT—is its push to go even farther with justification. One of the students they interviewed—a student in a Quantitative Physiology class—said in response to the question whether writing the report had led to the discovery of "any limitations or new possibilities in [the] data" (332): "One of the things I realized from the peer review especially is that there are many ways to take data and analyze data, so it is important to justify to the reader why you took a specific approach and why you think it's valid—particularly because it might not seem obvious to someone else" (333). The approach one takes has to be recognized as "valid." The possibility for human community that can be engaged even more fully, however, is not whether the approach was valid for that one person. That approach has to be justified, rather, as valid for anyone. What renders the approach really valid, in other words, is that it would be justifiable for anyone to take. Everyone, no matter who, would justify it—if she can be sold on seeing it the way it should be seen.

How we might increase meta-awareness of this particular sales job—i.e., clearly justifying opinion as universal—is the concluding section's focus.

SEEING AND SELLING WHAT WOULD BE VALID FOR EVERYONE

The case to be made here builds on the assumption that it is better to teach something we know well and have good reason to value—artful procedural judgment—than to teach what we know less well (the norms of other disciplines) and what neither we nor our students can know (the odyssey their professional lives may take). The question the case rests on, then, is how the New Rhetoric can help us teach judgment.

Let us consider what the New Rhetoric adds to “seeing” and “selling” (the powerful terms brought into play by Nowacek [39-66]). Rhetorical judgment depends on sight because, when we have to judge whether a reason, an argument, or a norm is relevant or irrelevant, strong or weak, better or worse, we judge “according to the Rule of Justice, which requires that essentially similar situations be treated in the same manner” (Perelman, *Justice* 83). Similarity needs to be seen, to be recognized. The problem is that each particular case is different. Although justice requires “equal treatment for identical beings,” identity is particular: “no two identical beings—that is, two beings all of whose properties are the same—exist. . . . If no identical beings exist, the Rule of Justice loses all interest for us unless it can tell us how to treat beings who are not identical. In fact, that is the only question that matters” (21). If the similarities and differences cannot be seen, how do we know what to sell? If recognition occurs, which similarities among two or more beings matter enough to override their differences? Which differences matter enough to warrant unequal treatment?

As for justice for beings (human or otherwise—a common topic in FYC), so also for judgment of situations (a topic bridging FYC and WID): in the view of Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca,

comparison of situations will be the subject of constant study and refinement in each particular discipline. Initiation into a rationally systematized field will not merely furnish knowledge of the facts, truths, and special terminology of the branch of learning involved and of the method of using the available tools, it will also provide instruction in assessing the strength of the arguments used in these connections. (464)

Disciplinary situations will not always be identical; they might be, rather, more or less alike. Which similarities among such situations are to count as essential or immaterial will not always be settled by scientific, mathematical, formally logical, or empirical demonstration. Unless they are to be determined by force, they can be modified by practical reasoning—by evaluative arguments selling the relative strength of what one’s methodology and procedures have enabled one to see. Awareness of the need to sell

can be heightened not merely by asking where equal consideration is warranted but more pointedly by asking what merits preferential consideration. What is, so to speak, more equal among equals because its validity would be—because selling shows it should be—justified by everyone?

I would like to show the possibility for such rhetorical action by turning to an assignment in an upper-division course in organic chemistry. An assessment of relative acidity, this particular assignment was crafted by Dr. Laurie S. Starkey (the materials below represent just some of the written guidance she provides her students for calibrated peer-review):

OVERALL SET-UP: The pK_a for meta-cyanophenol (**A**) is 8.61 and the pK_a for para-cyanophenol (**B**) is 7.95. Use these data to determine the effects of the cyano group on the acidity of phenol. Resonance effects should be considered.

GUIDING QUESTIONS:

- 1) What is the relationship between pK_a and acidity?
- 2) Which is the stronger acid, *A* or *B*?
- 3) What do the conjugate bases of these phenols look like? (Please refer to them as CB-A and CB-B.)
- 4) What does the detailed structure of the cyano group look like?
- 5) Describe the resonance forms of both conjugate bases.
- 6) Are the cyano groups involved in the resonance? If so, how?
- 7) What effect does resonance have on the relative acidity of *A* and *B*?

WRITING PROMPT:

Thoroughly explain the difference in the pK_a 's of meta-cyanophenol (*A*) and para-cyanophenol (*B*). In other words, which is the stronger acid and WHY? Be sure to clearly address resonance effects. Your response should consider the Guiding Questions but should be written in essay form.

Be extremely clear in your written arguments. Avoid using ambiguous nouns such as “it”; instead, refer to species by their proper names (e.g., *A*, CB-A, the cyano group, the oxygen atom, the negative charge, etc.). [emphasis added]

Most of the writing this exercise is designed to elicit can be judged bi-modally—right or wrong, yes or no. The following question excerpted from her scoring rubric is typical:

1. Does the essay clearly identify B (para-cyanophenol) as the stronger acid?

- | |
|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes
<input type="checkbox"/> No |
|--|

In an e-mail, Dr. Starkey characterized the assignment's aims as oriented toward validation, not original research: "There is very little primary data gathered in undergraduate labs or lectures. Most exercises are really exploring or discovering . . . more experiencing and validating—gaining experience with lab techniques, etc." Such exploration and discovery are not insignificant. As Crosswhite notes, in "application of an existing law or precedent to a new case, something creative or inventional happens. One discovers something new *about the law or precedent*" (93). Newness *can* be discovered, we might prefer to say. That such discovery might happen more often, aided in small part by our enterprise, is what we want.

We want, I further assume, that that discovery be more artful, not only more frequent—something our disciplinary colleagues want as well. Note that the question "Does the essay clearly identify B (para-cyanophenol) as the stronger acid?" guides students less to application of the rules than to *effective* application of the rules. Students are asked, for instance, to do more than identify; they are asked to "clearly" identify.

Let us look at how "clearly" operates. Consider the following question, which like the professor's other guiding questions appears on a rubric (on which appear as well three levels of competence—a low-level paper, a mid-level paper, and a high-level paper—which the professor uses to model calibrated peer-review; see appendix):

2. Does the essay clearly describe the relationship between pK_a and acidity (as the acidity increases, the pK_a decreases)?
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Answer: No
Feedback: The pK_a evidence is not presented in the essay at all.

As the professor's or peer's feedback commentary implies, the circled "no" is not negative enough. The relationship is not merely unclearly described; it cannot be described at all, clearly or otherwise, for the "evidence is not presented at all." But a question is raised: what if the evidence were presented and the relationship described—not unclearly but only fairly clearly (in other words, not *really* clearly)? How would we justify saying that one clear presentation of the relationship in question was clearer than another? A student aware that she has to sell the clarity of the presentation of the rule

she has to apply might discover not only the logic of the rule but also, in thinking about clarity, new resources of effectiveness and agency.

Two different comments in response to the same question tell us more about how “clarity” operates here. Of the middle-quality essay just noted, we read the following:

9. Is the argument for why B is the stronger acid clearly laid out and easy to follow?
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Answer: No
Feedback: After discussing resonance, no argument [<i>sic</i>] is made for how this explains the difference in stability and acidity.

Again, the circled “no” does not capture the degree of failure here. It is not the case that the argument was not “clearly laid out and easy to follow”; rather, no argument whatsoever was made. But if there are arguments to be made for why B is the *stronger* acid, and if these arguments are to be judged for clarity and organizational flow, there is rhetorical work to do. It is possible, for instance, for the argument to be present but wrong, as indicated by the feedback response for the low-quality paper:

9. Is the argument for why B is the stronger acid clearly laid out and easy to follow?
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Answer: No
Feedback: An argument is presented, but it is faulty.

The argument in the low-quality is “faulty,” whereas in the middle-quality paper the argument is altogether absent. This discrepancy suggests that argumentation is not the most highly prized performance quality of this exercise. If we turn to the high-quality paper, we see what is more highly prized: “A logical, step-by-step progression of argument is presented.” Logical, discrete, forward (i.e., not recursive, reflective) *movement*—these presentational qualities of argument are valued. This value judgment grounds the decision to treat this paper’s argument “more equally” than the argument that is not present and the argument that is present but not well presented.

If this case is even nearly right, then it is probably “clarity” that fills in what is meant by “better described”—as seen in the overall assessment of the top-quality paper:

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 10 Highest <input type="checkbox"/> 9 <input type="checkbox"/> 8 <input type="checkbox"/> 7 <input type="checkbox"/> 6 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 Lowest
Rating: 10
Feedback: The essay is [<i>sic</i>] correctly identifies B (para-cyanophenol) as the stronger acid. However, essay could have better described the structure of the resonance forms.

Of the three essays, this is the top essay, a “10.” (The middle-quality essay received a “5,” the low-quality essay a “1.”) Yet the “10” essay “could have *better* described the structure of the resonance forms.” If the Rule of Justice applies to three papers at three distinct levels, then imagine two or more papers at each of these levels (High, Middle, Low). That is to say, if the Rule of Justice informs the value judgments distinguishing a “10” paper from a “5” paper and a “1” paper, imagine the value judgments needed to justify gradations between two or more “10” papers, with all the gradations of “better” argument and description possible—not to mention the judgments at work in filling out the possible rankings between “10” and “5,” between “5” and “1.”

It is not up to a WPA rhetorician to adjudicate these rankings. Even had we the know-how, we are not the audience. As Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca acknowledge, there are times when the speaker’s “argument is limited by custom, by law, or by the methods and techniques peculiar to the discipline within which his argument is developed. The discipline often determines also the level at which the argumentation must be presented, laying down what is beyond dispute, and what must be regarded as irrelevant to the debate” (465). (Again, we might say that arguments are “generated by” as well as “limited by” disciplinary culture.) What Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca go on to say about disciplinary culture is important for understanding the limited role we can play: “Naturally, the different philosophies influence any argumentative scheme by their *determination of the structure of reality* and the *justifications* they give of it, by their criteria for valid knowledge and proofs and by the hierarchy in which they place audiences” (465; emphasis added). What I believe projects that develop the resources of the New Rhetoric can add to the conversation, then, is not adjudication of disciplinary differences, nor a call for social justice, nor a reminder like Miller’s to attend to the window itself but, rather, arguments that direct the attention of disciplinary colleagues and students to lessons appropriately taught in FYC: that value judgments and justifications help comprise each window, that they comprise whether that window is clear, and that even if the window is clear, it is not thereby self-evidently transparent. Seeing reality must be sold as a valid approach for everyone, if not also as the way everyone should see—as the way that is most real.

This project has tried to make room for the New Rhetoric within the New Rhetorical conversation about disciplinary writing. The case was made that the New Rhetoric can be especially valuable in helping students understand the function and motives of “generic” appeals to reality. The motive behind the New Rhetoric was aligned with the New Rhetorical motive to do greater justice to the complexity of discourse, resulting in a model of discourse devoted to justifying “the possibility of a human community in the sphere of action when this justification cannot be based on a reality or objective truth” (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca 514). It was furthermore suggested that, if making choices and selling them as valid is good disciplinary rhetoric—that value-laden appeals to reality must be justified to be seen—then directing students’ attention to that fact would likely help them participate, within any discipline, more meaningfully and perhaps, for that reason, more effectively.⁷



NOTES

1. Here and throughout, the reference to “the rational” and “the reasonable” owes much to John Rawls’s *Political Liberalism*. The rational applies to how one’s “ends and interests are adopted and affirmed, as well as how they are given priority” (50). The reasonable refers to people who desire “a social world in which they, as free and equal, can cooperate with others on terms all can accept” (50). The rational and reasonable “are complementary ideas”: “They work in tandem to specify the idea of fair terms of cooperation, taking into account the kind of social cooperation in question, the nature of the parties and their standing with respect to one another” (52). My 2012 article in the *WPA Journal*, “Just Comp,” explored these terms with respect to FYC; this article is something of a sequel. (See also Forst; Kraemer, “The Reasonable and the Sensible.”)

2. Compare with Perelman: “If a word already exists, its definition can never be considered arbitrary, for the word is bound up in the language with previous classifications, with value judgments which give it, in advance, an affective, positive or negative coloration” (*Realm of Rhetoric* 61).

3. Perelman and his collaborator Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca do not diminish the power of communal, disciplinary, and activity networks: “All language is the language of a community, be this a community bound by biological ties, or by the practice of a common discipline or technique. The terms used, their meaning, their definition, can only be understood in the context of the habits, ways of thought, methods, external circumstances, and traditions known to the

users of those terms. A deviation from usage requires justification” (513). It is the “deviation from usage” that is of greater import here, if only because for learners in disciplinary discourse—for learners especially, perhaps—it is more reasonable for us to profess that usage, habits, ways of thought, and so on sometimes require justification than for us to assume that either students will not deviate in some way from disciplinary norms or all deviations are to be suppressed.

4. In Joanna Wolfe’s study of engineering writing, I see something similar. She writes of strategies of “selecting data visualizations that balance the engineer’s need to present an ethos of accuracy and precision against the audience’s need to grasp a clear message” and “organizing technical reports so that managers can easily find recommendations, conclusions, and other bottom-line messages while still satisfying fellow engineers’ needs for detailed reporting of precise numbers, calculations, and methods” (371). Here we have the Reasonable and the Rational: the Reasonable—honoring one’s obligation, as an engineer, to meet the audience’s need for clarity and, in the case of managers, their need for bottom-line guidance; the Rational, fulfilling one’s interests, as an engineer, to be accurate and precise and to be so recognized by other engineers. For a similar argument made about ethos in science, see Allan Gross (15) and Ding (“The Passive Voice” 146-47).

5. From a personal interview with Dr. Ertan Salik on April 25, 2013—conducted by Evelyn Blanco, Cristina Fucaloro, Sarah Jackson, Dan Staylor, and Terry Steagall. This particular question about writing and doing was inspired by Michael Carter’s “Ways of Knowing, Doing, and Writing in the Disciplines.” The project in which the students and professors participated was IRB approved (PROTOCOL #: 12-145).

6. From a personal interview with Dr. Nina Abramzon on April 29, 2013—conducted by Evelyn Blanco, Cristina Fucaloro, Sarah Jackson, Dan Staylor, and Terry Steagall.

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APPENDIX

PAPERS (presented without correction)

High-quality paper:

The lower the pK_a value, the stronger the acid. Since *B* has the lower pK_a , it must be the stronger acid. The difference in the pK_a can be explained by looking at the stability of the conjugate bases (CB). After deprotonation, each CB has an O^- where the phenol hydroxyl used to be.

In both CB's, the negative charge on oxygen is benzylic and has resonance involving the benzene ring, in which the negative charge is distributed onto the carbons in the benzene ring that are ortho and para to the oxygen. In addition, the para-substituted cyano in CB-B provides extra resonance stabilization to delocalize the negative charge onto the N. It is impossible for the meta cyano group in CB-A to be involved in resonance which delocalizes the negative charge. The extra resonance involving the para cyano group makes CB-B *more stable, less reactive* and a *weaker base*. If CB-B is the weaker base, it has the *stronger parent acid* (para-cyanophenol, *B*).

Middle-quality paper:

Para-cyanophenol (B) is the strongest acid and the explanation can be found by looking at the conjugate bases. Since the cyanide group contains a CN triple bond, it is an electrowithdrawing (EWG) group which is good for the negative charge. Usually, you want the EWG to be closer to the negative charge (the phenol O will have the negative charge), but in this case we will look for resonance since its affect is more important. Both conjugates have resonance, where the negative charge on oxygen moves to the ortho carbon on the benzene ring. Once it is in the ring, the negative charge can continue to move around the ring because it is allylic. There will be 3 resonance forms that have a negative charge on a benzene carbon (2 ortho and 1 para). This is true for both conjugate bases. However, in CB-B, when the negative charge is on the same carbon as the CN group, there is more resonance because it will be allylic to the CN pi bond. In this new resonance form, there is a pi bond between the phenyl C and the cyano C, a double bond between the cyano C and N, and a negative charge on the N of the cyano group. This is an excellent contributor, since the negative charge is on the more electronegative N. In CB-A, the negative charge is never next to the CN carbon so there is only the 3 resonance forms.

Low-quality paper:

Para-cyanophenol, B, is the stronger acid since it has the lower pKa. We have to consider the conjugate bases to explain the difference in acidity.

Both the conjugate bases have a negative charge that can be moved by resonance into the benzene ring. The charge can move around the benzene ring (ortho and para), but the resonance is not good because carbon is not electronegative so it doesn't handle the negative charge well. Since both conjugate bases have the same resonance, the answer must be because of inductive effects.

The CN group is an electron-withdrawing group (EWG). The closer the CN is to the OH, the more stable it is. When the CN is meta to the OH, the acid is very *stable* so its *unreactive* and a *weak acid* (A has the higher pka). When the CN is para, the OH is less stable and more reactive so B is the stronger acid.

Feminism, Mindfulness and the Small University jWPA

Christy I. Wenger

ABSTRACT

In this article, I argue that our administrative ethos must be responsive to our location by detailing my move from practicing a feminist ethic of care as a graduate WPA to practicing contemplative administration as a tenure-track, junior WPA at a small, public liberal arts university. I examine how an ethic of care can be particularly unresponsive to the material changes in status that WPAs experience when taking on new positions. Problematizing recent configurations of care-driven administration and the models of servant leadership upon which they are built, I offer contemplative administration as a feminist alternative for WPA work, one that supports growing attention to the role of contemplative education within higher learning. I argue that contemplative administration preserves a feminist emphasis on relationships without the gendered weight of caring models and takes a fresh look at materiality and wellbeing by approaching these terms through the lens of mindfulness. Mindfulness, or moment-to-moment awareness, promotes a culture more responsive to the needs of both junior-faculty and tenured WPAs and more sensitive to the material boundaries of our leadership than a caring ethos, which tends to overwrite differences between locations and bodies.

Rita Malenczyk reminds us that WPA identities, both those we choose to take on and those imposed upon us by the places and spaces of our work, are more than rhetorical markers for our narratives; they are instead the limits within which we are able to successfully administer our programs. WPAing necessarily involves navigating multiple and conflicting identities, a challenge Malenczyk hopes we meet by relying on our instincts and by keeping in mind our productive limitations (“Kitchen” 185). While Malenczyk focuses on narrative conflicts between the stories we tell about ourselves and the ways we become characterized in others’ stories, such as when the identities we willingly accept are not the same ones our schools

and colleagues see for us, I suggest here that the physical places of our stories serve as constraints for those narratives. We must include the material among our “productive limitations.” Indeed, my story points to how problematic it can be when we import administrative identities from school to school without considering how different material conditions may necessitate new ones—even when our old administrative identities are welcomed by new schools and new positions.

Below, I detail my experience with moving from a feminist ethic of care as a graduate WPA (gWPA) to practicing contemplative administration as a junior-faculty WPA (jWPA) to examine how changes to our material conditions necessitate corresponding changes to the ways we practice and theorize feminist administration. Based on the tenets of contemplative education, contemplative administration, I will explain, is a leadership style founded on the principles of mindfulness, or moment-to-moment awareness, and committed to the well-being of both individual leaders and their communities. Like all practices of mindfulness, contemplative administration asks for close attention, slow movement, and conscious action. Despite care’s reputation as a liberating practice for feminist administrators, my narrative shows the limits of an ethic of care to empower WPAs and to productively challenge some of the misconceptions of writing and WPA work. My experience demonstrates that when WPAs are thrust into campus narratives that name them as “caretakers of writing,” we are positioned to take personal responsibility for the health of the writing culture on our campuses. Such positioning frames change as individual, not as corporate and collaborative, and aligns action with reactivity. I will argue that contemplative administration provides a viable alternative to these pervasive care-based feminist administrative models. Redefining myself as a contemplative administrator has allowed me to transfer the mindfulness I originally discovered on my yoga mat to a mode of feminist leadership that is guided by this intentional awareness. Unlike care-based leadership models, contemplative administration respects the material realities and discursive limits of the stories I can tell from my current position as a jWPA at a small, Mid-Atlantic public liberal arts university.

* * *

A few weeks into my first semester as a new jWPA, I had to rush to the gymnasium between teaching two sections of first-year composition. I had already settled into a routine to use the scant hour between these writing classes: I wolfed down a sandwich or whatever leftovers I had packed for lunch that day while lesson planning and responding to a never-ending stream of student, departmental and university emails. In between emails

and bites, I fielded questions from students dropping by my office and others hoping to see the department chair, who happened to have an office next to mine. On this day, however, I was scheduled for a insurance-driven “wellness check.” When I signed up for my university-sponsored insurance prior to the semester’s start, I was shocked to learn that my insurance premiums would be substantially more than I had paid as a graduate student and that my new insurance would cover less. When I expressed this frustration to the human resources director, she nodded knowingly, told me she and her daughter were on her husband’s plan and alerted me to an annual wellness check that would take place shortly after the start of the semester. She cautioned me to watch for emails and to sign up quickly because all time slots would fill up the day the check was scheduled to run on campus.

Like so many other managed care plans, my insurance tied financial incentives to “preventative care” measures like this health check. In exchange for a scheduling inconvenience, a missed lunch and a run across campus, I could lower my deductible by ten dollars a month, a savings I desperately wanted. However, there was a catch: if the combined blood test, weight and waist circumference measurements rated me in the yellow or red zones rather than the green, I could face mandatory doctor visits and increased medical costs. As someone who has inherited high cholesterol despite maintaining a healthy and active lifestyle, I worried about failing the test and driving up my premiums even higher. While seemingly a mundane task of adult life, this health test struck me as highly symbolic, echoing the limitations of an administrative identity based on care that I felt pressed into on my new campus.

