

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.

