Writing Program Administration

Volume 38 • Number 1 • Fall 2014

Journal of the Council of Writing Program Administrators

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Authors' Guide

WPA: Writing Program Administration publishes empirical and theoretical research on issues in writing program administration. We publish a wide range of research in various formats, research that not only helps both titled and untitled administrators of writing programs do their jobs, but also helps our discipline advance academically, institutionally, and nationally. *WPA: Writing Program Administration* is published twice per year: fall and spring. Possible topics of interest include:

- writing faculty professional development
- writing program creation and design
- critical analysis and applications of discipline or national policies and statements that impact writing programs
- labor conditions: material, practical, fiscal
- WAC/WID/WC/CAC (or other sites of communication/writing in academic settings)
- teaching multimodal writing
- 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: Writing Program Administration*, please query the editors. We are particularly interested in publishing new voices and new topics.

Submission Guidelines

Check the website for complete submissions guidelines. Please include the cover sheet available at http://wpacouncil.org/info-for-authors. In general submissions should:

- be between 3,000–7,000 words; longer and shorter pieces will rarely be considered
- follow *MLA Style Manual and Guide to Scholarly Publishing* (most current edition)

- have identifying information removed for peer review: author name(s), track changes, comments, and properties cleared throughout
- include a short running head with page numbers
- include an abstract (200 words max) as part of the manuscript, following the title and preceding the body of the text
- have an accurate and correctly formatted works cited page
- include the cover sheet
- be saved as a .doc, .docx, or .rtf file. Do not send .pdf files. If you have special formatting needs, contact the editors.

More information regarding the formatting of the manuscript (specifically endnotes, tables, and pictures) is available at http://wpacouncil.org/node/1812. Manuscripts that don't conform to the requirements will be returned to the author with a request to reformat.

Reviews

WPA: Writing Program Administration publishes review essays of books related to writing programs and their administration. Publishers are invited to recommend appropriate books to bookreviews@wpacouncil.org. If you are interested in reviewing texts, please contact the book review editor at bookreviews@wpacouncil.org

Announcements and Calls

Relevant announcements and calls for papers and/or conference participation 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 links for further information. Submission deadlines in calls should be no earlier than January 1 for the fall/winter issue and June 1 for the spring issue. Please email your calls and announcements to journal@wpacouncil.org and include the text both in the body of the message and as an MS Word or RTF attachment.

Correspondence

Correspondence relating to the journal, submissions, or editorial issues should be sent to journal@wpacouncil.org

Subscriptions

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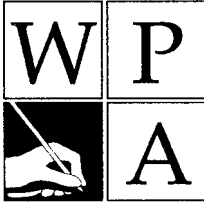
Writing Program Administration

Journal of the
Council of Writing Program Administrators
Volume 38.1 (Fall 2014)

Contents

From the Editors

We are pleased to present the fall 2014 issue of *WPA: Writing Program Administration*. As the new editors, we've instituted a number of changes—some visible and some behind the scenes—so we'd like to discuss them briefly.

The most obvious change is the cover facelift. Each stripe (red, tan, and white) pays homage to the previous covers and editorships while the blue cover aligns the journal with the current branding of the Council of Writing Program Administrators (CWPA). Kenneth Bruffee chose red for the original cover in 1979 when the newsletter became a journal. Under Doug Hesse's editorship, the cover changed to tan, and under editors Dennis Lynch and Marguerite Helmers, the cover became white with red lettering. Additionally, we want to note that this year marks the thirty-year anniversary of the WPA logo, which first appeared on the journal in 1984.

On a side note, our cover art archival work revealed the editorships of the journal, reminding us that we stand on the shoulders of giants. We share the legacy of the journal here:

> Harvey Weiner (1978/Newsletter)
> Kenneth Bruffee (Spring 1979–Fall /Winter 1983)
> William Smith (Spring 1984–Spring 1988)
> Christine Hult (Fall/Winter 1988–Spring 1994)
> Doug Hesse (Fall/Winter 1994–Spring 1998)
> Dennis Lynch and Marguerite Helmers (Fall/Winter 1998–Fall/Winter 2001)
> Dennis Lynch, Marguerite Helmers, and David Blakesley (Spring 2002–Fall/Winter 2002)
> Dennis Lynch and David Blakesley (Spring 2003–Spring 2004)
> Duane Roen, Greg Glau, and Barry Maid (Fall 2004–Spring 2007)
> Deidre Pettipiece, William J. Macauley, Jr., and Timothy Ray (Fall/Winter 2007)
> Deidre Pettipiece and Timothy Ray (Spring 2008–Fall/Winter 2008)
> Alice Horning, Debra Dew, and Glenn Blalock (Spring 2009–Spring 2011)
> Alice Horning and Debra Dew (Fall 2011–Spring 2014)

A second modification, perhaps less obvious, is the changing of the book review editorship. Dr. Edward White's term as book review editor has ended with this issue. He has served as book review editor for the past ten issues of the journal, and we are thankful for Dr. White's extensive expertise and continued support of the journal.

With Dr. White's departure, we welcome Dr. Norbert Elliot (New Jersey Institute of Technology) as the book review editor and Dr. Jacob Babb (Indiana University Southeast) as the associate book review editor. Dr. Elliot has been a great and generous friend to the journal in his capacity as an Editorial Board member, and we look forward to working with both him and Dr. Babb. In the spring issue, look for a letter discussing their plans for the book review section. They may be contacted at bookreviews@wpacouncil.org

Finally, we've changed the composition and role of the Editorial Board. Past editorships have relied on the Editorial Board as the main source of reviewers for submissions. We've shifted that role somewhat and are instead relying on the Board for assistance in policy development, guidance in decision-making, and the mentoring of authors. Our discipline is a rich and thriving one with a great many interests, and we are thrilled to be able to rely on the talent and expertise of our membership. Reviewers now are drawn from both the Editorial Board and subject matter experts in the field on the subject matter of the manuscripts.

We have instituted a three-year term limit on members of the Editorial Board to continue the vitality of the Board while retaining important institutional history of the journal. To help us institute this policy and make room for new Board members, several long-standing Board members volunteered to step off. We would like to take the opportunity to thank each of them for their dedicated service: Anne Beaufort, Russel Durst, Patricia Freitag Ericsson, Greg Glau, Eli Goldblatt, Rich Haswell, Brian Huot, and Shirley Rose. Each has generously continued to give their time to the journal, as a reviewer, as a mentor, or by contributing ideas for future issues.

In their place, we welcome ten talented Editorial Board members—see the front matter of the journal for a list of the current Editorial Board. We want to call attention to a new standing position, which is allocated for Writing Program Administrators-Graduate Organization (WPA-GO) representation. At the request of WPA-GO, the person in this position will change each year. We have attempted to assemble a Board that represents a wide range of diverse institutions where WPAs work. We look forward to a productive working relationship with the Editorial Board and have already benefitted greatly from members' expertise and wisdom.

We also call your attention to an announcement that directly follows this letter. Readers will find a call for a CWPA People of Color Caucus that was presented by Genevieve García de Müeller at the July 2014 Executive Board meeting and endorsed by the CWPA Executive Board. Additionally, you will find the CFP for the CWPA 2015 conference titled "Sustainable Writing/Program/Administrators" in this issue. We encourage you to submit a proposal.

In these pages, you'll find a range of articles on thought-provoking topics. Building on the foundation laid by the previous editors, Alice Horning and Debra Dew, we have worked with each author or author team to move their manuscript into print.

Dylan Dryer and Irv Peckham's "Social Contexts of Writing Assessment: Toward an Ecological Construct of the Rater" complicates the assessment picture with a detailed examination of how raters are influenced by their surroundings.

"Thinking Liminally: Exploring the (com)Promising Positions of the Liminal WPA" introduces a fourth category—liminal WPAs—to the hierarchy of gWPA, jWPA, and sWPA. With this new categorization, Talinn Phillips, Paul Shovlin, and Megan Titus raise important ethical questions for our discipline to consider.

Ann Dean's article "Understanding Why Linked Courses Can Succeed with Students but Fail with Institutions" uses the intellectual and historical development of institutions to examine critical issues in our discipline through the lens of linked courses: post-bureaucratic labor practices, the exchange value of educational experiences, and the tremendous social and economic pressures surrounding higher education.

In "Relentless Engagement with State Educational Policy Reform: Collaborating to Change the Writing Placement Conversation," Heidi Estrem, Dawn Shepherd, and Lloyd Duman describe how they turned a writing test placement score mandated by the Idaho State Board of Education into a fruitful conversation with state legislators and a "focal point for careful, faculty-led research and experimentation."

The revised and updated WPA Outcomes Statement 3.0 is presented here as well. In the accompanying piece, "Revising FYC Outcomes for a Multimodal, Digitally Composed World: The WPA Outcomes Statement for First-Year Composition (Version 3.0)," representatives of the Taskforce—Dylan B. Dryer, Darsie Bowden, Beth Brunk-Chavez, Susanmarie Harrington, Bump Halbritter, and Kathleen Blake Yancey—share the processes of and timeline for revision, examine what has changed from the 2000 version and the 2008 version, and offer commentary on what this

document is and how it can be used. The WPA Outcomes Statement 3.0 also can be found on the CWPA website, www.wpacouncil.org

Finally, Norbert Elliot's review essay "Writing in Digital Environments: Everything Old Is New Again," which reviews an impressive number of books, explores what writing means in the world of Web 2.0.

We would like to extend our gratitude to the many hands and eyes that have made this issue possible. We would like to thank the authors whose work appears in this issue and for their patience during the transition of the editorship. We are grateful to David Blakesley, Rita Malenczyk, Alice Horning, Debra Dew, and Susan Miller-Cochran for fielding numerous questions; to our assistant editor, Jarod Daily, and to our ads manager, Kelsie Walker, for their thoughtful work which has been critical to this issue. We commend Jennika Smith for her eloquent design work of the new cover; we are humbled by her donation of time and expertise. We thank Joel Wingard for his generous offer to copy edit and proof the journal before it went to press. We are indebted to our Editorial Board for their wise and swift counsel and the many reviewers who provided careful and thoughtful feedback to the authors. We are thankful to the University of Delaware for distributing the journal and for the continued support of our colleagues at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock. Finally, we would be remiss if we did not thank the readers who continue to support the journal. It is your support that makes the journal possible.

As always, please don't hesitate to contact us with ideas or concerns. We encourage you to respond to the call for articles, and we hope you enjoy this issue. As Harvey Weiner would say, "We want to hear from you!" Our email is journal@wpacouncil.org

Barb and Sherry

People of Color Caucus Statement

Dear CWPA Members,

During the CWPA conference in Normal, I proposed the formation of a CWPA People of Color Caucus (CWPA POCC) to the executive board. The board voted unanimously to endorse the POCC and gave it their full support.

The CWPA POCC will focus on the efforts and concerns of scholars of color working with fundamentally different and disparate experiences of people of color in academia. To increase diverse representation among academics, graduate students, teaching assistants, writing directors, and lecturers, people of color should be mentored into academia and see a precedent for their right to be a scholar—to see their work valued and to be in conversations with vetted tenured faculty.

The People of Color Caucus will be a vital component to an ongoing conversation on inclusion and mentorship of scholars of color in CWPA. The CWPA POCC will actively work to increase representation of people of color into CWPA and into academia at all levels. The CWPA POCC will also function as one avenue for CWPA to advocate for scholars of color against marginalizing environments.

If you are interested in joining the CWPA POCC, please contact me at ggarciad@unm.edu

Best,
Genevieve García de Müeller

Social Contexts of Writing Assessment: Toward an Ecological Construct of the Rater

Dylan B. Dryer and Irvin Peckham

ABSTRACT

Research on rater behaviors has historically interpreted raters' decision-making practices as decontextualized. This article suggests raters' scores are better interpreted as a residue of the overlapping social systems in which raters are enmeshed: historical currents in the field of writing studies, the day-to-day dynamics of the room within which the assessment occurs, the ongoing microecology of scoring at their table, and near-instantaneous intrapersonal responses to all of the above. We argue that the use-validity of assessment data is bolstered by a fuller understanding of the relationships behind the complex social behaviors of raters, and we make four recommendations to bring writing-assessment practices into closer alignment with contemporary complex models of the writing construct. The analysis and recommendations are based on triangulated research focused on a single assessment (19 readers; 152 first-year composition portfolios; 370 sets of scores) using a Phase 2 Portfolio assessment protocol.

Although no assessment can capture the full complexities or predict the complete range of a student's writing abilities (Condon), assessment scholars agree that writing assessments based on a specificity about a particular domain of locally valued writing skills (Huot), careful scoring procedures (Lane and Stone), and development of criteria (Broad et al.; Hambleton and Pitoniak) can provide useful information about students' abilities to meet clearly defined writing outcomes.[1] The most current interpretations of validity also demand attention to an assessment's social consequences (Huot, O'Neill and Moore; Kane; Poe and Inoue), e.g., the risk of misdirecting students to non-credit, writing courses with significantly higher rates of attrition and failure than mainstream credit-bearing alternatives or

the disparate impact of a poorly designed rating scale on federally protected populations.

In response to growing awareness of the social costs of construct-under-represented and construct-invalid assessments, the field has begun to call for models that better approximate the complexity of students' actual writing practices and development (Wardle and Roozen). It is also time, we contend, to acknowledge the complexity of raters' reading practices (Barkaoui; Harsch and Martin; Knoch "Rating"). Though large-scale assessment technologies such as rater calibration and rubrics are rhetorically constructed as translocal—i.e., inevitable, transparent, and ideologically neutral (Huot and Neal)—in the final analysis, each writing assessment is an irreproducible confluence of idiosyncratic humans and complex textual artifacts in specific spaces and times (Elliot). Researchers, however, must not shrink from engaging the complexities of local factors; any cost incurred in protecting students and teachers from the consequences of overgeneralizations on the basis of numbers derived from an always-partial assessment is worth paying (Moffett).

Inattention to local factors also helps explain why the state of knowledge about raters' decision-making practices remains so fragmented. Although Liz Hamp-Lyons observed nearly twenty years ago that a "great deal remains unknown about . . . raters' rating processes" ("Rating" 761), fifteen years of research advanced the field's understanding very little, if her recent comments on the subject are any indication ("Writing Assessment" 4; see also Zhang). Meanwhile, the variety of construct-irrelevant influences on raters' scoring decisions seems endless: assumptions about writers' skill levels (Diederich), prior scoring experiences (Barritt, Stock and Clark; Vaughan; Wolfe "Relationship"; Wolfe "Uncovering"; Wolfe, Kao and Ranney), prompt fatigue (Weigle), handwriting (Powers et al.), personality type (Callahan; Lumley and McNamara), candidates' choice of genre (Carrell) or prompt (Hamp-Lyons and Mathias), severity drift (Myford and Wolfe), scoring order (Singer and LeMahieu), inferred gender (Haswell and Tedesco Haswell), and ego involvement with the projected writer (Dryer "Mirror"; Wiseman). Raters score in perplexing ways for curious reasons, and their "ontological and epistemological orientation" usually remain unknown quantities (Elliot, Briller, and Joshi 6). To paraphrase Charles Bazerman, in every assessment situation, students' papers disappear into the "black boxes" of raters' nervous systems (Wolfe and McVay 5).

It is curious that raters' minds should remain black boxes—after all, composition studies reoriented to a socio-cognitive view of communication a quarter-century ago. While writing-assessment tools and practices have generally been sluggish to reflect these advances (Behizadeh and Engel-

hard; Dryer "Scaling"), if the field has accepted the utility and accuracy of socio-cognitive models for curricular purposes, these models should also be extended to writing assessment. To that end, this empirical, qualitative research study attempts to pry open the black box by resituating raters' decisions in a complex ecology of scoring. To avoid the flattening effects of single-method inquiries (see Suto), this study joins other recent mixed-method approaches (e.g., Knoch "Investigating") by employing MacMillan's model of Ecological Inquiry. This model allows us to see raters' decisions and the possible social consequences of the scores assigned as the residue of the operations of four social contexts in a particular assessment: 1) *Field* level effects, which are the raters' tacit and explicit beliefs about what writing is and how it should be taught, organizational systems (e.g., program, university, or corporation), pre-assessment teaching conditions, status differences among raters; 2) *Room* level effects, which are the organization and purpose of the particular assessment; 3) *Table* level effects, which are the social ecology of each table of raters; and 4) *Rater* level effects, which are raters' cognitive and affective reactions to *Field*, *Room*, and *Table* effects.[2]

Methods

The assessment scene we studied as participant-ethnographers was sponsored by Jennings-Baker,[3] publisher of a composition textbook called *The College Rhetor*.[4] We learned of the assessment, part of a Jennings-Baker initiative called PASS,[5] from a JB representative, who gave us permission to study the assessment. We offered our own time as raters in exchange for time appropriated from paid raters for interviews. As provisional members of the research project, we were included in communications with the principals as details for the reading were finalized, and along with the other seventeen raters, we went through the training and calibration sessions over two days of scoring.[6] In figure 1, we offer a floor plan of the assessment: at Table A in the top right are sitting the table leader (TL-A) and the four raters: A1, A2, A3, and A4. Table B has three raters working with their table leader (TL-B), and so on for Tables C and D.

We supplemented our notes and observations with data from video/tape-recordings of the assessment and semi-structured interviews (Prior 187) with raters from different tables during both days of the assessment. Interview questions were conducted after the training and before the assessment (addressing motivations for participating, impression of training, and questions of value), midway through the assessment (addressing impressions of and factors in their scoring decisions), and post-assessment (addressing comparison of this scoring experience to other scoring experiences, overall
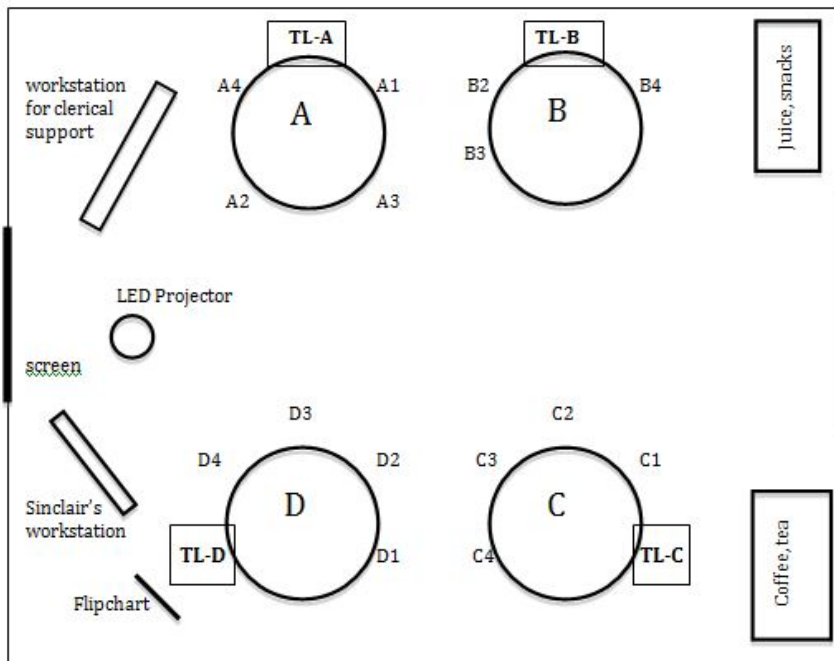
Fig. 1. Floor Plan of PASS Assessment

descriptions of their decision-making processes, and unanticipated issues in the scoring experience). We conducted an exit survey of all raters immediately after the assessment ended, as well as focus-group discussions with the four table leaders and five of the other raters an hour later. Finally, we conducted a quantitative analysis of the holistic scores and of the four analytic scores, which were based on the WPA Outcomes Statement 1.0: Rhetorical Knowledge; Critical Thinking, Reading, and Writing; Writing Processes; and Knowledge of Conventions.[7]

SITE CONTEXT

JB retained Michelle Sinclair,[8] a national figure in US writing assessment, as chief reader. She explained to raters on the first day that the PASS assessment had three purposes: 1) to establish a protocol for publisher-teacher joint assessments of the effectiveness of textbooks generally; 2) to determine the effectiveness of the *College Rhetor* specifically; and 3) to establish a benchmark against which teachers using other textbooks and other outcomes-based assessments could measure their own students' achievements.[9] Sinclair and JB selected raters from teachers in two- and four-year colleges who had used the *College Rhetor* and were familiar with the WPA Out-

comes. Incentives included an hourly rate of about twenty dollars, staying at the resort hotel where the assessment was held, and the opportunity to learn more about assessment. The two of us were assigned rater numbers D4 and A4 and joined seventeen other raters for the two days of scoring.

Raters were calibrated using the "Phase 2" portfolio assessment model (White). Raters were briefed on White's argument that the general impression valued in holistic scoring loses instrumental reliability when raters consult different documents by the same student; portfolio assessments should therefore focus on students' reflective introductions, consulting the contents only "to authenticate what the student is saying in the reflective letter" (592-4). In addition, Sinclair reminded readers that this assessment was low-stakes (Baker). "Nothing we do here will affect any student," Sinclair said. "You're not grading, you're producing data."