As a jWPA straight from graduate school and as the first official writing program administrator at my school,² I had already been compelled to see my new administrative role in similar health-related terms. I felt my colleagues understood me more as a nurse assigned to care for the writing program and its “patients” than as a collaborator and pioneer of campus writing initiatives, including but not limited to the program itself. Beginning with the fall faculty assembly at which new professors are introduced, I’d been described as someone hired to “take care” of writing on campus. At the time, I didn’t like the way that sounded, but I initially tried to shake it off. Shortly after my introduction though, just as I was attempting to get a brownie and coffee from the selections laid out by campus dining services, I was greeted warmly—with no fewer than six repetitions of everyone’s desire for me to “take care” of students’ writing, so they could get “down to business” with those students in upper-level classes. Such loaded greetings, while certainly not unique to my particular school or position, felt like a singular burden, making me welcome the announcement that the

all-school meeting would begin and that we were to cease our mingling and take our seats.

During the meeting, I ruminated on my unease with these expectations of care and how they positioned me to react to existing problems instead of positioning me as an agent of change and as someone who could bring a new and lively awareness to writing at our school. In the days following, there were many more encounters with colleagues across campus, casual meetings that occur frequently at my small university. Each time, these exchanges played out similarly, as if they were scripted: I'd exchange pleasantries with my colleague, and before I could say much else, I'd listen to stories about the diseased and mangled texts students were producing in seemingly every discipline. Story after story warranted more care and extorted me as the one to deliver it. One of the most heated encounters with an art history colleague ended with his vague warning that "obviously not enough care [was] being taken in first-year writing" because his sophomore students seemed to lack "even basic writing skills." That this occurred in front of our Dean of Teaching and Learning and was acknowledged by her defeatist shrug left me dispirited. These are the moments, of course, that solidify institutional narratives about the role of writing programs and administrators on our campuses. These are the narratives I needed to change.

Slotted into an identity that positioned me as a "caretaker of writing," I felt caught by a system of managed care created out of good intentions, but carrying with it a promise of a test through which I'd be measured for qualities of health not fully under my control. Ostensibly a way to create a culture of health, both my medical screening and my presence on campus were imagined as the available means of enforcing individual (not collective) responsibility for "problems" within these systems of managed care. Care—both what I needed to 'take' with my own body as measured by the medical screening and what I needed to provide the writing program and students through my leadership—seemed coercive and isolating.

As a feminist and a gWPA, I'd previously understood care as a means of flattening hierarchies and redefining professional relationships. When working as both the graduate assistant director of the writing program and the writing center at my doctoral institution, I'd happily and consciously accepted an administrative identity defined by care because it freed me to work collaboratively with others invested in writing. Indeed, I'd been told that one of the reasons I was chosen for those positions and continued to perform them year after year was because my peers and senior colleagues saw me as a considerate and approachable colleague who genuinely cared for others. But, I wasn't just called to care; I actively chose this identity

position for myself because it was an easy fit for my outgoing nature and because I could find support for care-based leadership in feminist literature. Utilizing an ethic of care by letting concern for writing instructors dominate my interactions with them, from observing their teaching to discussing their syllabi, allowed me to use my (minimal) power as a gWPA in nonthreatening, collegial ways. It set the tone of my teaching workshops as collaborative and friendly pedagogical spaces where tenured faculty and graduate students alike could mingle and, coached by me, learn from each other. Those are experiences I still treasure.

But in those early moments on my new campus as a jWPA, I was forced to confront the limitations of the caring perspective that had worked so well for me in the past. Ironically, before I began my tenure-track position, I had been ready and willing to be identified again as a caretaker, as a feminist who exercised an ethic of care in her interactions with others. But quickly, I felt the material differences between my current position and my previous positioning as a gWPA, differences that seemed to converge around the issue of care. The feminist ethic of care I had carried proudly to my new campus as a cornerstone of my administrative identity—which initially seemed to match so well with my new university's expectations of me—suddenly felt unresponsive to my changed material situatedness. The most obvious conflict between my previous administrative experience and my current tenure as a jWPA was the way I was no longer just one of many writing administrators on campus but instead was the *sole* “caretaker” of writing and the only faculty member ever hired for this purpose. I quickly realized that on my small campus where I am the only WPA of any sort, I didn't just *represent* the writing program, I *was* the program to many people.³ And, as a young, female administrator, often much younger than fellow colleagues around campus or within my program, defining myself through care seemed to position me within campus narratives more as a young nanny or nurse than as a feminist administrator committed to change and growth. With these new realizations, I worried that if I accepted the ways my new colleagues were calling me to become a manager of care, would that care begin to manage me? Could I really “fight” care with care? Most importantly, did I want to?

The rest of this essay “interrupts” the dominance of care-driven administration as the most viable means of feminist leadership, intentionally invoking Nedra Reynold's definition of interruption as a rhetorical move that “offers a tactical, practical means toward discursive agency” (72). What follows is not an out-of-hand dismissal of care for feminist jWPAs but a contextualized interruption of the dominance of the ethic of care. The space for administrative agency I hope to create is both discursive and

material, as both matter to WPA work. To clear out an alternative space for jWPA identity and agency, I problematize recent feminist configurations of care-driven administration and the models of leadership upon which they are built. I then offer contemplative administration as a feminist alternative for WPA work, one that hasn't yet been given serious attention despite recent and growing interest in contemplative education within institutions of higher learning.⁴

Contemplative administration preserves a feminist emphasis on relationships and alternative means of knowing and acting without the gendered weight of caring models, and takes a fresh look at wellbeing—of people, programs and leadership—by approaching these terms through the lens of mindfulness. If the most important aspect of writing program administration is not managerial, as Bruffee asserts in his 1977 *WPA* editorial, but educational, aimed at “creat[ing] conditions in which learning can occur” (11), then mindfulness better positions WPAs than caring to be aware of the emotional and physical management of writing programs and people, to resist our construction as an exploitable presence and to carve out new possibilities for how we might become effective change agents within our programs and campuses. Because mindfulness asks us to slow down and focus on the present moment, it helps administrators to develop openness and acceptance of experiences as they unfold, delaying hasty judgment. Delayed judgment, openness to experience, and acceptance of ambiguity are some of the necessary conditions for the learning process. Such openness and careful attention can help us to better assess the content and contexts of work-related problems; it can also give us a means to react consciously and with purpose as opposed to reacting defensively, paving the way for WPAs to create purposeful counter-narratives about their roles and goals on campus. While especially important for untenured jWPAs, this kind of agency can transform both junior and senior administrators' roles on their campuses and within their programs.

ADMINISTERING CARE

Conversations about feminist leadership often begin with a discussion of how care works through networks that reach out rather than up, which is contrasted to hierarchal power structures in traditional patriarchal systems of administration and management. In *Performing Feminism and Administration in Rhetoric and Composition Studies*, Carrie Leverenz overviews the central principles of ethical feminist administration and notes feminist WPAs' preference for care. Care is often viewed as a moral and egalitarian means of leadership, one that spreads out rather than reaches up. Power in

these leadership approaches is shared and facilitative, built through relationships and governed by support not control. Indeed, care-driven administration is often used to advance models of collaborative leading, which emphasizes “community, shared responsibility, and open exchange” (Gunner 254). When outlining the roots of a feminist ethic of care, administrators most commonly cite three feminist theories of care, including Carol Gilligan’s “injunction to care,” Nel Noddings’s “reactive and responsive” ethic of care, and Sara Ruddick’s global application of care in the form of maternal thinking (Leverenz 9-10). A feminist ethic of care in our own field has emerged as one that includes, minimally, upholding a decision-making process “made in the context of specific human relationships where feelings, not just rationality, play a key role” and demanding “that care be the dominant term in all of our interactions with others” (Leverenz 9;10).

Seeing care as the controlling force for all interactions is a heady task, one that, as E. Shelley Reid argues, may require feminist administrators to adopt strategies that allow them to “manage care” within their programs so as not to become overwhelmed. Because WPAs must lead by example and must work within traditional structures that do not present caring as a viable heuristic or action, Reid claims, “I need better ways to manage... caring and to ensure that the caring supports a range of management actions I might need or want to perform” (133). Mentoring is for Reid a key strategy of the “good enough” feminist WPA—a liberating construction Reid uses to remind us of the limits of any one administrator—who seeks to lead through caring. She defines mentoring more expansively than most, choosing to see it as the local application of feminist administration, including day-to-day interactions with others and the relationship-building that sustains a writing program (128). Mentor-as-caregiver is therefore the way Reid suggests we bridge conflicting identities as feminist women and “boss compositionists” while keeping in mind our productive limitations.

Mentoring is a fruitful site of leadership because it is gendered both masculine and feminine: it contains the mentor-as-protégé model, which is masculinist as mentors work on the principles of indoctrination into the status quo, but it also contains the distinctly feminine model of mentoring as selfless, “unlimited caregiving (Enos)” (129). Reid capitalizes on this tension to carve an in-between space that allows her to conclude: “I can mentor people in ways that help me foreground not just caregiving, but an ethic of care—an approach to problem solving that (as writers such as Carol Gilligan and Nel Noddings explain) emphasizes relationships and individual circumstances more than abstract principles or rules” (129). In these ways, caring becomes both the means and the end of feminist administration.

I easily identify with Reid's preference for mentoring as the locus of her feminist administrative identity and care-driven action. As a gWPA, I spent most hours on campus not only teaching my own composition classes but also talking in my office, in the hallways, and in the common rooms to other instructors about their pedagogy and practice. My office door was always open, and in return, I served the program through mentoring on a daily basis. My colleagues knew I cared and valued developing relationships over criticizing or emphasizing power, so they didn't hesitate to come to me with problems or troubles—even when these admissions might compromise idealistic images of their teaching. When fellow graduate students would lose patience with their students not talking in class, they would seek me out and ask for suggestions on how to engage them. When an adjunct's students struggled with formulating claims in their writing, she asked for sample worksheets and assignments, and we spent time together strategizing for the next class meeting. I often counseled my peers through rocky emotions related to their own studies and their teaching identities. And, just as often, they willingly invited me into their classrooms to do extra observations, not required by the program, simply to get my feedback on their courses and teaching strategies. As a gWPA, I intentionally crafted my administrative identity through the lens of caring and applied it through a practice of mentoring, like Reid. And, this was easy to do because I could leave the "boss compositionist" parts of administering the writing program to the tenured director to whom I reported. If I was the "woman on the ground," he was the man in the office, who, in his obvious position of power, allowed me to deflect mine for the sake of resisting binaries and creating a collaborative network of teaching and mentoring that easily complemented my care-driven feminism.

But, I understand Reid's argument differently now. I can neither ignore the "boss compositionist" power that I maintain these days, nor can I fail to see how my administrative ethos shapes that power, and how the leadership methods I consciously employ define the ways I can enact change. I have "expert power" on my campus, to use Irene Ward's term, because of my degree and credentials as well as the singularity of my presence as a WPA. Even so, I am still earning "referent power" based on my interactions with others and the narratives they craft of me based on individual experiences with my leadership and the institutional relationships I create (Ward 64). As a gWPA, my ethos, or referent power, was boosted by the commonalities I shared with others in the writing program; like the adjuncts, I was a marginalized instructor of writing, and like the other graduate students, despite my title, I went home to my dissertation every night.

In my new position, however, my power is challenged by material difference, namely my positioning as a young, female administrator. In my program, my relative youth means that the adjuncts and faculty I am called to mentor and lead often have ten to twenty more years of experience in the local classrooms than me—usually at my university and sometimes within our writing program. Demographics of my cross-curricular colleagues are very similar to those within the writing program. To talk and work effectively across this difference, I need to be fully aware of the leadership models that shape my administrative ethos and help to create my referent power. A care-based ethos is one highly implicated in service, which is evident when we unpack the ways Reid's administrative model is indebted to the application of servant leadership in higher education, a leadership style attributable to Robert Greenleaf, which recently has been incorporated into feminist ethics of care. To take on a care-based ethos, then, is to define myself in terms of service models of leadership. In the next section, I examine how these models may limit the agency of young, untenured program directors, and suggest, in turn, that alternative feminist models are needed to help better position jWPAs as agents of change on our campuses.

CARING AS SERVICE

Reid makes visible the ways contemporary applications of care-based leadership discussed in writing studies and within the pages of this journal are indebted to recent feminist incarnations of servant leadership in management and leadership studies. Described by Marlene Fine and Patrice Buzzanell, two feminist academic administrators, servant leadership is “serving the faculty and students (or multiple stakeholders, particularly employees). On the most basic level, serving means doing things for others that enable them to do their jobs; serving means taking obstacles out of employees’ way” (131). Working from Fine and Buzzanell’s definition, Reid claims that while there are still conflicts to be navigated in the real life situations of WPAing, the model of servant leadership allows her to bridge the gap between mentoring and leadership and to see mentoring as creating a viable method of leading by caring and producing actionable outcomes and paths that can humanize the process of leadership (138). Writing in leadership studies, Kae Reynolds makes the correlate argument to Reid’s that studies of servant leadership can be strengthened by overt attention to a feminist ethic of care (164). Serving and caring share a similar sensitivity to reacting to other’s needs, and so, at first blush, servant leadership seems to be a promising care-driven model for feminist administrators. Servant leadership crafts referent power out of a daily exercise of care, demonstrated by

the service the feminist administrator provides to her university, her program, and, especially, the people within it. Her administrative ethos thus rests on a connection between serving and caring, as care becomes the primary service these WPAs perform.

This unlikely connection between leading and caring is true to the both-and nature of servant leadership as originally coined by Greenleaf. In his 1977 *Servant Leadership*, Greenleaf begins with a binary between serving and leading in order to upset it, asking, “Servant and leader—can these two roles be fused in one real person, in all levels of status or calling? (7). He uses this book and further publications to promote the fusion and complementarity of these roles. Greenleaf sees service as the prerequisite to effective leadership and defines service as “the care taken by the servant-first to make sure that other people’s highest priority needs are being served” (13). Servant leadership is therefore driven by fellowship and concern for others. Servant leadership is also, then, largely reactive, fueled as it is by addressing the problems and needs of others in ways that demonstrate caring.

Reid’s own discussion and application of servant leadership evidences the servant leader’s responsiveness. Reid begins her discussion of care-driven leadership by crafting a composite adjunct, Lacie, whom she must serve through caring, and states that her whole essay is a response to “figuring out how to be(come) the feminist WPA Lacie needs” (126). Building her leadership strategy from Lacie’s needs highlights the centrality of interpersonal relationships to Reid’s method and the additional responsibility of emotional manager that this strategy carries. As Reid demonstrates through her interactions with Lacie as well as her choice to use this composite adjunct as a central lens through which to view her leadership, listening and working toward mutual understanding are common approaches of the servant leader because “servant leaders in particular understand that they lead through relationships with others” (Wheeler 39). The metric of success for this leader is community development via attention to the individual achievement of goals as well as the characteristic of care in the relationships within that community (McClellan 42-3). Service, caring and advocacy are, in turn, seen in primarily other-centered terms: “Servant leaders understand service is not about them but about working through others to accomplish dreams and growth in others and the organization” (Wheeler 18). If this language begs the question of self-sacrifice, Greenleaf’s original models leave no room for question, as they use Jesus as a model example of the servant leader.

While not widely popular when first introduced, Greenleaf’s concept has recently seen a surge of interest in leadership education. The way that servant leadership bridges binaristic terms like serving and leading, fronts

relational connections to others and becomes a method not just of leading but one of living, makes visible the ways it can be understood as promoting a feminist ethic of care. And, servant leadership insists that it is not only women who can enact such an approach: “the feminization of leadership, promoted by the pairing of the words ‘servant’ and ‘leadership’ appears to successfully de-gender or ‘demasculinize’ the mainstream language of authoritarian leadership” (Eicher-Catt 19). It follows that servant leadership might ultimately become a “gender-holistic” model of integrative leading that works toward inclusion and awareness (Reynolds 155). However, seeing servant leadership as integrative might be more idealistic than realistic.

When she deconstructs the language surrounding servant leadership, Deborah Eicher-Catt finds that this promised gender holism too easily becomes a kind of promised gender/less leadership. As with other totalizing views, servant leadership may not acknowledge the different experiences of men and women who seek to apply its methods to administration. Too, when women engage in servant leadership, argues Eicher-Catt, we may align ourselves with the very oppressive management practices we seek to avoid as we become emotional managers of those we lead: “While on the surface the language or logos of S-L appears to promote an innocent ethic of resistance to standardized, perhaps oppressive, leadership practices; it operates by a logic of rhetorical substitution that maintains, or at least can maintain, those oppressive practices...[and] that nurtures patriarchal and androcentric organizational norms and practices” (Eicher-Catt 23). Through Eicher-Catt’s analysis, we can see how servant leadership may be dangerous for feminist administrators as it can position them as exploitable resources by encouraging them to be emotional managers so that programs run smoothly. Even if WPAs adopt Reid’s “good enough” attitude, intentionally defining ourselves through this kind of reactive emotional management may limit the ways we can become agents of change.

Additionally, feminist administration built upon such an ethic of care may be less sensitive to the material limitations of our leadership and may overwrite differences between locations and bodies. For some feminist administrators who share embodied similarities with those they mentor or who convey seniority through their embodied presence, this may not be a divisive factor; for young, female jWPAs, it most certainly has a significant impact on their ability to successfully lead their programs. My 30-something body “outs” me as a director with more credentials and education than teaching experience. I am therefore positioned more in the realm of knowledgeable scholar than seasoned teacher, when it is the latter that tends to be valued most at my school. This is not lost on the instructors in my program who often remark that I am closer in age to their children

than I am to them. Age and teaching experience can challenge even the best attempts at mentoring in my program because the traditional hierarchy is undermined: “traditional mentoring typically involves a hierarchal relationship...comprised of a senior person who advises and guides a junior or less-experienced colleague” (Dunbar and Kinnersley 17). Positioning myself as a caretaker of writing only serves to contribute to this imbalance. What I need then is a feminist leadership tradition that promotes a culture more mindful of material difference, more responsive to the needs of young jWPAs and less reactive to the “problems” within a particular writing culture as diagnosed by others’ narratives. In the next section, I propose feminist contemplative administration as one such possibility.

FEMINIST CONTEMPLATIVE ADMINISTRATION

I was hired into my jWPA position with the stipulation that I would begin immediately the work of assessing the program as part of a larger, campus-wide assessment initiative. My Chair and Dean both expected me to “take care” of writing by producing data that proved students’ writing was “fixed” by the conclusion of our two-semester sequence of first-year composition. That such value-added assessment was listed in my job description’s yearly deliverables made me feel initially that I needed to begin this work without delay. Two months into my position, however, I recognized that our program was so diffuse that any data-driven assessment would produce results more scattered than conclusive. Not only was I still too unsure what our classes’ goals were to assess them accurately, but no one else seemed able to articulate a consistent message of these curricular goals either. With no director and without a strong sense of leadership, teachers in the program had largely grown comfortable with defining our first-year writing curricula in ways they saw fit, allowing them a great degree of freedom in designing their individual classes even if that came at the cost of consistency between sections of the same course.

On one hand, I knew I had to respond to the need for assessment demanded by my superiors; on the other, I didn’t want my response to be one that reinforced narratives that I would simply be the “caretaker” of writing on campus. To meet these demands on my own terms, I needed to align my beginning actions as director with those of a change agent, but I also needed to assuage the fears of our instructors who worried how my presence would affect them. If, as Malenczyk reminds us, we do not have to be limited solely by the administrative identities our universities choose for us, then we can construct our ethos or presence as directors by defining ourselves within new narratives. As a jWPA, I have chosen to define myself

as a contemplative administrator and to model the mindfulness I see at the heart of this leadership style in my relationships with others on campus and through my actions as a writing program director. Contemplative administration is the means by which I enact my feminism and remain sensitive to my material placement as a young, female jWPA.

It is a common view that what makes us strong teachers can make us effective administrators. Richard Gebhart in, "Administration as Focus for Understanding the Teaching of Writing" included in the *Longman Sourcebook for Writing Program Administrators* defines administration as macro-level teaching. While writing program directors may not work with all students directly, they do touch every student through "policies, committees, staff members, programs of training and supervision, appeals procedures, and the like" (Gebhart 36). Gebhart encourages us to draw upon the very pedagogies we use in our classrooms to help us navigate our administrative roles and responsibilities.

As Gebhart suggests we might, I came to contemplative administration naturally through teaching after I experienced care-based administration as unsuited to the material conditions and writing culture present at my current university, as I explain above. For the past five years, I have engaged students in a feminist contemplative writing pedagogy that is based on the tenets of contemplative education. Contemplative education is a globalized, holistic learning approach that fuses a traditional curriculum with contemplative practices including yoga, meditation and the martial arts, among others. Because this pedagogical approach is integrative, asking us to see our students and ourselves as minds and bodies and valuing first-person knowledge alongside other substantiated forms of evidence, I find it to be one that harmonizes with the tenets of feminist pedagogy. And so, passersby to my classrooms are as likely to find me asking students to close their eyes and concentrate on their breath through meditation as they are to witness me conducting a writing workshop on generating claims. Indeed, I believe that the two acts can reinforce each other. I continue to teach using contemplative pedagogy because my students seem calmer and more aware of their writing and learning habits, and because they tell me that our practices help them to focus and learn more in my classes and to feel more engaged in and control over their writing processes.

Like other teaching methods, contemplative education forwards a cohesive picture of theory, curriculum, pedagogy and assessment; unlike traditional methods, "an emphasis on open awareness distinguishes the contemplative approach" (Grossenbacher and Parkin 2). This emphasis on open and attentive awareness isn't a separate pedagogical component to be put alongside theory, assessment and the like, but instead infuses every aspect

of the contemplative educational process. The contemplative educational process has a history in our own field. James Moffett was an early proponent of contemplative pedagogy in writing studies when he argued that “writing and meditating are naturally allied activities” (231). Our current decade has seen an explosion of interest in the contemplative with academic initiatives such as the Mind and Life Institute, responsible for neuroimaging the brains of meditators like the Dalai Lama, and the Association for the Contemplative Mind in Higher Education (ACMHE), a “multidisciplinary, not-for-profit, professional academic association with a membership of educators, scholars, and administrators in higher education,” which “promotes the emergence of a broad culture of contemplation in the academy by connecting a network of leading institutions and academics committed to the recovery and development of the contemplative dimension of teaching, learning and knowing,” according to its website. Academic interest has been buoyed by new scientific evidence testifying to the beneficial psychophysiological effects of contemplative practices like mediation and yoga. Growing acceptance and inclusion of the contemplative within the university “is happening, not coincidentally [then], as the scientific research on mindfulness is expanding and producing results relevant to teaching, learning and knowing,” notes Mirabai Bush, cofounder of ACMHE (183). And, this expansion is itself notable: “[o]ver the last twenty years, there has been an exponential increase in research...from some eighty published papers in 1990 to over six hundred in 2000” (Smalley and Winston 2). This research often centers on the effects of mindfulness, cited as the main benefit of contemplative practice.

In light of a long tradition of Eastern contemplative philosophy and practice, contemplative educators understand attention in terms of mindfulness, or, most simply, moment-to-moment awareness. In particular, mindfulness is a *learned* moment-to-moment awareness where each “thought feeling or sensation that arises in the attentional field is acknowledged and accepted as it is” (Bishop et al 8). Rather than over-identifying with or immediately reacting to thoughts and feelings as they play out in the moment, the practitioner of mindfulness creates a critical distance, a space between perception and response, that allows for eventual, intentional response as opposed to automatic, unthinking, and habitual reaction (Bishop et al 9). Because mindfulness is regulation of the here and now, *this* moment, it is always situated in a particular body and responsive to material conditions. And because it asks us to interrupt our ruminative thoughts *about* experience to focus on experience itself, inhibiting “secondary elaborative processing of the thoughts, feelings and sensations that arise in the stream of consciousness,” it involves a direct experience of embodied events (Bishop 10). The

act of turning off rumination temporarily (or at least putting our resources toward that noble goal), increases our capacity for attending to the present because our attentional range is limited when focused on both rumination and processing (Schneider & Shiffrin 1977, qtd Bishop et al 10).

Like critical thinking, mindfulness is a particular, intentional application of awareness and is best seen as a skill that can be developed with practice. As I yogi, I practice mindfulness each time I sit on my mat to meditate, and each time I flow through a series of poses, a *vinyasana*, linking breath and movement together. But, mindfulness doesn't just stay on the mat; not only can mindfulness learned through contemplative traditions transfer to our daily activities, but the very act of performing our day-to-day experiences can become a viable means of practicing mindfulness and learning to develop contemplative presence. Thus, it makes sense to apply mindfulness to the acts of WPAing and to make those administrative acts contemplative exercises in themselves.

Unlike feminist administration built on an ethic of care and indebted to a troublesome history of servant leadership, contemplative administration is built upon a foundation of mindfulness as understood through Eastern philosophy and practice. And, because it rests on focused attention, contemplative administration is useful for all WPAs who hope to break a cycle of automatic reactivity, whereby we may be pressed by our universities to react to existing problems rather than to reframe them in order to invite a slower and intentional responsiveness. The benefits of focusing on the here-and-now can certainly be reaped by jWPAs and experienced administrators alike. Mindfulness also respects embodied difference as it attunes us to our environments and asks us to alter our frames of perception to include the materiality of experiences as they occur. Respect for and attention to embodiment as lived and real and not a discursive production makes mindfulness a dynamic and vital practice of feminism. Finally, mindfulness asks us to simultaneously respect the wellbeing of our bodies as administrators at the same time that we work toward the wellbeing of our programs.

While interest in contemplative education is growing, contemplative administration remains undertheorized. In one of the few articles on this topic, Laura Beer reports her study of Naropa University in Boulder, Colorado to define this leadership style. Naropa, according to Beer, is committed to providing not only a contemplative education for students but also a contemplative workplace environment for faculty and staff. This university, created on the tenets of contemplative philosophy and practice, advocates and illustrates "a way of performing administrative duties with a high degree of self-awareness, respect for others, active feedback, and acceptance of diverse experiences and backgrounds" (Beer 218). At Naropa, meetings are begun

with a group bowing ritual and a moment of silence. Faculty, staff and students are also encouraged and supported in practicing mindfulness through a variety of contemplative activities from meditation, yoga and even labyrinth walking—spaces for each can be found on campus. Beer reports that as a result of contemplative administration, employees of Naropa identified workplace benefits such as greater communication between departments, faculty and administrators, more transparency and less anxiety, increased job satisfaction and performance as well as a greater sense of well being (224). Beer concludes that contemplative administration can be practiced anywhere, not just at a university committed to a contemplative educational mission, as long as mindfulness is used as a guide to practice.

As a jWPA, I am interested in how mindfulness can be used by contemplative administrators to interrupt a cycle of reactivity and to reframe the actions we take to ensure the success of our programs and our own wellbeing. In my case, I knew that I needed a better understanding of my program, a picture of what it looked like in the present, not clouded by my hopes for future improvement and apart from the pressures of assessment, before I could begin the actions that would position me as a change agent. From there, growth would be possible. Growth of my program was, in other words, dependent on my ability to view it mindfully, inserting a space between my perception of it and the intentional response that I wanted to characterize my leadership. Thich Nhat Hanh gives contemplative administrators a way of understanding this kind of growth with his definition of mindfulness as applied to the seemingly trivial act of washing the dishes:

While washing dishes one should only be washing the dishes, which means that while washing the dishes one should be completely aware of the fact that one is washing the dishes. At first glance that might seem a little silly: why put so much stress on a simple thing? But that's precisely the point. The fact that I am standing there and washing this bowl is a wondrous reality, conscious of my presence, and conscious of my thoughts and actions. There's no way I can be tossed around mindlessly like a bottle slapped here and there on the waves. (4-5)

Growth in Hanh's example is to be wholly focused on the "nowness" of dish washing and nothing else. In other words, washing the dishes with mindful presence is both the means and the end of this contemplative act. Transferring these lessons to administration means I must apply such slow, conscious, and open presence to my program and the people in it.

So rather than speeding through changes, I have chosen to spend my first two years as a jWPA building presence in my program and among the

adjuncts that staff the majority of our first-year writing courses. Conscious of the ways my referent power will develop from the ethos I cultivate and embody as director, I have intentionally sought to manage through mindful presence. To establish this presence, I set up meetings with faculty and adjuncts to discuss their experiences of teaching in our program and to solicit their opinions of what was working well and what wasn't. I saw this practice as one of mindfulness because it asked for sustained attention and not big action. Still collaborative and focused on relationships, I also saw it as distinctly feminist. On a small campus like mine, so much of my narrative presence is constructed from one-on-one connections with others; as a contemplative administrator, I can use this to my advantage by allowing the principles of mindfulness to guide these interactions.

Consequently, I tried to refrain from domineering these meetings so that my primary actions were to ask leading questions and to listen. In fact, I often thought about Hanh's advice during the discussions I had with instructors in our program. The purpose of these meetings was not to "fix" the program or even to provide personalized care; I was simply "washing the dishes" with as much mindfulness and presence as I could muster on any given day. That my first impulse was not to fix the problems diagnosed by those within the program and quickly filling my notebook is reflective of the ways contemplative administrators must practice self-care, so as not to subsume their own well-being for the sake of caring for others. I also "washed the dishes" by choosing to teach all the classes I could within our program, so I would be able to enter conversations about our courses based on my own experiences on campus. During one of these early meetings, an experienced adjunct, Susie,⁵ asked me directly what my plan was for change, and I answered truthfully that I wasn't sure at that point because I hadn't yet done enough listening. A narrow focus on caring may encourage us to speed through change, so that we may respond quickly to others' needs as we initially see them; mindfulness requires an application of slow and measured attention for a more comprehensive view.

Laura Micciche argues that we far too often succumb to the pressure of instituting dramatic changes, which she calls "big agency" in her recent *WPA* article, "For Slow Agency" (73). *WPA* work often hinges on the big agency of creation and revision, of forward and fast action that produces structural results. But, this can lead to what Micciche herself experienced as a jWPA: sleepless nights and a feeling of being overtaken by her job. Big agency in our field is symptomatic of American culture's focus on doing over being: "[w]e want to do, to succeed, to produce. Those of us who are good at the doing seem to fare well in many of our institutions and corporations.... We are so focused on doing that we have forgotten all about being,

and the toll this takes on our physical, mental, and emotional health is palpable” (Smalley et al 17-18). Micciche uses the metaphor of hypermilling, or the practice of slowing down to conserve energy and gas while driving a vehicle, to argue against this cultural trend and for attending to productive stillness and slowness in our administrative conceptions of agency. She hopes that the slowness this metaphor stresses will change the ways we understand what it is to act as WPAs.

I appreciate Micciche’s argument because it creates a space for mindfulness in the application of feminist administration. If the status quo is to equate WPAing with rushing to action, then there is value in slowing down, in focusing on being and not just doing, just what mindfulness asks of us. Contemplative administration helps to fill a gap in our feminist models, which haven’t necessarily adjusted expectations for big agency and fast-paced actions even if they have forwarded a focus on collaboration. In a time when the economy is tight, admissions are down and our program budgets are getting cut back while our responsibilities as administrators are growing, the long-term benefits of slow and mindful agency are increasingly important. Mindful agency can help ensure the success of our programs and help us acknowledge the kinds of support we need to carry out writing initiatives that are feasible and actionable on our campuses without resulting in WPA burnout. Because these are realities all WPAs are now experiencing, contemplative administration is a practical choice for all of us, not just those of us who count ourselves among the untenured ranks. So, while my argument has been driven by the specifics of my experiences as a jWPA, contemplative leadership can benefit us all.

And yet, when we are expected to deliver big changes and to work quickly, slowing down can be a risk. So while “[s]lowing one’s pace is not equivalent to loafing,” we must still make our case through “persuasive, strategic communication” (Micciche 84). As with any approach, contemplative administration is best received when we are clear about our intentions and goals. Conscious of this, I made sure to communicate my contemplative administrative goals to my department chair and received her support to focus on the smaller acts of developing presence within and insight into our program before I suggested large changes to our curriculum. But being seen as a loafer, as refusing to act, is not the only risk we take. No matter how communicative we are, our slow movement can also be misinterpreted as refusing to collaborate with others, a problem I initially encountered. Because slow movement can lengthen the process of change, it can confuse our peers who expect swift action. If swift action doesn’t occur, speculations can arise that administrators are scheming behind the scenes. Initially, some faculty read my attempts to listen and collect experiences before insti-

tuting changes to our curriculum as proof that I would introduce those changes top-down, without discussion or collaboration.

Practicing mindfulness, I had labored over a new curricular structure that would address some of the concerns that instructors had raised in the one-on-ones I conducted, increase consistency between sections, and yet allow for as much freedom as possible to respect the program culture I had inherited and the teaching experience of many of our instructors. While I took responsibility to draft an initial version of these documents, I did so in collaboration with our instructors, using their feedback to inspire changes that would offer potential solutions to the areas in our old curriculum that they felt were problematic. Because I was moving slowly, I first introduced working curriculum documents at a composition committee meeting. These were meetings I called to order usually about once a month in order to discuss any issues within the writing program and to collaborate on projects. Upon taking my position, I learned that members of this committee were both tenured and adjunct, and that I was to use this group as a sounding board and starting place for any new initiatives. I hoped to flesh out these documents with the committee first and then to disseminate to the larger pool of instructors in the program for feedback and discussion after any initial kinks had been worked out. However, one faculty member, Susie, read my slow action and mindful movement as a lack of transparency. Though Susie wouldn't engage me in dialogue, I inferred from the few comments she did offer in group settings that she was worried I would run down the clock just enough so that there wouldn't be sufficient time for collaboration. She seemed to interpret my mindful movement as a means of passive-aggressively gaining individual control. So, despite my request to first keep these curriculum revision documents among the committee (of which she was the representative adjunct member), she immediately disseminated them to the entire program. Because those documents were released by someone other than me and without appropriate contextualization, they caused a flurry of anxiety and heated discussion among our instructors. And, because they did not know these were draft documents upon their release, many instructors believed that they indicated changes to be acted upon immediately, without time for them to provide feedback before they were adopted.

As a new jWPA trying to build trust within my campus community, this leak easily could have caused me many sleepless nights—what Micciche means us to avoid. But, my training in mindfulness allowed me to take a step back and assess the situation before reacting defensively or internalizing this struggle as a sign of my failure. This is why contemplative administration, in particular, is so valuable. Unlike Micciche's hypermill-

ing, mindfulness isn't just a metaphor for our work, but it can be a practice with measurable effects on jWPA's wellbeing, as it was for me in this case. By affirming my practice of mindfulness and bringing the contemplative to the places and spaces of my work, contemplative administration helps me get a handle on the stressors of my job and promotes my wellbeing, or "neural integration," which can create integrative pathways in my brain that promote my intrapersonal and interpersonal attunement, according to neural research (Siegel 40). While mindfulness cannot change the demands made on us, it changes the ways we view those demands and makes apparent that we have choices about how to respond. Bob Stahl and Elisha Goldstein write that "[h]ow we respond has less to do with the actual event than how we make meaning of the event" (27). Mindfulness allows me to be more responsive to my automatic stress reactions by noting them and their triggers. When I understand stress as a choice in my control, I can choose to respond differently to stressful situations. Because our brains are as plastic as our programs, as jWPAs we can literally rewire ourselves for less stress by using mindfulness as a personal and professional practice.

In my case, rather than reacting in anger toward Susie, I funneled my emotional energy into finding a way to mitigate the damage done when the working curriculum documents were leaked. Because I was able to step out of the ruminative loop that would normally have me more worried about what had *already* happened than the ways I could positively affect the leak of the documents, I was able to use this event to characterize my administrative ethos as one dominated by slow, conscious change—as one of mindfulness. Instead of hastily attempting to patch up misunderstandings via email, I conferred with my chair and on my recommendation, we invited all of our writing instructors, adjunct and tenure-track, to the next department meeting to discuss with me and the rest of the faculty the changes represented in the curriculum documents. That I was able to open up a normally private forum to include adjunct voices was a testament to my allegiance to transparency and my genuine desire to receive feedback. The department meeting itself became an exercise of mindfulness as it acknowledged and accepted the feelings provoked by the proposed curriculum and created a space between initial reaction and the intentional response that would follow. Instead of using the meeting to convince instructors of the value of the documents, I asked attendees to become a part of the early revision process and to approach the meeting as a chance to brainstorm positive as well as negative consequences of adopting the new curricular goals and outcomes. Instead of only venting concerns, then, instructors became part of a mindful process of noticing and listening to each other and to me. I also used the meeting to listen to instructor concerns with mindfulness, so that I could

hear all comments and accept them without initial judgment. For many WPAs, criticism can be especially difficult because of how closely we carry our administrative identities and how many hours we invest in our jobs. With an attitude of mindfulness, however, I am reminded of the limits of my own perspective and the need to join with others for the strongest and most comprehensive view.

Even now with the new curriculum in place, our instructors still cite that meeting as a valued forum in which their voices were heard. For me, it has become a key moment of understanding how contemplative administration can produce both positive effects for my program and my own wellbeing. By choosing my action slowly and with focused attention, I made progress in becoming the change agent I hoped to, and I created distance from the expectation that I was to react quickly to “fix” problems and smooth emotions. I also created a positive forum that helped to shake up preconceived expectations and alter old habits (and their accompanying fears and resulting scripts). Reid is most certainly correct to warn feminist administrators to be satisfied with “good enough” lest we allow our jobs to take over the entirety of our personal and emotional lives. Though, that is an attitude that may be easier to adopt when programs are approached mindfully through contemplative administration than when administrators reactively respond with care. And, with its focus on self-reflection and insistence on self-care, mindfulness becomes a sharper tool than care for feminists who want to resist the gendered hierarchy of labor in our field.

Slow movement and mindfulness may yet be the exception rather than the rule on my campus at large, but my goal as an administrator is to use mindfulness to slowly transform my writing program’s culture to one that stresses wellbeing through the application of mindfulness focused on intention and action (not just reaction) as well as engaged thoughtfulness. So, while my application of mindfulness may slow down my movements as an administrator, it does so with measurable, positive effects. In addition to changing dominant narratives within my program through my interactions with writing instructors during workshops, meetings and one-on-one’s, I have used my small campus to my advantage to consistently characterize myself as a mindful administrator. My colleagues know that I value mindfulness as a practice and skill because I’ve purposefully made this public: I’ve volunteered to speak about its advantages within various classes; I’ve openly shared my research connecting mindfulness and writing during campus events, such as when my university hosted a regional conference for the English Honor Society, Sigma Tau Delta; I also label myself a contemplative writer-teacher-administrator every chance I get. Colleagues have also seen me on the quad practicing yoga with my students and some may

have even joined in on the various meditation flash mobs or community yoga events my classes have organized. In short, I've embraced opportunities to be aligned with my contemplative practices and interests. If, on my small campus, I am going to "become," to some degree, my program, then I might as well use this slippage to insist on my and my program's contemplative presence. And while my application of contemplative administration is surely enhanced by my personal practice of yoga and meditation and supported by my teaching methods, I could still utilize contemplative administration without these additional practices. As the contemplative practice of yoga teaches us, "[e]ach moment of your life is a moment of potential practice" (xxi). Practicing mindfulness in our daily exercise of leadership within our programs is all that is needed to be contemplative administrators and to give our administrative actions, even the small ones, a renewed sense of purpose.



NOTES

1. While there was a sequence of writing classes established at my university upon my arrival, there was no cohesive writing program per se. My colleagues in literature had worked to manage these classes as best they could without release time, administrative titles or self-claimed "expertise" in writing studies in years past, but pressed the need for a WPA assistant professor position in writing to help create a program that unified these courses with a common purpose and in light of best practices in composition and rhetoric. Their advocacy resulted in my hire.

2. Often, when the topic of writing or the writing program comes up in campus or school meetings, my colleagues will often look at me and say, "You know, *you*." Such declarations equate me with the writing program in campus narratives, testifying to me that if either the program or I are aligned with care, the other will surely take on this presence as well.

3. While Ellen Langer has researched the effect of mindfulness on learning for decades, Judith Simmer-Brown and Fran Grace date the current interest in contemplative education to the 1990s and through the 2000s. During this time, there was an increase in publications on this topic, coverage of newly-built centers for meditation and mindfulness on college campuses nationwide and the creation of academic initiatives like the Center for the Contemplative Mind in Society and the Contemplative Studies Initiative at Brown University (xiv). These authors explore recent incarnations of contemplative education in their 2011 *Meditation and the Classroom*.

4. See the “Greenleaf Center for Servant Leadership” at greenleaf.org for current research on and applications of this leadership approach.
5. To protect privacy, I have used pseudonyms.

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Flat and Fertile: A Conversation About the Writing Program at Illinois State University

Shirley K Rose and Joyce Walker

Shirley Rose (SR): Thank you, Joyce for taking some time out to talk with me about the writing program at Illinois State University. This interview is the fourth in a series *WPA: Writing Program Administration* has devoted to conversations about the writing programs at the home institutions of the WPAs who serve as local hosts for the summer conference of the Council of Writing Program Administrators. I'm looking forward to coming to the Bloomington-Normal area for the conference this July and I'm eager to hear about ways you think the writing program there reflects its institutional and geographical location. First, I want to start with some basic demographic information about your writing programs at Illinois State University. What are the programs and how are they organized? Who leads them and how does the organization of the writing program reflect the larger institution?

Joyce Walker (JW): The writing program that I direct is a general education writing program, so we handle the general education writing requirements. We teach four courses: English 101, which is the first year writing course that all freshmen students take unless they have done a dual enrollment in their high schools, and English 101-10, which is the same course but it has a writing consultant that's attached to the course and smaller course size so that students can get one-on-one help as they go through the course. We have also an English 145, which is an intermediate level writing course that's not taken by all the students across campus. Certain majors have their students take intermediate writing with us and other majors have intermediate writing courses within the major; we serve a lot of different majors in that course but not all the students on campus; then English 145.13 which is specifically an intermediate writing course for all the majors in the College of Business.

In addition, our English Department has tracks in both undergraduate and graduate programs that focus specifically on writing and/or on rhetoric and composition. So, our program is really intra-disciplinary. We are an English Studies program rather than a traditional English Department, so students are often interested in different combinations of study that have to do with rhetoric and/or writing. For example, they might be studying creative writing and publishing or technical communications and rhetoric and composition, so it is actually quite a bit different from other institutions where majors might be tracked more strictly in their own area.

SR: You said that it is an English Studies department and not an English Department...

JW: We think that makes a difference and what that basically means is this: About 25 or 30 years ago the department made a very specific decision to think about how to integrate the different areas of English and allow students, both undergraduate and graduate, to move across different areas rather than tracking students rigidly into single areas. It is a little more obvious in our graduate program; our PhD program is specifically an English Studies program, so students can take courses across the board in linguistics, rhetoric and composition, technical communications, English education, creative writing, and in literature and cultural studies. So, all of our students have had at least some coursework in other areas, rather than just in their own specific scholarly interests. And I think that changes the dynamic of the department quite a bit. It changes how we hire. It changes a lot of things. It's quite a bit different than other programs that I've been associated with because that constant focus is to say "Well how can I make connections across these boundaries?" rather than "How do we strengthen these boundaries between programs?" So, for example, for a lot of our hires we are thinking across three or four different areas to try to figure out, "Well if we got a hire who could do these three things then he or she would be able to teach classes over here and over here." So it is different than other institutions where I've worked.

SR: I can certainly see at the graduate level how different that is, and for undergraduate majors as well. Do you see ways that that set of attitudes is reflected in first year writing as well? Or in those intermediate writing courses that are for other majors?