The scoring sheet used in this assessment, seen in figure 2, is modeled directly on the WPA Outcomes Statement 1.0 and required raters to use 6-point scales to assign a holistic score and four analytic scores. Raters were to total their analytic scores—a sum that could range from 4 (each outcome ranked a 1) to 24 (each outcome ranked a 6). Portfolios were randomized and scoring was adjudicated—on any portfolio, the two raters' holistic scores had to be at least adjacent, and the sums of their two total trait scores had to be within four points. If either or both of these criteria were not met, the portfolio was referred to a third rater, usually one of the four table leaders.

Analysis of Social Systems Discoverable in the PASS Assessment

In what follows, we examine raters' production of scores within the complex ecology of this assessment, illuminating quantitatively derived scoring patterns with information derived from qualitative methods. To provide a glimpse of this complexity, we add another layer to figure 1 to represent how raters' decisions are influenced by the entire ecology of the assessment scene, not just by procedures intended to influence them (such as calibration).

To keep the figure visually accessible, only ecological effects on Table C are mapped. Beginning with rater C4, who is sitting to the left of his table leader and with his back to rater D1, we know that he is more than meets the chief reader's eye. He claimed to have enjoyed the handful of assessments he'd participated in prior to his invitation to read for the PASS project and felt well prepared by the calibration sessions. He was less sure,

Portfolio Scoring Sheet

Reader Number_____   Portfolio ID _____

Holistic Score (circle one):

6   5   4   3   2   1

Analytic Score:

Rhetorical Knowledge (audience, purpose, context, genre, etc.):

6   5   4   3   2   1

Critical thinking, reading, and writing (thinking about and using arguments and source material):

6   5   4   3   2   1

Writing Processes (invention strategies, drafting, giving and receiving feedback, revising, etc.):

6   5   4   3   2   1

Knowledge of Conventions (appropriate grammar, style, and usage, spelling, etc. as relevant):

6   5   4   3   2   1

_____

First Reading Holistic   Second Reading Holistic   Third Reading Holistic   Total Holistic _____

Fig. 2. PASS Scoring Sheet

however, how closely PASS priorities matched his own. He was unsure whether he scored like his tablemates; while he often wondered how they were scoring, he never consulted his table leader and was lukewarm about the importance of the scoring sheet, believing strongly that he scored best from his initial impression. "I read this stuff all the time," he explained in an interview, "and it's often the case that your first-paragraph impression will be confirmed by the rest"—a common assumption among relatively unpracticed raters.
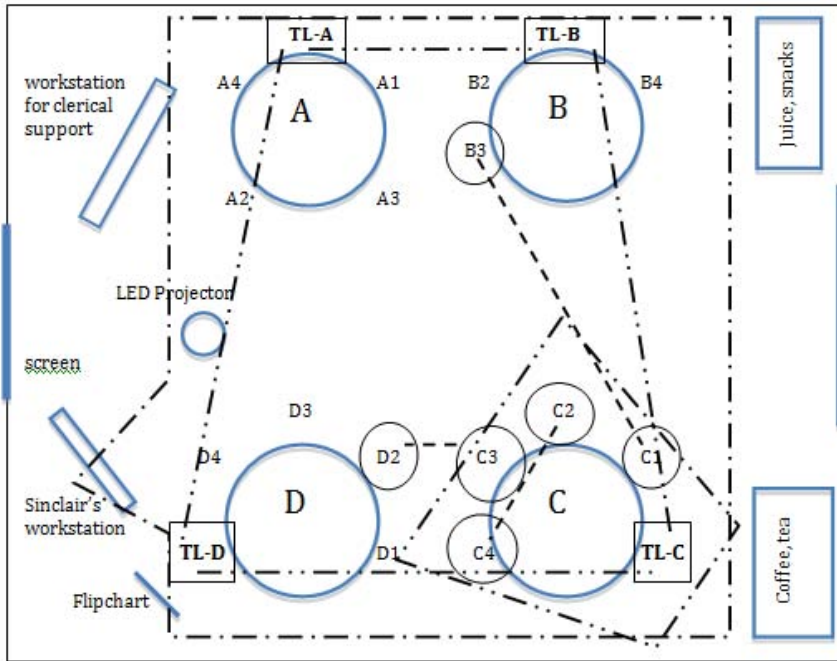
Fig. 3. Floor Plan of PASS Assessment with Sample Effects on Table 2's Scoring

The circles around the raters at Table C indicate their own sense of professionalism and priorities—as well as vested interests in managing their own labor—which are only partially susceptible to official influences, here symbolized by the encompassing dash-dotted line that emanates from the chief reader's station and that bounds all four tables.

Although raters typically read in small groups around tables, we know little about these microecologies of scoring (but see Colombini and McBride). Yet these ecologies exert hidden influences on scoring behaviors, illustrated here by dashed lines. For example, rater C4 was, in addition to the profile he divulged above, also an irritant to rater C2.

> C2: At our table, we have someone who's a little more vocal while he's scoring, so I was kind of influenced by him at the very get-go. I knew which portfolio he was referring to. I found myself saying, 'I disagree and let me find all the reasons I disagree.' . . . I ended up scoring that paper lower than the rest of the room . . . I wonder whether I was just overreacting to his praise of it, you know.

> Peckham: It's like if *he* said that, it can't be that?

C2: He said it was really good, and if he hadn't said that, I would have given it a 4, but for some reason I gave it a 3.

Such influences extend beyond the imagined community of "our table" or "we table leaders" (mapped here with dot-dot-dashed lines): for example, the effect of rater D2's squeaky chair on rater C3's nerves; the preference of rater C1, who explained that she was "from a community college," to leave the calibration discussion to those "university instructors in there" after rater B3 "misinterpreted my comment about fluency" during the initial calibration session.

In our analysis, we document a sampling of the effects we found operating at each of the four levels described above: field, room, table, and rater. We will argue that field-, table-, and rater-level data is essential information about raters' reading practices and should enrich assessment constructs that remain oversimplified by the tendency to report only the final, room-level data. In other words, we are arguing for a vision of assessment congruent with contemporary constructs of writing.

Social System of Field

A JB representative introduced Sinclair to the raters as a national leader in writing assessment research—a kind of incarnation of the field. As chief reader, Sinclair had to quickly establish the ethos of the scoring sheet and the expertise of the raters. Sinclair argued that the WPA Outcomes Statement (WPA OS) represented a field-wide consensus on achievable aims of first-year composition courses. She then used the scoring sheet's (see fig. 2) alignment with the WPA OS to establish room-level confidence by characterizing it as "a professional scoring guide that depends on your expertise as a teacher." In the next twenty minutes, Sinclair reiterated "professionalism" three more times: that the data produced by the study required "professional judgments" of the raters; that raters should not "score like a computer; [but] like a professional, which you are"; and that raters' appraisal of explicit or implicit learning in the reflective letter would necessitate "professional judgment." These compliments were justified: most raters were experienced teachers and raters. Rater A3, the least experienced teacher in the room, had five years' teaching experience; nearly half had more than twenty, and the rest at least ten. Experience with assessments was more uneven—for three raters, this was their first controlled assessment experience. All raters, however, considered themselves qualified to cope with rating issues raised in the calibration session. On our survey, the lowest self-

assigned ranking of familiarity with issues raised in the calibration sessions was 4 on a 6-point scale.

To capture the raters' sense of the field, one of our exit survey questions was to "assign a rank ordering" to the four traits that appeared on the PASS scoring sheet. In the following discussion of their rankings, we operate with the assumption that that the ordering of outcomes in the WPA OS reflects the relative importance of each outcome to the Outcomes Collective, the name assigned to the large group of rhetoric and composition scholars who collaborated over several years to author the Statement (Harrington *xvi*). The WPA OS had to appear in some order, obviously, but that order was not arbitrary and reflected the scholarly consensus of the field—the social-epistemic over the current-traditional model (Berlin). Peckham, who was one of five members of the steering committee responsible for finalizing the 2000 version of the WPA OS, remembers that in both the 1998 Chicago meeting and the discussions of the steering committee, the ordering of the WPA Outcomes Statement was a conscious, rhetorical construction—as one would expect from rhetoricians. Since the scoring sheet was adopted from the WPA OS, field-level effects should be observable in the relative distribution of overturned scores—for example, by raters who claimed to value Critical Thinking, Reading, and Writing as most important compared to those who claimed to value Conventions most highly.
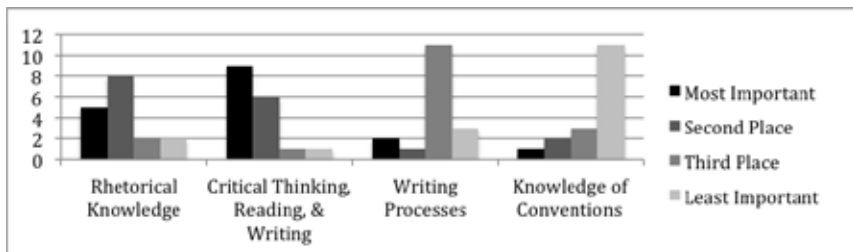
Fig. 4. Relative Priority Given to each WPA Outcomes Statement Trait

In figure 4, the four WPA Outcomes are shown with the relative importance each of the seventeen raters assigned them. Raters broadly reproduced the Outcome Statement's ordering.[10] The two outcomes Rhetorical Knowledge and Critical Thinking, Reading, and Writing in the majority of raters' perceptions were more important than Processes and Conventions. Since raters identified themselves by rater number on the exit survey, we were able to link each rater's ranking of the WPA OS traits to their individual scoring history, represented in data table 1.

Table 1 Percentage of Overturned Scores by Rankings of Outcomes

Ranking of Outcome	Percentage of Overturned Scores
Ranked Rhetorical Knowledge Most Important	16.6
Ranked Rhetorical Knowledge Second	18.1
Ranked Rhetorical Knowledge Third	18.1
Ranked Rhetorical Knowledge Least Important	17.7
Ranked Critical Thinking Most Important	13.0
Ranked Critical Thinking Second	16.0
Ranked Critical Thinking Third	30.5
Ranked Critical Thinking Least Important	49.6
Ranked Process Most Important	42.2
Ranked Process Second	18.8
Ranked Process Third	13.3
Ranked Process Least Important	16.8
Ranked Conventions Most Important	30.0
Ranked Conventions Second	20.0
Ranked Conventions Third	22.3
Ranked Conventions Least Important	13.1

This linkage of ranking to scoring history enables us to see the distributions of overturned scores vis-á-vis individual raters' valuation of outcomes. The distribution of overturned scores does not precisely replicate the ordering in the WPA OS, since the raters prioritized Critical Thinking over Rhetorical Knowledge. Those who ranked Critical Thinking first had only 13% of their total scores overturned; the rater who ranked Critical Thinking least important had 49.6% of his scores overturned. Process and Conventions appear in their familiar third and fourth places, respectively, and those who placed them there were unlikely to have their scores overturned. Raters who elevated either Process or Conventions above its station, so to speak, were much more likely to be overruled. The lack of any significant correlation between how raters ranked Rhetorical Knowledge and the percentage of overturned scores is curious; it's possible that in the current zeitgeist, it has been displaced by Critical Thinking as a proxy for curricular aims (Peckham *Going* 105-11, but see also Maid and D'Angelo).

Just as every score is an incremental addition to a rater's ongoing development of her beliefs about what writing is and how it should be appraised,

every assessment makes its own contribution to this conversation at field-level social systems. Mapping raters' self-positioning with respect to field-level articulations of principles against their decision-making practices could offer an important source of information about how deeply those field-level articulations have penetrated into local training and program practices as well as offering ground-level glimpses of how these principles might be shifting.

Social System of Room

The room is the tacit arbitrator of appropriate score values. Sinclair explained that "the scoring should depend on the criteria we've agreed on, rather than on who scores it." As chief reader, Sinclair had to gain raters' confidence while persuading them to accept scores on benchmark portfolios and room-determined scores as the preferred score. After raters scored the benchmark portfolios for the first calibration session, table leaders led discussions before the scores were tallied and shown on a flipchart. In her subsequent discussion, Sinclair affirmed the room's "professional judgment" by uniting references to the room (underlined) with references to herself and the team of readers who chose the benchmark portfolios (in **boldface**):

> It's really interesting to see the spread for the first paper. We'll come back to that, but let's see where the areas of most agreement are. And this is pretty clear. Ten out of 16 scorers scored it a 1. That's what **we** saw it as. [Pointing to an isolated high score] This person is obviously way out of line, whoever it is; I don't know, and I don't care, but whoever that person is, you should re-evaluate how you're proceeding because the rest of the room essentially said '1 or at best a 2' OK? Let's see where else we are in agreement. Paper B, 12 out of 17 said it was a 5; **we** saw it as a 5, and again, these people are sort of close, and these 2 people are out of line. By definition, right? The room saw it as a 5. We're going to go back and talk about these in a minute; let's just see how it works . . . Paper C, now, the room has it as a 3, but **we** saw it as a 2, and we'll need to talk about whether it could be better there. Paper D, clearly the best of the lot, and the room clearly saw it as a 6. [points to a low score] This person is coming from some other planet; [light laughter] maybe this was a clerical error. But that's a very strange score for a paper that everybody—almost everybody— thought was the best of the lot. Portfolio E **we** saw as a 4; the room saw it as a kind of 4-3. We'll talk about what's the better score.

Such rhetorical framing of portfolio quality as having an ontological existence is routine in writing assessment, as it was during both days of the

PASS assessment. Drawing raters' attention to the areas of greatest consensus around a 2 and a 5 during the second calibration session, Sinclair suggested that "I think we're entitled to say that [Portfolio] L *really is* a 5, and [Portfolio] M *really is* a 2, in the sense that 'really' is the group consensus. So you want to check your score against those two" (emphases added).

Several raters claimed in our interviews to have shifted their scoring in response to room-level calibration. Rater D2, for example, initially scored the benchmark 6 portfolio as a 4, privately believing that the portfolio's sophisticated language and syntax was mostly, as she put it, "BS." During the discussion, however, the room successfully rationalized the portfolio's assertions about knowledge of syntax and conventions as a kind of rhetorical knowledge—the writer's astute anticipation of how teacher-readers would be reading his or her text, an anticipation that in fact turned out to be the case.

> Rater D2: I am aware now that I don't necessarily have the same values as the others *in the room*, so I have tried to be more liberal and reward articulate writing, even though there may not be much substance to it *in my mind*. When I assign the scores right now, I realize that if people have the conventions down, that's being valued, and so I am being more generous. People *in the room* are interpreting that as [the student's] 'rhetorical knowledge.' (emphases added)

Rater A3's distribution of scores replicated the room's with a maximum difference at score point 3 (see data table 3) because he has been able to internalize the room norms. He explained that he made difficult decisions by bearing in mind that

> inasmuch as I don't have access to prompts, course goals, or the students who wrote these papers . . . the knowledge that this is not a grade helps to overcome that. Grades play so much a part of motivating students or rewarding things that maybe don't show up in a final draft or things like that. Since this isn't a grade in that sense, it kind of helps mediate that complication.

Similarly, Rater C2 disciplined herself against overreacting to what she perceived to be second-language interference:

> I hear [Sinclair's] voice in the back of my head as I look at this terrible grammar. . . . I'm not sure whether I'm giving them a genuine score or I'm deflating them because of her direction. . . . I'd give it a 1, but I guess I'll give it a 3 or a 4 because she said not to be harsh on them.

While both raters A3 and C2 may initially read the portfolios through their previous experiences, the values of the room, as a social system, mediates their initial response.

It was inevitable, however, that some raters' sense of the field as discussed would produce some interpretations of the "right" score that would be at odds with the room-level social system Sinclair was attempting to construct. Rater D1 explained that she "liked the idea of structuring the assessment around the WPA Outcomes," (and was among those who ranked Critical Thinking, Reading, and Writing first) but complained that the scoring sheet didn't allow her to evaluate a student's voice. Her distribution drifted lenient (see data table 3 below) in comparison to the room level distribution. Others who clung to private scoring schema drifted severe: rater B3, feeling that a lot of the portfolios she read "were kind of in the middle," made decisions by eliding critical thinking with a private outcome of engagement:

> Rater B3: When there's some real thought, that's more of an upper-level paper, even if they're not the greatest writer. There's more critical thinking, there's better analysis, there's more sense of personal responsibility in their learning. It isn't the teacher's job to make you learn in college, it's your responsibility.

> Peckham: You'd say that the interactive element between the teacher and the class actually has something to do with the score you assign? That's not in the criteria, is it?

> Rater B3: I definitely value engagement. I definitely valued students who don't blame me for their lack of learning.

Rater B3's private appraisal of how the students might have interacted with a projected version of herself (note the shift from past to present tense: "I . . . valued" to "students who don't") is neither supported by the scoring sheet nor measurable in the portfolios. Typical of raters assessing a construct-underrepresented trait, she trends severe, awarding nine overturned 3s. As we will explain further below, we are not suggesting that voice or engagement cannot or should not be assessed, but we know that raters reduce scoring criteria to "manageable representation[s]" to limit the demanding cognitive routines necessary to appraise a complex construct such as writing ability (Bejar 4). Raters D1 and B3 perhaps did not have sufficient opportunities to translate their commitment to voice and engagement into the room-level language drawn from the scoring sheet.

Social System of Table

The sound of raters reconciling (or not) private motives with room-level intentions will have been familiar to most readers, especially those who have followed the scholarly uptake of Bob Broad's landmark study of an assessment scene at City College nearly fifteen years ago. But by shifting our focus from the social system of the room to the table, we can see how different configurations of personalities responded differently to Sinclair's attempt to socialize raters/tables into similar scoring behaviors. In data table 2, we have constructed a thumbprint for each table, measured against the thumbprint of the room. We might describe Table B as timid, assigning a disproportionate number of scores to the middle, the well-known 3-4 category and reluctant to risk low and high evaluations (see Elliot 103). Table D, by contrast, leads the pack toward a flattened score distribution pattern, assigning 12% 1s, 13% 2s, 19% 5s, and 13% 6s. Raters at this table were bold, unafraid of ranking portfolios as marginal or exceptional.

Such scoring thumbprints can be instructive to compare, not least because they can illustrate variance concealed in a room-level mean. Table-level scoring thumbprints can also indicate the effects of an elusive influence on scoring behaviors: the table leader. Straddling room and table systems (Hoskens and Wilson), table leaders play a pivotal role in how individual raters score, as can be seen in how two different table leaders attempt to broker Sinclair's version of the field to the configuration of raters at their table.

Table 2 Distributions of Scores—Room v. Tables

	Table A	Table B	Room Mean	Table C	Table D
Score of 1	4%	1%	7%	10%	12%
Score of 2	15%	12%	14%	16%	13%
Score of 3	22%	28%	22%	19%	21%
Score of 4	31%	34%	28%	24%	23%
Score of 5	22%	19%	21%	23%	19%
Score of 6	7%	5%	8%	8%	13%

As we might expect from the distribution of scores at Table D, their table leader was a highly experienced rater and table leader. We can see her confidence and poise as a table leader in this transcript of her conversation with rater D2, whom she suspects has been scoring high:

TL-D: This is the second paper I saw that you gave a 5 to; you gave it a 5, and I gave it a 3—and here's something I find interesting.

D2: [with mild sarcasm] Interesting?

TL-D: I think you were reading more into it. . . .

D2: That's interesting. That's possible.

TL-D: I think you were giving it a lot more benefit of the doubt . . . The best way we can proceed is to continue to refer back to the scoring guide. . . .

D2: Actually, you're liberating me because I had a sense that if I *were to really go with my true feelings, the score would be a lot lower. . . .* [The benchmark 3 portfolio] just threw me. That paper was atrocious.

TL-D: Even if you think it was atrocious, you have to look at it as a benchmark for *what we mean by a 3*. (Emphases added).

TL-D deftly negotiates the line between maintaining table sociability and ensuring that members of her subsystem are aligned with the room's macrosystem. If she senses resentment in D2's laughing echo of "Interesting?," she responds by guiding the conversation away from abstractions about "atrociousness" and back to local dynamics and the shared artifact of the scoring sheet. Doing so allows D2 to save face with some graciousness of her own saying, remarkably, that the table leader's intervention has in effect liberated her from her idiosyncratic sense of the field.

Table leader A, however, struggled to keep her table attuned to room-level dynamics, as we can see in this exchange with rater A1, who in this excerpt had just told her curtly that she "didn't care" whether or not the table leaders were checking on scoring.

TL-A: You know what [calibration] is going to show us? This is not necessarily going to show us that we're wrong, but that if we're way off, maybe we need to take more time, and if we're not, the way we're doing is working. You see what I'm saying?

A1: Another thing it can tell you of course is just what bothers you the most; I mean there are things that wouldn't significantly distract me that significantly distract *you*.

TL-A: That's right—personal prejudices, and I understand that [pause] um I'm a uh grammarian, big time. But that doesn't distract me. . . .

> A1: It depends which it is. I can get by if they don't put a comma before [inaudible] but if you see some random comma and it's so distracting that it messes up the rest of the sentence.

> TL-A: Yeah, I know. Plus we're so skilled at putting in what we think it should be even though we see that it's not that; that sometimes in a way can get you through a paper [pause]. Well, we've all done it; same experience regardless of where we teach [trails off]

Unlike her colleague at Table D, table leader A fails to resist the interpersonal realm, electing to try to repair relations with A1 at the cost of losing focus on a room-level issue (i.e., the relative importance of conventions). By invoking off-rubric criteria, she attempts to be professional by invoking a shared teaching experience rather than by translating Sinclair's room-level calibration to the table. Perhaps as a consequence of this idiosyncratic uptake on conventions, table A generated twice as many nonadjacent conventions scores as Table D, as well as displaying a marked central tendency in scoring.

Raters react differently to ecological influences—conceding to some room-level imperatives, reserving resistance for others, negotiating prior allegiances to previous training and value-systems with the imperatives of room-level reliability. While so far we have seen raters' responses to "official" sources of rater influence (the chief reader and her table leaders), this conversation captured at Table A suggests that official sources are only part of the spectrum of influences. Here, rater A2 tries to open a discussion about the difficulty of assessing rhetorical knowledge, but is interrupted by A1, whose intervention appears to have contributed to Table A's asymmetrical relationship with the room:

> A2: If I'm on the fence, though, if they say they're addressing a particular audience, but I can't see one—

> A1: [*interrupting*] —at some point, I just give myself a break: 'would you pass this paper or wouldn't you pass it?' And that's your gut [snaps fingers] after reading an intro—gut, right? *Then* you kind of go through and justify.

Although Sinclair had warned the room "that you're going to have to fight against your tendency to do here what you've done before," A1 elected to limit her own labor by using a private grading scale. Unchecked by her table leader, this rater-level decision becomes a table-level factor in scoring. On the second day of scoring, A1 again interrupted the table leader to argue for a rating system used by piecework raters whose primary motive is to stay employed by standardized testing agencies.

A2: What if I have like, hypothetically, a reflective [reflection] that doesn't reference the portfolio?

TL-A: Sometimes what [the student] is expressing we might not recognize as one of the outcomes, but it actually is, in a roundabout way. And you go back into their papers and see do they have this? Whether it's addressed or not, that's when you go into the analytic scores and—

A1: [interrupting]—that's where you get into that portfolio thing, though, 'cause it's only a 1-point differential. Who's gonna give it a 4? Nobody. Even if you give it a 2, everybody's going to give it a 1 or a 3; you're both going to be within a point.

A2:—yeah [pause] yeah, I mean, I scored the SATs, so yeah.

We find evidence for the influence of this conversation in data table 3, which reports seat-level distributions relative to that of the room, identifying leniency and severity drift where measurable. As can be seen, A1 gave no 1s, preferring the safe card of the 2. In research comparing timed with untimed essay performances, Peckham finds the same logic governed piecemeal readers for the ACT Essay exams, a notable reluctance to award 1s and 6s on a 6-point scale. Rather, raters were clearly deciding whether a paper was a 2/3 or 4/5, as if knowing that second raters would also edge toward the middle ("Online" 130). Like those ACT raters, A1 awarded the highest proportion of 4s in the room; by the end of scoring, A2 had also drifted toward the middle, over-assigning 2s and 3s and under-assigning 5s.

Since raters could of course stay within a "typical" distribution relative to the room and still award a nonadjacent score, data table 3 also reports the number of overturned scores each rater produced, which helps us locate effects of even quite subtle inter-rater influences. "If we are to be totally honest for the sake of your data," reported C2, "there is one person who keeps kind of irritating me . . . because of hopping on the iPhone all the time and checking on the email all the time." Resentful that the table leader appeared to be asking everyone to pick up this rater's slack, rater C2 said she felt like saying, "No, I don't want to do her work. I want to check my email now. . . . I'm annoyed with her." C2 believed that she scored leniently, writing on her exit survey that the assessment procedure "influenced me to be more compassionate than I could have been before." Resentful of her off-task tablemate and irritated by the chatty rater C4 (as mentioned above and who awarded elven overturned 2s), C2 has lost touch with both the room and herself, over-scoring 1s and 2s and under-scoring 4s.

Table 3 Seat Distribution of Scores (N =1840)

	Score of 1	Score of 2	Score of 3	Score of 4	Score of 5	Score of 6
Room Distribution (overturned scores)	6.7% (40)	14.1% (46)	22% (55)	28% (43)	20.8% (56)	8.4% (19)
Table A: 465 scores						
Table Leader	0%	12%	36%†	24%	21%	6%
Rater A1	0%	8%	22%	45%* (6)	20% (9)	6% (5)
Rater A2	6% (1)	23%† (1)	32%† (6)	24% (5)	10%† (2)	6%
Rater A3	8% (3)	14% (6)	19% (6)	27% (6)	23% (3)	10%
Rater A4	1%	19%	10%* (2)	30% (2)	33%*	7%
Table B: 410 scores						
Table Leader	1%	24%† (5)	23%	30%	19%	3%†
Rater B1[1]	—	—	—	—	—	—
Rater B2	4%	11% (2)	26% (7)	40%* (1)	17%	2%†
Rater B3	0%	10% (1)	39%†† (9)	30% (1)	13%† (2)	9%
Rater B4	0%	7% (1)	25% (3)	36% (2)	25%	7%
Table C: 521 scores						
Table Leader	4%	18% (1)	28% (1)	22% (1)	22% (2)	6%
Rater C1	11%	9%	14%*	25% (3)	34%** (6)	8%
Rater C2	14% (3)	22%† (4)	22% (6)	12%	18%	12% (1)
Rater C3	14% (5)	6%* (2)	6%**	37%* (4)	27%* (10)	11% (3)
Rater C4	6% (1)	21% (11)	21% (5)	26% (5)	19% (5)	6% (1)
Table D: 444 scores						
Table Leader	4%	10%	23% (1)	34%	19%	10%
Rater D1	3%	3%*	18% (1)	33% (2)	23% (5)	21%** (2)
Rater D2	0%	4%*	22% (3)	29% (1)	26% (4)	18%* (5)
Rater D3	32%†† (27)	23%† (16)	22% (5)	8%†† (1)	13%† (4)	2%† (2)
Rater D4	8% (4)	28% (1)	16%	18% (3)	14%† (2)	18%*

Drift
* lenient—1 SD from room mean
**significant leniency—2 SD from room mean
† severe—1 SD from room mean
††Significant severity—2 SD from room mean

Note

1. Rater B1 did not attend the assessment session due to illness.

Raters were even influenced by raters they could not see. Rater A3, for example, was asked to adjudicate Portfolio 78, which B2 had scored a 5 and D3 (predictably, given his sharply severe scoring profile) had scored a 1. Not knowing D3's scoring profile, A3 struggled against his initial inclination to give Portfolio 78 a 5, ultimately lowering his score to as a way to accommodate D3's 1.

RA3: I could have seen either a 5 or a 1 as a defensible position. Ultimately I gave it a 4; I thought it was worthy of being a higher half. But knowing that it got a 1, it encouraged me to look for reasons why it could have earned a 1.

Dryer: So the presence of that other judgment [trails off]

RA3: Absolutely.

In a 2011 review of neurophenomenological research, Marilyn Cooper describes all humans' attunement with influences in their immediate environment as structural coupling, a "process of mutual adaptation that occurs when organisms or systems perturb one another in a prolonged interaction, gradually becoming more attuned to one another" (437; see also Heath and Luff; for an assessment-specific example, see Columbini and McBride, esp. 202). We believe scoring tables are best similarly understood as permeable social systems, subject to multiple and competing influences. As we will see below, so are raters themselves.

Social System of Rater

Finally, we find effects in the intrapersonal realms of affect and cognitive dissonance. Rater B4 described her reluctant accommodation to the social system of the room, following the discussion of the benchmark 6 portfolio in the first calibration session:

> B4: If I have to give it a 5, I will. We had this conversation at our table yesterday; I wanted to see it the way we were asked to see it. There were those who said, 'where's the evidence in it?' and those who said, 'but look at the sentence structure!' The language was there; to me it was someone who could speak the language, but they weren't understanding what they were saying.

Rater B4 is willing to align but retains her private response to the portfolio. We can imagine that others engage in private resistance—perhaps muttering at the table or the buffet line, perhaps leaving a silent trail of nonadjacent scores. Nearly a third of rater D3's scores were 1s, as if he were waging a private war against the room's "voice of the majority." Others find ways to redress bias or perceptions of inadequate instruction in their scoring, developing workarounds to the room-level randomization design. Rater D2 told us she always guessed at the gender of the writer when reading the reflective essay. Although she worried that gendering caused her "to fill in the blanks for writers" based "on the space I think writers should occupy," she conceded that she would find "fluffy" writing more acceptable from a female than a male writer.

Some raters, recruited from nearby colleges, claimed that they could deduce the student's school from the reflective letter. As rater C2 explained: "While you're judging the paper . . . I'm also kind of judging the English department of that school." Asked what she meant, C2 explained, "When I know [the portfolio] comes from that more 'hippy' school, I'm a little more impressed with the student who came out of this casual environment but came out of it with an academic tone."

These comments complicate common assumptions about raters' behaviors. One might imagine that raters, as a consequence of calibration sessions, scoring guides, and prior experiences, base their scores on their perceptions of the portfolios in question measured against their interpretations of objectified standards. We found, to a surprising degree, raters reacting to and rejecting the scoring values of the room, table and field social systems. Interpreted within an ecology of scoring, a score is not the private appraisal of an isolated artifact but is instead produced by the dynamic interaction of multiple systems.

One of the more interesting findings in our study is raters' awareness of their own situation within these systems. Our entrance survey collected the sorts of information that are routinely used to assess rater expertise and compatibility (number of years' experience teaching writing, prior assessment experiences, current job description), and our exit survey posited a series of questions to which raters could respond with a ranking on a 6-point scale (e.g., familiarity with issues discussed during training and norming; preparation to assess the portfolios). We found that only the handful of questions that gave raters opportunities to reflect on their own scoring practices and table-dynamics consistently corresponded with nonadjacent scoring. Data table 4 reports those questions, mapped to the percentages of nonadjacent scores that each rater who responded in the top, middle, and bottom thirds of the scale produced. Rater D3, for example, rated his familiarity with the issues discussed during training and norming as 6 on a 6-point scale. However, when asked later in this same survey to indicate the degree to which those sessions changed the way he would otherwise have scored these portfolios, D3 circled 2, in the bottom third of the scale. Perhaps because he imagined himself as professional, a self-image Sinclair urged in the opening session, D3 assumed enough authority to resist table and room systems. He marked 6 in response to our question on frequency of thinking about how other raters were scoring but that didn't mean he was trying to score as they were scoring. He wrote in the margins of the survey, "Thought about it continually, but disregarded any and all *qualms*" (emphasis added)—a revealing way to characterize his relationship to his table, the room, and to assessment practices more generally. Placed in

Table 4 Selected Exit Survey Questions

Question	Identical/Adjacent Scores	Nonadjacent Scores
How closely did calibration fit with what you value in student writing?		
Not at all (1-2)	65.2%	34.8%
Fairly closely (3-4)	75.0%	25.0%
Very closely (5-6)	72.5%	27.6%
Do you feel that the other readers valued the same things in undergraduate writing as you?		
Very Little (1-2)	68.2%	31.8%
Somewhat (3-4)	74.3%	25.7%
Very Much (5-6)	72.6%	27.3%
Please indicate the importance of the scoring guide to your scoring.		
Not important (1-2)	71.4%	29.6%
Somewhat (3-4)	75.8%	24.2%
Very important (5-6)	79.4%	20.6%
How frequently did you know what score you would assign after reading the first two or three paragraphs of the reflection?		
Almost Always (5-6)	50.5%	49.5%
Sometimes (3-4)	65.2%	34.8%
Almost Never (1-2)	61.7%	38.3%
How often did you think about how the other readers or the table leader might have scored an essay when you assigned your score?		
Seldom (1-2)	51.2%	48.3%
Sometimes (3-4)	62.5%	37.5%
Often (5-6)	59.9%	40.1%

full ecological context, Rater D3 becomes more than just a seriously discrepant scorer, accounting for more than a fifth of all overturned scores. When his responses are mapped to his scoring profile, he offers a useful

insight into a kind of professional motivation that he surely shares with others.

Conclusion

"Without a clear understanding of . . . how scoring criteria must be resolved against an assessor's intuitive professional understanding of a piece of work," asks Victoria Crisp, "can we ever be really sure of what an assessment is measuring?" (10). Empirical qualitative research gives us insight into raters' understandings of the writing construct they are scoring and provides a potentially useful protocol to establish connections between scores and these understandings. Moreover, it suggests that a view of scoring from only the room level obscures important differences in table-level scoring distributions and rater-level reading dynamics. If raters' scores are residues of social dynamics of tables, the ethos projected by their table leader and chief reader, and by raters' complex relations to their working conditions in and concepts about the field, our exploration into the ecologies of an assessment site suggests four opportunities for working *with* local ecologies and conditions—not strategies to minimize or manage their influence.

First, research based on the ecology of scoring should inform scoring protocols. Raters' generally accurate perceptions of their own scoring profiles suggest that they have a useful part to play in identifying validity threats. Raters also deserve more opportunities to report and reflect on their perceptions alongside the conventional room-level calibration sessions, fraught as those sessions are with imbalances of authority, expertise, and assertiveness (see Rater C1's comment, above). Table leaders might also be encouraged to supplement chief readers' reliability reports with attentive interpretation of the activity at their table. Compare the reports of interpersonal conflict and tension we have documented at Table C with their table leader's characterization:

> TL-C: My people even without knowing me came to me a lot with 'You've got to look at this one, I don't know where to go.' When I've had experiences norming before, they've not been as nice . . . but everyone was like 'Hey, what do you think?'; 'Can I have your help with this?' People were very receptive to feedback; even if there were several in a row that I didn't speak to anyone about, they would be like "Are we OK? How are we looking as a table?"

As data table 3 documents, scoring at Table C was overturned frequently; yet no other table leader reported such spontaneous requests for recalibration and discussion. Is it not possible that these raters knew on some level that their scoring was problematic, even if they could not quite have said

how or why they knew? What if this table leader had been trained to listen for such questions as a potential source of information—in this case, as her raters' attempts to signal to her that they felt something was wrong?

Chief readers might also adjust conventional models for adjusting severe or lenient scoring. Such models rely on a unitary and outmoded construct of the rater's mind and miss the table as a microecology of scoring. This modernist interpretation may help explain raters' vulnerability to post-intervention hypercorrection or a retreat to prior scoring behaviors (see Congdon and McQueen). Instead of pulling a rater aside to discuss a pattern of aberrant scores, table leaders might invite a table-level discussion about the causes and possible interpretations of a discrepant score, interpreting that pattern of scoring within a model that emphasizes the communal nature of reading (Knoch "Rating").

Second, while holistic scoring procedures have long emphasized highly orchestrated initial training (see Bejar 4-5), there appear to be few protocols for attending to questions that arise during reading. For example, recall (as discussed above) that Rater A3 had been asked to adjudicate one of Rater D3's nonadjacent scores and that he had no reason to suspect that D3 was scoring so severely. Weighing both scores as potentially legitimate, A3 develops an important insight about the instrumental validity of the scoring sheet.

> A3: This author . . . was in her reflective letter misdirecting readers' attention from the things she was actually demonstrating that she did well. And so, if you were to take her reflection simply at face value, she was very convincing that she didn't do anything well. But reading her other papers, I think it was actually defensible that she was actually doing these things; she just wasn't entirely sure how to reflect upon them effectively.

> Dryer: So she was potentially disadvantaged by this particular scoring protocol?

> A3: I do think so.

Chief readers may overestimate the durability of the effect of calibration and the transparency of rubrics. Recent insights into the brittleness of conceptual gains made by novice teachers (Reid, Estrem, and Belcheir) point to the powerful longevity of prior dispositions (especially those tacitly operating on the field level). A questionnaire (like the one we put to the PASS Raters) administered before an assessment could help chief readers make better decisions about where to invest the limited resources of calibration;

under ideal conditions, the results of such a questionnaire would be shared and discussed with raters themselves before calibration begins.

Third, assessment designs—including scoring guides—may assume more shared agreement about the meaning of key terms than actually exist at the tables. Even the table leader focus group acknowledged the tenuousness of their grasp on the writing construct:

> TL-D: The assumption was that we were going to agree with all of the scores and the way that they were seen by whoever selected them. . . . We should have at least gotten those samples ahead of time so that we could have read them and had a *discussion* about them amongst ourselves. We had the answers but without the rationale. (Original emphasis)

A weakening alignment with the construct of an assessment has usually been framed as "severity drift," and both human and algorithmic techniques are routinely deployed to spot and correct it (e.g. Hoskens and Wilson). But an ecological construct suggests that weakening alignment could be reframed as an occasion for renegotiating interpretations of the scoring guide. In this context, it is compelling that both focus groups argued for, as rater D2 put it, "structured times when readers need to feel they can get up and go." Rater C1 agreed, laughing, "Where they *make* you get up and go!" At the table leader focus group, TL-C said almost precisely the same thing:

> You have to structure times when readers need to feel they can get up and go—'OK, we're all breaking now.' Because someone would come back and they'd be like 'Oh, where am I, I've got to hurry up with this,' and I thought that might have affected us.

To be sure (and not to put too fine a point on it), "going" probably means toilet breaks. But that can't be all that raters meant, given that they independently spoke of "structured time." A variety of collective experiences (even waiting in line for lunch) might offer chances to renegotiate their experiences of the assessment: opportunities to vent, contextualize pet peeves, to share tacit definitions of a term such as *process*, or to compare impressions like rater B3's, which she probably would not have articulated for herself had she not been interviewed: "I was surprised by how many of the portfolios fell right in the center, and I thought for a while 'did I just get all of the average ones?'"

It appears that assessment administrators should expend as much capital as they can spare on time: time for raters to excavate tacit assumptions, time to explore the premises of the assessment, time to work toward a more closely shared definition of key terms (the exit survey alone suggests a wide range of private definitions of the term *rhetorical knowledge*). Material con-

ditions alone make such time costly (raters must be paid; schedules are difficult to coordinate), and cultural conditions conspire against enacting an ecological construct of writing assessment: social conventions default toward hierarchies of surveillance and control; social imperatives for "objective" scoring discourage negotiation and discussion, even when such discussion might increase the reliability of scoring.

Finally, moving from the dynamics operating within an assessment to the reporting of its scoring, we suggest that the use-validity of assessment data is enhanced by reporting the scoring protocol and its relation to field-level criteria, making a routine practice of disaggregating scores by table and rater, and providing those profiles alongside the scoring profile of the room. It might be objected that this practice would undermine the years of effort spent gaining the confidence of external stakeholders for reliable direct assessments of writing, but stakeholders who never see table-level distributions alongside room-level distributions are less likely to see the full complexity of the construct assessed. Accordingly, they may believe that raters' scores (and thus the decisions made on the basis of those scores) are less consequential than they are; they may also be tempted to believe that writing assessment can be outsourced with little harm to the process. Users of the information derived from large-scale, program-wide assessments should be aware of the degree to which a range of social systems introduce volatility into any large-scale assessment of student writing. Users who are more aware of the full complexities that produce scores are likely to be more circumspect in their use of that information than history suggests has been the case so far.[11]

NOTES

1. For much of the twentieth century, writing assessments operated with an assumption of generalized writing ability—i.e., an ability to answer selected-response items about grammatical conventions or to produce an impromptu belletristic essay were sufficient proxies for writing ability. In spite of subsequent research documenting dramatic differences in the conventions of different genres as well as writers' difficulties in transferring writing ability across genres, this assumption still operates in the most powerful US large-scale writing assessments (as their overgeneralized names suggest: the former "SAT Writing" test and the still-current "AP Language and Composition" and the "ACT Writing Test").

2. We have adopted MacMillan's framework of four "concentrically embedded contextual layers" suited to ecological research in writing with terms suited to assessment (335). *Rater, Table, Room,* and *Field* correspond to *micro-, meso-, exo-,* and *macrosystems* respectively.

3. A pseudonym.

4. Another pseudonym.

5. A pseudo-acronym.

6. We were included in team meals to give us access to conversations among the chief reader and table leaders but otherwise paid all our own expenses.

7. This research was done prior to the publication of WPA Outcomes Statement 3.0.

8. Another pseudonym.

9. Sinclair and the Jennings-Baker representative both emphasized the academic nature of the scoring, possibly to obviate concerns about the corporate sponsorship of the assessment affecting the integrity of the second purpose above. "We are," Sinclair said to the raters, "not being asked to do anything to favor Jennings-Baker but rather to come out with as careful a set of data on the material we have as possible and let the conclusions fall where they may."

10. We cannot conclude anything about the degree to which they belonged in the field before the assessment because we were unable to distribute these questionnaires before the assessment began.

11. This study was judged Exempt, Category 2 by the Institutional Review Boards of the University of Maine (application #2009-12-01) and Louisiana State University (IRB# E4870).