JW: The writing program at Illinois State University is, I would have to say, a relatively new kind of program compared to most writing programs, and I don't want to get really enthusiastic about it because it's my thing so I could talk about it for days. But, we do what we call a

genre studies/ activity theory focused writing course. It focuses on literate activity in ways that I think can be interesting to teachers from different disciplinary backgrounds. Also, there are two other things going with our program that affect the graduate students who teach with us. One is the intra-disciplinary focus, so you very rarely get a grad student who would say “Well, I don’t care about teaching composition at all. That’s not interesting to me.” Second, our program as well as ISU as a whole, has this very strong education and teaching focus and because of that our program actually advertises our interest in pedagogies across all the different disciplines. Students come in very interested in pedagogy, and that helps us to create coherence and enthusiasm for the program.

SR: You mention the strong teaching focus at ISU. It’s known as the oldest public university in Illinois; and, as the name of the town where it’s located signals, it was founded as Illinois State Normal School, a training school for teachers. I know the university motto is “Gladly we Learn and Teach.” How are the university’s late 19th Century roots as an institution focused on teacher preparation evident in the English Department’s 21st Century academic programs?

JW: It’s very connected, because most of our graduate students, coming in, have already expressed an interest in teaching, and then in our Writing Program, they get a very strong grounding in pedagogies that relate to the study of literate activity of all kinds. So, many of our teachers are able to incorporate things they learn in the Writing Program into other classes they teach. Also, because we’re a teaching-focused institution, grad students get a chance to teach at least one or two courses that are in their area, and that means they come back to the writing program with all kinds of knowledge from these areas and then incorporate that into their teaching in our program. So it is almost like we have a writing across the curriculum program within our department, and I think that has a big influence on how writing is taught in our department.

SR: That is really interesting because it seems like you’re describing a set of attitudes that probably are part of that theoretical approach to your curriculum that is mutually reinforcing.

JW: That’s the reason I came to ISU, because I was really interested in building a certain kind of writing program and ISU provides enormous support for the first year writing program. We have a full time assistant director, an office manager who manages the business end of the program, and eight graduate students who are assigned to do program work as part of their assistantships. For the size that we are,

I don't know of any other WPA who has this same level of support. We're also given a lot of freedom (and responsibility) to think about what our writing program should be doing and teaching, rather than simply being asked to follow the dictates of the University. I know there are programs where WPAs really struggle with trying to balance the requirements of the institution with their own knowledge about what works for writers, but at ISU, especially within the department, there is a focus that says "No, we should be theoretical about what we're doing in this course, we should be on the cutting edge, we should be thinking ahead about how it is that people really become literate and about how that would impact what we would want to teach in a course like this." I've been really encouraged to do that here. The graduate students I work with at ISU are so interested in pedagogy that they are really willing to read a lot of theory and research scholarship on literacy and learning. I know that some WPAs can find it difficult to promote a really rigorous, scholarly approach to teaching writing. So I think it does make a big difference that at ISU we can be rigorous in adopting a theoretical and research based approach to teaching first year courses.

SR: Yes, it does if they're coming in with an orientation toward pedagogy and the entire department culture and institutional culture is supporting teaching as a serious intellectual activity that is informed by theory. So, I can see how that would make a significant difference. I agree with you about the wonderful amount of support you have for the program...you said something about "considering the size"—how many students do you have in first year writing?

JW: We serve about 3,000 students a year, so it is not a small size but it is not nearly as big as even the University of Illinois, certainly not as big as Arizona State University. It is a relatively medium sized institution, around 20,000 total enrollment.

SR: What do your—was it eight or nine—program assistants do?

JW: Eight graduate assistants.

SR: What are their duties?

JW: I'll digress for a minute by saying that when I came into the program the assistants all did basically the same tasks: they served as mentors, they observed classes, and they ran workshops. I think this is similar to what many programs do. However, over the last couple of years, we've made the positions more specialized and focused on teaching them professional skills in certain areas. This helps them when they go on the job market, we think. So, our eight positions include three "Teaching Coordinators," one for each of the courses that we teach

(two levels of first year writing and one intermediate writing course). Each of these coordinators helps to develop materials for our new instructor orientation, and works one-on-one with all the new teachers in their first semester teaching, as well as mentoring and assisting more experienced teachers. These positions are all also starting to do some Writing Across the Curriculum work. Then we have an “Outreach Coordinator” who does a range of different tasks related to our community outreach: she works with K through 12 teachers, trying to create bridges with K through 12 teachers in the region, especially schools that feed a lot into ISU to talk with them about what our expectations are. We’ve done quite a bit of work actually with small groups of teachers on the common core and also with some community colleges in the area, including Heartland Community College. She also handles other kinds of outreach, like our Grassroots Writing Research Scholarship program, and our visiting speaker series. In 2013 Anis Bawarshi was our speaker, and he was awesome.

SR: I saw that on the website. That’s great.

JW: We also have a person who primarily does data gathering and assessment, our “Data and Research Coordinator.” And we have a “Technology Coordinator,” because all our writing classes are taught in computer classrooms. We also have a *Grassroots Writing Research Journal* editor who serves as the associate editor for our journal, which you can find out more about, if you want to, on our website: [<http://isuwriting.com/grassroots/>]

SR: I found the link for *Grassroots* and took a quick look. The journal’s title is a nice reminder of the prairie that makes up so much of the Central Illinois terrain, though I suppose there is not much original native grassland still uncultivated. Who coordinates the efforts of all of the people who contribute the work that goes into an undergraduate research journal?

JW: We have an assistant who acts as the associate editor of the *Grassroots* journal and I am the editor. We also have a professional development coordinator who coordinates all our professional development events for teachers, and we do a lot of those every semester. We do two big events at the beginning of each semester, then we have our orientation for new teachers, and then sponsor other events for teachers where they can get together to discuss an issue or create a reading group and talk about particular issues they want to explore. It’s really all part of our “grassroots” approach, which focuses on cultivating involved partners who can participate actively in shaping the direction of the

program. Rhizomatic, I suppose, as you mentioned in discussing the prairie grass.

SR: Are all of these assistants graduate teaching assistants?

JW: Yes, they are all PhD level graduate teaching assistants.

SR: I can see pros and cons to that, both coming out of graduate teaching assistants' relative transience. One advantage would be that because they are a transient population you can be more responsive to what the current needs are; but at the same time, that transience must mean that to some extent you are always starting over again and again and again with your training of them for what they need to be doing.

JW: Yes. We've learned to create what I call a documentation layer, so all of the events that we do have an "event plan" that we produce. So, for example, for our visiting speaker series we have a planning document that outlines all the tasks and provides a timeline, so that when we have turnover, the new person can pretty easily take up the task. Although most of our Coordinators take on the position for 2 years, this kind of documentation really helps with transitions, as well as helping to professionalize the graduate assistants. I think it's an important part of the work of a WPA – which I suppose connects well to this year's conference theme: The WPA as Worker

SR: I think offering these kinds of program assistant positions and mentoring the graduate students in them is an important role for the WPA of a program like yours that is located in a department with a thriving graduate program with a strong record of job placement.

JW: Yes, it's something we're thinking about trying to discuss with others at the conference this year. How to organize work hours and document the value of your work, but also to do this in ways that allow you to limit your work to appropriate work hours, and how to use training documents and documentation of practices to both streamline and limit workload. This is something we've actually been very conscious of in our writing program.

SR: Joyce, I was very interested in how you connect this to the 2014 WPA Summer Conference theme: "WPA as Worker." Would you talk about that a little bit? I know you've thought about exploring connections between things your program does and the conference theme. Did you participate in a choice of what the theme would be?

JW: No, I didn't. That was given to us by the CWPA president Rita Malenczyk. That theme is interesting to me because the conference call for proposals talks about some of the real difficulties we have as WPAs, and as people who are not official WPAs but who are writing teachers who also have to do data collection, right? Because you have

people who have positions as WPAs but then in a lot of institutions they maybe have a WPA who is only getting a single course release, and so the other teachers who teach at those institutions also take on some of the roles of a WPA. They do data collection; they do assessment stuff. When I was at the WPA conference last year, a lot of the talks that I was most interested in, in terms of data collection about student learning and other things, were done by people who didn't have official jobs as WPAs. So the theme of "WPA as Worker" I would maybe turn it a little bit on its head and say "the work of WPAs." I think that one of the things we could do at this conference is really explore how do we create a space institutionally where people can care about these topics more than just the WPA doing all the work, right? How do you create an intuition where all the people who work in the writing program have some stake in what's happening?

I think that our writing program could serve as one of the possible models for how that can be done because we really do have a lot of collaboration and the teachers feel like they have a stake in what we're doing and they have access to the data and they help us figure out how to collect the data and what kind of data we want to collect. We are trying to create consensus without doing it in a top-down way. We thought we might try to talk about that model for a Writing Program, what we call coalescence.

SR: Say some more about this model of coalescence.

JW: Coalescence means that rather than starting out by trying to make everyone do the same thing in all of our classes, we encourage teachers to experiment with different ways of reaching our learning goals, and then share their practices with other teachers. Over time, we track how our practices "come together" in interesting ways. We really try to use these grassroots models of helping people come together to see what it is they care about and how they do it. And that is connected to Bob Broad's work with dynamic criteria mapping, I think. He's going to be giving one of the one day institutes before the WPA conference. [Note: Here is a link that speaks more about that process: http://www.usu.edu/usupress/books/pdf/7308_Organic_Intro.pdf; and here is a link to information about the institute: <http://isuwriting.com/cwpa2014/>].

SR: I will look forward to hearing from your writing program colleagues at the conference because that grassroots model sounds very useful. I understand what you're saying about how it is not an issue of how to manage people or how to get people to do what you want them to do,

but rather how to—the word I’m thinking of is very old-fashioned—“husband.” How do you husband your resources?

- JW: And how do you create frameworks that allow for continuity? That connects to my personal interest in technology because I started out as a New Media Studies person rather than a WPA originally, and so I’m always very interested in the ways that technology can be used to help provide people with the information that they need to work together effectively. For example, we started this year doing quite a bit of assessment and data collection using Wufoo [www.wufoo.com], which is an online survey program. We’ll be presenting on that at the 4Cs Conference—we have some graduate students who are going to be presenting along with me about how we see assessment as a way to provide data for everyone, the teachers and students. We have designed our assessments so the information can go back into the classrooms as data that students can work with. Since teaching students to work with information (collecting different kinds of data and analyzing it) is a big part of our undergraduate writing program, we’ve tried to find ways of using our own data to help teachers as they work with students to learn different kinds of research methods. For me, this way of thinking about data is part of the process of thinking about the work of WPAs: how can we find ways to collect and share data that are productive for everyone.
- SR: I agree that is important. I’m going to connect that back to some other questions. Everything we’ve been talking about is relevant to our central question, which is “How does your writing program reflect its location?” But let’s turn now to things that are more about regional issues. How do your teachers and students reflect the local and regional culture and economy of Central Illinois and maybe the Midwest more generally?
- JW: That question is a little difficult for me based on whether I’m talking about the department or the writing program specifically. In the writing program our instructors are almost all graduate students and full time non-tenure track faculty. We don’t use very much contingent labor at all, maybe six or eight sections a year. Most of those are former graduate students that have remained in the area, and a lot of them are doing full time work and they teach a course for us here and there. So, while our non-tenure track faculty and the adjuncts that work for us are very embedded in local and regional culture, the graduate students are often regional and national. About 60 percent are from locations around Illinois, while 10–11 percent are international students, leaving about 29–30 percent who are from a range of loca-

tions within the US. This gives us an interesting mix in terms of the teachers. But, in terms of the students, they are definitely representative of the region because more than 90% of ISU undergraduates are from Illinois. Because we're a very strong teaching college and many of our students are interested in careers related to teaching in all different subject areas, not just in English, we tend to draw from a fairly specific group, a student population of people who are interested in education. So, for example, in the English Department, if students are interested in teaching as a career, they'll select Illinois State over the other schools in the state of Illinois. We will be their top choice. I have thought about this a lot, and I guess the direction I kind of want to go isn't very representative of the whole but I think it is very interesting against the backdrop of the conference and its theme, and that is the attacks on teaching in our country.

SR: The attacks do seem to be growing in frequency and intensity.

JW: Illinois State is really a great place to look at and think about how the negative focus on teaching and teachers in our country has impacted how the education of teachers is working in this country.

SR: In what ways?

JW: I don't know if you saw the recent article that came out that was based on some research about the fact that the United States is really eleven different countries. [Note: see "Forget the 50 States" on National Public Radio: <http://www.npr.org/2013/11/11/244527860/forget-the-50-states-u-s-is-really-11-nations-says-author>].

SR: No, I didn't see that. Tell me more about it.

JW: Lots of folks I know re-posted the article on Facebook, but there was an article in the *Washington Post* on it, too. The author, Colin Woodard, did research on voting patterns and attitudes and offered the thesis that divisions in the US aren't "state-based" but based on different regions that tend to have very similar views. Colin says that there are about eleven of them in the United States and they're very different from each other, and the area Illinois fits in is "the Midlands." One of the things about the Midlands is that people tend to be pluralistic and organized around the middle class, which felt very accurate to me, and which I think really describes Illinois State well.

SR: Give me some examples.

JW: Our students are very middle class. That is a great description. Even if they're not middle class, they're middle class oriented, which is a better way to put it. And so that creates a certain flavor on campus, I think. People are practical about their degrees. They're goal oriented. They have something they are trying to do with their degrees for the

most part. They have a direction they are trying to go as undergraduates, and they are also less diverse, as is reflected by their status as middle class. It's also an orientation towards being safe and practical. But, currently in our country the middle class is endangered. It's shrinking yearly, and so the burdens on our students are related to the fact that many of them can't expect to have the kind of life that they've been trained to think about as fair. I also think it is interesting because they have a tendency to think of fair in ways that are fairly narrowly constructed. A lot of our teachers really focus on doing the work of bringing to these students a sense of national and international, global issues, ways to think about one's culture as one among many and being aware of its attitudes about economics, safety, and standard of living as a kind of a "fair" that is not applied equally to everyone. I think that's something for our students that's really important—both to get that sense of broadening out, especially since many of them are going to be teachers, and also to recognize that they have particular pressures and burdens based on who they are that have been growing over the last fifteen years and thinking about who it is they want to be and what kind of country it is that they want to live in, and to help them deal with the anxiety they feel about their futures.

SR: That's a really good point because, as you say, the middle class hasn't had to think about itself as threatened, by nature of the definition of middle class. If you have always thought that you were ordinary....

JW: Exactly. And I think that's kind of how our "Midlands" students see themselves. When I was going to school I came from a middle class home, and I'm from Illinois also, so I have a lot of affinity for these students generally because my background is similar. What I see in students now is that they have a sense of anxiety, especially also because of teaching being under attack generally in this country. These students come to us because they're really interested in teaching, which means they're really motivated in certain kinds of ways to help others, right? They're passionate about the act of teaching as a thing you do that participates in your culture and then they also have a sense of sort of safety growing up—of normalcy, speaking of Normal schools—that they associate with their own way of living. But all of that is in flux right now. I think that anxiety is really reflected in our students. But, I also think for us as WPA conference goers, this anxiety is an issue that is worth talking about. How are these changes going to affect those of us who teacher teachers, maybe in significant ways?

SR: Joyce, this leads right into another question I had. I'll try to make the connection clear. I want to know about the University's globalization plan, the big part that internationalization and globalization seem to play in the university's strategic plan. I was fascinated by this. I read your university's "Educating Illinois," the vision statement, the mission statement, and the goals, and there was nothing remarkable there. But then I read the strategic plan for internationalization, which is a separate document that is very detailed, and very specific, and very aspirational as well. I just thought, "Well, here's an institution that's not the first one I would have picked to go global."

JW: Yes, and obviously because of its geographical location, right? Its location is often clearly associated with a kind of insularity.

SR: Yes, though now that I think about it, the agribusiness that is such a big part of the Illinois economy has been international for a long time—from the international trading of commodities like the corn at the Chicago Board of Trade to the big farming machinery makers like International Harvester with their origins in Northern and Central Illinois. Could you talk about how you see the university's strategic plan for globalization?

JW: It is economically driven in many ways. I think Illinois has been a state that has been a relatively wealthy and powerful manufacturing state, and that has been in jeopardy since the beginning of the latest Recession. So you have companies like Caterpillar, with its early 20th Century origins in Peoria but now an international firm competing with other international companies, and others, like a lot of the regional food companies such as Archer Daniels Midland [in Decatur], and Kraft Foods Group, Inc. [with its cheese-processing plant in Stockton] because that's a big thing in Illinois. We produce an enormous amount of corn and soy beans, both of which are commodities that are starting to become interesting in ways beyond food, right? As potential energy resources.

SR: Good point. Archer Daniels started out as a linseed crushing business and moved from there into food processing. It shouldn't be too surprising that it is positioned now to process plant-based oils as alternative energy sources.

JW: Yes. So you have all this farm land and you have to figure out how to deal with that, and you also have this, in Northern Illinois, a very strong base for agriculture-related industry. And the state of Illinois recognizes that we're moving to a much more globally linked economy and they're hoping that helping Illinois think globally will be a way to produce more economic wealth for the state. At least my impres-

sion is that part of ISU's "global move" is driven by that. I think ISU is really trying to recognize that twenty years down the road their revenue sources from students are going to be based on a much more global economy. If they can start now, twenty years from now they'll be in place to be a strong institution in whatever that future looks like. But, they're not an institution that jumps on bandwagons and says "this is what we have to do *right now*." My impression of the strategic plan is that Illinois State is thinking twenty years down the road. They're thinking of how some of the degrees that they offer that are their most popular degrees are going to need to transition into more globally oriented degrees. So they want to be ready for that. Examples I would offer would be perhaps our Health Care programs and our College of Business.

SR: I think you're very wise and insightful. Given this tradition, this long time identity as a teacher-focused and teaching-focused institution, a teacher-preparation institution that is interested in teaching as an intellectual activity, how do you imagine that internationalizing that will look like?

JW: You have me there. I don't know the answer to that. From an activity theory perspective or from a genre studies perspective, when you think about literacy acquisition, it starts to become easy or way easier at least and interesting to start looking at how different people in different settings produce the texts that they produce, and acquire the literacies that they need and how those move across boundaries.

So for us in our writing program that has become a fundamental thing. It is not a reaching toward globalization so much as it is a changing of the way we think about what it means to be literate. So, for example, movements also related to World Englishes can be integrated into an activity theory model of teaching writing. There are questions that I know you probably have heard as a WPA, where the teachers are saying "but I need to teach them correct grammar because that's what will matter to them in the world." In our courses, we spend a lot of time doing pretty in-depth analysis of different kinds of writing settings and the grammars and the contingencies of those settings and how the settings are manifested in the texts that get produced. We basically say in our writing program that we are trying to turn students into writing researchers themselves. Not to make them aware, like in a writing-about-writing program, that there is such a thing as writing research but to make them into actual practical everyday writing researchers in how they go about thinking about the literate things they do in the world.

When you think about that issue and you think about globalization, the way that our program fits into that model is that once you take that approach, any setting that you move into—whether it is something that is right next door and looks like it is exactly what you already know how to do or it is moving to a different country and trying to talk with people who have learned other different kind of English or other languages – you’ll need to take a writing research approach. We look at a lot of cultural historical activity theory, so that means we’re looking at distribution and reception and the ecologies of writing settings. Our writing program applies a set of practices that can be used to engage in writing as an activity rather than a thing that you do correctly or a thing that you do wrong. So as you move into different settings, maybe different global settings, you’re not burdened with that sense of “this is the way it has to be because my teacher taught me I have to use semicolons like this.” You’re way more likely to be interested in and aware of the ways that the writing is changing.

Part of our long term goal is to think about knowledge transfer. You can’t look at knowledge transfer and not look at how it moves across unusual boundaries, not just traditional boundaries. I think our writing program participates in that larger globalization goal by taking a problem solving approach.

SR: Yes, you’ve made a convincing argument there that the writing program is already preparing the way, helping to build that culture.

JW: I think that it is really interesting, but when I was first here three years ago and I would talk to people about what we were doing in the writing program, I found there was—not necessarily a lot of resistance—but a lot of skepticism. People would say, “You’re doing *what?*” And I’d answer “activity theory,” and try to explain it a little bit. People would respond, “How do you get students to understand those complicated concepts?” That was a lot of what I heard. Now I’ve been asked to be on a writing across curriculum committee to try to develop a more robust writing across the curriculum program at Illinois State, and at the first meeting of that group I found that everyone was already saying how important it was that we do some of the things that our writing program is already doing. So when I told them about what we were doing in the Writing Program, they were receptive. And that wasn’t what it was like three years ago. I think that maybe it’s possible that the teaching focus at ISU is helping with the uptake of these ideas, because a lot of the teachers at Illinois State are aware of their own teaching practices in ways that are not necessarily the same as at other institutions...

SR: There is a kind of self-consciousness or habit of reflection about it, perhaps.

JW: Maybe, and so as I start to talk to people and I try to ease their fears about why aren't we exclusively studying grammar, they can immediately start to see some value and I don't think that's been the case in other places where I tried to start this sort of thing rolling. And maybe it is just time, too – that thinking about this issue is evolving at a lot of institutions. I think a lot of people are starting to see the complexities of genre differently than they did even ten years ago.

SR: I think that's true.

JW: Generally people are becoming more aware that writing isn't always exactly the same in every setting. That makes it easier to make that argument.

SR: I would agree that there is more understanding of that. Let's close in here at the end. This has been so interesting.

I want to ask these last two questions because they are two of my favorites, if you have the time. One is this: when the WPA Conference comes to Normal this summer, what should we make sure that we see on your campus, besides your writing program offices and classrooms that will help us to understand the cultural location of the writing program or of ISU more generally?

JW: I've given a lot of thought to that question, and what I would suggest is that both work and resources are distributed across our campus. Probably the most interesting thing to do would be to talk to people because there are lots of different groups doing interesting things and they're very oriented towards accomplishing things in collaborative ways. I think what you really want to be interested in at Illinois State is the sense that we have of people working together to try to think about what it means to teach and learn. For example, our Center for Teaching and Learning is not in a fabulous, big building, but if you go in there and say, "Hi, I'm a teacher from another campus. I'd be interested in to know what you are doing here," then somebody will sit down with you and talk with you about what they're doing and how they're doing it. Claire LaMonica, who is also a member of the English Department faculty, is the director there, and she's been enormously helpful to us in the Writing Program. And I feel like I've had that experience everywhere I've gone at ISU. For example I've talked with Dane Ward, the Dean at Milner Library about collaborating to try to figure out how teachers use research in their classrooms, and he was just so approachable and interested. I feel that ISU has a fairly flat hierarchy, and that makes it easy to work and talk with people. So I

would say just take a walk around campus and you'll find a lot of people doing good work in their areas, and not just one or two programs getting all the attention and resources.

SR: Let me move on to my last question. I have a metaphor for the program that I direct and that metaphor is the ocotillo. I don't know if you've ever seen one but it grows very tall. It is a succulent that is native to the desert Southwest where I live. It can survive on very little water. When it has to do that it is straggly and deformed looking. But when it gets water, it has these thousands of tiny leaves on each branch and really amazing red flowers at the tips. It is just stunning. I think of my writing program as the same. We can get by. We can get by on really minimal resources; but when we get the resources, we can do amazing things. Do you have a metaphor for the writing program you direct?

JW: Just as you were talking I was having a moment...I had a friend when I was doing my PhD who had a t-shirt that said, "Central Illinois: Flat and Fertile." I think that based on all the things I've been saying to you, the metaphor I would use would be the land, that we are flat and fertile in that way. We are capable of producing a lot of different kinds of things, and we're fertile in that the ideas we produce are allowed to grow and change. We are a place that is nourishing, and we're not really into building hierarchies. But I don't know that I could think of a particular object that represents that to me. Except for the idea of growing things in rich soil. We do a lot of that in Illinois, and I think that is a good metaphor for what we do. But if you know anything about farming, if you know anything about ecology, there are ways that you can destroy that, by not paying attention to the needs of the whole ecosystem, by using chemicals that taint the food or the water. I would like to think of us as a program that can be ecologically resilient, that we can become inter-networked with the rest of our institution in ways that are really productive. Not necessarily powerful in the sense of controlling, but more serving as a ground that is nourishing to the people that come to us to learn about how to think like a writer.

SR: I think that's a wonderful metaphor—"flat and fertile." I read that the difference in altitude between the lowest point and the highest point in Illinois is only a thousand feet or so. There's a twelve thousand foot difference in Arizona, my state (see http://www.cleveland.com/datacentral/index.ssf/2012/04/highest_and_lowest_elevations.html). I grew up on the prairies of Colorado, so I have an affinity for the wide open spaces people describe as "flat." I like the idea of the writing program as ground that might be considered featureless and boring because flat, but should instead be valued as the best kind of space

for growing. I found a description of the geology of Illinois—admittedly, on Wikipedia—that said the abundant soil of Illinois was made up of a very thick layer of illite, the most common kind of soil in the world, on Pennsylvanian bedrock that was “here before the dinosaurs” (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Geography_of_Illinois). So I also like the analogy of appreciating the richness of the ancient soil that makes up the writing program’s curriculum, respecting it, and being careful about the dangers of introducing various kinds of artificial fertilizers into it. I hope I haven’t carried your metaphor too far, Joyce. Thank you so much. Was there anything else you wanted to say?

JW: I really appreciate your giving me the chance to think through some of these things because some of the things I said to you were not things that I have said before. I actually said them as I thought through the answers to your questions, so that was productive for me.

SR: That’s great. It was great talking with you, and I’ll see you in Normal at the WPA Conference this summer!

JW: I look forward to that.



Review Essay

“All Things to All People”: The Expanding Role of Writing Centers

Rebecca Lorimer Leonard and David Stock

Babcock, Rebecca Day, and Terese Thonus. *Researching the Writing Center: Towards an Evidence-Based Practice*. New York: Peter Lang, 2012. 214 pages.

Geller, Anne Ellen, and Michele Eodice, eds. *Working with Faculty Writers*. Logan: Utah State UP, 2013. 320 pages.

Grutsch McKinney, Jackie. *Peripheral Visions for Writing Centers*. Logan: Utah State UP, 2013. 174 pages.

Lee, Sohui, and Russell Carpenter, eds. *The Routledge Reader on Writing Centers & New Media*. New York: Routledge, 2013. 304 pages.

Writing centers are vital to contemporary college writing cultures.¹ As such, writing centers are well-positioned to support writers in ways not easily accomplished in other campus spaces or units: acting as language and literacy mediators (Grimm), modeling for faculty best practices in responding to student writing (Harris), counteracting micro-acts of language discrimination or racism (Geller et al., Greenfield and Rowan), revealing the power of conversation to support rigorous and creative thinking, and more. Many writing program and writing center administrators believe the writing center to be a place that provides a “very crucial aspect of what writers need—tutorial interaction,” in which writers “gain kinds of knowledge about their writing and about themselves that are not possible in other institutionalized settings” (Harris 27). As Harry Denny claims in *Facing the Center*, “Writing centers are sites *par excellence*” for making “local, material and individual all the larger forces at play that confound, impede, and make possible education in institutions” (6). But this unique role in campus learning—

individualized, collaborative, extra-instructional—also opens a realm of responsibilities for all things centrally, or tangentially, related to writers.

Four new books in writing program administration suggest an expanding understanding of writing centers' role on college campuses. The books describe an increasing range of activities for supporting a wider variety of writers with an expanded view of what writing is. Each book calls for this change while exploring, to a greater or lesser extent, the evolving administrative work that accompanies it. As Chris Anson notes in *Working with Faculty Writers*, such an “expansion of services” may move writing program administrators “into less charted territories where new dangers lurk beyond the edges of prior experience” (26). For many writing program and writing center administrators, this danger is not new. But this image of the contemporary writing center raises questions about whose territories should be charted with what experience. Is it writing centers that should be doing this work? Do these expanding roles dilute the day-to-day tutoring sessions that Muriel Harris suggests are writing centers' most important contribution? Perhaps administrators should consider not which program should support faculty writers, conduct original research, or explore new media, but which of these tasks programs are already doing and why. Local contexts will determine whether or not these expanding roles are appropriate for writing centers. These books help writing program and writing center administrators think harder about these evolving contexts and the new roles they demand.

WRITING CENTERS AS FACULTY SUPPORT

Working with Faculty Writers reimagines college faculty as writers who need support, suggesting that writing centers should, in collaboration with others, assume this role. As Robert Boice notes in the Foreword, the collection's sixteen chapters show, through the “up-close observations” of practitioners (vii), what faculty writing support might look like. Editors Anne Ellen Geller and Michele Eodice highlight the broad scope of faculty writing programs, including voices from centers for teaching and learning, writing centers, and WAC programs at research- and teaching-intensive colleges, showing how faculty writing support directly contributes to a larger culture of writing on campuses (2, 293). Geller and Eodice argue that both universities and faculty themselves need to acknowledge the writerly identities of faculty and recognize writing labor as supportable work—recognizing faculty as workers who “write to earn” (7, 296). The collection's chapters are in service of this argument, reminding readers that faculty writing programs cannot be motivated by designations of remediation (failed faculty), but

must instead be planned with “a commitment to what many of our mission statements promise and value: lifelong learning” (293).

Thus, Geller and Eodice have constructed a collection that follows the long-time writing center dictum that all writers need readers. A broadened understanding of who these writers and readers are is presented in three parts: 1) “Leadership and Locations,” which explores who should do this work and where it should happen; 2) “Writing Groups/Retreats/Residencies,” which describes the forms faculty writing support can take; and 3) “Issues and Authors,” which explores how faculty writing identities can be reimagined. Varying points of view—from writing program administrators, teaching and learning center directors, and faculty writers themselves—are spread across the three parts so that each reveals a cross-section of a writing culture that values faculty writing.

Part 1 contains Chris Anson’s critical historical review of WAC programs that attend to faculty writing, UMass Amherst’s Center for Teaching and Faculty Development’s description of faculty programs that support faculty writing on a continuum (rather than in one-shot retreats or workshops), and Lori Salem and Jennifer Follett’s research-based proposal for starting a faculty writing center. Though Anson’s chapter focuses specifically on supporting faculty writing through WAC programs, he addresses two pressing concerns for writing centers’ role in faculty writing support. First, he calls “largely unexplored and theoretically questionable” the claim that supporting faculty writing leads to improved student writing support (22). Though many of *Working with Faculty Writers*’ chapters ground their arguments in the connection between writing support as teaching support (e.g., Michelle Cox and Ann Brunjes’ chapter), Anson calls this connection an assumption. He also questions writing centers’ and WAC’s place on the “sophistication continuum” of disciplinary-specific knowledge (25). As others have argued (Kiedaisch and Dinitz), Anson wonders if generalist writing centers have the expertise to guide cross-disciplinary faculty through the writing support that is the most meaningful to them—complex, discipline-specific critique of the kind they will receive from their field’s manuscript reviewers. Anson provides an important critical dimension to the collection, reminding readers that faculty need support not for “general rhetorical concerns” but for the “sophisticated concepts, research findings, and phenomena” that create rhetorical contexts for disciplinary professionals (28). Writing centers are perhaps best positioned then, to facilitate what Anson believes to be the most effective processes to improve a piece of writing—“having other disciplinary professionals read and respond to it” (28).

Salem and Follett’s smart chapter explores the process of building a faculty writing center by analyzing university policy documents for

“implicit beliefs concerning faculty literacy that animate university policies” to “recruit those ideas to our cause” (55). Salem and Follett ground their analysis first in an institutional rather than individual understanding of writing struggle—the university’s role in producing the writers it relies on writing centers to “fix” (53)—and second, in the shifting institutional environment for faculty writing—part-time faculty, English-only academic journals, journal ranking (54). The three themes that arise from their analysis—1) faculty do “research” and students “write”; 2) faculty writing (on or off research tracks) is individual evaluation; 3) faculty and universities want collaborative work—not only provide openings to argue for a faculty writing center, but also to reassign value to student writing centers. Salem and Follett say their first step would be to insist that “the central mission and message of a faculty writing center should echo that of student writing centers: that a place where writing can be transparently discussed and regularly practiced is good for everyone in the university” (66). They argue that a faculty writing center can succeed if directors “consciously build a rationale . . . based on ideas that the university *already sponsors*, but [select] ideas that allow us to circumvent the idea of fixing poor writers” (55, emphasis added). Salem and Follett’s savvy administrative strategy inserts a new program into writing work that already exists.

Part 2 of *Working with Faculty Writers* reviews the broad landscape of writing groups, retreats, and residencies that create essential faculty writing communities on campuses. Tara Gray, A. Jane Birch, and Laura Madson’s chapter explores the unique cross-disciplinary capacity of teaching centers to support faculty writers, arguing, along with Jessie L. Moore, Peter Felten, and Michael Strickland’s chapter on faculty writing residencies, that faculty writing support aligned with teaching programs brings about the added benefit of improved teaching of writing. Angela Clark-Oats and Lisa Cahill describe faculty writing groups as “a new space for engaging in literacy events within the academy,” a discursive opportunity “to address the alternative and competing discourses of the university” (112–13). Ellen Schendel, Susan Callaway, Violet Dutcher, and Claudine Griggs provide four institutional lenses on the same phenomenon of the writing retreat, finding that their follow-up assessments reveal both immediate and lasting impacts on participants: participants report feeling “more productive, more engaged in their work, more receptive to feedback, [and] happy that they’ve met colleagues from other departments” (160). Part 2 concludes with two case studies of faculty writing groups, both reflecting on how writing groups build unique cross-disciplinary practices and relationships.

Finally, the chapters in Part 3 move across the variety of writing identities taken up by faculty and soon-to-be faculty (graduate) writers. Cox and

Brunjes, directors of a WAC and Office of Teaching and Learning program respectively, show how faculty at teaching-mission institutions can take on simultaneous writer/teacher roles when supported in this endeavor by intentional WAC programming. They take their cue from the National Writing Project mission that values a “clear linkage between the depth of a faculty member’s writing practice, his or her reflection upon that practice, and the effectiveness of that faculty member as a writing teacher” (192–93). William P. Banks and Kerri B. Flinchbaugh’s chapter explores identities most explicitly, explaining that their WAC workshops did not increase faculty writing productivity until they focused explicitly on how faculty identified as writers themselves rather than those who taught with writing (229). The two programs they describe—consultation sessions for faculty in the school of medicine and a WAC Academy—are “up front” about what they say is a shifted ethos, engaging faculty in conversations about “why they do or do not see themselves as writers” (231). Letizia Guglielmo and Lynee Lewis Gaillet consider the complex writing role of contingent faculty who often publish without departmental support and thus write under unique pressures.

Part 3 importantly includes first person narratives of the faculty writing experience. William Duffy and John Pell echo the ethos proposed by Banks and Flinchbaugh, suggesting that their experience of “phased collaboration” is a productive orientation to co-authorship that helps faculty writers reflect on their writing practices while getting work done. They offer phased collaboration as a conceptual framework for “genuine collaboration” that guides writers to “discover ideas and compose texts” writers cannot necessarily produce on their own (247). Michigan State graduate students Elena Marie-Adkins Garcia, Seung hee Eum, and Lorna Watt describe weekly multidisciplinary writing groups that allow graduate students to practice the professional roles of specialists through regularly and sustained cross-disciplinary conversation. And Carmen Werder argues that a self-authorship theoretical model can encourage faculty writers to take on a role that best sustains a sense of writerly self (288).

Working with Faculty Writers is intended not just for writing center audiences, but for all writing program administrators, as well as for centers for teaching and learning and faculty writers themselves. In the introduction, Geller does, however, highlight writing centers’ role in supporting faculty writers, saying that centers “have always sought—and have often found—a larger institutional role influencing academic culture” with various writing initiatives like WAC and WID programs tending to “coalesce around writing centers as sites for universal writing support” (9). Thus, while requests or demands to support faculty writers may indeed feel to directors like yet

another set of responsibilities, Geller and Eodice show that faculty are not new writers to be attended to: they have been there all along. And since writing centers believe that all writers need readers, centers are already, in a way, doing this work.

WRITING CENTERS AS NEW MEDIA CENTERS

The Routledge Reader on Writing Centers & New Media presents nineteen chapters published between 1996 to 2010 that illustrate the critical role for new media in the future of writing centers. Editors Sohui Lee and Russell Carpenter hope their reader will motivate writing centers to incorporate new media theory, following models of writing centers such as Eastern Kentucky's Noel Studio for Academic Creativity that, as Andrea Lunsford says in the Foreword, "mark a key moment in writing center history, as writing becomes multimodal, multimedia, multilingual, and multivocal and as writing centers move to adapt to students' shifting communicative needs" (xii). The editors offer the reader a "shared reference point of scholarship" that improves the writing center field's understanding of new media by revisiting theory about new media from rhetoric and composition as well as from other fields (xvi). For the purposes of their book, they define new media as "the cultural objects that . . . use digital technologies for distribution of information, communication, and data . . . from video to application (apps) on cell phones" (xvii).

Six of the nineteen chapters were originally published about writing centers or for writing center audiences, and the other thirteen are Lee and Carpenter's determination of key readings in new media studies. Chapters are presented chronologically rather than thematically for readers to "identify intersections, overlaps, gaps, and opportunities" themselves (xv). Lee and Carpenter's introduction includes a useful "Reading Connections" section that presents six thematic chapter groupings, like "Communities of Practice" and "New Media Tutor Training," to guide these intersections. These landmark essays, together with writing center readings, accomplish three important goals: a reintroduction of often taken-for-granted new media terms, a dialogue about what is or is not new in new media tutoring, and an argument to move beyond programmatic description.

Recontextualizing Terms

The balance of the collection leans heavily toward theoretical or research-based pieces not originally intended only for writing center audiences. This balance brings about a recontextualization of many new media terms in current usage—*design*, *maker*, *multimodal*, *remediation*, *digital*—as well as

terms that have origins in composition, rhetoric, or literacy studies but have relevance to new media—*audience, collaboration, multiliteracy*. The collection sets these terms in the context of writing programs, and specifically writing centers, reminding readers of the terms' long histories and implying that these histories should matter to those making choices about whether or not to work with new media composition.

For example, the New London Group's groundbreaking article on "Multiliteracies," originally published in the *Harvard Educational Review* in 1996, resonates still. The New London Group chose "multiliteracies" to "describe two important arguments we might have with the emerging cultural, institutional, and global order: the multiplicity of communications channels and media, and the increasing saliency of cultural and linguistic diversity" (32). In elaborating this umbrella idea, the group introduces their "key concept" of design, in which all writers inherit and make meaning, arguing that those involved in literacy education must be "active designers—makers—of social futures" (33). They stress that designing is both "founded on historically and culturally received patterns of meaning" as well as a "unique product of human agency: a transformed meaning... a new meaning-making resource" (43). The influence of this definitional work is profound, and reverberates through later chapters in the collection, most clearly in "Design" by Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen and "Mediation and Remediation" by Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin, and across nearly all later chapters as well. But "Multiliteracies" is also an important reminder to those interested in writing centers that multiliterate practice is more than strategies for supporting writers composing among multiple languages or modes. According to the New London Group, multiliteracy reframes both tutor and tutee as designers/makers of social change, and this is a motivating reminder indeed.

But for writing center studies, as a field grounded firmly in theories of collaboration, Andrea Lunsford and Lisa Ede's chapter, "Among the Audience," is probably the most immediately relevant theoretical reminder. Lunsford and Ede explain that after engaging with the new media literature, as it was in 2009, they understood that "what we thought of as two separate strands of our scholarly work—one on collaboration, the other on audience—have in fact become one" (196). Lunsford and Ede take pains to acknowledge that online composing environments allow writers to "merge and shift places...participating in both brief and extended collaborations" reminding us "that writers seldom, if ever, write alone" (196). Their fusion of audience and collaboration leads them to reject neither the term "audience" nor their theory of "audience invoked/audience addressed", but instead begin to pry apart the term's overdetermined quality to get at

the core of what they believe their theory still helps us understand—how to write to audiences who are “there all the time” and thus necessitate even more practice understanding the “multiple reciprocal responsibilities entailed in writer-audience relationships” (203, 206). If writing centers do anything consistently, it is to give practice in responsible audience awareness. Thus, Lunsford and Ede’s revisiting of the term reminds writing centers of the ever-rising responsibility to audience necessitated by new media compositions.

What Is or Is Not New in New Media Tutoring

Lee and Carpenter’s chapter choices also enact a dialogue about the novelty of new media, multimodal, digital, or multiliterate tutoring. Is multiliteracy tutoring simply a continuation of what tutors have always done across new genres or modes, or is working with new media a wholly different enterprise that necessitates reimagined tutor training and development? Many of the chapter’s conclusions may seem, to a skeptical writing center professional, very familiar: multiliteracy tutors should begin a session “by developing a rich profile of their rhetorical situations” (Sheridan 281); new media tutors “engage the writer in conversations about their ideas” and use “a range of non-directive and directive strategies” (Lee and Carpenter xix). David Sheridan describes what he calls the “I just want to scan” nightmare (272): “a reductive model for our WC that we daily labor against, a model that reduces us to something even worse than a grammar lab: a tech lab, mindless technical procedures with a skills and drill nightmare replaced by a “point-and-click one” (271). Michael Pemberton notes that many could argue that the challenges of multimodal compositions for tutors are “essentially no different from the problems posed by any other texts, regardless of genre or discipline” (110), and in fact Lee and Carpenter themselves say that the pedagogical principles of multimodal tutoring are “similar to practices in composition studies” and “print-based” tutoring (xviii, xix). This similarity of the supposed new to the old, along with the always “incipient threat” of computer-aided or -mediated tutoring as educational efficiency (Pemberton 107), may render new media ideas shrug worthy to writing program administrators.

But the chapters speak back to this mindset. Authors argue that digital texts’ rhetoricity does necessitate change: tutors must watch or listen rather than read students’ videos and presentations (Lee and Carpenter xviii); centers need new supplies like larger paper for website mockups (Sheridan). In her chapter in the *Routledge Reader*, Grutsch McKinney suggests that tutors must learn to “look at” and “see” student writing, asking what the point is

of reading aloud a website when tutor and tutee could more profitably talk about it (248).

In fact, the NLG work from 1996 helps us remember that “multiliteracies also creates a different kind of pedagogy, one in which language and other modes of meaning are dynamic representational resources, constantly being remade by their users as they work to achieve their various cultural purposes” (32). In her chapter in the *Routledge Reader*, Grutsch McKinney acknowledges the parallels of the old with the new, but does not let writing center studies stay stagnant in that reality. She argues that it is because new media tutoring is so similar to what “we have always done, just in new forms, genres, and media” that “it is not another thing” (245). In other words, because the new is old, because “new media texts are texts,” writing centers should hesitate even less to support them (247).

Moving Beyond Description

Finally, Lee and Carpenter’s collection also moves new media conversations in writing center studies beyond descriptions of programs that do or don’t work. A few chapters do this important descriptive work—Michael Pemberton’s and John Trimbur’s chapters describe textual changes that necessitate increased attention to media; Russell Carpenter, Grutsch McKinney, Jennifer Sheppard, and Sheridan’s chapters describe training, evaluation, and outreach initiatives—but they generally avoid evaluating the merit of OWLs or online tutoring systems. Instead the chapters move on to ask bigger questions about the motivations for, or implications of, practical changes.