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Thinking Liminally: Exploring the (com)Promising Positions of the Liminal WPA

Talinn Phillips, Paul Shovlin, and Megan Titus

Abstract

This article problematizes the hierarchy and taxonomy of senior/junior/graduate WPA through the lens of the authors' graduate student administrative experiences and suggests a fourth, more fluid category: liminal WPAs. The liminal WPA is typically outside the tenure track (graduate student, contingent faculty, etc.) and may lack other status markers such as a terminal degree, a job description, or a permanent position; however, the liminal WPA has a workload comparable to sWPAs and jWPAs. We argue that theorizing writing program administration in relationship to the tenure track minimizes the work of those who are outside it; thus, the field has minimized work done by those with fewer resources and more complicated relationships to power. We present not only a critical viewpoint of liminal WPA work but also show how thinking liminally, or exploiting one's institutional impermanence, can be a place for liminal WPAs to be productive, valued members of the discipline.

* * *

Jamie is the interim director of a writing program who accepted the position after the director resigned in protest over budget cuts. Jamie's responsibilities include administering the exemption process for undergraduate writing courses, settling transfer disputes for writing courses, working with the director of composition, and training faculty in writing across the curriculum both individually and in university-wide workshops. In addition, Jamie reports directly to the provost, has been working closely with a dean to increase the number of writing-intensive courses on campus, and has authority to approve new writing-intensive courses. Jamie works with other major stakeholders to develop a common reader project to improve first-year retention. The program's $250,000

budget also pays for the writing center and its coordinator, a non-tenure track, full-time administrator.

Based on this job description, is Jamie a junior WPA (jWPA)? A senior WPA (sWPA)? A graduate student WPA (gWPA)? What kind of WPA scholarship is most likely to be helpful to Jamie?

Our doctoral institution offered us many opportunities for writing program administration work as graduate students. We each held two or three assistant director positions, substantial positions with responsibilities that grew over time, which encompassed three or more years for each of us and sixteen years combined. We took these positions because we liked the work and wanted training for future administrative positions, thus increasing our marketability. Economic motivations also drove us; these were paid positions that, in some cases, included health insurance. We enjoyed our work and remain grateful for these opportunities.

However, the range of experiences and levels of responsibilities we held were sometimes problematic. Along with the good we accomplished, at times, we also felt powerless. For example, as assistant director of composition and third-year doctoral student, Megan was responsible for mentoring and, in some respects, supervising more advanced TAs. Unsurprisingly, she felt she didn't actually have the authority to carry out her job when this entailed failing a student in a professional development course after he had defended his dissertation. As interim directors of the writing center and WAC program respectively, Talinn and Paul found themselves in the awkward position of giving advice on writing instruction to tenured faculty, although they were not faculty themselves. We had the authority of graduate students, some of the tasks of sWPAs, and identified most with jWPAs' sense of being caught between our work and the institutional authority needed to achieve it. While the problems we experienced are part of the territory of WPA work, we wondered if these problems were so often a part of the territory of a graduate student's WPA work.

The debate surrounding who can and should do WPA work continues in our discipline. Conventional wisdom suggests that untenured faculty should not accept WPA positions before tenure; however, nearly all advertised WPA jobs require new hires to take (often substantial) administrative roles immediately. Refusing a position because it includes administration or renegotiating a position so that administrative work is delayed is often not possible. Further complicating the issue is that many young faculty have administration as a primary professional goal and identity, as Charlton et al. note in *GenAdmin*. A group of jWPAs, they encourage the field to move beyond "good idea/bad idea" discussions of untenured faculty and

WPA work. We suggest that many of the issues they raise apply not only to those the field classifies as jWPAs, but also to some graduate student and contingent WPAs. As we will explain, the hierarchy of gWPA, jWPA, and sWPA constrains and prevents the field from accounting for the true positionalities of many graduate students and other untenured administrators. We instead argue for a more fluid category: liminal WPAs. Liminal WPAs engage in the high-stakes work of j- or sWPAs but typically have an untenurable institutional rank: graduate student, contingent faculty, support staff, etc.

We begin this article by investigating our opening scenario as it relates to ways in which we typically understand the work of WPAs. We next examine the narrow ways the field has sometimes perceived graduate student administrative work and point to examples from the literature and our own experiences that challenge these definitions. We then offer an alternate view of some graduate student administrators as liminals whose identities and roles are complex and ever changing, and then we examine the relationship between these roles and the power and authority assigned to them. We situate our discussion of the liminal WPA within the historical theoretical framework of liminality. We conclude by suggesting that liminal WPAs might more productively navigate their roles through a strategy we call *thinking liminally* or exploiting the constraints of liminality to further their professionalization and strengthen their programs. We hope, overall, to not only present a critical perspective of liminal WPA work but also to show how this status creates spaces to be productive, valued members of the discipline.

A Preliminary Investigation of Identities

Due to our own experiences, we emphasize liminality as graduate students in this piece. However, it is clear that others experience liminality as staff, contingent, or NTT faculty. A lack of institutional status means liminals are typically without the attendant power, institutional position, or compensation of j- and sWPAs. They may have the protection of a terminal degree, but not a permanent job; they might have the protection of the job, but not the terminal degree. They may have neither. For example, one fellow liminal WPA works in an independent academic writing unit that has not gained departmental status. As such, she cannot be hired as a tenure-track assistant professor. Accordingly, she must make do as an instructor (with a PhD) with no potential for promotion. Liminals are likely to have lower salaries and less access to benefits and are less likely to be in effective mentoring relationships or have defined duties. The causes and conditions

of liminality are multiple; the common thread running through liminal WPA positions is a disparity between workload and institutional position, exacerbated by the reality that our discipline has only recently begun to account for such positions in its theory and research. Despite all the ways that liminals lack institutional status and authority, they are charged with real, demonstrable WPA work.

Take, for instance, Jamie, whose position as interim writing program director held little of the power or position granted to the previous director, a tenured, full professor with years of experience as a WPA. Yet the job description remained essentially unchanged. What had changed was that Jamie lacked the protection of the degree and a permanent job.

Is Jamie a gWPA? Technically, yes. Jamie is an ABD graduate student in a WPA position. That position, however, is very different from those outlined in gWPA literature. Jamie is neither a *de facto* "informant" for an sWPA (Latterell 31) nor an "administrative assistant" (Latterell 27), nor a jWPA nor NTT (as that term represents full-time faculty in non-tenure track positions with recurring contracts). Liminal positions like Jamie's operate in more complex ways than traditional WPA terminology allows. These positions need to be named and understood so that we may address the needs of liminals in our programs and in our scholarship.

When we focus on an administrator's relationship to the tenure track, we minimize the work of those who are not currently on a tenure track appointment or may plan never to be on it and increase the likelihood that administrators with fewer resources and more complicated relationships to power will be unsupported by the profession. In light of the work that liminal WPAs engage in, the theory, strategies, and practices currently afforded to them by our discipline are often unhelpful and leave them disadvantaged.

Consider the support and/or scholarship Jamie has access to. S/he might be written off as unsupportable. (*Obviously, you shouldn't have taken an untenurable WPA position.*) Jamie might turn to scholarship that assumes those who do "legitimate" WPA work—the kind often described in connection to jWPAs or sWPAs—are tenured or on the tenure track. (*Use your power or lose it!*) Jamie might turn to scholarship for graduate student WPAs. (*Refer the difficult or politically dangerous problems to your mentor.*) None of these options are particularly useful though. By reconsidering how we think about and respond to those engaged in writing program administration, we hope to improve the practicality of scholarship and graduate curricula that focus on WPA issues.

(Re)Presenting the Role of gWPAs

When we consider how gWPAs are described in the scholarship, we find our discipline's cultural models too limiting. Scholar James Paul Gee refers to cultural models as:

> Images, story lines, principles, or metaphors that capture what a particular group finds "normal" or "typical" in regard to a given phenomenon. . . . Cultural models are not true or false. Rather, they capture, and are meant to capture, only a partial view of reality, one that helps groups (and humans in general) go about their daily work without a great deal of preplanning and conscious thought. (143)

Typical presentations of gWPA work center first and foremost on the status of such WPAs as graduate students and the connected expectations that their duties are limited in certain ways. These cultural models are predicated on experiences designed by privileged programs, relate to "ideal" or "ethical" circumstances (negating, rather than practically responding to, those which don't correlate), and to experiences that transpire in calm, cool, and collected environments that fall outside the scope of curricular, financial, or medical flashpoints. Given our own experiences as graduate students who took on duties more aligned with j- or even sWPAs, the notion of graduate students engaging in gWPA work simply because they are graduate students quickly becomes untenable. Likewise, literature on gWPAs failed to address the issues we were facing, as did literature for j- or sWPAs.

If we were to write a job description based on the ways that established members of the field describe graduate student WPA work, it would include such duties as an office assistant who answers the phone and keeps records, a mentor who acts as a caregiver towards other students, or a spy who reports on and even disciplines peers. For instance, Ebest's survey of the Council of Writing Program Administrators describes gWPA work as "conduct TA training and counsel other TAs;" "administrative assistant;" "tutors;" "mentors;" and "research assistants" (75).

Similarly, Latterell's "Defining Roles for Graduate Students in Writing Program Administration" identifies three graduate student roles: "the liaison or go-between, the administrative assistant, and the co-policymaker" (24). According to Latterell, the primary responsibilities of the liaison are communicating the writing program's policies to TAs and reporting problems back to the WPA, while administrative assistants focus primarily on paperwork. Co-policymakers "occupy a more equal position in relationship to the WPA" and help with decision making, albeit under the guidance of a WPA (29). Latterell argues that all of these roles are limiting and that graduate students are capable of more substantial contributions—and we agree.

While Latterell rightly suggests more positive programmatic outcomes for gWPAs who play more significant roles than office assistants, we argue that broader involvement might simultaneously impact graduate student WPAs negatively.

Clearly defined positions in which students receive limited, structured exposure to WPA duties are the purpose of gWPA roles in some programs; we don't dispute their existence. We do suggest that they account for one kind of graduate student experience. The assumption that such protected gWPA roles represent all graduate student experiences as WPAs obscures the more complicated, politically dangerous work of graduate students in liminal positions. Mattison, in "Just Between Me and Me," focuses on the complexity of his roles, observing "you take on an authority role that asks you to supervise tutors, some of whom are other graduate students. These dual roles are not without conflict. In fact, your dual roles of student and administrator can pull you in opposite directions" (16–17). We encountered these dual—in fact, multiple— roles in our own gWPA work constantly. For instance, Megan regularly engaged in work associated with sWPAs as she taught and supervised graduate students and served on university committees that determined curriculum and debated retention strategies. Such work may be especially problematic because she was ostensibly a mentor (and figurehead of institutional authority as instructor) to students she also had to relate to, as a peer, in graduate courses. The shifting roles and the resulting problem of authority that she experienced are hallmarks of liminal WPA work.

In contrast to the relatively static, low-responsibility roles described by more senior members of the field (e.g., Ebest; Latterell), graduate students paint more complicated pictures of their gWPA work. In our own graduate work and in scrutinizing that of our colleagues, we were struck by the liminal nature of our WPA work. Among ourselves, the term came up during a heated conversation in the campus coffeehouse, probably a result of Paul's undergraduate studies in Anthropology. But as soon as we began exploring the literature, it was clear that others, too, had independently used the same term to describe their situations. Although not a rhetoric and composition or WPA scholar, Bryant Alexander articulates the liminal nature of his work as a graduate student administrator in a communications department. He outlines duties that included "facilitating the graduate orientation . . . troubleshooting for and advising teaching assistants, and conducting midterm teacher evaluations and classroom visitations" (16). Although some of Alexander's duties fit the "office assistant" model, others certainly did not. While he wasn't specifically describing gWPA positions, Alexander's use of the liminality concept was intriguing to us. Like Alexander, we were also

"expected to negotiate two conflicting cultures" and were "betwixt and between the power structure of the administration and the cultural community of graduate students in which [we] technically held membership" (18). Despite this conflict, Alexander argues that although the different administrative roles assigned to graduate students result in "unequal portions" of power, they are ultimately invaluable experiences (19).

Other graduate WPAs describe even heavier loads of sWPA work. For instance, Joyce Inman characterizes herself as an "almost WPA" as she directs a writing program as a "full-time, non-tenure track instructor and a PhD candidate" (149). Helmbrecht and Kendall describe their work "administer[ing]" a portfolio program and later "oversee[ing] the program itself" in "Graduates Students Hearing Voices" (173–74); they argue that they did tenure-track writing program administration (173). This sentiment is echoed by the participants in Edgington and Taylor's survey of graduate students. In their survey "a few [graduate students] argued that they were doing the work 'of an administrator and faculty member—as a graduate student,' but receiving less pay and fewer perks for it" (162).

Like us, Helmbrecht and Kendall recognized themselves in the definition of a jWPA and call for a reconsideration of what it means to do gWPA work (173). However, we fear that recategorizing gWPA work as jWPA work only reinforces the hierarchy that causes confusion in the first place. Instead, liminality offers us a lens that problematizes that hierarchy or at least better describes particular positionalities in relation to it. While Edgington and Taylor offer recommendations for making gWPA positions more robust, such as creating stronger support networks for gWPAs (165), spending more time mentoring and preparing them for the job market (166), and calling on programs to take more responsibility in assessing such positions (167), what they suggest still doesn't account for work we engaged in while serving as interim directors, supervising peers, and advising tenured faculty. Further, they do not interrogate the problems these robust positions might create for graduate students.

Examples such as these demonstrate that there are spaces between g/j/sWPA where graduate students' duties may slip between categorizations and thus make their work harder to define. As graduate students, we were not alone in having performed the more sophisticated, high-stakes work typically attributed to j- or sWPAs. The g/j/ sWPA taxonomy simply doesn't account for the work that some graduate students do or provide strategies to encourage their success.

A gWPA Job Description

Liminality originated as an anthropological concept in the work of Arnold van Gennep in the early twentieth century and was further developed by Vincent Turner in the 1960s. We found van Gennep's and Turner's early explanations especially valuable as a lens for understanding the work of writing program administration.

Van Gennep identified three rites of passage: rites of separation, which are preliminal (e.g. being ABD); transition rites, which are liminal or threshold (e.g. a dissertation defense); and rites of incorporation, which are postliminal (e.g. being addressed as Dr. after a successful defense) (11). Postsecondary education and the tenure process can easily be seen as an extended rite of passage from layperson or initiate to professional, marked with smaller rites along the way. Each landmark reshapes our status, identity, agency, and power. Even as progress is made towards the next rite, the person remains firmly positioned in the previous role.

One's statuses, roles, and identities are more or less stable in preliminal and postliminal stages; it is in the liminal state that one enters a strange and shifting environment, as one "pass[es] through a cultural realm that has few or none of the attributes of the past or coming state" (Turner 94). As the literature and our own examples demonstrate, gWPAs often have attributes of both the past state—student—and the coming state—professor. They may take classes and be subordinate to advisers, but they may also teach their own classes and grade their own students. A graduate student's liminality might also mean that he controls a sizeable budget but lacks the institutional rank to access the necessary financial management systems the university uses to track financial transactions.

The term *liminality* reveals the inability of static concepts of WPA to represent those engaged in such work. Turner uses the terms *liminal personae* and *threshold people,* noting that such people "elude or slip through the network of classifications that normally locate states and positions in cultural space" (95). For us, the network of classifications describes conventional WPA work in terms such as gWPA, jWPA, and sWPA. Our experiences were not located in the typically described and expected "states and positions in [the] cultural space [of our profession]" (Turner 95). The conventional network of classifications, or hierarchy, obscures our realities because it is inextricably tied to the way we understand those states and positions in the cultural space of our profession. Because much of our scholarship, especially that focused on power, exploitation, and economics, is predicated on taxonomies that fail to account for liminal WPAs, the concept of liminal WPAs sets the scene for a reappraisal of just who we are

describing when we refer to gWPAs, jWPAs, sWPAs, in addition to who we are excising and the implications of those classifications.

We remember existing in the threshold vividly, unable and unwilling to retreat to the more protected status of graduate student but also unable to claim the institutional status as Dr., Director, or tenure-track. While we believe that all graduate students experience some degree of liminality as they transition to professionals, graduate students who serve as liminal WPAs experience a more startling and less connected (or scaffolded) chasm between their role as students and their experience as professionals. A gWPA might have clearly defined duties, close, systematic mentoring, and be protected in other ways, but a liminal may be running a program alone in an office on a satellite campus. This ambiguity has its benefits and disadvantages. While we did wield power that was atypical for graduate students, we also lacked amenities, compensation, and power offered to sWPAs who had crossed the threshold and entered the postliminal space. We found ourselves disadvantaged in our work with tenured faculty and among graduate students, as well. Yet as we learned to embrace our liminal selves, we developed strategies to empower us within those same populations, strategies that served us well in later administrative roles.

The term *liminal* paves the way for a conceptualization of writing program administrators based on the characteristics of their work and not on a taxonomy based on educational or career track. Liminality also provides a way to triangulate contradictory positions in order to consider alternatives to conventional research/advice that doesn't serve the liminal WPAs we've described. The term *liminal WPA* is not about delineating another well-defined preliminal or postliminal state on the cultural landscape but rather about opening up the potential for the critical analysis of the particulars of particular WPAs.

Exploitation in Liminal WPA Work

Although conventional taxonomies of WPAs and the assumptions that come with them often spark calls of exploitation, we hope to move beyond such discussions here because they inadvertently erase traces of liminals who continue to exist despite the ideal labor scenarios we as a profession proclaim to value. Economic exploitation is clearly a factor in the situations we describe, especially by the institutional forces that create liminal positions, and the current economic landscape suggests that these practices are unlikely to disappear.

Graduate students and other liminals are often complicit in their exploitation because they feel a sense of responsibility to their work. Adler-Kass-

ner reminds us that our work as WPAs is "always rooted in *our* emotions, *our* ambitions, *our* goals" (22). The more a liminal feels connected to a writing program (personally and professionally) and the more autonomy and investment a liminal has in that program, the more willing she or he will be to ensure the health of a program, even at great personal cost. For example, Talinn had gone to great lengths to help establish a site of the National Writing Project. When her replacement unexpectedly stepped down, Talinn resumed the position for several months—in addition to being the full-time interim coordinator of the writing center and finishing her dissertation. She recognized that this choice was extremely problematic, but having invested so much to develop the program, she couldn't bear to see it disintegrate. When Megan became assistant director of composition, she did so because she wanted to support the director of composition, who was dealing with a medical issue. Despite the inappropriate hours she worked (sometimes thirty to forty hours per week in addition to teaching and coursework), Megan's work supported the director and helped to keep the program running smoothly.

That we could perform those duties well stemmed largely from the fact that we—underpaid, half-finished, powerless graduate students—were considered by the institution to be the best people for the job at that moment. We had the day-to-day programmatic experience needed and were deeply invested in our programs that we wanted to see succeed. In addition, attractive financial and psychological advantages—for graduate students—came with the job. As liminals, Paul and Talinn had the first real salaries of their lives and access to significant amounts of travel funding while Megan earned money towards upcoming expenses. Paul received health benefits for himself, his wife, and his new child. Even the small trappings of a "real job" carry great psychological weight. The possibility of a less-used computer and an office not shared with three other people, of a job title to mention to parents, of *health insurance*—these are real benefits to those inhabiting the liminal spaces of graduate school. Thus we were complicit, in part, because exploitation still represented improvement. We are also confident that we were neither the first nor will be the last graduate students to be considered "the best person for the job," especially in light of increasing financial pressures on higher education. Is it wrong to accept such a position in order to secure healthcare for your child and spouse? Would an ethical mentor have suggested that Paul and his family forgo dental care for a few more years? Would it be ethical to tell Talinn to throw in the towel on a program that she was invested in?

We recognize the elements of exploitation in our experiences. We not only survived but are proud of our graduate program and of the work we

discuss here. We're also satisfied with the tenure-track futures such work helped prepare us for. We hope to use our experiences to help others who find themselves in similar positions—particularly those with less voice—see more possibilities for negotiating challenging power structures.

In particular, we want readers to know that our experiences should not simply be chalked up to exploitation. Discussions with other students in our program suggest the more problematic aspects of our experiences are not typical, but rooted in particular historical moments. Many of these experiences are the repercussions of mentors and friends suffering devastating losses and grappling with serious disabilities. Within our small faculty, three members experienced life-altering tragedies within twenty-four hours. These events understandably threw the writing programs into crisis for months with lifelong aftereffects for the faculty involved. Other experiences were a result of the global financial crisis.

The pressure that crises place on writing programs may create demands from liminals that are incommensurate with their compensation, status, and workload. While other faculty may be genuinely unaware of the volume and complexity of work involved in asking a liminal to direct a writing program—even on an interim basis—we write in the hopes that such lack of awareness will no longer be a legitimate excuse.

Readers who respond to our essay by viewing our graduate program critically are missing the point. Our intention is to respond practically to some of the issues we've faced, issues that a few months on the job market clearly demonstrate are problematic at other institutions as well. We argue that readers should consider our essay as an opportunity to more fully scrutinize their own programs and institutions and explore how graduate positions are defined, staffed, and supported.