For example, Sheridan motivates his practical descriptions by foregrounding materiality, saying “the material dimensions of composing” are “crucial to the concerns of communicators in a digital age” (274). He argues that recognizing the paper and process of new media composition brings about a “collapse in the division of labor”—a “new kind of rhetor” who is doing it all, controlling “a dizzying variety of semiotic resources (words, graphs, music, photographs, video clips, colors, interactive components)” and becoming responsible not only for these resources’ composition, but also their *reproduction* and *distribution* (275, original emphasis). According to Sheridan, this labor collapse “involves a critique of traditional hierarchies that privilege the symbolic expression of words over the material labor of production” (274). Sheridan uses a material frame to propose three fundamental literacies new media tutors, or “superconsultants” as he calls them, must know in a tutoring context that supports the full material process of production, reproduction, and distribution: 1) the material forms and mate-

rial contexts (circulation) of rhetorical compositions; 2) the material processes of production and distribution (publish); and 3) pedagogical literacies (276–77). Pedagogical literacies are not peripheral for new media tutors because they are not simply tech lab workers—they are also generalists who are trained “alongside their ‘analog’ peers” (277).

In the end, the social, material, and pedagogical imperatives to incorporate new media into everyday writing center work prove compelling. In the context of writing center studies’ history, the collection does miss an opportunity to interrogate the strange double life of the word “remediation”: the introduction encourages writing centers to take risks by “‘remediating’ tutoring practices” and be inspired by “the spaces they inhabit in terms of ‘remediation’” (xvi) even as Bolter and Grusin note their proposed term is “used by educators as a euphemism for the task of bringing lagging students up to an expected level of performance and by environmental engineers for ‘restoring’ a damaged ecosystem” (61), and Pemberton reminds us that historically, writing labs were “sites where . . . remediation took place, and the focus of this remediation work was largely restricted to grammar, mechanics, and other easily-quantifiable matters of surface structure” (107). It is no wonder writing center professionals hesitate to embrace the remediation of texts when their spaces have hosted the remediation of people for quite some time. Perhaps this issue could spur conversations of the kind directed by the introduction’s “Reading Connections”.

While the *New Media Reader* is convincing in its call for writing centers to attend to new media studies, writing center readers might see it as yet one more thing to add to a bursting training or professional development schedule. Echoing Pemberton’s note of caution, Sheridan says that the “hard truth of the matter” is that new media tutors “*are* asked to be ‘all things to all people,’”: “photographers, graphic designers, illustrators, web coders, technicians, programmers. . . teachers and meaning makers” (276), as well as those who “contribute to faculty development through workshops on integrating new media into the writing-intensive classroom and through one-on-one support” (273). Lee and Carpenter leave it up to readers to decide whether or not new media writing is already part of the teaching, tutoring, and administrative work of writing programs, or whether it is truly new work that necessitates new responsibilities.

WRITING CENTERS AS RESEARCH SITES

Researching the Writing Center: Towards an Evidence-Based Practice is “the first book-length treatment of the research base for academic writing tutoring” (1). Rebecca Day Babcock and Terese Thonus aim to motivate those

involved in writing centers to broaden the field's scholarly practices and, consequently, its disciplinary profile and academic status by conducting "RAD research"—replicable, aggregable, data-supported scholarship produced with qualitative or quantitative methods—on all aspects of writing center work (3). The authors synthesize RAD research from scholarship in writing center studies and related disciplines, notably composition and education, and identify guidelines for best practices as well as opportunities for future empirical research. These outcomes complement the book's primary purpose, which is to help readers reconceptualize what constitutes research in writing center studies and recognize the disciplinary implications of failing to incorporate scientific and humanistic research methods. Citing Richard Haswell's polemic on the decline of RAD research in the journals of NCTE/CCCC along with Muriel Harris's admonition for writing center scholars to do "some serious thinking and testing and researching" (2), Babcock and Thonus argue that writing center scholarship can and must be informed by humanistic and scientific methods and by relevant scholarship from other disciplines (3). While acknowledging the vital role of theoretical exploration and anecdotal experience in creating a foundation for writing center professionals to mediate theory and practice, the authors assert that empirical research offers a more "credible link between the two" (3). The credibility of this link transcends best practices in writing center work by raising the disciplinary profile of that work, which in turn positions the discipline to earn greater academic legitimacy and broader influence. *Researching the Center*, then, casts writing centers as research sites and, as such, the locus for the field's disciplinary development.

In chapter 1, Babcock and Thonus frame their review of writing center scholarship by making an important distinction between research and assessment. Both are central to writing center work and should be seen as scholarly activities based in empirical data and involving systematic inquiry (4). However, assessment should be understood as a precursor to but not a substitute for research because assessment is concerned primarily with making judgments that apply to a local context, whereas research entails "open[ing] inquiry beyond the local context . . . to global contexts and applications" (4). The challenge for program directors is to turn assessments of local, specific contexts "into research questions and RAD inquiry that can benefit the entire field" (59), and the authors highlight examples of how empirical research in writing center scholarship models this transition from local to global contexts. The authors also survey edited volumes and anthologies—the "canonical collections" (8)—in writing center scholarship to highlight a growing receptiveness towards but consistent dearth of empirical research. In the field's three most popular anthologies, for

instance, only five articles “meet the criteria for empirical [data-driven] research” (13). While acknowledging the intellectual work and influence of individuals employing primarily humanistic approaches in defining a developing field, Babcock and Thonus underscore the absence of empirical research in early scholarship, imprecise uses of the term research, as in labeling narratives, detailed descriptions, or anecdotal accounts “case studies,” and a reliance on lore or application of theories from other fields to determine writing center practice. Even now, despite growing awareness of the value of empirical research and a handful of recently completed RAD studies in writing center scholarship, Babcock and Thonus note that “output remains scarce” (21)—a conclusion that provides a strong rationale for the timeliness and value of their book.

In chapter 2, the authors describe how evidence-based practice (EBP), an orientation to empirical research in fields with “strong ‘practice’ components” such as medicine and education (22), can strengthen writing center scholarship. EBP stipulates that judgments and decisions about practices should be informed by the best available evidence retrieved from current research, which is made available through research syntheses and meta-analyses. The appeal of EPB is two-fold: first, it allows practitioners to focus equally on “theory, research, and practice” while working with clients, thus preventing practice-focused fields from becoming disconnected from theory or research (30); second, it compels a research community to determine *what* counts as evidence and *who* gets to decide (32). Applied to a writing center context, EPB would illustrate how “disciplinary decision-makers,” those who review publications and presentations, determine evidence, and it would raise the profile of data as a desired form of evidence in conjunction with lore and anecdote (32). Data are defined as quantitative or qualitative information available to researchers and others that has been “collected to answer a specific research question” (32). This chapter also includes a general overview of research concepts and techniques, ranging from research ethics to data-gathering techniques, with illustrative examples of these concepts and practices drawn from inside and outside writing center scholarship. Although the authors do not describe this section as a research guide, this chapter and the two appendices—a research information statement/consent form from the KU Writing Center and an Institutional Review Board (IRB) application from the University of Texas of the Permian Basin—reflect that purpose and are informative, especially for readers unfamiliar with social science research.

Chapters 3 through 7, which constitute two-thirds of the book, contain syntheses of empirical research conducted on a range of topics and sub-topics relevant to writing center practice. Chapter 3 examines “institutional

contexts of academic writing centers” and includes research on surveys of writing centers, peer tutor methods and models, and certification and accreditation. Chapter 4 reviews research on tutoring “different” populations such as basic writers, writers with disabilities, second-language writers, and graduate students. Chapter 5 surveys research on tutoring activities categorized according to language skill (reading, writing, speaking, listening). Chapter 6 details research on writing center interaction. To illustrate the level of specificity that periodically emerges throughout these chapters, consider the following example from a review of research on the function of suggestions in tutoring sessions:

Ritter (2002) coded suggestion types according to illocutionary force, which is related to the pragmatic directiveness of the suggestion. Ritter’s types were *indirect suggestion* (‘It’s a little confusing.’), *interrogative* (‘Does this paragraph kind of repeat some information?’), *first-person modal* (‘I’d put an S on checklists.’), *second-person modal* (‘You wanna make that plural.’), *repair* (‘During these years, instead of *at* these years.’), and *imperative* (‘Just put a period there.’)” (Babcock and Thonus 132, emphasis in original)

Readers who are less familiar or comfortable with social science research may find such details disorienting, perhaps even overwhelming, whereas others may find inspiration to generate related research questions or projects.

Interspersed throughout these chapters are six sections called “Recommendations for Practice” which include, in total, 50 brief summaries and accompanying citations derived from research synthesized in the previous section/chapter. These lists illustrate the value of engaging in empirical research in writing center scholarship with an “evidence-based practice” orientation: they constitute readily accessible and clearly applicable guidelines, or practices, for writing center work. Some challenge writing center conventions, frequently based in lore: “Rethink the stricture against required visits (Gordon, 2008)” (85); “Don’t assume a collaborative frame (Kim, 2009). Be flexible, as the tutee may have other ideas for how the tutorial should proceed.” (142). “Group tutoring or ‘desk-side consultations’ may prove more effective than one-on-one tutoring for students from some cultures (Moser, 2002)” (105). Others provide specific direction: “With basic writers, tutors should assume the roles of Interested Reader/Listener, Supportive Evaluator, and Partner in Writing (Beaumont, 1978)” (92); “It cannot be stressed enough that tutors must listen carefully to tutees (Cardenas, 2000; Brown, 2008; Fallon, 2010)” (120). All stem from empirical research, which means they can be generalized across locations and shared by the field.

The later chapters include content aimed at illustrating empirical research at work and providing examples of possible research questions and projects. They also include moments where the authors are more explicit in their critique of the limitations of current research in writing center studies. Chapter 7 illustrates the strength of empirical data to answer basic questions about writing centers. To address the question, What is a successful tutorial?, Babcock and Thonus contrast the tacit knowledge in generic responses from typical writing center directors with the scope and depth afforded by RAD research on general academic tutoring from scholarship in developmental and peer education. The authors criticize writing center scholarship for “running approximately 20 years behind” other disciplines in producing empirical evidence to support, in this case, its most central practice: peer tutoring (147). The authors also question why studies on peer tutoring, which abound in the fields of education and cognitive science, are absent from writing center publications (151). Babcock and Thonus contrast the “largely descriptive accounts of what constitutes success” in writing center scholarship with several possible definitions of success that stem from empirical research to demonstrate how such an approach to research creates an ongoing research agenda that can sustain rigorous inquiry and, in turn, strengthen a discipline (171). Chapter 8, titled “An Agenda for Writing Center Research,” provides a list of research questions “yet to be investigated” that were generated by the research syntheses in the previous chapters (170). For each chapter heading, research questions are raised, followed by suggestions for possible research approaches and methodologies. In addition to the research questions in this chapter, throughout the book the authors refer to several potential research projects related to tutoring, some of which include studying politeness (53), the use of writing as a tutoring technique (118), the influence of gender (125), and the reliability and validity of web-based peer-response computer programs in specific educational contexts (151). In their conclusion, Babcock and Thonus envision empirical research as “becom[ing] so much a part of the fabric of writing center work that all administrative and pedagogical decisions will be founded upon it,” and they are convinced empirical research will inform and advance writing center theory and practice “in ways that anecdote and lore simply cannot” (169). They also take heart in the growing amount of empirical research on writing centers conducted by graduate students (four master theses and 70 dissertations appear in the references) and invite members of the field to make such work increasingly visible and accessible.

Researching the Center is a landmark text for the field, encouraging widespread reorientation to research and practice in ways that subordinates lore and local contexts to data and disciplinary identity. Babcock and Thonus

compel writing center researchers and practitioners to remake their “community of practice” in light of empirical methods and evidence-based practices. But the question remains, how likely is such change, or under what conditions can writing centers function as research sites? Perhaps we need an empirical study to determine how many writing center administrators are able or willing to conduct empirical research, especially in light of issues related to writing center directors’ professional identities and working conditions that Babcock and Thonus mention in chapter 1. Citing survey data, the authors reported that half of writing center directors viewed their positions as temporary, and half identified professionally with writing center work but not necessarily writing center research (7–8). The authors also note that “the majority of our colleagues lack training in research methodologies, be they qualitative or quantitative” (8), a condition exacerbated by the absence of empirical research in the “canonical” scholarship which Babcock and Thonus described as “essential reading for prospective and current writing center professionals” (11). Further, few writing center directors have institutional support or access to resources needed to develop and sustain a scholarly research agenda, many writing center directors and staff are not required or expected to publish scholarship, and funding pressures and institutional mandates constantly compel administrators to do “more (local) assessment, not more (generalizable) research” (20). Equally problematic are the implications of research that suggests a general lack of awareness of the discipline of writing centers and a corresponding “inability to conceptualize the writing center as a research site,” even among writing center practitioners (19). *Researching the Center* clearly corrects that misconception, but can it inspire research in sites where research is not promoted or rewarded?

Babcock and Thonus also raise a related challenge: the tendency for many directors and practitioners to view writing centers as “unique,” to distance their centers from the “nomenclature” and “research practices” of other disciplines, and to simultaneously celebrate and lament the resulting marginalization of writing centers in the academy. The authors critique this kind of separatist stance because it “delegitimize[s] writing center studies as a research discipline” and “marginalize[s] writing center scholarship” that could inform the research and practice of other fields (31). How appealing is the prospect of conducting empirical research to such individuals? How practical is such an appeal? Further, if the institutional status of many writing center directors does not provide access to material conditions or resources required to produce empirical research, which in turn is needed to legitimize the field, will the burden of labor continue to fall on graduate

students? Will the subsequent burden of legitimizing the field as a scholarly discipline follow, making writing centers as research sites exploitative?

These questions should not detract from the significance of *Researching the Center* or its value to all members of the field. The book both addresses and advances the conversation among writing center scholars about the necessity of producing “more evidence to validate our practices” (Driscoll and Perdue 11). Babcock and Thonus have presented an exhaustive account that urges and enables readers to conduct empirical research that will promote best practices and increase the disciplinary status of writing centers. They’ve also demonstrated how a rising generation of writing center scholars has forged ahead and is already doing this work.

WHAT WRITING CENTERS ARE NOT

Peripheral Visions for Writing Centers challenges members of the writing center community to expand their collective vision and stories of what constitutes writing center work. Jackie Grutsch McKinney prefaces her provocative argument with a list of twenty-five tasks that typify the work of a writing center director, from training tutors and attending conferences to writing reports and ordering supplies. (For directors who are also faculty, the list continues in paragraph form.) Yet the complexity and scope of such work, Grutsch McKinney argues, is not reflected in the “story” about writing center work that nearly everyone—scholars, directors, tutors, even program administrators—tends to tell. That story, which Grutsch McKinney characterizes as a “writing center grand narrative,” is this: “*writing centers are comfortable, iconoclastic places where all students go to get one-on-one tutoring on their writing*” (3, emphasis in original). Certainly this statement will strike many readers familiar with writing center discourse and practice as accurate, if not incontrovertible: how else, they may wonder, could writing centers be identified or their work characterized? Some may even feel uncomfortable with questioning a universal and unifying description of writing center work, especially one as hard-won as this: what else, they may ask, can foster professional identity and community across local and, in many cases, isolated contexts? Some may take offense at a perceived insensitivity to a description that represents the culmination of years of struggle to legitimize the nature of writing center work by rendering it visible and valuable, for those inside and outside the profession: why, they may question, would you critique the core of what writing centers do?

Grutsch McKinney is acutely aware of these perspectives, but to some extent they all underscore the validity of her claim, which is that this grand narrative has become the central feature of writing center discourse, a trans-

parent, taken-for-granted Truth that misrepresents writing center work and restricts the field's ability to grow. Indeed, Grutsch McKinney anticipates readers feeling increasingly uncomfortable as they progress through the book only to see their "most naturalized and cherished common-place assumptions about writing center work" subject to open critique (4). Given its continuous circulation in the field's professional discourse, the writing center grand narrative has resulted in a kind of "collective tunnel vision" that prevents insiders and outsiders alike from seeing the complexities of writing center work, narrating its multiple dimensions, or imagining how it might, or must, evolve for future contexts, purposes, and audiences (5–6). Grutsch McKinney's purpose in troubling this grand narrative is to decenter it from writing center discourse and thereby open narrative space for "other representations of writing center work" to receive notice and legitimacy (9). Revising this received narrative is a crucial step to reshaping the field's discourse about what writing centers do, which will in turn provide a broader, more representative vision of that work for everyone associated with writing centers (18).

Drawing on narrative theory informed by the work of Jerome Bruner, Kristie Fleckenstein, and Nancy Grimm, Grutsch McKinney interrogates three key ideas invoked by the writing center grand narrative—namely, that writing centers are "cozy homes," iconoclastic, and that they tutor all students—in corresponding chapters. The first idea, Grutsch McKinney believes, is "perhaps most firmly entrenched": that writing centers should be "a cozy, homey, comfortable, family-like place" (20). In this chapter, a version of which appeared in *The Writing Center Journal* in 2005, the writing-center-as-home metaphor is documented in exchanges on the WCenter listserv and in journal articles; common topics that emerge in these venues include identifying essential objects, ranging from couches and bookcases to coffee pots and art, to designing and arranging the physical space. Noting the intention of writing center professionals to create friendly and inviting spaces that function as alternatives to traditional classroom and remedial laboratories, Grutsch McKinney claims that the dominance of a cozy-home metaphor invokes a culturally-specific conception of home reflected in a director's or tutor's (typically white) race and (typically upper or middle) class. Further, appealing to students' sense of comfort may undermine expectations to be intellectually engaged and challenged while at the writing center. Most importantly, spatial metaphors may detract writing center directors from what the material realities of writing centers reveal about how physical space is actually experienced and used. While Grutsch McKinney is not critiquing the intent to create a welcoming space, she is highlighting how that aim, and the prescribed means for achieving that

aim, have become so pervasive as to overshadow other ways of understanding, designing, and using writing center space. Consequently, attending to peripheral visions—that which we can't or won't see—will necessarily broaden our view of the multiple uses and experiences that occur within writing centers, which in turn allows us to convey such multiplicity to others.

The second key term in the grand narrative is that of iconoclasm, which Grutsch McKinney discusses in relation to the perennial issue of marginalization in writing centers. Here Grutsch McKinney explores the nature and consequences of how writing center professionals have situated and storied themselves as “outsiders on the inside” (36). In her review of published scholarship on the relationship between writing centers and academic institutions, Grutsch McKinney notes a tendency among writing center scholars to celebrate their “outsider positions,” given their non-traditional approach to teaching in comparison with traditional approaches that characterize typical forms of institution-sponsored instruction. Grutsch McKinney claims that the frequency by which this perspective is reinforced puts pressure on others in the field to replicate and perpetuate it. Grutsch McKinney offers an interesting interpretation of the field's relationship to the term marginal; she sees a “persistent tendency . . . to re-story the marginal label into something else” (40). While some refuse the marginal label, others embrace it in ways that resist or subvert the institutional integration of writing centers; this latter move is what strikes Grutsch McKinney as iconoclastic and gives her grounding to make iconoclasm a central part of the writing center grand narrative, though the accuracy of the term is questionable because the connection between iconoclasm and marginal is somewhat strained. But, similar to Babcock and Thonus's argument in *Researching the Center*, Grutsch McKinney critiques this subversive stance as hampering the professionalization of writing center programs and its academic and disciplinary status. To highlight this point, Grutsch McKinney refers to survey research which demonstrates that “hundreds of writing center directors begin with no graduate coursework in writing center or writing program administration,” they have no coursework or background in teaching writing and remain disconnected from relevant professional fields, and their positions are mostly non-tenure-track and typically do not support or permit opportunities for professionalization (53). In light of these professional challenges, Grutsch McKinney admonishes the field to move beyond the marginal/not-marginal binary by eschewing the tendency towards privileging iconoclastic identities and practices in writing center work.

Grutsch McKinney's final chapter, in which she interrogates the notion that writing centers tutor all students, provides more specific and substan-

tial data (in the form of survey research) than in previous chapters. Grutsch McKinney asked survey respondents, most of whom worked in public or private colleges or universities, to explain what a writing center is (93). The data, which are documented in a 45-page appendix, includes responses from 117 individuals associated with writing centers, including writing tutors, writing center directors, undergraduate and graduate students, and faculty (92). Grutsch McKinney frames her survey data by reviewing recent literature in writing center studies to illustrate how writing center professionals understand and describe tutorials as primarily “one-to-one,” “peer-to-peer,” “non-directive,” and occurring in “set sessions” (60). She then highlights how nearly all survey respondents described writing center work in terms of tutoring all students; other types of work, such as offering workshops, were barely mentioned. This demonstrates how tutoring has become “the *sine qua non* of writing center work” (58). Grutsch McKinney notes that such a description makes writing center work comprehensible and quantifiable for ourselves and others. However, she emphasizes limitations, including perpetuating the perception of writing centers as remedial, reinforcing problematic assumptions about tutors (as white) and students (as other), and setting an unrealistic goal to work with “all” students when not everyone wants or needs tutoring. Most importantly, this part of the grand narrative precludes writing center professionals from recognizing and talking about the range of non-tutoring activities that are part of writing center work, including workshops for faculty and students, group tutoring, in-class presentations, outreach, assessment, and content development in the form of websites, videos, blogs, newsletters, and podcasts: “The existing literature rarely posits these other activities as alternatives to tutoring or something equally important” (76). Grutsch McKinney cites additional survey research that asked directors about non-tutoring activities. Responses included such various activities as keeping records, writing reports, providing handouts, evaluating tutors, writing tutor handbooks, working with faculty, and blogging. But these are seen as peripheral to writing center work. Grutsch McKinney closes this chapter by reiterating her appeal to question the grand narrative in order to prevent “the collective forgetting of the complexity of writing center work” (80).