The Challenges of Liminal WPA Power

A liminal's power, like his or her roles, is constantly shifting. Success as liminal WPAs thus requires an awareness of how power shifts from moment to moment and in relation to the taxonomies that attempt to contain them. Success also requires an honest assessment of what is worth risking and what the benefits are. A mentor taught us that "there are some ditches worth dying in," a fitting maxim for a tenured, senior WPA. Liminals, on the other hand, may spend more time searching for the few ditches to survive in.

Though we are certainly not the first to constructively critique the conception of WPA power offered by Ed White in "Use It or Lose It: Power and the WPA," we suggest that it is an example of scholarship particularly

unhelpful for liminal WPAs because they have such little institutional power to begin with. After saving his institution's WAC program, White says "I am convinced that any WPA could have done what I did." He precedes this statement with the disclaimer, "Of course, it helped to be a tenured professor who knew the ropes" (6).

Paul's experience as interim director of the WAC program offers a more realistic depiction of liminal WPA power. In the midst of curricular revision, Paul attended a meeting of tenured faculty and curriculum coordinators where he encouraged them to develop writing-intensive courses. To prepare, Paul read a variety of WPA scholarship, including White. After Paul offered detailed motivations and benefits for developing writing-intensive courses, a tenured faculty member said "That's all well and good, but can you give us one good reason why we should be developing writing classes in our departments?" Paul's position as a liminal WPA certainly did not grant him the power of a tenured sWPA, from which he might have been able to construct an *ethos* enabling him to be heard.

There is little doubt that most WPAs (regardless of rank) wish they were afforded more power to carry out their jobs; however, liminal WPAs are multiply disadvantaged when it comes to issues of power. As we mentioned earlier, liminals may lack the minimal authority that comes with having the initials PhD behind their names. Negotiating power successfully among upper administrators while still categorized as a student is a Herculean task. Further, liminals may not have the privilege or advantage of choosing their ditches. While this can also be true of sWPAs, there is a tremendous disparity between a dean asking a liminal to lead curricular reform and a dean asking a sWPA to complete the same task.

While this piece highlights our graduate student experiences as liminal WPAs, these scenarios could easily apply to other liminal WPAs. Liminal WPAs also may lack the (again, minimal) authority that comes with having a quasi-permanent position or official job title. Nita Danko, a literature MA and assistant writing center director, was left "running . . . the writing center, without title" while the director was on leave (136). She reflects that she was "not a PhD, not tenured, and only behind closed doors was [she] recognized for [her] ability to run the center" (136). We would suggest that, although Danko was not a graduate student, she was also operating as a liminal WPA. Danko encountered numerous problems and, in retrospect, realized that she expected others to perceive her as someone with authority, but that she "had never really been given any authority" and was defined not by what she was, but by what she was not (138). Overall, the lack of outward acknowledgement of Danko's position kept her at the bottom of the hierarchy and impacted her relationship with her tutors and with the

institution at large; she laments: "I'm not a peer, and I'm not really even faculty" (139).

Megan's experience as assistant director of composition also yielded similar gaps between perceived and actual power, as well as between peer and faculty. One of Megan's jobs was course scheduling for graduate teaching assistants and adjunct faculty. Megan was publicly confronted by an angry adjunct (and fellow graduate student) over not receiving courses for spring term. While the adjunct clearly perceived that Megan had the power to grant her courses, she did not believe Megan's authority was such that Megan was above being berated in public. Megan's perception was opposite; she believed her authority should put her above such reproach (Would an adjunct treat a sWPA in such a manner?) but that her power did not extend to creating classes. Both Megan and the adjunct perceived Megan's power and authority to be somewhere in-between that of a gWPA and that of a sWPA, but their respective perceptions of said power and authority were markedly different.

The liminal existences described in this section belie the power that sWPAs may take for granted but that many liminal WPAs wish they had. It also reflects liminals' multiple disadvantages. Without a PhD or job title, Danko had no official place within the institutional hierarchy and its decision-making processes. She simply doesn't exist. Even if she makes powerful allies and convinces them of her abilities, she will still be disadvantaged by her interim status. The transience of Danko and other liminal WPAs makes them easy to discount: "It's a good idea, but she won't be around to finish it, so why bother?" Likewise, the adjunct would continue in her position longer than Megan would, so Megan was easy to disregard: "She's just the latest lackey to the director who will leave soon, so why not take my anger out on her?"

Thinking Liminally: Negotiating Our (com)Promising Positions

We have suggested that many liminals are without degree, without title, without institutional permanence and therefore have little power to enact the change that drew most of us to WPA work. We sometimes found ourselves frustrated, thwarted, and defeated, yet we would not erase our liminal WPA pasts. Although liminals can certainly benefit from the s- and jWPA literature, Fremo points out that jWPAs may not hold the same "values, beliefs, and educational or cultural histories" as their senior colleagues and thus must "circumvent such boundaries in order to make connections with [their] more powerful, institutionally sanctioned audiences" (198). Liminals may find themselves circumventing boundaries as well, yet with

even less power and visibility than more privileged j- and sWPAs; thus, effective strategies for j- and sWPAs may not be helpful for liminals. How, then, does one survive, much less thrive, as a liminal WPA?

For us, the solution was to think liminally. First, we had to make an honest assessment of the power we had, then assess other power that might be available to us, and finally, use our institutional impermanence and invisibility to our advantage. In retrospect, some of our greatest successes occurred when we chose to think liminally and exploit our liminal status. We identified six tactics in an overall strategy of thinking liminally.

Remember that No One Wants This Job

The liminal's greatest power lies in taking a job no one else wants: If a more powerful person wanted the job, she or he would have it. The conventional wisdom of waiting until tenure to take on administrative work obscures power that those in such positions may exploit. As Roach, Norris, and others have suggested, liminals can use this reality to their advantage by doing excellently a job that others believe is important enough to fund, but not fund well. Remembering that no one wants this job can encourage liminals to fly under the radar. It may also lead to opportunities where supervision is minimal, and therefore liminals might have more leeway to initiate projects or manage (modest) resources. Inman identifies some of these liminal opportunities in her own work, writing "My instructor-level position and dedication to an underserved student population allowed me to negotiate departmental politics without concern for retribution, as I posed no threat to anyone" (150). And while it may serve our discipline as a whole to create tenure-track positions that encourage long, meaningful careers from the outset, in spite of the risks, liminals can still parlay their experience into long and meaningful careers, though often at different institutions.

Choose Your Ditches

"Choose the ditches you're willing to die in" is useful advice for any WPA, but for liminals the criteria for choosing might look a bit different. Liminals have to be realists because the fiscal realities and institutional politics can be overwhelming. Liminals, if they are to thrive, must recognize that they will often lose and lose on issues of great importance, just like other WPAs. Instead of being rendered powerless by the losses, liminals need to focus on the power that is available to make gains, even if those gains aren't the ideal.

For instance, liminals might focus their energies on problems and projects that don't threaten the status quo or someone else's budget. They also might find that they can reap greater rewards by working on less impor-

tant projects where they can be successful rather than engaging in some Sisyphean task like spearheading curricular reform. For example, during Paul's year as interim director of the WAC program, the university was in the midst of curricular reform and the future of WAC courses was in serious doubt. Paul recognized that he lacked the institutional authority to make significant headway on this problem, even though he believed it very important. Instead, he put his time and effort into a common reader project (in tandem with Megan and two librarians) that improved first-year writing for years afterwards.

Talinn accepted the writing center position knowing that she would only direct it for one year. As she considered what she wanted to accomplish, she made choices mindful of the permanent director's management style and writing center philosophy. Though there were some aspects of the writing center's culture that Talinn would have liked to change, she was confident that the permanent director would not appreciate such changes. Instead, Talinn focused on lower-stakes, contained projects that increased the writing center's efficiency without expanding its role and thus the workload of the director. For instance, she codified unwritten policies, moved from paper to online scheduling, updated promotional materials, and revised the writing center's website instead of, for example, changing supervision practices or starting a new workshop series that the permanent director might not want to continue. Talinn focused her time on substantial projects that required minimal future maintenance instead of on projects that might threaten the permanent director in some way or confuse the university community by starting new services that wouldn't last.

For liminals, the need for widespread institutional change may be irrelevant. Institutional change, even within a small program, is unlikely to happen in a year or two, and a liminal who attempts it will most likely end up frustrating herself, her colleagues, and anyone she supervises. Instead, liminals might focus on short-term projects that can be completed within a semester or two and that will require little maintenance by future directors.

Similarly, liminals might tackle projects that the university wants but that powerful people won't complete. Or liminals might develop a program that gives the university great publicity without costing others much time or money. Paul and Megan were junior members on the committee to create a first-year common reader. The university believed this was important to first-year retention and initially a broad constituency, including tenured faculty from across campus, was part of the planning. As the project developed, though, fewer and fewer of the tenured faculty and upper-level administrators were significantly involved and, in the end, Paul, Megan, and librarians did much of the work. That project ultimately became a

space for Paul and Megan to shine. The university valued the project, but Paul and Megan had broad freedom in executing it because other members of the committee couldn't or didn't want to invest the time. While this could have been a high-stakes, politically charged situation, the lack of involvement by tenured faculty opened doors for Paul and Megan to have a substantial impact on curriculum without threatening others.

Rethink the Meaning of Investment

Senior and jWPAs are trained to allocate resources with the expectation that their tenure will continue. This might mean protecting a budget that rolls over in order to safeguard future interests. It could also mean focusing on long-term goals and other projects that are important but difficult to achieve, or that require multi-year funding. Yet liminals may actually be better served by exploiting their impermanence. Roles, power, and ethics for liminals shift and become more contextual than they are sometimes represented in j- or sWPA literature. In consequence, liminals may reasonably make different decisions based on the nature of their exploitation, the limits of their power, or time available. Thus, instead of protecting funds for future projects that probably won't materialize, a liminal might instead spend the funds at her disposal (instead of having them commandeered at the end of the year) by funding a project more generously, allocating equipment to benefit allies, or providing travel funding to other liminals.

Although Megan did not receive funding for her work, she was able to demonstrate another type of investment in the composition program to her fellow TAs. TAs had limited options to complete required professional development hours each semester. They also often complained about the choices available, and Megan and her co-assistant director frequently had to remind TAs to complete the hours. After the first year, Megan and her colleague took recommendations from the TAs and created a new, broader list of options. The TAs were grateful for the investment Megan and her colleague made in the professional development program, and (mostly) completed their hours more quickly and with more interest and vigor. While the director of composition and faculty may not have seen these hours as important, they were very important for the TAs, as they represented graduation credits. Megan and her colleague demonstrated their investment to the TAs and the professional development program and were rewarded for that investment.

Protect Allies

While establishing relationships with powerful benefactors is useful, liminals should also carefully maintain relationships with other liminals, peers, and staff. Liminals may be able to take advantage of strength in numbers. In addition, the objectives that one liminal has power to achieve may well overlap with those of other liminals. It is ethical for liminals to protect their interests and their allies, given that they are powerful conduits for liminals' limited access to success, for the good of programs, and of institutions. This doesn't mean organizing extravagant junkets to Vegas, but it might mean fully funding travel to an important conference. Another possibility is reallocating equipment to other liminals or addressing underfunded programs.

Cultivate Benefactors, Especially Unlikely Ones

Liminals may have little institutional power themselves, but they can work to build relationships with those who do, whether that power is formal or informal. McGlaun notes that to secure appropriate materials and funds for the writing center, she did not go to academic affairs where the center was housed but instead built relationships with another departmental secretary and student technology which gave her a grant to upgrade computers (242). Similarly, Ranieri forged relationships within a university curriculum program and used those relationships to build his "institutional ethos" within and beyond his department (253). As McGlaun and Ranieri demonstrate, liminals might work to build relationships with those outside their programs/departments and, in particular, with more powerful administrators on campus. At times, each of us wished that the provost actually knew our names. Liminals aren't likely to make strong allies of a provost or dean, but when one is completely unknown, it's difficult to even find the footing to defend a program in person.

Sometimes powerful administrators can be found in unlikely places as well. A liminal should take the time to seek out administrators who might benefit her cause and carefully consider how that administrator might help, or even defend, one's program. In particular, a liminal might look to a center for teaching or academic success or even to deans/chairs of other schools and departments. As White argues, we need to "see where our allies are and find out ways to strengthen them and keep them happy" (6)—wherever support for writing and a strong writing program might lurk. Those higher up in other programs can provide support and clout in crucial arguments or even provide funding.

One might also find benefactors by locating common ground with enemies amid hostile terrain. At a time when relations were strained between

the different threads of the department, Paul relied on tension between English and other departments to secure an unlikely ally for WAC, a tenured faculty member from outside of rhetoric and composition who could defend Paul from other departments when disagreements arose about the teaching and staffing of composition courses.

Establishing connections with other services and programs can also offer liminals more resources than they might otherwise have. Paul's WAC center forged a partnership with other faculty support services to offer a course redesign studio to support curricular change. By pooling resources and expertise with other units, Paul was able to participate in demonstrably successful faculty development, personally noticed by the provost as contributing to the core visions of the university.

Finally, we recommend that liminals cultivate relationships with those who appear less powerful such as support staff or librarians. These less-obvious allies may not provide funding or job security, but they often wield the informal power that can help a liminal get the job done. Megan worked with an administrator who, in terms of institutional hierarchy, wasn't very powerful; yet this administrator actually wielded enormous power and influence and was able to help Megan assert authority on scheduling issues with adjunct faculty. She also worked with librarians to encourage resistant faculty to incorporate information literacy into their assignments. Together, Megan and the librarians identified resistant instructors and worked with them to develop engaging research assignments. While the instructors might have brushed off librarians, Megan served as a liaison between resistant instructors and the librarians and was able to encourage the instructors to meet with librarians to plan their class research projects. Megan and the librarians also ran several workshops on developing research assignments for TAs and adjuncts and brought new TAs to the library for a pedagogy session run by the librarians. By the end of Megan's tenure, the majority of first-year writing instructors were fully utilizing the library's resources in their research assignments. Megan and Paul's experiences suggest that while sWPAs might not need to consider benefactors beyond their departments, this is vital for liminal WPAs.

Walk Softly Sans Sticks

While liminal WPAs often have to look outside their departments to cultivate allies, it is developing advisory or working relationships with peers that can be the most challenging. For Talinn, one of the most stressful aspects of being interim director of the writing center was supervising peers. Many of the tutors had years of experience—as many as Talinn—and in the past,

Talinn had tutored alongside them. Three of the tutors were writing dissertations, just as she was. Not only was Talinn supervising peers for the first time, but she was doing so with little additional status. She found the possibility of having to discipline her friends extremely stressful and, before she started, considered how she would approach such situations. Talinn opted to deepen her rapport with the tutors and establish clear expectations to minimize the possibility of having to discipline a tutor.

First, she codified unwritten policies and expectations into a handbook. She also codified the tutor job description. She felt it was easier to communicate these things in writing at the beginning of the year during training than to bring them up after a problem occurred. Having policies and procedures documented in writing imbued the policies with more authority and gave Talinn more authority in the event that a tutor did become a problem. In case of a dispute, or worse yet, an escalation to some higher authority, Talinn could point to the policies that had been discussed and distributed earlier.

Second, Talinn considered her overall demeanor towards tutors. It seemed strange and inauthentic to suddenly begin behaving as The Boss. Instead, Talinn chose to continue interacting with graduate tutors and other experienced tutors like a peer, albeit as a peer with more responsibility. Instead of working to separate herself from the tutors, Talinn continued to develop those relationships based on their shared status as students, dissertation writers, job hunters, etc. The increased rapport meant that that tutors would have to transgress even further in order to misbehave because they would be disappointing both a friend and a boss through inappropriate behavior.

While Talinn developed a strong working relationship with tutors who were also peers, Megan struggled to develop a strong working relationship with other graduate students, especially her co-assistant director of composition. Although they shared the job equally, Megan found herself doing more of the work, mainly because she was faster to respond to emails and thus more visible to graduate students. However, Megan and her colleague established a written list of shared duties. They divided the TAs into two groups for reporting professional development hours and observations. They also divided the professional development workshops they would run for the TAs and, during the semester that they co-taught the pedagogy course, they attended class on alternate days. While Megan handled scheduling with the director, her colleague mentored TAs struggling with teaching.

This division of duties might seem obvious, but it was an important part of the success of having co-assistant directors of composition. Because

Megan and her colleague were often the *de facto* directors for the TAs, it was important that they establish clearly defined roles for themselves so that the TAs knew who was in charge of what. While this wasn't always successful, it gave the TAs—and the department—a sense of security in the leadership of the program.

These kinds of leadership choices won't always be successful, but they do offer liminals a tactic for minimizing disciplinary problems. Talinn's situation was caused by her lack of a degree and Megan's by the lack of a degree and job title, but many liminals might find parallels when supervising adjuncts, when in a temporary role, or when they lack the preferred credential for the job.

Conclusion

Let's return to the story of Jamie, the ABD graduate student who is the assistant director of the writing program. Imagine that Jamie has consulted with an sWPA at another institution for advice about the job offer to become interim director. Jamie has a spouse, twins on the way, a mortgage, and enough experience to not only do the job, but do it well, politics and rank notwithstanding. However, Jamie will not have the protection of a PhD or tenure, and the job will be eliminated after one year. How should the sWPA respond?

We hope that the answer will be more complex than a simple "Don't take an administrative position without tenure." In fact, we hope that these stories have caused readers to reconsider the categories within which WPAs are positioned. We have attempted to complicate commonplace roles by demonstrating the complex roles and relations to power that liminal WPAs, in this case graduate student liminals, deal with every day: teacher-administrator-supervisor-graduate student-MFA, etc.

Liminal WPAs also remind us to reconsider definitions of success. In a recent piece in *Harlot*, Kristin Bivens et al. challenge Baliff et al.'s definition of women's ways of making it in rhetoric and composition. Baliff et al. established quite ambitious criteria for making it: Women who are successful in the field of rhetoric and composition hold a PhD, are tenured, and are able to balance scholarship and real life. Bivens et al. counter that success in rhetoric and composition needs to be more inclusive and empowering, especially given today's climate of contingent faculty in instructor and administrative roles.

Similarly, we do not hold that a liminal's success is necessarily signaled by getting a tenure-track job and thus moving up in the hierarchy although that is what we have been able to do. Others might find success in contin-

ued liminal work because they find it meaningful or because continuing in it makes a particular lifestyle possible (e.g., living close to family or in a particular geographical area, allowing a spouse to keep a better paying job, having added time to spend with young children). Trade-offs are inherent in academic life, and liminals are certainly not an exception to that. We would suggest, though, that liminals are successful when we make choices aware of the taxonomies and power structures we operate in. We are successful when we make choices in pursuit of our goals. We are successful when we make decisions with our eyes open. We can be successful if we choose continued liminality and successful if we choose to leave it, whether we leave for a tenure-track job or for a job outside the academy.

We do not dismiss the ethics of institutions choosing to staff programs with liminal WPAs, but we argue that liminal positions are not going to disappear and may even grow given the current budget climate. The untenured and uncredentialed will continue to accept WPA positions, and our current taxonomies obscure the liminal WPAs already in our midst. Liminal WPAs are a growing presence in the field of rhetoric and composition who work at the margins without the protection of a degree and/or job security. They are resourceful administrators who locate power in unusual places and use it to benefit their programs and institutions. Liminals will continue to enact positive change at their institutions, even while simultaneously experiencing the anxiety, frustration, and exploitation that comes with liminality.

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Understanding Why Linked Courses Can Succeed with Students but Fail with Institutions

Ann C. Dean

ABSTRACT

Research in and outside composition suggests that when students take writing courses linked with courses in other disciplines, those students learn, engage, and persist at higher rates than others. Implementing and sustaining linked courses, however, has consistently presented writing programs with significant logistical difficulties. Looking at the intellectual background and historical development of these institutional issues reveals both the practical steps necessary for implementing linked courses and the crucial questions at stake in any curricular project: post-bureaucratic labor practices, the exchange value of educational experiences, and the tremendous social and economic pressures surrounding higher education.

Linked courses confront composition programs with a paradox, both frustrating and revealing. Coupling composition courses with courses in other disciplines so that students form a cohort or learning community increases student engagement, retention, and learning, according to three decades of published research (for example see Cargill and Kalikoff; Collins; Craig et al.; Graham; Kasper and Weiss; Kiniry et al.; Kirsh; Luebke; Rodriguez and Buczinsky). Despite these advantages, administrators attempting linked courses frequently find that the project can epitomize everything that's stubborn, inconvenient, and inflexible in the way colleges operate: difficulty in scheduling, difficulty in staffing, difficulty in filling classes. However, it is worth returning our attention to these courses, both for their potential to improve student learning and for their potential as case studies in negotiating the complex relationships between learning and organizational structure. In considering linked courses, I will argue here, composition scholars have paid attention more to the interactive engagement within

courses and less to the institutional practices and techniques for scheduling and accounting that underwrite that engagement. A better understanding of institutionalization, its historical development, and intellectual context helps clarify the work necessary for implementing linked course projects. This understanding also illuminates the significant issues complicating all curricular work in contemporary institutions of higher education: labor, accountability, and significant economic and demographic change.

Definition and History

As a curricular innovation, linked courses date back at least to the 1980s, when programs at the University of California, Los Angeles; the University of California, San Diego; Cornell; and elsewhere in the country designed composition courses that were coupled with courses in other disciplines (Griffin 401; Kiniry et al. 31; Kirsch 48). Linked courses

> share a cohort of students and, to some degree, materials, syllabi, and assignments. Linked writing courses generally entail the coupling of a content course with a writing course, such that students draw upon the materials, heuristics, and learning opportunities of one course as they write for the other. (LaFrance 1)

Research on learning communities presents arguments in favor of linked courses. Connecting courses, residences, and co-curricular activities, learning communities are intended to "build community, enhance learning, and foster connections among students, faculty, and disciplines" (Smith et al. 20).

Numerous studies provide convincing evidence that linked courses can indeed create powerful learning and connection (see in particular Smith et al.; LaFrance; and Watts and Burnett). Teachers who have offered them discover that "writing provides [students with] a new lens of exploration into themselves as social beings and the discourses that make up their worlds, a kind of reflection that develops productive ways of knowing capable of helping them succeed in our classrooms" (Collins 42). Not only does their writing improve, this scholarship argues, but students engage more fully in the rich experiences college has to offer, conferring with others, making contacts on campus, and "working collaboratively in dual problem-solving spaces" (Watts and Burnett 229).

Researchers outside composition have also called for experiences that "integrate," "contextualize," and "converge." The American Association of Colleges and Universities sponsored a 2005 report calling for "integration" as a key outcome of a college education. The report's language echoes Collins' account of student learning in linked courses: "in a world of daunt-

ing complexity, all students need practice in integrating and applying their learning to challenging questions and real-world problems" (*College Learning* 13). Gerald Graff agreed two years later, denouncing "coursocentrism":

> a kind of tunnel vision in which our little part of the world becomes the whole. We get so used to the restricted confines of our own courses that we became oblivious to the fact—or simply uninterested in it—that students are enrolled in other courses whose teachers at any moment may be undercutting our most cherished beliefs. (Graff)

He recommends linked courses as a method to improve teaching and develop faculty understanding as well as to improve learning and students' experience.

Scholars of student engagement, retention, and success have also argued for integrative, interactive experiences. Kinzie and co-authors identify "three fundamentals to fostering student learning: involving students, increasing their time on task, and taking advantage of peer influence" (31). All are fostered by linked courses. These results hold across demographic categories, even for students who otherwise experience challenges in college: "first-generation students who report more participation in group discussion, presentations, and group projects and who more frequently discuss courses with other students have been found to have a higher probability of academic success and retention" (Kinzie et al. 32; see also Rodriguez and Buczinsky 9). At non-residential or very large institutions, linked courses make it easier for students to get to know one another. Even if students head to the parking garage after class, they have spent their hours on campus with a cohort of classmates who share the same breaks and deadlines.

The integration that appears to produce such positive educational results is not only intellectual. The affective experience of community has real power for both students and instructors, according to *Learning Communities: Reforming Undergraduate Education*:

> When students are asked to define community, they describe it as a sense of belonging and connectedness in both the academic and the social contexts of the college or university. These reflections have been repeatedly reinforced in the extensive literature on college student socialization, which underscores the power of the peer group and the value of positive relationships with peers and faculty members . . . Rendon's research on first-generation learners indicates that the 'accepted for membership' issue is especially critical: she found that newcomers to academia have a deep need for validation that their ideas are worthwhile and that, in fact, they belong in college at all. (Smith et al. 98–99)

Such research forcefully directs us toward building programs that will institutionalize integration, interaction, and community. The American Association of Colleges and Universities and the National Survey of Student Engagement advocate for integrative, engaging experiences, including linked courses (*Statement on Integrative Learning*; NSSE *Annual Results* 2013). In response, many institutions have offered linked courses and learning communities. The directory of learning communities maintained by Evergreen State College includes more than 300 institutions; many of these include linked courses as part of the experience. Publications inside and outside composition studies show that linked courses have been offered at many types of institutions: two- and four-year, public and private, selective and accessible (Cargill and Kalikoff; Watts and Burnett 209). Publications have documented their efficacy for developmental students, for multilingual students, and for first-year composition students studying a range of disciplines (Kasper and Weiss; Craig et al.; Levine).

Despite these indications of opportunity and possibility, compositionists' interest in such courses may be waning. Entries on the topic in the CompPile database suggest an intriguing pattern. Of eighty-four total entries going back to 1979, the largest number appears in the 1990s. Articles on linked courses continue to be published, but since 2004, they have been placed in WAC and Learning Community journals, not in venues devoted to first-year composition, teaching writing, or writing program administration. CompPile does not list any publications on linked courses since 2010.

Why is the field turning its attention away from a mode of teaching that research has demonstrated to be effective for students and compelling for faculty? One answer may be that these courses are fiendishly difficult to implement and sustain. Scheduling, staffing, funding, staff development, and student advising all present persistent challenges to this curricular model, challenges which require significant ongoing work from people across the institution. I argue here that these challenges are interesting and revealing in their own right. The successes and the failures of linked course projects are worth attending to because of what they can teach us about program building, about the relationships between resources and policy, and about the ways our institutions experience social and economic change. Looking at linked course projects within a historical, policy, and management framework can provide concrete, practical suggestions for WPAs considering implementing them. It can also prepare WPAs to respond to future opportunities shaped by these same forces.

Research on linked courses does not discuss institutional context as fully as it addresses learning, interaction, and teaching. In Michelle LaF-

rance's bibliography on linked courses, twenty-two articles discuss curriculum and learning while only eight discuss institutional logistics. Those that do so tend to frame their discussions narrowly, seeing logistical issues as barriers to be overcome rather than as interesting problems in their own right. In her detailed account of a linked course project at UC, San Diego, Gesa Kirsch describes the difficulties of working with teaching assistants drawn from and hired by various departments. Do the TAs see themselves as writing teachers or as philosophers or sociologists? Who decides how these TAs should allocate their time and attention? Such problems, Kirsch writes, "can be avoided if a new program is designed carefully, if the workload of TAs is monitored closely, and if the coordinator is bestowed with full autonomy in the selecting, training, and supervising of teaching assistants" (54). The passive voice is notable here: who would design, monitor, and bestow? And, more importantly, why would they do so, and how? Answering these questions requires us to address a scope broader than the individual courses themselves, including relations among full-time faculty across departments and between and among graduate programs. A linked-course project's needs would have to compete with the diverse interests of all these entities. Time and money, of course, help negotiate these sorts of contexts. Joan Graham's 1992 synthesis of the state of the field lays out the need for resources (time, money, and planning) in a variety of institutional contexts, and, tellingly, two of the programs she describes began with significant grant money (Ford Foundation and FIPSE), and all included significant training time for faculty and writing instructors (119, 122). In addition to time and money, linked course projects require attention to the interests and limitations of all the people involved: students, instructors, and staff. Using my own experience with linked courses as an example, I will argue that these interests and limitations are not simply barriers to overcome. Rather, they are indicators of the need for a specific type of administrative work, one with its own intellectual and social context.

A Case Study in Institutional Logistics

When I began a linked course project at my own regional comprehensive university, I sensed that students and staff tended to think of the institution as one in a series of state bureaus: the post office, the unemployment office, Social Security. When I looked at my institution, I perceived fragmentation and isolation. Students, faculty, and staff seemed anonymous and, therefore, misunderstanding and misunderstood.

Setting out to increase interaction, I created linked courses. I worked closely with advising services, whose sixteen staff members register and cre-

ate schedules for a large proportion of first-year students. I recruited writing instructors interested in trying something new and identified instructors in the disciplines who were willing to have classes linked. Because our composition course focuses on academic discourse, linking with a course in a discipline made intuitive sense. Adding the richness and depth of disciplinary work, we thought, would help students meet the composition course outcomes such as "read, understand, and think critically about the ideas and language of others, including rethinking previous knowledge in light of new readings and ideas" and "make interpretive connections between separate readings" (see https://usm.maine.edu/sites/default/files/core/College%20Writing%20Outcomes.pdf for the full list of outcomes).

The summer before the linked courses were offered, instructors developed syllabi and assignments, and advisors monitored registrations to make sure the linked sections of composition filled. Over four semesters, we offered first-year composition sections linked with engineering, nursing, American history, African-American history, jazz, quantitative decision-making, environmental science, and biology. At the end of each semester, we evaluated these sections with particular attention to the experience of the link: the university's director of assessment went to classes and administered an assessment directed particularly at the question of how the link helped students' learning and motivation.

Numerous problems arose.

First, it was very difficult to find instructors who wanted to work together, to schedule a meeting with them, and to explain the idea of linking courses. Locating home phone numbers for adjuncts, bringing faculty to meetings away from their home campuses of our multi-campus university, and creating conversations between strangers from different departments all took significant time and energy. Several people were insulted, incommoded, or irritated during this process. For biologists and nurses, the daily realities of the lab schedule are so familiar that they are almost difficult to articulate. For me, lab schedules were so unfamiliar that I didn't know I had to ask about them, and I kept scheduling meetings, and even courses, during them.

Second, we had problems filling the composition sections. Too late, we discovered that we had scheduled a writing course linked with engineering in the same time slot as calculus and had located the course linked to nursing on a different campus from the other introductory-level nursing courses. Advisors explained to me that our students see time, day, and location as so important to making a schedule that information about curriculum or content has minimal weight in their decisions, especially in the summer before their first year. For students, the modular, separate, trans-

ferable nature of credits is so fundamental that any other way of thinking about course choices has to be taught within a course. Complicating the issue is that student time is also divided by structures outside of the university: childcare hours, the shift schedule at work, welfare's work/school requirements.

The third problem we encountered grew from the second: students outside the linked program needed seats in composition courses, and we had open seats in the linked sections which needed to be filled. Bowing to these two pressures, we opened composition sections to students not in the courses from other disciplines, creating problems for writing instructors who had incorporated readings and activities from other courses into their own syllabi. Smith et al. call this a "broken cohort" and explain that it significantly dilutes the experience of community that linked courses are intended to achieve (78). Instructors who had designed a new course found that their students would have preferred the plain old composition course the instructor had been teaching the previous semester. The instructor teaching about jazz did not have a single student actually in the linked course; students in the linked African-American history section complained to instructors that they were being "forced" to write about topics they did not like.

Sometimes, there was serendipity. Many students discovered that they were very interested in African-American history; the writing instructor (a full professor in the English department) has continued to teach composition sections on this topic, even without the link. Students who were in the right place also had good experiences. Engineering students embraced the opportunity to write about the design challenges they faced in their first-year engineering course. Nursing students wrote eloquently about their sense of vocation. Instructors found the work stimulating, designed interesting new sequences of assignments, visited university archives and museums, and, in some cases, made friends with colleagues they would not otherwise have met.

But on the whole, the amount of time and effort put in by university faculty and staff was incommensurate with the benefits students received. In seven linked sections taught over four semesters, only sixty-two students actually took linked courses together as cohorts. During those four semesters, our program offered approximately 120 sections of FYC. The number of students who participated in this program constituted 3% of the total student population taking first-year composition. This number was not impressive, especially in light of the significant work done by twenty-three members of our faculty and staff to set up, organize, and teach these sec-

tions. After the fourth semester, I publicly and privately called the effort a failure and stopped planning further links.

The Challenges of Implementing Linked Courses

The accounts of those who have tried linked courses describe many difficulties in implementing and sustaining such projects. Like me, many administrators encounter apparently insuperable institutional logistics: creating cohorts, accounting ethically for faculty/instructor time, managing misinformation and assumptions among individual faculty members and departments. The cohort problem stems from the apparently simple fact that writing courses tend to be smaller than introductory courses in other disciplines. Steven R. Luebke explains that at his institution, he found a colleague in another discipline interested in linking with his writing course. To do so, however, "my colleague had to divide his 75-student class into a 50-student and a 25-student class. This meant he had to teach an extra class, a tall order at our university, where each full-time faculty member already teaches four courses each semester" (n. pag.). This model is neither practicable, nor, on a large scale, ethical. It calls for uncompensated, uncontracted work from faculty.

The demands linked courses make on instructors are described by many scholars: instructors need "time to revise classes, to structure assignments, and to coordinate course activities. But at a small, tuition-dependent institution that emphasizes teaching, time is a luxury, and simply encouraging instructor cooperation is not enough" (Rodriguez and Buczinsky 9). Small or large, teaching- or research-intensive, all institutions place significant demands on instructors' time and energy, and linked course projects require more (Graham; Kirsch 52–53). Particularly for the composition instructors, whether they are TAs, adjuncts, or full-time faculty members, a linked program can demand significant course and teaching development. Additionally, composition faculty in linked programs often are subject to uninformed assumptions from their colleagues: that they will serve as paper editors or that they are assistants to the students and faculty in the other course. Mary Ann Hutchinson sees this tendency as related to a larger institutional misunderstanding about first-year composition: "Composition classes (as 'contentless') become dumping grounds for successive first-year initiatives" (paraphrased in LaFrance 10).

Smith et al.'s compilation of research on learning communities suggests that, perhaps because of such problems, many students do not experience a truly integrated, intensive learning community:

> At this point, learning community programs for freshman students have been created in all types of institutions, but they are most common in research-extensive universities . . . Although these institutions offer large numbers of learning communities that reach hundreds or even several thousand freshmen, both the intentions and the outcomes of these programs may be situated on the lowest steps of the 'Ascending Steps of Learning Community Goals.' (93)

Smith et al. say these lowest steps are "participation, enrollment, and satisfaction" (70). The highest steps include "increased intellectual development, cognitive complexity, academic maturity, self-confidence, and motivation" (Smith et al. 70). According to the authors, these last are currently out of reach for most students in many linked course programs.

Why does the structure of the school, an institution whose mission is to support learning, create so many barriers to learning? A historical and theoretical perspective on the institution itself, drawn from Ian Hunter's *Rethinking the School*, makes sense of this paradox. Hunter argues that histories of schooling in the West commonly treat schools as failures to meet an ideal. In his view, such accounts ignore the historical reality that schools are a hybrid form, constructed through two sets of techniques: bureaucratic and pastoral. Bureaucratic techniques were developed in early modern Europe as newly emerging nation-states developed methods for growing beyond the direct, personal power of kings and aristocrats. They developed written tax rolls, impersonal laws, and regular procedures. These activities grew over the course of the nineteenth century as states developed mechanisms for monitoring criminals and the poor, caring for children and elderly people, and eventually providing public education. This bureaucratically organized work produced, in Hunter's words, "arts of government." Practitioners could treat "political reality as a domain open to technical administration" (67). These techniques create many of the tedious and frustrating aspects of work in a contemporary institution.

It is certainly tempting to fantasize about a free educational space, an agora or plaza where students and teachers would encounter each other naturally, fall into conversation, and learn for the joy of it. FAFSA forms, immunization records, residency requirements, bus schedules, and computer passwords do not figure in such a fantasy. But they do make possible the otherwise impossible: mass education. The entire population of a large country will not, of course, happen upon a teacher downtown and fall naturally into sustained work in algebra or social studies. Large-scale public schooling is possible through the bureaucratic arts of government that divide, label, and account for time, money, and work.

But schooling has another central and constitutive element—human interaction. Hunter argues that the personal, interactive aspects of pedagogy in our schools derive historically from techniques such as confession, witnessing, and testimony, all developed during the Reformation and Counter-Reformation in early modern Europe: "the practices of a spiritual discipline whose object is to create a kind of person capable of acting on principle" (67). Although most contemporary college teachers and students do not practice or understand these techniques as Christian, it makes historical sense to think about writing and revision, for instance, as developing from the testimony and self-examination that Protestants taught each other in early modern Europe.

Widespread literacy itself accompanied these techniques: generations of readers began their literacy journey with religion and literacy intertwined. Children's primers introduced the letter A with the rhyme "in Adam's fall, we sinned all." Protestants wrote spiritual autobiographies; taught each other to read their English and German and French Bibles; and trained their children in exegesis. Catholics absorbed and transformed some of these practices as their church responded to Protestantism in the Counter-Reformation. In the twenty-first century composition classroom, devoted instructors take students through recursive patterns of writing, examination, and revision, asking them to develop self-reflective rhetorical awareness, to encounter and surmount challenges, and to engage in internal and external dialogue. For many composition teachers, the ethical content of these interactions has ceased to be religious and instead become aligned with a political project: the public good, democratic participation, social justice.

In composition studies, we have perhaps focused too exclusively on the human interactions in our work, oftentimes ignoring their historical connection to the administrative, fragmenting, bureaucratic techniques that enable us to bring such experiences to large numbers of people. Hunter makes historical and theoretical sense of the fragmentation we face in large contemporary institutions. This fragmentation was a positive educational force in early modern Europe because it provided for interactive, caring relationships and bureaucratic organization at the same time. Composition, like other disciplines, does its work with first-year students through bureaucratically organized situations such as graduation requirements, credit hours, instructor contracts, scheduled classroom space, and time. Without this hybrid form, which separates a small group of people from others through bureaucratic techniques, allowing them to work closely together through pastoral techniques, academia as we know it would not

be possible. To build new programs, we need to work with the structures on both sides of the hybrid.

Administrative Work's Intellectual Context

Hunter's hybrid model suggests that institutional logistics are not simply barriers to be overcome. Instead, they are arts of government: techniques for meeting valuable ends or balancing competing pressures. To think clearly about large-scale educational projects, it is important to consider logistical matters (scheduling, accounting, contracts) not simply as containers for the more interesting work of teaching students or as barriers to true community and unfettered experience, but as the products of others' work. Schedules and spreadsheets are content, as well as form.

As an example of the sort of context that produces institutional logistics, consider the New Public Management (NPM) approach. This approach to managing public entities attempts to borrow some of the efficiencies of private corporate entities for the use of government. Although this work is longstanding and influential, many compositionists and others in the humanities have avoided considering it. To many in composition, this work reads as depressing, consumerist, neoliberal jargon. Even the tone of a document like the movement's 1992 manifesto is off-putting:

> Entrepreneurial governments . . . measure the performance of their agencies, focusing not on inputs but on *outcomes*. They are driven by their goals—their *missions*—not by their rules and regulations. They redefine their clients as *customers* and offer them choices . . . They *decentralize* authority, embracing participatory management. They prefer *market* mechanisms to bureaucratic mechanisms. And they focus not simply on providing public services but on *catalyzing* all sectors—public, private and voluntary—into action to solve their community's problems. (Osborne and Gaebler 19–20)

To the managers, policymakers, and administrators who have embraced it over the last two decades, such language does not sound like dangerous claptrap. Instead, it has appeared as a set of exciting tools for making change in an intractable series of complex problems. New Public Management is specifically framed as a public enterprise for governments and other state entities. It derives from work in corporate management loosely grouped under the title *post-bureaucracy*. These managerial models aim to break down entrenched bureaucratic structures to make way for more flexibility, more communication, more consensus, and more work in interdisciplinary teams. The idealized model seems to be a Silicon Valley startup

where groups work together fluidly, calling on individuals' expertise when and where it's needed, and delivering value in record time.

This movement in management is intertwined with a globalized, knowledge- and service-heavy economy just as bureaucracy itself was both a cause and an effect of early modern capitalism. The flexibility and efficiency such structures enable also support outsourcing, including the way in which they require workers to manage themselves by developing their own evaluation criteria. Those managers and policymakers have written these ideas into all sorts of influential places—for instance, the accreditation standards used to evaluate our institutions.

Post-bureaucratic organizations are structured around "fluid/flexible decision making processes; network[s] of specialized functional relationships; open and visible peer review processes; open and permeable boundaries; broad public standards of performance; expectation of change" (Hodgson 84). Set out in these terms, such ideas seem allied with approaches that compositionists and other members of the faculty have critiqued as a neoliberal attack on the heart of education (Johnson; Gallagher). The longevity of these ideas suggests that our critique has been ineffective: Osborne and Gaebler's book is more than two decades old, and the framework it sets out has been carefully implemented in a variety of settings from British water utilities to the government of New Zealand. During this period, NPM has also accumulated critiques and revisions from other perspectives outside our own. Some scholars have philosophical problems with NPM's overreliance on market models (Yielder and Codling; duGay); some think the model is valuable but that it has never been implemented fully enough (Dunleavy et al.; Gray and Garsten); and some claim it has been implemented and proved to be ineffective (Christensen and Laegreid). Engaging more fully with this conversation can provide compositionists with important perspectives on the larger social context within which we operate.

What a successful linked course project does, in NPM's terms, is develop a new way to "redefine . . . clients as *customers* and offer them choices." Ironically, a Marxist interpretation would be entirely congruent with this view, seeing the work as converting an experience (intensified learning and interaction) into something solid that can be bought and sold with money: "Money is a crystal formed of necessity in the course of the exchanges, whereby different products of labour are practically equated to one another and thus by practice converted into commodities" (*Capital*, volume I, chapter 2). When a curricular project has been successful, the experience of learning for both instructors and students has been successfully abstracted into a unit that students will pay for, that instructors will show up to produce, and that transcripts will list.