As Grutsch McKinney concludes, she identifies a salient problem that limits the professional development of the field. While common ways of communicating are necessary for the formation of discourse communities, Grutsch McKinney notes that problems arise when the ways those communities communicate “are not expansive enough to allow members to change” (82). One particular challenge to changing the grand narrative is “the ever-beginner culture in writing center studies” (84). In light of notori-

ously high turnover of tutors and staff, the grand narrative provides coherence and enables approximation towards, if not entry into, the discourse community of writing centers studies. However, because insider positions aren't readily accessible to outsiders and because they require too much time and effort, initiates rely on imitating the discourse conventions of the community. As long as the professional discourse of writing center studies is dictated by this grand narrative, the field will be stunted in its development. Grutsch McKinney, again echoing Babcock and Thonus, argues that this has already happened at the level of research, noting an absence of "substantial theoretical and empirical research on aspects of writing center work beyond tutoring" (85).

As might be expected, because Grutsch McKinney's primary purpose is to critique the grand narrative, she offers only general suggestions for addressing the problem. These suggestions include the need for heightened awareness of the existence and problems of the grand narrative, and the need to enable a greater number of members of the field to tell their stories, especially those that challenge or divert from the grand narrative. While these suggestions are somewhat unsatisfying, Grutsch McKinney offers two valuable strategies to help writing center professionals and others begin reenvisioning writing center work. The first is a technique used in drawing: when attempting to draw an object, an untrained artist will find that her mind often interferes with her eyes by supplying images of what it thinks it sees rather than what the eyes are actually registering. To counteract this interference, the artist is instructed to focus on seeing and drawing the "negative space" around the object (87–88). When applied to writing centers, this technique prompts writing center professionals to first capture "what writing centers are not" rather than "what we imagine is there . . . based on our communal habits of storying writing centers" (89). The second insight corresponds with the title of the book: replacing the field's collective tunnel vision with peripheral visions. This requires shifting focus away from the writing center as the center of intersecting fields and practices and instead seeing the various activities surrounding the center as part of that center (89). The purpose of both strategies is to produce more complex descriptions and nuanced stories that will "dislodge the writing center grand narrative" (90). Failure to change our vision, Grutsch McKinney warns, could result in the current writing center model fracturing under the pressure of two competing models: multiliteracy centers, which broaden the potential for feedback both through and across different media, and comprehensive writing centers, which have broader missions more aligned with WAC initiatives and activities (90). Grutsch McKinney does not signal an eagerness to reinvent writing centers in light of either of these pro-

posed models. Rather than changing the writing center, she wants readers to change their vision of, and their story about, the writing center.

But won't changing the story of writing centers also change the writing center? Why can't multiliteracy centers or comprehensive writing centers be seen as legitimate stories about writing center work? If the writing center grand narrative is inhibiting the growth of writing center studies and requires revision through "peripheral visions," will such visions and the stories they inspire privilege local contexts at the expense of a larger professional identity? Might peripheral visions promote a fragmented story of the field that will frustrate efforts to frame writing center studies as a coherent and legitimate academic discipline? These questions can't be addressed without expanding our vision of what writing centers might be, which validates Grutsch McKinney's argument. But they also signal the challenges that arise when attempting to broaden conceptions and stories about what writing center work is and should be.

WHAT ARE WRITING CENTERS?

These four books, taken together, offer a complex image of the contemporary writing center, a center with many roles, many of which are complementary or perhaps even simultaneous (one could research any of the other books' calls for change). But this image also implies the potential for mission creep. And writing center and writing program administrators seem to perceive this potential as a spectrum between danger and opportunity.

Michael Pemberton warns about new media tutoring, for example, that administrators "should stop and think carefully about how far we are willing to go down this path in our quest to create 'better' writing tutors," warning that if centers "diversify too widely and spread ourselves too thinly in an attempt to encompass too many different literacies, we may not be able to address any set of literate practices particularly well" (114). "Ultimately," he says, "we have to ask ourselves whether it is really the writing center's responsibility to be all things to all people" (114). Others have taken up this phrase, as does this review essay, to "think carefully" about the point of diminishing returns in expanding support for writers, or in expanding perspectives of what writing centers are or can do.

Other administrators see the expanding sites and services of writing center work as opportunities, and sometimes responsibilities. For example, in her chapter in the *Routledge Reader*, Grutsch McKinney sympathizes with "the impulse as a writing center director to say, 'Not one more thing! We do enough!'" but argues that administrators must evolve along with writing because "we are in the writing business" (255). Geller and Eodice hope

their book highlights “what can be done to promote and sustain all writing in the academy, whether that means student writing (undergraduate and graduate) or faculty writing” (2). They want to “embrace...how institutions commit to making the process and work of writing visible and valued” (2). In other words, they see a direct connection between supporting more writers and becoming even more central to the work of their institutions. So that even as writing center work seemingly expands, taking place nearly everywhere—“from teaching and learning centers to writing across the curriculum, and communication across the curriculum programs to writing centers” (9)—it actually closes in on the core of what the university does.

In fact, this synthesis of mission, in that writing center goals are already university goals, provides one way to navigate the opportunities and dangers proposed by these four books. In another wise turn, Anson suggests that “creating a ‘culture of writing’ at an institution is not so much a matter of offering more and more workshops and retreats” but of “viewing all participants on a campus—administrators, faculty, staff, and students—as part of an interrelated system” (35). As demonstrated in these books, writing centers have the breadth of expertise to support that system, rather than each of the system’s individual members in turn. In other words, this image reveals a contemporary writing center that creates connections among writers. This writing center facilitates links among writing communities and among multiple writerly identities. In the afterword to *Working with Faculty Writers*, Eodice states that her final call to action is for “faculty to turn toward each other...and [form] communities” in order to “consider some of the pressing questions of the coming years” (296–97). Writing centers, with their multiple roles, agendas, audiences, texts, spaces, and activities can support this turning toward, encouraging writers to turn toward each other to ask hard questions about writing. For writing centers this is not another thing to do or be; this is precisely what centers are already doing every day.



NOTE

1. According to Jill Gladstein, preliminary data from the WPA Census, which includes 925 respondents representing 734 four-year colleges and universities, show that only 6 respondents reported their school as “not” having a writing center or learning center with writing tutors. In other words, 99% of respondents report having a writing center on campus.

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CWPA Position Statement on Pre-College Credit for Writing

Kristine Hansen, Jeffrey Andelora, Heidi Estrem,
Clint Gardner, Joe Janangelo, and Susan Miller-Cochran

The following statement was written by an ad hoc committee appointed in 2012 by Duane Roen and Rita Malenczyk, who at that time were President and President-elect, respectively, of the Council of Writing Program Administrators. The officers of CWPA were concerned about the rapid growth of alternatives to first-year writing courses being offered to high school students. A sister organization to CWPA, the College Conference on Composition and Communication, had already appointed a task force to draft a position statement on dual credit and concurrent enrollment. It seemed prudent for the CWPA to take an official position as well so that WPAs across the nation could have guidance in formulating local policies about pre-college credit. In addition, an official position statement would help WPAs speak with some unanimity and authority when questioned about reasons for their policies.

The ad hoc committee was tasked to research all the various options—not just dual credit/concurrent enrollment—that high school students have today to complete college first-year writing requirements while still in high school. Kristine Hansen, Brigham Young University, was asked to chair the committee, and the five members of the committee came from both universities and two-year colleges: Jeffrey Andelora, Mesa Community College; Heidi Estrem, Boise State University; Clint Gardner, Salt Lake Community College; Joe Janangelo, Loyola University Chicago; and Susan Miller-Cochran, North Carolina State University. Over the course of the next seven months, the committee deliberated, mainly by email, on the content and wording of the position statement.

A draft of the statement was presented to the executive committee of CWPA at its annual spring meeting in early 2013. Comments from the executive committee, including particularly helpful suggestions from Linda

Adler-Kassner, were then returned to the ad hoc committee. The ad hoc committee then revised the position statement and submitted it again to the CWPA executive board for consideration at its annual summer meeting in July 2013. The board approved the statement with minor changes, and the following statement was then prepared in the fall of 2013 for digital publication on the CWPA website. The *CWPA Position Statement on Pre-College Credit for Writing* is now offered in the print journal of the CWPA to become part of the official archive of our collective scholarship. We hope that readers of the journal will find it helpful to draw on this statement as they make and explain policies regarding pre-college credit to stakeholders at their various institutions.

PREAMBLE

The Council of Writing Program Administrators (hereafter CWPA) is an organization that advocates for best practices in the teaching of writing in postsecondary institutions. Courses offered in writing programs include, but are not limited to, the first-year writing (FYW) course, a course that is almost universally required in two- and four-year North American colleges. FYW is a course that, among other things, introduces newly matriculated college students to the academic writing they will do in their college years. Colleges may require only one course in writing or as many as four or five. FYW at many institutions is a two-semester course sequence, and it may be followed by required or recommended writing courses in subsequent years.

Increasingly, high school students have several options for attempting to demonstrate that they have completed the FYW requirement prior to matriculating at college, including these:

- **Advanced Placement.** First developed in the mid-1950s, the Advanced Placement (AP) program sponsored by the College Board, recommends on the basis of certain test scores that students are qualified to be exempted from the FYW course, and it encourages colleges to grant students credit for FYW on the basis of students' scores on an AP test.
- **International Baccalaureate.** Available since the late 1960s, the International Baccalaureate (IB) diploma, aims, in part, to develop in students the kind of skill in writing and other subjects that the first year of college traditionally has imparted; many colleges grant waivers to holders of IB diplomas for various first-year courses, including writing. IB is still a rather small program in North America, with only 924 high schools in the US and Canada participating in 2013.

- **Concurrent Enrollment.** Begun in the 1970s, concurrent enrollment (CE) or dual credit (DC) is also sometimes called “college in the schools” or “postsecondary enrollment.” The DC/CE option has grown enormously in the last 20 years, with student enrollments now outpacing those in AP courses. In a DC/CE writing course, typically offered in a high school and taught by a high school teacher who has been appointed by the college sponsoring the course, students complete both high school graduation requirements and the FYW requirement in one and the same course.

Because of the pervasiveness of these pre-college options for earning college credit in writing and because of concerns about their equivalency to the FYW courses students take on college campuses, CWPA offers this public position statement regarding AP, IB, and CE courses.

First, CWPA notes that, because of local variability, it is impossible to take a single position on whether or not high school students should avail themselves of AP, IB, and DC/CE courses. Second, CWPA cannot dictate whether colleges and universities should grant credit for any or all of these pre-college offerings. So much depends on context and on the participants and the nature of any pre-college curriculum that decisions must be made locally. Therefore, this position statement provides information, guidelines, and resources that individual stakeholders can turn to in order to make sound judgments about (1) the advisability of students enrolling in pre-college options that are meant to substitute for a college FYW course, and (2) granting or accepting waivers and credit for those options in place of FYW.

CWPA has written this position statement with many audiences in mind. Those who have a stake in decisions about pre-college credit in writing include the following:

- Students
- Parents and other custodians
- High school English teachers
- High school principals
- Local school boards
- Prospective and current college writing teachers
- College writing program administrators, including directors of writing centers and writing-across-the-curriculum programs
- College admissions and enrollment management officers
- College deans and presidents
- Boards of regents or trustees for colleges
- State departments of education

- State legislatures and governors
- The US Department of Education
- Independent, non-governmental think tanks and non-profit organizations that aim to influence educational policy (e.g., Achieve, the American Youth Policy Forum, the Institute for Educational Leadership, Jobs for the Future, the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, the National Center for Educational Accountability)
- Future employers, who will expect college graduates to be competent, versatile writers in careers that increasingly demand advanced writing abilities

With so many stakeholders interested in the issue, the CWPA recommendations below are based on a careful examination of how the options of AP, IB, and CE compare to typical FYW courses in three important areas:

1. Curriculum
2. Student Readiness
3. Instructors

Stakeholders may use the descriptions given for the curriculum, student readiness, and instructors in FYW to compare with descriptions of the same factors in the pre-college options of AP, IB, and DC/CE.

This statement is informed by the following two statements that have been developed and published or co-published by CWPA about the learning outcomes and habits of mind a strong FYW course should produce. Stakeholders are encouraged to read these documents:

- *WPA Outcomes Statement for First-Year Composition* (available at <http://wpacouncil.org/positions/outcomes.html>)
- *Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing* (available at <http://wpacouncil.org/framework>; developed in collaboration with the National Council of Teachers of English and the National Writing Project)

In the interest of brevity, many of the points made below are not developed in detail, nor are research citations given for much of the scholarship that underlies the generalizations. An annotated bibliography of relevant sources will be made available at the CWPA website in 2014.

THE FYW COURSE

Many stakeholders, as they imagine what FYW includes, may think back to the “freshman English” course they took in college. But today’s FYW

course has evolved far beyond the courses of yesteryear. It is an introductory course within a particular general education program at each college or university that performs a unique function in the lives of newly matriculated students. With an enrollment of 15-25 students per section, FYW is likely to be the only small course (or one of only a few) that new students take in their first year—and one of only a few courses in which the teacher learns the students' names and interacts personally with them, conferring with them about drafts and giving them detailed feedback on their writing. FYW is often part of an integrated network of courses identified (officially or unofficially) as part of the "first-year experience," which is designed to help new students enter the culture of the specific college or university the student has chosen to attend. These first-year courses, together with support services often attached to them (e.g., writing centers and information literacy courses), are developed deliberately and intentionally, and their purpose is to help emerging adults undertake the university-level study of writing and develop the habits of mind and skills that will make them independent learners.

In this context, FYW has frequently become a course in which students learn to read and to produce the kinds of discourse used in university disciplines. The course is designed to take advantage of a unique curricular moment, giving students carefully designed experiences in reading and writing that cause them to reflect seriously on the ways that advanced literacy skills lead to success in college and in the many professions that accomplish much of their work through writing. The FYW course may also be part of an institution's writing-across-the-curriculum program, the first step in a planned progression of reading and writing experiences which recognize that students' abilities must "not only diversify along disciplinary and professional lines but also move into whole new levels where expected outcomes expand, multiply, and diverge" (see WPA Outcomes Statement).

Curriculum

The curriculum of FYW is writing itself—the subject and the activity—and it is designed by experts and aligned with research. These experts are familiar with the institutional mission of the college where they work and the place that advanced reading and writing skills have in that mission. While the content of the course shifts depending on the particular university or college context, the FYW course or course sequence is often the first time that students have studied writing as a subject of research and as a set of practices that they might hone and deepen. The FYW course has carefully specified outcomes; many writing programs, whether within English

Departments or independent, conduct regular assessments to ensure that these outcomes enable students' success beyond the first-year course.

The books and other teaching materials chosen for FYW courses are up-to-date and reflect the current best thinking and best practices in the teaching of writing as determined by scholars in the field of writing studies. For example, the assignments students complete give them experience in writing for varied purposes and audiences in many different genres and in contemporary media. The assignments also incorporate students' experiences and thinking from participation in discussions, reading about current issues and great ideas, and listening to stimulating lectures that add value to the FYW course. The day-to-day instruction emphasizes formulating valid claims and supporting the claims with strong evidence and arguments, using recursive processes of planning, drafting, revising, editing, and evaluating writing—including peer review, teacher conferences, and writing center tutorials. Instruction includes composing with online tools to locate and evaluate sources of information; then incorporating the information according to scholarly and ethical guidelines to avoid plagiarism; and finally designing and formatting the information for user-friendly reading. The curriculum undergoes constant review and is updated and improved on a regular basis.

Student Readiness

Student readiness for FYW is determined locally by carefully designed placement practices. These might include a combination of measures, including writing samples, self-assessment, high school grades and/or standardized test scores (including SAT and ACT scores). Some colleges have more than one FYW course, and students are placed into the one that they appear most ready to succeed in. They will explore writing, rhetoric, and research strategies appropriate to their level in the college's curriculum and be introduced to the expectations of their particular college or university. They will be prepared for the next step in their institution's curriculum in literacy as well as for other courses that require critical thinking, research skills, and strong writing abilities.

Instructors

The credentials and experience of FYW instructors vary from institution to institution. In some (especially large research institutions), many FYW classes are taught by graduate students and part-time faculty, not PhD-holding, full-time professors; in other institutions (especially small liberal arts colleges), nearly all of the classes are taught by full-time faculty.

Because of the labor-intensive nature of teaching writing, classes in FYW are usually kept small, so many teachers must be hired to staff all the sections offered, and most institutions find it impossible to staff them all with full-time teachers. Part-time faculty members typically hold MA or MFA degrees, and some have PhDs; graduate students are in the process of earning MA, MFA, and PhD degrees.

Most institutions now have a writing program administrator (WPA) or at least a faculty member whose duties include directing the work of all the instructors who deliver the curriculum. As a result, in the last 30 years, FYW courses have been staffed by instructors who are better prepared for their assignments and better supervised in their work than previously in the history of FYW courses. Pre-service and in-service training are widely required for part-time faculty; more formal course work is now the norm for graduate student instructors. Class visits and evaluations by the WPA and other faculty are standard, as are routine assessments of teaching performance prior to the issuing of a new contract. In fairness, however, it must be said that the material conditions under which some FYW instructors work are not ideal. At some institutions, instructors are underpaid and overworked, teaching five or more sections (i.e., 120 or more students per semester), without adequate office space to confer with students. CWPA and other professional organizations (e.g., the Conference on College Composition and Communication, National Council of Teachers of English, and Modern Language Association) are constantly striving to improve the working conditions of FYW instructors.

Recommendation

Stakeholders evaluating whether new students should enroll in a given institution's FYW course should investigate the unique aims, curricular design, and staffing of the writing program, not simply to determine whether it meets high standards, but also to learn whether it helps students acquire the habits of mind and ways of behaving in a democratic society that will allow them to function effectively in the academy and later in careers and public life. CWPA notes that, on balance, taking the FYW course at the institution where a student matriculates can confer significant advantages to the new college student, since the course is likely to provide a significant form of enculturation—not only intellectual but social and emotional—into the new world of postsecondary education and the early years of an autonomous adulthood. CWPA cautions stakeholders to remember that writing is not merely an instrumental skill that can easily be acquired once and for all at a young age, like learning to ride a bicycle. Rather, writing is one of

the most important cultural practices in the age we live in, a practice that that can be central in developing many dimensions of the student's life—academic, personal, interpersonal, civic, ethical, moral, and spiritual, as well as professional. Accordingly, choosing the optimum course in writing instruction for a given student should not be a matter of determining how to earn a few required credits in the cheapest and quickest way possible, but a matter of how to gain the most value at the right time and place in the student's education.

THE ADVANCED PLACEMENT OPTION

The Advanced Placement program in English was created by the College Board in 1954. It took the form of a test administered to elite prep school students who were bound for Ivy League colleges in order to determine which students among this already selective group could be exempted from typical freshman English courses of that era and move directly into advanced literature courses. Since AP's inception, the College Board has worked aggressively to offer AP programs and now "pre-AP" programs in thousands of high schools in the US and abroad. There are two AP English tests, one in English Literature and Composition and the other in English Language and Composition, each of which cost \$87 to take in 2012. The two tests are quite similar. First, each asks a series of multiple-choice questions that students have 60 minutes to complete. In the literature exam, these questions focus largely on the formal features of canonical works of literature; in the language exam, they focus on formal properties of rhetoric that can be identified in written texts. The computer-scored multiple-choice section of each test comprises 45 percent of the student's grade. Second, both exams pose a set of three "free-response" questions requiring students to handwrite timed, impromptu essays in 120 minutes. The three human-scored essays account for 55 percent of the grade. The essay prompts for the literature exam ask students to analyze literary works. In contrast, the essay prompts for the language exam require students to analyze the rhetoric of a passage; to construct their own argument about a broad issue; and to synthesize a few provided sources into a mini-research paper (for this essay, students have an additional 15 minutes to read the sources).

Students' scores on the multiple-choice and essay sections are converted by ETS statisticians into a single composite score using a 1-5 scale. The College Board advises colleges that a score of 5 means a student is "extremely well qualified" for advanced college work; 4 means a student is "well-qualified"; 3, "qualified"; 2, "possibly qualified"; and 1, "no recommendation." Generally, students take an AP course in order to prepare for the tests, but

they can take a test without taking the corresponding course (and they can take the courses without taking the corresponding test). Since 2010, more students have taken the language exam than the literature exam, probably because more institutions are now permitting exemptions from FYW for the language exam. At the same time, fewer postsecondary institutions now allow exemptions from FYW for the literature exam on the grounds that it does not compare well to FYW.

Curriculum

The College Board has never attempted to specify a curriculum that teachers must follow to prepare students for either of the two AP tests. Since 2007, the College Board has required AP teachers to submit a syllabus for their course so that it could be audited as a quality control measure. The syllabi are no guarantee, however, of what actually happens in AP courses. The long-standing US tradition of teaching American literature in the junior year of high school and teaching British literature in the senior year impacts the curriculum of an AP course, particularly the course that prepares students for the AP Language and Composition test, which most students take in their junior year. Because state curriculum mandates often require American literature to be taught in the junior year, many high school AP courses that are ostensibly preparing students for the Language and Composition exam are actually focused mainly on American literature with some attention given to teaching the formal features of rhetoric.

As a result, the curriculum of an AP course is not comparable to that of the typical college FYW course. Nor is it usually a good match in terms of the practice in writing that students receive. In order to do well on the AP test, students in an AP course receive extensive practice in performing timed writing. The genre of writing most practiced in an AP course is the short formulaic essay, typically a five-paragraph essay, not the variety of genres aimed at in the typical FYW course. Writing processes emphasized in FYW—planning, drafting, revising with peer and teacher review, and editing—are typically given short shrift in AP. Finding and evaluating the quality of library and Internet sources for an original argument that synthesizes the scholarship on an issue are likewise not a major part of the AP curriculum because there is no time for researched writing on the AP exam. While the Language and Composition exam requires students to synthesize a handful of already provided quotations in one of the three 40-minute essays, this exercise only demonstrates whether students can read and summarize sources, not find and evaluate them to compose an original argument. And because the College Board requires that the AP test essays be

handwritten, composing using a computer and online tools is not emphasized in AP courses as it is in typical FYW courses.

Student Readiness

Many high school students now take both AP tests. Typically, they take the English Language and Composition exam in their junior year, when they are 16-17 years old, and they take the English Literature and Composition in their senior year, when they are aged 17-18. They are, in fact, younger at the time they take the language test, the exam which more colleges now allow as a substitute for FYW. This fact raises these significant questions: Should FYW credit be given for short, formulaic timed writing the student did two years prior to matriculating at college? If a student bypasses FYW on the strength of such a small amount of writing—even if it was rated highly by test scorers—might they be missing out on the developmental and socializing effects of more writing and of writing assignments that are designed for the curricular moment when they matriculate at college?

Instructors

Teaching AP courses can be seen as a choice assignment. Usually, the most experienced, most effective, most dedicated teachers are given the opportunity to work with the unusually motivated students who choose AP courses. With their heavy student loads, high school AP teachers may give up personal time in order to grade student writing, especially timed writing, as they prepare students for the exam. Some AP teachers also assign other kinds of writing in addition to timed writing, including research writing. However, the main focus of most AP courses is on reading and analyzing literary and other texts rather than on the production of writing in varied genres and media. The training and experience that high school teachers receive in conjunction with these courses and the goals of the courses are usually not the same as those associated with FYW courses.

Recommendation

Stakeholders evaluating AP as a substitute for FYW would do well to consider that colleges are increasingly not giving exemptions for AP scores of 3 and for the AP Literature and Composition exam. Sometimes colleges will give students credit hours for AP scores, but not specify any particular course that the credit hours cover. CWPA recognizes that rigorous AP courses are valuable in their own right because they require students to meet high expectations and they contribute much to the knowledge and maturation of students. CWPA therefore highly recommends that students

enroll in AP courses. But CWPA questions whether AP tests are valid indicators that students are prepared to bypass FYW and does not recommend that students take AP English tests in order to try to exchange their AP scores for FYW credit.

THE INTERNATIONAL BACCALAUREATE OPTION

The International Baccalaureate (IB) was established in 1968 in Geneva, Switzerland, to prepare students for international mobility in higher education. To accomplish this goal, IB provides secondary schools with a curriculum and a diploma recognized by colleges and universities around the world. Seeking to make an IB education available to students at all levels—primary, middle, and secondary—it currently serves over a million students in more than 3,000 schools in nearly 150 countries. In 2012 its Diploma Programme (DP), for students aged 16-19, was offered in 2,378 schools worldwide, 927 of those in the US and Canada. Schools that want to offer the DP must complete a strenuous application process; after authorization, they are evaluated every 5 years to ensure they continue to meet IB's high standards. The DP is an integrated six-part, two-year curriculum capped by the “extended essay,” a 4,000-word composition on a subject of the students’ choosing, that demonstrates their ability to do research and college-level writing. Students are examined in their writing and other abilities by external examiners hired and trained by the IB to ensure “international parity.” Students who earn the IB diploma with highest scores are often able to complete their undergraduate degrees in fewer than four years; for instance, they can complete a bachelor’s degree in three years at Harvard University. At Oregon State University students with top IB scores are guaranteed automatic admission and a year of college credit as well as a generous scholarship, renewable if they maintain a 3.0 GPA. Though IB programs are not yet widespread in North America, they hold much promise for adding rigor and challenge to the typical high school curriculum. Participation in the IB Diploma Programme is not free, however; parents will typically pay \$600 or more per year for their child to participate in the curriculum and take the whole array of required tests.

Curriculum

The IB Diploma Programme curriculum has six integrated parts: first language (called A1), an acquired language (called A2), individuals and societies, experimental science, mathematics and computer science, and the arts. At the center of the curriculum is a three-part experience each student completes: an interdisciplinary “theory of knowledge” course explor-

ing the nature of knowledge across disciplines and encouraging respect for other cultural perspectives; a “creativity, action, and service” experience engaging students in artistic pursuits, sports, and community service outside the school. Writing is central to every subject in the curriculum, and teachers use writing process pedagogy—planning, drafting, getting feedback, revising, and editing—to teach students to produce writing in many genres. In the theory of knowledge course students produce a “theory of knowledge” essay, which figures largely in the overall assessment of ability and accomplishment. The culminating paper is the 4,000-word “extended essay,” a research paper that synthesizes a good portion of what the student has learned. As a result, students who come to college with an IB diploma, have done much more writing than high school students usually do, and the writing is much more substantial and varied than just a few short papers analyzing literature or timed essays.

Student Readiness

The IB program is clearly for unusually motivated and bright students. However, the high fees often establish a barrier to entry for low income students. Some financial assistance in the form of scholarships and federal and state grants is available to such students. Also, students can take individual IB courses instead of the entire DP curriculum; they can earn IB certificates for each subject area in which they are examined, but they have to pay for each exam they take. Other than being at least 16 years old, there are no formal prerequisites for enrolling in an IB course. Thus, it is largely up to students and their parents—influenced possibly by advice from teachers—to decide whether the full IB Diploma Programme or individual IB courses meet students’ needs, aptitudes, and desires. If their high school has an IB program in place, students seeking a challenging path through high school are likely to desire to participate.

Instructors

Teachers in an IB program are carefully chosen and trained to be part of the team that offers the DP curriculum. Assessment of students’ success is not entirely in the instructors’ purview, however. Teachers’ evaluations of students’ homework, projects, notebooks, and labs typically account for 20 percent of students’ grades. The other 80 percent is determined by the external examiners who are hired and trained by the IB. Instructors thus become more like coaches helping the students prepare for the exams. The external examiners evaluate students’ theory of knowledge essays and extended essays and score their exams in each subject, awarding scores from

1 (“poor”) to 7 (“excellent”). Because the external grading is intended to be objective, valid, and reliable across time and place, it is criterion-based not norm-referenced. Students who score at least 4 in all six parts of the curriculum, thus achieving a minimum of 24 points, are awarded the IB diploma. (Students who score below 24 may still get IB certificates for each subject area examined.)

Recommendation

CWPA believes that the IB experience is likely the most rigorous and challenging path students can take through high school. No one part of the IB curriculum is comparable to FYW; however, because the IB experience includes frequent, varied, and extended writing assignments and essay exams, as a whole it could be considered strong evidence that students have worked to develop the same competency in writing that is aimed at in FYW. CWPA recommends more study of the college success of IB students who have been exempted from FYW; it also recommends that writing program administrators examine the writing IB students have done in high school as they make placement decisions. Furthermore, it is recommended that local writing program administrators be involved in their respective college’s decisions about awarding credit for FYW on the basis of IB performance.

THE CONCURRENT ENROLLMENT/DUAL CREDIT OPTION

Since the 1970s, the terms “concurrent enrollment” and “dual credit” have been used to describe various programs across the nation that allow students to enroll in college courses while in high school. (Sometimes the terms “dual enrollment” and “concurrent credit” are used, as well as “post-secondary enrollment options” and “college in the schools.” Since concurrent enrollment and dual credit seem to be the most common names, this document will refer to the option as DC/CE.) Whatever the name used, the idea is the same: high school students enroll in a course that meets requirements for graduation from high school *and* nets them college credit for FYW if they successfully complete the course. The college credit comes from the postsecondary institution that agrees to have its FYW course taught in the high schools or to high school students who take it by coming to a campus or through a distance learning arrangement. According to 2002-03 data from the National Center for Education Statistics, 74 percent of CE courses were taught at high schools, 23 percent on campuses of postsecondary institutions (usually by college faculty teaching high school students who commuted to the campus), and almost 4 percent via dis-

tance education. However they are offered, DC/CE courses are intended to address the concern that high school curricula are not rigorous enough and not preparing students to be “college-ready.”

The recent explosive growth of the DC/CE option is in part fueled by the concerns of state legislatures and other education policy makers, who want to

- encourage more high school students to pursue higher education so that they will be better prepared to work in the globalized economy of the Information Age;
- build effective bridges between high school and college so that students make smooth and rewarding transitions from secondary to postsecondary instruction;
- spend public funds for higher education wisely by finding ways to maintain or cut costs while educating more students effectively.

The DC/CE option seems to address all three of these concerns. A small body of research shows that students who enroll in DC/CE tend to enroll in college and to persist toward college graduation; these results seem particularly pronounced for students from low-income families.¹ The cost of acquiring college credit through the DC/CE option is generally lower than what a student would pay for the same credit while attending college. In some states, legislatures have offered incentives to get students to take DC/CE courses by offering to pay all or part of the costs involved. CWPA is sympathetic to these concerns, but urges stakeholders to use the information below to consider whether a given DC/CE option is equivalent to a typical FYW course offered at a college to a fully matriculated student.

Curriculum

It is difficult to generalize about the curriculum of all DC/CE courses. The original conception was that the curriculum of a particular college’s FYW course would be offered to high school students, but the curriculum that is actually delivered is not always “pure.” Depending on the relationship and existing agreements between the host college and the high school, as well as on the resources the college devotes to its DC/CE program, the DC/CE curriculum in a high school may or may not be similar to the FYW curriculum at the college that grants the credit for the course. Some DC/CE programs scrupulously seek to maintain congruence between the high school and college versions of the courses: They follow the same curriculum and pedagogical methods; they use the same textbooks; the college offering the credit trains the high school teachers in the goals and methods of the course; and, ideally, the college sends liaisons periodically to observe, to

consult, and to supervise delivery of the curriculum. In these well-run programs ongoing evaluation ensures that the DC/CE courses are equivalent to the FYW course in every respect.

However, other DC/CE programs are marked by many alterations that occur as high schools use limited resources to meet state curriculum mandates and legislative requirements to offer DC/CE courses. One course may be used to try to achieve the goals of two or three different mandates or programs. For example, some high schools offer DC/CE credit for one or both of their AP courses, Language and Composition or Literature and Composition, even though the object of study and the writing assignments in AP courses, as described above, are very different from those in most FYW courses. Some high schools simply offer their regular senior English course, and some of the students enrolled in it take the course for DC/CE credit while other students do not. The curriculum in such courses does not take into account the local considerations that the best FYW courses (described above) can.

The implications of this variability are unsettling. Even though high school students may not have actually had a college FYW course, once the DC/CE credit goes on a college transcript, it is very difficult to tell that they have not had the real thing. College credit is usually widely transferable because of the vast network of articulation agreements between all kinds of two-year and four-year institutions across the nation. A student in a small rural high school may take a standard high school English literature course that one sponsoring postsecondary institution is willing to call DC/CE, and the student can transfer the credit and be exempted from FYW upon matriculation at a second postsecondary institution. Admissions officials and writing program administrators at the second institution will generally not be able to tell that the student did not actually take the FYW course of the first institution.

Student Readiness

According to the Education Commission of the States,² the requirements high school students must meet to be eligible to enroll in a DC/CE course vary widely from state to state. Some states specify a minimum GPA, test scores, and/or written recommendations from teachers and other school officials. Fifteen states reserve DC/CE for twelfth graders only; 20 allow eleventh graders to participate; 2 allow tenth graders; and 9 states permit—but don't necessarily encourage—ninth graders to enroll. The remaining states apparently have no policy on student eligibility.

When students are still minors—especially as young as 14, 15, or even 16—concerns arise about their readiness for an FYW course that is designed for students on a college campus, who are typically 18 and 19. Designers of college FYW courses generally plan the curriculum to challenge emancipated young adults who should be ready for the rhetorically challenging and perhaps morally and ethically challenging texts that are often a part of FYW. When such course content is taught to teens in high school who are still minors, their lack of life experiences and readiness to confront some of the questions addressed in college FYW courses could spell trouble. Parents of high school students may object to the content of the curriculum since their children are still under their control. If students who are minors go to a nearby college campus and take a FYW course with students who are older, perhaps by ten years or more, parents and administrators may have additional concerns about the wisdom of mixing students of such disparate ages and stages of maturity.³

Even when students are taught in their own high school, questions arise about the disparity between the cultures of high school and college. Teens as young as 14, 15, 16, or even 17 might be taught in high schools to produce correct, competent writing commensurate with their stage of cognitive maturity, but can it accurately be called college writing? The high school DC/CE course may become an entity that is neither fish nor fowl. In high school, sporting events and other extracurricular activities may interrupt or even cancel classes—even ones being taught for college credit. Failing high school students usually can't drop a course as they can in college. College teachers usually don't allow make-up work, but high school teachers are often required to. Because parents have more say in the lives of their minor children, they are allowed to see their educational records. But the FERPA law (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act) allows students who are either 18 or enrolled in a postsecondary institution to restrict access to their educational records. DC/CE students appear to be in the gray area of this law: Are they high school or college students? Can parents and the high school view their DC/CE course records? These questions are not answered the same way in every state or institution.

Instructors

Just as there is wide variability in the curriculum of DC/CE courses, there is among instructors of the courses as well. The instructor of a DC/CE course may be employed by the college sponsoring the course, someone who perhaps teaches the FYW course on the college campus and also travels to local high schools to teach the same course or teaches it via distance

learning. In such a case, concerns about teacher qualifications and training to deliver the curriculum do not generally arise. However, most DC/CE courses are taught by high school teachers. In best case scenarios, these high school teachers will have been hired because they have the right education and credentials to be teachers of writing; they will also have been given some pre-service training to become acquainted with the textbooks and other materials, the curriculum, the writing assignments and exams, and the pedagogical methods the sponsoring college requires for its FYW course; and they will be regularly visited, observed, evaluated, and invited to in-service activities to continue their professional development as teachers of writing.

Sometimes, however, high school teachers of DC/CE courses have less training or experience with FYW courses. They may be handed the college's syllabus for FYW but choose materials and develop assignments (and/or exams, not often used in FYW) on their own, or in conjunction with other mandates described above such as AP practices and state standards. Since the college coursework required of most high school teachers is typically focused on secondary instruction (and not postsecondary teaching), they may not be aware of research in the field of composition studies that informs FYW.

Recommendation

For the reasons given above, CWPA urges parents and other custodians to perform due diligence before choosing to enroll students in a DC/CE course, and urges postsecondary institutions to carefully examine materials before granting an exemption from and credit for FYW on the basis of a student's high school experience in what was called a DC/CE course. One appropriate way to exercise this diligence is to determine whether the DC/CE course is part of a program accredited by the National Alliance for Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships (NACEP). NACEP was organized in 1999 to develop national accreditation standards for DC/CE courses. NACEP restricts its definition of DC/CE to college courses taught during the usual school day in high schools by high school teachers selected and prepared by partnering colleges; it is not concerned with courses in which college teachers go to the high school to teach, courses that high school students take at a nearby college, and AP and IB courses. NACEP's goal is to certify that college courses offered in high schools are as rigorous as those offered by the sponsoring college. To that end, NACEP has 17 accreditation standards, categorized in five areas—curriculum, faculty, students, assessment and program evaluation—all of which emphasize that DC/CE

students are to be taught and treated the same as fully matriculated college students. These standards cannot be met quickly; a CE program must be in place for five years to gather assessment data before it seeks accreditation. As of April 2013, only 89 programs across the nation had achieved NACEP accreditation.

However, it must be noted that even programs with NACEP certification may not produce the outcomes in writing desired by a particular institution. Colleges and universities may still want to investigate exactly what students did in their DC/CE course. Some guidelines useful in assessing the parity between a particular DC/CE course and a college FYW course may be found in the Statement on Dual Credit/Concurrent Enrollment Composition: Policy and Best Practices, available at <http://www.ncte.org/cccc/resources/positions/dualcredit>. This statement was adopted in November 2012 by the Conference on College Composition and Communication, and it offers guidelines that should be met in order for CCCC “to support dual credit/concurrent enrollment composition” so that the “needs of student writers at all points in their development” are properly addressed and “the rights of teachers and writing program administrators” are protected.

The Two-Year College Association has also published an Executive Committee Statement on Concurrent Enrollment, urging attention to quality control, the environment on the high school campus, and the cognitive and affective readiness of high school students for college learning, along with policies for involving parents, supporting high school faculty, and assigning college grades to high school students. The TYCA statement is available at http://www.ncte.org/library/NCTEFiles/Groups/TYCA/Concurrent_Enrollment.pdf

CONCLUSION

CWPA stands ready to cooperate with other stakeholders in discussing the best ways to design a coherent K-16 curriculum in writing and reading that is commensurate with the level of young people’s cognitive, emotional, and social development at each stage of their education. This discussion should include how to best prepare teachers to deliver such a curriculum in a way that achieves the outcomes that will best serve students as they mature and serve the goals and needs of our democratic society.

In the meantime, the Council of Writing Program Administrators believes that thoughtful deliberations should precede decisions about enrolling young people between 14 and 18 years of age in what are called “college-level writing courses.” As this position statement shows, not all of the three main pre-college credit options—AP, IB, and DC/CE—compare well with FYW in terms of these three factors:

1. curriculum
2. student readiness
3. instructors

CWPA believes that enrolling students in substitutes for FYW probably does them a disservice when the substitutes do not compare well to FYW in curriculum, student readiness, and teacher preparation and supervision. CWPA therefore urges postsecondary institutions to exercise diligence in examining the curriculum, assignments, written work, test scores, and other evidence that students present upon entering college to claim that they already have had an experience equivalent to FYW.

Because writing is such an important activity in the information age and the global economy we live in, CWPA strongly encourages schools at all levels to find ways to offer more writing instruction to students, rather than to find ways to compress or eliminate it at one level or another. Moreover, CWPA questions whether the current trend of accelerating young people's education is an unmitigated good. Introducing more and more so-called "college-level learning" into high schools may short circuit the normal intellectual, social, and emotional development that high school courses have traditionally provided students and thus prevent those students from having the first-year college experiences that are critical to their adapting to the new culture of college and developing the habits of mind that the first-year experience aims at.

When 18-year-olds arrive in college with the equivalent of an associate's degree, they could, presumably, qualify for a bachelor's degree by the age of twenty. CWPA asks stakeholders to consider whether the purpose of a college education is to make it possible for students to graduate as quickly as possible by amassing enough credit hours from disparate sources or whether it is to produce thoughtful, well-rounded, highly literate and humane people who are prepared to take their place in professions and in civic life. CWPA's position is that all who have a stake in answering these questions should look carefully at the pre-college credit industry and determine whether participation in AP, IB, or DC/CE produces the outcomes and habits of mind that we all want students to demonstrate both while they are in college and at the time they earn their degree. It may be that pre-college options are highly valuable to high school students' educational development but should be considered as preparation, not substitutes, for strong FYW courses taken on the campus where each student matriculates.



NOTES

1. Barnett, Elisabeth and Catherine Hughes. "Issue Brief: Community College and High School Partnerships. Prepared for: The White House Summit on Community College." September 2010. Web. 3 September 2012. <<http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED512397.pdf>>

2. The Education Commission of the States (ECS) is an interstate compact created in 1965 to improve public education by facilitating the exchange of information, ideas and experiences among state policymakers and education leaders. As a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization, the ECS involves key leaders from all levels of the education system. Forty-nine states, three territories and the District of Columbia constitute the commission's current membership. Each member state or territory is represented by seven commissioners—the governor and six other individuals, typically legislators, chief state school officers, state and local school board members, superintendents, higher education officials and business leaders. (See http://www.ecs.org/html/aboutECS/home_aboutECS.htm)

3. For a discussion of these concerns, see Barbara Schneider, "Early College High Schools: Double-Time" in *College Credit for Writing in High School: The "Taking Care of" Business*, Eds. Kristine Hansen and Christine R. Farris (Urbana: NCTE, 2010), 141-164.

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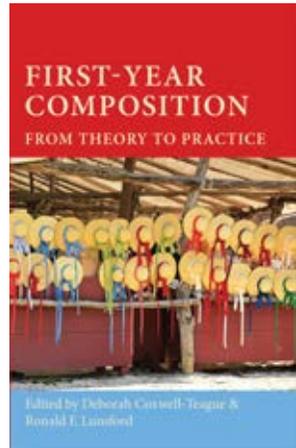
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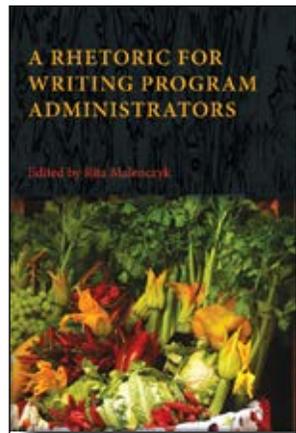
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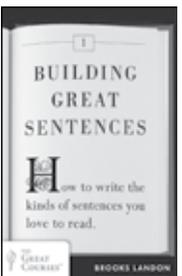
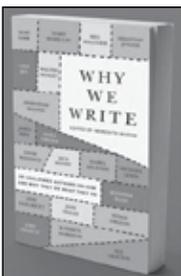
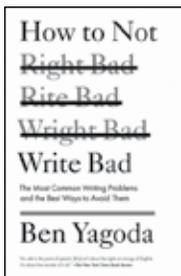
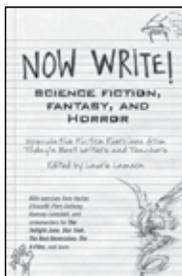
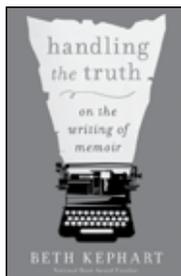
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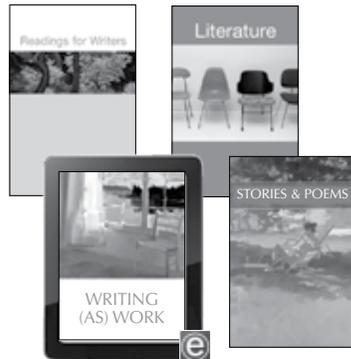
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