It is this process of abstracting experience into exchangeable units that causes many of the practical, nitty-gritty difficulties in implementing linked courses. For instance, consider the managerial context of my own project: one of my major activities was setting up meetings. In doing so, I was asking for more and different work from everyone. Specifically, I asked instructors to show up at different times and places, to present their work to people who otherwise would have known nothing about it, and to redesign their assignments and classroom practice in relation to activities in other parts of the university. I asked staff advisors to understand and advocate for a complex curriculum designed by faculty, around subject area knowledge in which staff had not been educated. I asked administrative assistants to schedule meetings with people working on other campuses outside our usual list, to contact adjuncts who did not use the university's email system and who worked in clinicals, labs, and other instructional forms unfamiliar to those outside their own disciplines. Unlike a curricular change within the English department or the first-year composition course, this project required people to cross both departmental boundaries and physical boundaries between campuses. It required flexibility from both instructors and staff. Although a sympathetic administrator had provided course development stipends, the larger economic implications of the project were in the opposite direction. Faculty, full- and part-time, were doing not only more work but an entirely new kind of work, one that remained after the stipends were gone.

From this perspective, we might be inclined to agree with critics such as Marc Bosquet, and claim that these techniques further the exploitation and attack the solidarity of the people who actually teach students. As Rick Iedema explains in his study of the linguistic work of contemporary institutions,

> People's jobs are becoming less narrowly circumscribed, while expectations of and levels of information about what workers do are raised. Most noteworthy here is that workers no longer just *do* their work: they increasingly *talk* their work . . . Workers across all kinds of organizations no longer just have narrowly circumscribed tasks, and that they are increasingly expected to communicate with others about what they do in generalizing and abstracting terms. (7)

The discursive work that Iedema calls enunciation is required for designing linked courses, or assessing students' learning in a program, or building structures for writing in the disciplines, or the other post-bureaucratic projects WPAs undertake. In these latter projects, workers (faculty, instructors, staff) enunciate the work of their own classrooms, disciplines, and local

ecologies, for audiences beyond their traditional meetings and water coolers. These self-presentations provide the opportunity for conversations, relationships, and a different subjectivity as a worker in an institution.

Like bureaucracy, post bureaucracy is both a way of getting work done and a way of managing workers. Iedema points out that "participation in the post-bureaucratic organization transposes aspects of surveillance away from (retroactive) hierarchical control into (pro-active) team participation" (12). This is the power of learning communities, interdisciplinary teaching, and assessment. All of them actively engage instructors in the evaluation and improvement of their teaching and students in the improvement of their learning. Iedema describes workers becoming authors creating accounts of their work. Such practices make work more discursive—workers talk about parts of the work that would otherwise not be discussed at all, and they do so for audiences who, in the past, would not have needed to pay attention to matters outside their own departments and offices. My desire to create community by including adjunct instructors in the intellectual life of the university, then, can be seen as a more up-to-date sort of surveillance, one that worked through "pro-active team participation." When I unknowingly used post-bureaucratic management techniques, I wasn't aware that historical forces were speaking through me.

Looking at linked courses from this perspective helps explain why they are so difficult to implement and why WPAs should ask themselves if implementing them is even desirable. Casting a linked course implementation as heroic reorganization in the corporate mode would be extreme, in that such projects do aim to improve both students' and instructors' learning and daily experience. But casting such projects as warm, caring community building would also be extreme, ignoring important elements of the larger institutional and social context. Hunter's terms frame the problem clearly. If we think about linked courses in terms of the interactions they provide, they are caring, socially-conscious, and ethically appealing. But if we think about them as a management model, they are post-bureaucratic and exploitative, particularly for adjunct faculty. In these characteristics, they are not so very different from other college courses.

I don't want to make the facile argument that every project an upper-level administrator gets excited about is automatically opposed to the values of social justice and liberal education. At the same time, it is important to consider that when we work with (or against) the administrative techniques we have inherited from our distant and recent pasts, we are doing policy work. We are "treating political reality as a domain open to technical administration" (Hunter 67). What these new, post-bureaucratic techniques do is treat more and more realities as open to technical administra-

tion: workers' subjectivities and students' vision of their progress through courses. The success of a project such as linked courses does not just hinge on whether a particular administration at a particular institution is interested in writing or first-year students or learning; the success of a project hinges on the ability to turn more abstract forces such as labor into exchangeable units. Attempting to change the nature or value of those units without getting caught in their essential paradoxes is a big project.

Specifically, to create "pure cohorts" and "higher-level outcomes," students need to register, pay, and show up (Smith et al. 77, 70). This issue looms large throughout the research on linked courses. To solve it, advocates need a comprehensible, culturally legible technique for explaining the time and money that linked courses require. As a metaphor, *link* explains what can happen inside the classes but not the payoff, the commodity value, students get when the course is finished. This ability to explain the exchange value is the great power of student credit hours, or Carnegie Units. These units explain to instructors what they must do (show up, stand in front of this room for this amount of time, hand in grades for these students) and to students what they will get (credits). Carnegie Units are valued culturally and are part of the infrastructure of schooling, despite their historically contingent and illogical nature. Writing in *Change* magazine, Jane Wellman explains the paradoxes:

> We do not directly determine how the learning in courses offered in art studios, physics labs, or community service field trips compares. Instead we leave it to the faculty to decide what something is "worth," depending on where it fits in the curriculum, and to convert that "worth" into credits. A hard-edged regulatory standard requiring a consistent formulation of learning, time, and resource use would make no sense in a complicated academic setting. So having a "standard" that is not really a standard is probably a good thing and one reason the credit hour has persisted. (21)

Despite its paradoxical nature, the credit hour creates powerful infrastructure and cultural meaning, allowing institutions to do their work.

When first-year students choose course schedules, they do so within a historically determined set of ideas and practices about the value and meaning of time. This set of ideas includes credit hours but does not include integration, in the way learning-community advocates use the term. Students allocate their time according to cultural common sense, working with and through infrastructure. Ideas about free time, for instance, come partly from their experience as high school students and the way public education is measured and evaluated through students' physical presence in buildings.

Adolescent limit-testing takes psychological and cultural shape in response to the scheduling infrastructure developed to discipline populations in the past. Free time can also be understood through the (legislated) hours, over-times, and breaks in hourly wage work, developed together with the public school system in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Working within this set of ideas, first-year students who also work hourly jobs are likely to see linked courses or block schedules as rigid structures, limiting their flexibility and control.

Suggestions for Implementing and Sustaining Linked Courses

As we turn to considering administrative practice of linked courses, it is important to keep Hunter's hybrid model in mind. I outline below the tasks and considerations necessary for getting linked courses off the ground and for maintaining them. This is not just practical administrative knowledge, learned the hard way. It is also an example of the complex relations between a very large administrative context and very small day-to-day tasks. For example, it is important to notice that in following these implementation steps, a WPA would complete at least one calendar year of work before focusing on what students actually do in class and in their writing. The aspect of the project Hunter would call pastoral, or the inter-actions between instructors in different disciplines, between students, and between reading, writing, revision, and learning, can only be attended to once the techniques for institutionalizing such work have been successfully employed. For readers considering a linked-course project, the following paragraphs give very practical suggestions about the pacing and scope of the project. For readers considering some other program-building opportunity (WID, writing fellows, crowdsourced evaluation, eportfolios), the impor-tant aspect of these recommendations will be the (im)balance between scheduling and registration, curriculum and staffing, and implementation.

Scheduling and Registration

At least one calendar year before you hope to offer linked courses, *meet with the registrar* to learn about the scheduling from that perspective. Ask questions: Can your registration software handle the links between classes? Are classrooms available at workable times? Would it be possible to hide the linked sections from some students, so they won't try to register for the writing class, only to be told "oh, that one is only for students in Environ-mental Science" and get frustrated? If so, how could the sections also be visible to the students who might want to take them?

While in the registrar's office, find out how to *mark linked-course experiences on student transcripts*. Does your institution have any already-existing unit other than credits? Are there stackables or pieces of certificates or pathways that you could use to mark students' linked-course experience on their transcripts? This would help to recruit those students who value transcript outcomes.

Next, *find allies in upper administration* who will support the retention and engagement aspects of the project. Vice-presidents or associate provosts for first-year or undergraduate education or student success are often excellent allies. It is important to publicize your project to upper administration regardless of existing support. Other allies might include the center for teaching and learning, general education, and programs of faculty development. Ask any of the people who will talk with you if there are funds available for stipends, faculty development, brochures, or technical assistance with marketing.

Find points in the first-year registration process where linked courses can be marketed. Discover how students at your institution register for their first semester of coursework. How many students meet with someone face-to-face for registration, and how many register online? Are there groups of students (nurses, ROTC, Upward Bound) who take different paths through registration? Does first-year orientation include registration and/or advising? Discover how students make their first-semester choices. Find a point in this process at which personnel or information from the writing program can be represented. A clear presence here will get students to register for the linked courses.

At your point of intervention in the registration process, create marketing materials for the linked courses, including a clear, recognizable name for the unit students will get on their transcript when they have completed the experience.

Curriculum and Staffing

Find linkable courses in other disciplines. Focus first on the cohort problem: how will writing classes, capped at eighteen to twenty-five, be linked with courses in other disciplines which are not capped? Perhaps there is another discipline at your institution with caps such as studio art, public speaking, or acting. Perhaps a department will negotiate to lower the cap on one section as a way to improve writing in their major. Or perhaps a biology course capped at one hundred could be linked to four different sections of first-year composition. Locate several possibilities, and approach faculty or instructors with whom your program might work.

As you talk to instructors, consider their institutional situations. Prepare for their fear of student writing. Many faculty in the disciplines will worry that you want them to assign and grade more student writing. Perhaps you have an active WAC or WID program, whose faculty participants will be easier to talk to about writing pedagogy. Find out how often they teach their first-year course: is there a department rotation? If a collegial and enthusiastic colleague teaches first-year biology only once every three years, will you do your linked course only once every three years?

Go through the same process with your own staff. Do you have four people who are interested enough in biology to design a first-year writing course around it? Or perhaps two people who could do two each? Would they do this several years running? What is their motivation? What is the payoff? Is there a marker that can be included in their personnel files or graduate transcripts to credit them for the project? Is there course development money available?

Set up the infrastructure. Go back to the registrar to get the courses on the schedule and on transcripts; arrange with advising to help students understand the benefits of the courses and register for them; prepare copy for brochures and websites; make sure instructors (both in composition and in the disciplines) have the courses on their schedules and that other people who might make changes in their schedules are aware of this commitment. Make a backup plan, in case the linked writing sections do not fill. Will you open them to other students? Who will decide whether or when to do that?

Implementation

Train instructors. Arrange faculty meetings and talk about transfer of learning and engaged writing and reading. Ask instructors in the disciplines what concepts they want students to work with most thoroughly and deeply; how they ask students to write and read; and what the most successful students get from their courses. Ask writing instructors to explain how they imagine working with the disciplinary content they've heard described. Provide models of assignments and curricula from successful projects at other institutions. Give the instructors of the linked sections opportunities to work together.

In the months preceding the courses, *monitor registration*. Are messages about linked courses getting through to students? Are staff in the offices of the registrar and advising services and the writing program supported in the work they do to fill these sections?

At the end of the semester, *assess the linked experience*, in addition to the course in general. Ask students to evaluate their experiences. Keep records

of linked sections' persistence rates and grades, as compared to those of students in other sections.

Promote the work. Inform the institutional community widely about the program's success, including at least one impressive statistic from your assessment and one good anecdote. Be sure to report to your allies in upper administration and among the faculty. Show this information to your tenure/promotion committee to help explain the magnitude of the task.

Challenges and Rewards

The most interesting and difficult of the recommendations above is finding or creating some way to mark on a student's transcript that she has undergone a significant, linked, interactive experience. The current three or four-credit course model neither pays linked teachers for the extra time the project requires nor gives students a clear, transcript-ready outcome for theirs. Negotiating this relationship between learning and credits requires very careful, practical work with the registrar and advising, as well as with faculty colleagues and writing instructors. Such work is ongoing because the relationship is structured by social and economic forces far outside a particular institution. So solving a particular problem on a particular day will not resolve the more abstract difficulties from which the practical problems spring.

Linked course projects require the WPA to work against credit hours as they currently are structured, against many students' ideas about free time, and against many in our current national policy discussions who would like education to become even more fragmented. Daniel Greenstein, director of the Gates Foundation's Postsecondary Success Project, claims that "Many of today's students aren't interested in a classic college experience of dorms and all-nighters. Rather, they need college to be 'unbundled,' and to be able to integrate it selectively, sometimes a course at a time, into their busy and full lives" (n. pag.) Greenstein and other reformers would like to free students' time so that they can engage more fully and flexibly in a globalized twenty-first century economy, learning and performing "just in time" for the workplace's changing needs (Laitinen; Patrick et al.). The most prominent critics of the credit hour take this approach. Linked-course advocates, on the other hand, make a related critique in the service of freeing students from the barriers created by earlier administrative techniques such as the three-credit hour course. Students thus freed could actually spend *more* time reading, thinking, talking about ideas, and generally soaking up the academic atmosphere. It's a different freedom and a different payoff. The two projects can seem complementary since both are working to redefine

the academic credit hour, but they have very different models of the relationship between the learning experience and the exchange value of that experience.

Viewing colleges from Hunter's perspective, we see that large-scale curricular projects such as linked classes involve both sides of the hybrid: interaction and control; pastoral care and administrative management. Focusing on just one aspect creates a lopsided project, one unable to fit into the larger institutional and cultural context. Thinking exclusively about students' and teachers' experiences of integration and interaction will not create a successful effort. It is also necessary to focus on the necessity of fragmentation, anonymity, and institutional control. WPAs should consider carefully whether such a project is ethical for their staff, and possible for themselves, before beginning.

Such considerations can be highly productive, for both current and future work. They operate, after all, around all college courses. A successful linked-course program can produce outcomes for students, particularly students at risk, which all teachers and administrators values, such as engagement, deep learning, persistence, and a sense of community. The research cited earlier in this article makes a compelling case for the endeavor. My own experience as a teacher in (rather than as an administrator of) a first-year composition course designed for engineers corresponds completely with the claims made in that research—students were engaged, their writing improved, and I learned a tremendous amount.

A linked-course project, then, is worth serious consideration. To make such a project work, a WPA must educate herself about administrative techniques and use them cannily. These are "arts of government," inescapable parts of the hybrid that is Western higher education. In my own linked course project, I ignored the arts of government, caught up in what Paul duGay calls "the thoroughly romantic critique of bureaucracy" (3). This is perhaps another instance of the tendency Richard E. Miller has identified in the field, our propensity to "depict professionals [and professional activities] in a negative light" (15). My avoidance of the administrative context of the work, however, meant that administrative fashions and historical forces acted through me. To work effectively and ethically within these paradoxes, WPAs must understand and employ credit hours, schedules, and contracts in their institutional context. The crucial corollary to this claim is that learning more about the history and ethics of these techniques will cause some WPAs to decide not to employ them. By maintaining an informed perspective on both the bureaucratic and the interactive aspects of such projects, we will be better placed to understand the significant challenges facing contemporary institutions of higher education.

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Relentless Engagement with State Educational Policy Reform: Collaborating to Change the Writing Placement Conversation

Heidi Estrem, Dawn Shepherd, and Lloyd Duman

Abstract

This article describes the educational reform efforts surrounding writing placement in one state context. We propose that placement offers a particularly useful engagement point because it is often controlled by state-level policies and it directly impacts the lived experience of first-year college students. To document how we worked across institutions in our state, we describe a series of events that occurred over several years and that fostered collaborative exchanges. Then, we explore the challenges and opportunities afforded by our long-term engagement with policymakers. Ultimately, we propose strategies that writing program administrators might consider as they become engaged with state-level higher education policy.

Writing Placement as Opportunity for Engagement

Writing program administrators excel at collaborating with colleagues in writing programs and across campus; as instructors and program leaders, WPAs also work to foster collaboration within classrooms. Sustained cross-institutional partnerships, however, are rarer. But as oversight of public higher education becomes increasingly consolidated and influenced by external organizations (e.g., Complete College America), joint efforts at the state level to influence state educational policy are not just important but increasingly critical if we are to provide input on decisions that affect ourselves and our students. Here, we describe how we have engaged with higher education policy decisions in Idaho and what we have learned along the way.

Much like the "rigid constraints" described by Beth Brunk-Chavez and Elaine Fredricksen (78), the Idaho state colleges and universities operate under a set of state-mandated writing placement practices that allow for little local flexibility. In 1999, our State Board of Education (SBOE) established cut scores based on standardized tests that place students into (or exempt them from) first-year writing courses at every college and university across the state, regardless of local context. While this approach offered consistency and efficiency, composition scholars will recognize that it is an approach that meets few expectations for purposeful, sound writing assessment.

In this article, we illustrate how WPAs might actively seek out and then use state policy pressure points, such as writing placement, to institute change, precisely because so many stakeholders are involved. Placement is one example of a site where many interests converge and refract, and it is that very complexity that makes the detailed policy work interesting and provocative for all of us. We propose that state-level educational policy is at a "just right" level for many WPAs to engage with: it directly impacts work at state colleges and universities, yet it moves beyond local campuses. Placement was our starting issue; it offered us a particular opportunity to work across institutions and to demonstrate, collectively, what Chris Gallagher describes as "writing assessment leadership" across Idaho (32).

We situate our exploration of this claim within the extended collaboration we have enjoyed in our state, and we have included as appendices some of the genres we were called to write. While our context is not yours, we also know how critical it has been for us to understand how others, in other contexts beyond our state, conduct research to respond to placement policies (see Ruecker; Isaacs and Molloy) or work creatively within current educational policy (see Brunk-Chavez and Fredricksen). Careful, informed scholarship by colleagues across the country shaped our work together across institutional boundaries within our state context, and it is our hope, in turn, to illustrate how our engagement and our collective advocacy evolved around this particular issue.

Statewide Advocacy for Writers and Writing Through Placement

In a 2011 *WPA: Writing Program Administration* article, Barbara Cambridge describes how educational research does or does not impact policy. She summarizes the results from Nelson, Leffler, and Hansen's work indicating that "many other factors currently take precedence over research evidence, including 'political perspectives, public sentiment, potential legal pitfalls, economic considerations, pressure from the media, and the welfare of indi-

viduals'" (qtd in Cambridge 136). Cambridge offers four suggestions for WPAs interested in, or in need of, engaging with policy makers on particular issues, and two are especially relevant here. First, she suggests WPAs get to know important decision makers and "their values, their knowledge bases, and the conditions of their professional political lives" (139). Second, she notes,

> because policy making is fraught with 'volatile and insecure circumstances,' knowing those conditions is important in attempting to work with a policy maker. Getting to know the person and the conditions for that person's work can help refine a sense of that policy maker as audience for the information to be shared from research and/or practice. (141)

By recommending that we understand the needs of situations we address, Cambridge positions the work of WPAs as rhetorical. Although it should go without saying, approaching what we do with rhetorical awareness allows us to address situations more effectively. In particular, we can rethink how we position ourselves in relation to our audiences. Although she does not address it directly, Cambridge marks the artistic proof *ethos* as an important to WPAs' work. The flipside of acquainting ourselves with policy makers is that they also get to know us, which provides an opportunity for establishing credibility. In classical rhetorical terms, *ethos* has three components: *phronesis* (practical wisdom), *arete* (virtue), and *eunoia* (good will) (Aristotle 121). As Cambridge notes, educational research may not hold sway in policy discussions. However, if policy makers know us better, then we may draw on other factors, such as our trustworthiness or kindness, when making recommendations to them. Throughout the historical narrative portion of this article, then, we provide examples of how WPAs and English department chairs strengthened credibility through demonstrating our good-faith commitment to relentless engagement in the writing placement conversation across the state.

Placement as Politicized Assessment

Writing placement is an especially powerful act of assessment that has direct implications for students. At the same time, it is a particular kind of educational practice, and one where external stakeholders—like state educational governing bodies—sometimes intervene. Writing course placement, as Brian Huot notes, is an assessment practice that "actually decide[s] for a student where she will be placed for the next fifteen weeks or, perhaps even more importantly, where she will begin her college or university writing instruction" (6). Because of this impact on individual students—and

the secondary impact on instruction, placement is also "one of the most common reasons WPAs and writing teachers become involved in writing assessment outside the classroom" (O'Neill, Moore, and Huot 80). Sound placement—that is, a process that results in a student being in the right class at the right time—is important to get right.

Within writing studies, scholars have identified several important guiding principles for sound writing assessment. In *A Guide to College Writing Assessment*, Peggy O'Neill, Cindy Moore, and Brian Huot propose that assessment should be "site-based, locally controlled, context-sensitive, rhetorically based, accessible, and theoretically consistent" (57); these principles are extended and explored in both the NCTE-WPA "White Paper on Assessment in Colleges and Universities" and the CCCC "Writing Assessment: A Position Paper." Writing assessment scholarship also invites us to consider how, in addition to Huot's principles, assessment practices might be ethical through "examining not only the assessment itself but also its impact on the community in which it takes place" (Schendel and O'Neill 202). Building placement approaches that reflect these values and principles is a daunting task but one that numerous scholars within our field have willingly engaged with.

Two innovative, research-based approaches to placement are especially relevant here (see O'Neill, Moore, and Huot for a useful summary of a larger variety of placement approaches). First, some schools have developed approaches that allow for a direct assessment of student writing. Under these approaches, students might submit a portfolio of texts (see Belanoff and Elbow for one example). Alternatively, they are asked to complete a series of writing tasks that attempt to engage them in writing similar to that expected within the college environment (for example, Les Perelman's iMOAT program). Secondly, some institutions have developed variations of Directed Self-Placement (DSP), an approach that gives students the autonomy to make their own placement decision. Originally implemented at Grand Valley State University, DSP has been adapted at a number of institutions (see Royer and Gilles' "Directed Self-Placement" and their edited collection, *Directed Self-Placement*). These two distinct kinds of approaches adhere to as many of the principles for sound writing assessment as they possibly can—and they are sensitive to the local context, culture, and purpose for placement. They are rooted in writing assessment scholarship and often generate ongoing study and research. For example, careful research led to the implementation of DSP at University of Michigan; continued study led to recent revisions and adaptations (see Gere, Aull, Green, and Porter; Gere, Aul, Perales, Lancaster, and Vander Lei).

Often, though, research-based evidence is not enough to effect change on its own. As Emily Isaacs and Sean Molloy explain in their study of the SAT Writing exam, writing studies scholars and WPAs hold substantially different views of placement than do other "senior administrators and decision makers" (518). They note,

> Forty years of research and study have convinced writing studies scholars that writing is a complicated, variable, and inconsistent intellectual process involving multiple brain areas and social interaction thus the preference for assessing (and teaching) writing only after students have engaged in various processes, social and intellectual. In contrast, measurement specialists and senior administrators often see writing as an uncomplicated process of transmitting ideas from brain to paper—thus the preference or at least high tolerance for assessing writing that has been written quickly, without social mediation or opportunity for engaging in various intellectual processes. (518)

Arguments from research—no matter how compelling—will not always trump arguments from stakeholders who are invested in expediency and transparency. At the same time, WPAs have a professional obligation to continue to engage in the discussion surrounding issues like placement. We can use these discussions to keep our field's research in the foreground while getting to know key constituents, as Barbara Cambridge recommends.

All of this is to say that placement is assessment, assessment is political, and writing scholars need to be in the conversation. Because understanding advocacy's importance is one thing and imagining how such advocacy might unfold is another, we offer our historical narrative of statewide collaborative efforts surrounding writing placement.

Idaho Higher Education Context

Idaho is a small state with relatively few public colleges and universities. Each of our eight public higher-education institutions (three universities, one four-year college, three community colleges, and one technical college) operates within unique circumstances. Our contexts, missions, student needs, resources, and instructor backgrounds differ substantially; additionally, our state is largely rural with geographically isolated populations. For example, North Idaho College, located in the northern panhandle, primarily serves a five-county area with a population that varies from semi-urban to vastly rural and whose occupations range from logging and mining to tourism. The College of Western Idaho is only five years old, quickly growing, and serves the state's largest urban area. Smaller state universities serve

regional communities while a fast-growing metropolitan university in the state capital accommodates a student body population that is increasingly made up of traditional students. Yet despite these differences, our State Board of Education (SBOE) set a statewide placement protocol in the early 1990s—a move that resulted in a number of unanticipated consequences that are now more readily visible. Figure 1 summarizes this timeline of events, and the subsequent sections briefly document the history of these efforts.

1998	English department chairs brought together to propose common placement scores for SAT, ACT, and ACT COMPASS
1999	SBOE implements policy III.q, which differs from the scores proposed by the department chairs
2000	English department chairs and WPAs establish annual meetings
2007	English department chairs and WPAs brainstorm how to re-establish placement conversation
spring 2008	Placement white paper presented to Council on Academic Affairs and Programs (CAAP; a statewide provosts' council)
summer 2008	CAAP establishes the English Placement Task Force
fall 2008	English Placement Task Force 1.5 day placement workshop
2009	Pilot placement projects
winter 2010	Pilot placement reports presented to CAAP
summer 2010	Placement Report and Recommendations presented to SBOE policy representative
2010-2012	Current policy temporarily suspended to allow for continued pilot projects
spring 2012	ACCUPLACER workshop
fall 2012	SBOE establishes Complete College Idaho plan, in collaboration with Complete College America
fall 2013	Full implementation of the first campus-specific placement process (The Write Class at Boise State)

Fig. 1. Timeline of Statewide Advocacy Around Placement

Placement as a Statewide Issue

1999: Establishment of Statewide Cut Scores for Placement

In 1999, in an effort to increase transparency and to ease transfer among institutions, our SBOE established a placement chart for entrance into first-year writing. At the time, courses across our state had neither agreed-upon outcomes nor necessarily transferred between institutions. Seeking to rectify this perceived inconsistency for incoming students and their parents, the SBOE set definitive guidelines for how students would be placed into initial writing courses. Initially, English department chairs and faculty from across the state were asked to provide recommended cut scores for popular standardized tests (ACT, SAT, COMPASS); however, the imple-

mented policy differed from those recommendations. All colleges and universities in this state were subsequently required to follow the same placement chart for first-year writing (see fig. 2).

c. Placement in entry-level college courses will be determined according to the following criteria.

Placement Scores for English

Class	ACT English Score	SAT English Score	AP Exam	COMPASS Score
English 90	<17	>200	NA	0 - 67
English 101	18-24	>450	NA	68 - 94
English 101 Credit English 102 Placement	25-30	>570	3 or 4	95 -99
Credit English 101 and English 102	>31	>700	5	

Fig. 2. Idaho State Board of Education Post-Secondary Education Policy III.Q Placement

Once implemented, this policy shifted more students from English 101, our traditional first-semester course, into two courses: 1) English 90, a three credit hour developmental writing course that counted toward financial aid and scholarships but bore no college-level credit and 2) directly into English 102, a second-semester, research-intensive course. At Boise State University, for example, the new score cut-offs created the need for four to five additional English 90 sections each year. All institutions, from our flagship university to our technical college, were required to follow this chart.

2000–2007: Sharing across Institutional Boundaries

This move to standardize placement caused challenges for WPAs and English department chairs across the state, and it was the implementation of this policy that spurred us to meet annually. These meetings provided an opportunity to explore responses to the challenges raised by this new policy. Eventually, the regular gatherings also provided a forum to discuss other issues as they arose, from the rapid increase in dual-credit programs in the early 2000s to the sharing of course outcomes in first-year writing. Institutions used the gatherings to profile productive practices (on issues such as concurrent enrollment, programmatic assessment, and curriculum, for example) and to share ideas across institutional contexts.

2007: Deciding to Act on Placement

While the challenges of this placement chart had been on the agenda at our yearly gatherings, our advocacy work began to take shape at the fall 2007 meeting. In addition to prior concerns about under- and over-placement,

the SBOE-mandated use of the COMPASS test raised significant problems. This low-cost grammar-and-usage test, which students could take multiple times in a single testing session, both placed students into English 102 and provided them credit for English 101. This struck us as both an inappropriate placement tool and a questionable educational practice. Although faculty recommendations had been ignored earlier, we decided to share our concerns with the SBOE and to gather evidence that might lead to a change in state board policy that year. We wanted to document what we knew so that we had a shared point of reference, and so we agreed to collaborate on a statement of best practices. We left our meeting resolved to write *something* to *someone* about these challenges.

As noted earlier, Barbara Cambridge recommends getting to know the audiences for policy change and the conditions in which they operate. We understood that while our SBOE members were a critical audience, we might be better served by at least initiating the conversation with another audience in mind. Our on-campus administrators encouraged us to write a white paper on writing placement for our statewide provosts' council. Our provosts, stakeholders invested in cohesive statewide policy and sensitive to supporting student learning, were key allies, and we wanted them to understand the challenges we were facing.

2008: Establishing Professional Expertise through a Placement White Paper

Immediately following the fall 2007 meeting, we collaboratively wrote a placement white paper, using our listserv to exchange drafts and ideas (see appendix A). White papers are used to clarify, provide background on, and contextualize an issue. As we wrote, we were able to mine our collective professional knowledge on placement and assessment. At the same time, we shared research and scholarship with one another to expand our collective knowledge base.

As educators, we had long felt the tension between how we and other stakeholders understood writing placement. On the one hand, we see placement as helping us to "[discover] what students are doing in the process of schooling" (Adler-Kassner and O'Neill 86). On the other hand, policy makers seemed to view placement as an assessment practice that "[proves] students are doing something that they are supposed to do" (Adler-Kassner and O'Neill 86). Writing this report enabled us to establish our expertise as scholars in composition and rhetoric, an expertise the SBOE may not have understood but that our provosts could recognize. Additionally, drafting the white paper gave us a unified voice. We were no longer positioned as individuals who did not share the state's values of consistency and clarity

but instead became a group of educators proposing pedagogically sound, research-based approaches to placement to our administrative colleagues. We also were using a genre unfamiliar to us as writing program administrators that better met the needs of our audience, a choice that allowed us to demonstrate not only our expertise but also our good will.

2008: Initiating Conversations via the English Placement Task Force

Several of us met with our own provosts to discuss the white paper and to strategize about next steps. At one provost's invitation, we presented our white paper via video conferencing to the statewide provosts' council. They, in turn, appointed us to create an English Placement Task Force and to establish the goals, timeline, budget, and deliverables of this group (see appendix B). We were now faced with a new writing occasion: outlining the context and purpose of a task force, an organizational model that wasn't common in our state. Writing this plan together helped us sharpen our goals, engaged us in dialogue as colleagues, and provided us an opportunity to collaborate with key on-campus colleagues who were not writing specialists but who could provide additional viewpoints on the implications of our work. Likewise, the statewide provosts' council wisely required us to include a much wider range of stakeholders on the Task Force: faculty and administrators as well as representatives from student affairs and the registrar's office at each institution.

2008: The English Placement Task Force's Framework for Placement

The English Placement Task Force included faculty, administrators, and student affairs representatives from each institution as well as the SBOE's Student Affairs Program Manager. This early presence of an SBOE representative—and of colleagues from student affairs, who often facilitate students' understanding of issues such as placement—proved to be critical, as it required us as faculty to articulate best practices in ways that would be meaningful to non-academics. Since maintaining momentum felt significant, we set specific goals and a brisk timeline and quickly brainstormed what we might need a budget for since we hadn't anticipated being asked to assemble one. The statewide provosts' council approved our proposal which included funding for a one and a half day workshop on placement and assessment.

In the fall of 2008, the thirty-person English Placement Task Force gathered for a workshop led by Peggy O'Neill and Diane Kelly-Riley. As these two writing assessment scholars presented best practices in assessment and helped us consider what statewide models might look like, attendees

had a particular purpose for learning from one another and building trust. The time together allowed us to articulate our concerns and values. During the workshop, we shifted from a solely "values-based" approach—a dogged commitment to our own beliefs and values surrounding assessment, no matter what—to what Adler-Kassner and O'Neill describe as an "issues-based" approach (95). We had begun this work with individual passions and commitments to certain "long-term values" surrounding writing placement (97). However, if we were going to collaborate usefully with a range of stakeholders, we needed to engage actively with others whose interests and passions were likely quite different, as such collaborations could lead to "short-term, tactical actions that might represent both [our faculty] interests (and values) and those of potential allies" (97). For example, our colleagues from advising offices across the state were most heavily invested in clear, consistent, standardized placement across the state, but they also shared our commitment to first-year student success and understood placement's role in that work. Institutional faculty administrators highly valued autonomy and research-based practices even as they too were committed to clear, statewide policy.

During the second day of the workshop, we worked in small groups to brainstorm what a new model for statewide placement might look like—one that honored the SBOE's values of transparency and consistency while also providing opportunities for research-based placement approaches. Some participants wanted simply to revise the existing chart, but writing faculty were invested in fostering a placement process that was locally controlled. We wanted to be able to meet our own students' needs—and the contexts of our first-year writing courses—at institutions that differ in mission, student preparedness, and first-year writing program contexts. These very real differences required more than a new standardized system.

After hours of discussion, we began to shape an approach to placement that highlighted research-based practices—the use of multiple measures, for example—while also providing a mechanism for consistency. Over the last few hours of the workshop, a new framework for placement that would guide individual approaches emerged: "Evidence-Based Placement: a Framework for Placement into First-Year Writing Classes in Idaho" (see fig. 3). We committed to developing pilot projects that might reflect this framework differently; we agreed that each pilot should integrate at least four of the five framework principles and be developed with our local context and constraints in mind.

A Framework for Placement into First-Year Writing
Courses at Idaho Public Colleges and Universities
English Placement Task Force
November 2008
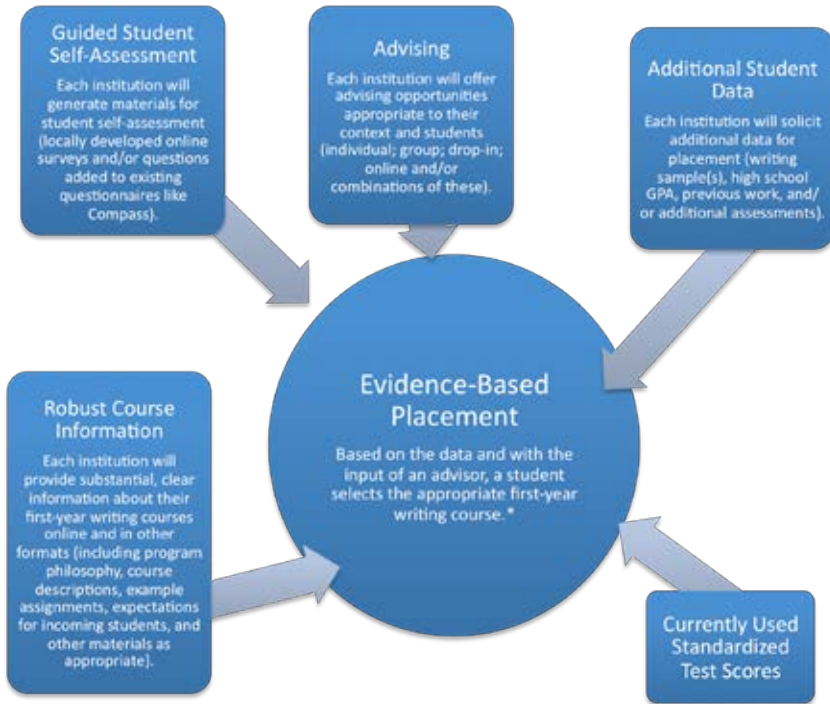
*If the data points to a decision between two courses, students will be able to select between those two only (90 or 99/101, 101/102). In other words, a student will not be able to place into 102 if the data suggest English 90.

Fig. 3. Idaho Placement Framework

A written product helped us both to clarify our values and to intervene on other stakeholders' perceptions of students and writing courses. The term *evidence-based placement* was used quite deliberately, seeking to underscore the research-based foundation of a multiple-measures approach to writing placement. At the same time, the term *framework* offered a substantially different way of considering how student literacy might be accounted for and understood. A *framework* provides a structure with room for adaptations as needed; a *cut-off chart* implies that these decontextualized numbers can predict student potential and performance in writing classes. We began to see how this approach might enable very different approaches to placement at different institutions while maintaining our professional commitment to using multiple measures to inform placement. In hindsight, this brief time together also provided a critical opportunity to share professional

expertise, to demonstrate our goodwill, and to show administrators and external audiences that we shared with them the goal of student success. Perhaps most importantly, it became clear that these deep commitments to this issue from all sides were rooted in an investment in our students—a value we all shared.

2009: Pilot Proposals and Results

The Idaho Placement Framework provided a mechanism for guiding our pilot placement projects, which were a key step in gathering data and continuing to build relationships with various constituencies. While national research-based recommendations were useful, our state educational policy makers are often especially interested in approaches that are designed for our state context. In light of this preference, the pilot projects offered us a way to 1) ground the assessment research of our field in campus-based research, 2) provide data on alternatives by testing their efficacy and efficiency, and 3) engage students in new assessment models.

Four very different institutions hosted pilot placement projects. Through responding to and working within the Idaho Placement Framework, each local team developed and piloted a placement system that best matched their local needs and interests. Since we were not always used to seeing ourselves as researchers on issues like this one—and since we were attempting to design context-appropriate placement processes while honoring a consistent, statewide framework—the process of developing and implementing these varying pilots on the campuses was as important as the results.

Throughout this time, faculty held regular meetings with key stakeholders at our institutions while the statewide English Placement Task Force listserv discussions continued. These overlapping and ongoing conversations demonstrated our expertise, built trust by revealing to others how important this issue was for our writing programs and our students, and solidified our commitment to understanding the payoffs and drawbacks of placement alternatives. We learned that it takes a remarkable institutional commitment to sustain changes in approaches to placement. Most important, we discovered these projects demonstrated how the statewide Idaho Placement Framework could provide a structure within which a variety of placement approaches might be both possible and appropriate. The Idaho Placement Framework worked as a kind of weighted chart that allowed each campus to emphasize different areas in accordance with local contexts. The following brief portraits give an indication of how diverse the approaches were—all the while meeting student needs more effectively and efficiently and simultaneously honoring the common Idaho Placement Framework.

Early Pilot Implementation: North Idaho College. North Idaho College (NIC) serves a diverse population of students with a variety of educational needs and aspirations: students who transfer to four-year institutions, who earn professional/technical degrees or certificates, who increase their skills in order to be successful in college-level classes, who receive workforce development or customized training, and who complete their GEDs. Because NIC's mission is to help students achieve success regardless of their educational goal, advising is an important tool to address students' needs and to offer them the best opportunity for success.

NIC's pilot placement project emphasized the advising aspect of the Idaho Placement Framework, developing a comprehensive advising model that would assist students not only as they began their educational journey but also as they navigated the educational system. Research (Moltz; Kolovach; Bradley) demonstrates that initial course placement bears a direct relationship to student retention, and proper placement speeds students' time to graduation and reduces their educational expenditure. Proper placement also allows the institution to allocate resources in an efficient, practical manner; to maintain higher retention rates; and to support higher completion rates. To provide a more robust placement process, NIC increased the course information (e.g., descriptions, syllabi, transfer information) available for students and modified a self-reflection intake sheet to include a reading and writing history. In addition, NIC implemented a new reading assessment; for this open-door institution's population, it was necessary to develop an efficient way to assess a large number of students with diverse needs. Previous institutional research had demonstrated that students with a reading score below college-level had only a 50% success rate in reading-intensive courses while those who scored at college-level had much higher success rates—in some cases up to 78%. As a result, NIC's pilot included a larger battery of COMPASS-based reading and writing tests as well as the inclusion of a student's high school GPA when appropriate. The results of conducting the pilot process in 2009 with 107 students in three different cohorts appeared to confirm the original hypothesis: a single measure of writing assessment, COMPASS Writing, gave a distorted picture of a student's capabilities, oftentimes placing the student in a remedial writing course.[1] On the other hand, multiple measures offered an advisor a richer view of a student's preparedness. In many instances, advisors were able to place students into gateway writing courses.

While using two standardized tests might not initially seem to meet best practices for writing assessment, the triangulation of COMPASS Writing, COMPASS Reading, high school GPA, and careful one-on-one advising opens the door for student-advisor interaction to discuss not only these

placement scores but to discuss non-cognitive issues with the student as well; it is this approach to thoughtful discussion that is so crucial to their success. Likewise, because NIC serves a range of students, the college needs to place them into a wider range of courses and program options than are available at four-year institutions such as Boise State University. The state-wide Idaho Placement Framework, then, helped NIC to develop multiple placement tools—a student's self-assessment and prior history as well as a fuller set of standardized test scores—to make more informed decisions for the campus and its students.

Early Pilot Implementation: Boise State University. Boise State University (Boise State) is the largest institution in the state, serving a population that is increasingly made up of traditional students while also meeting the needs of working adults in the metropolitan area. About 2800 students complete registration each spring and summer, and so, in addition to responding to the Idaho Placement Framework, the pilot placement team at the institution wanted to devise an pilot placement project that would: 1) privilege efficiency and usability through an online format, 2) communicate to students the differences between courses, and 3) emphasize the importance of both reflection (i.e., self-assessment) and projection (i.e., considering future goals).

This pilot project began as a small-scale placement process titled "Evidence-Based Placement@Boise State" and, over the next several years, became "The Write Class." Early versions were developed with the support of colleagues in institutional assessment, the registrar's office, and the vice-provost for undergraduate studies. The initial pilot placement project utilized an online form to gather the data from students: self-assessment of writing confidence and experience, self-reflection on first-year writing courses, high school GPA, and standardized test scores. Throughout the process, students could seek advising for further information. Based on the evidence submitted, students were placed into one of two initial courses. The highest-scoring students had the option to create a portfolio application in order to be considered for the second-semester course.

The first pilot in 2009 included 250 students, and it provided evidence that this kind of innovative process was sustainable, efficient, and effective. First, students placed differently; fewer applied to begin in English 102 or chose to begin in English 90. Second, participants in the pilot earned higher grades (3.02 for pilot participants; 2.79 for the test-placed comparison group) and enjoyed higher course completion rates (91.3% for pilot participants; 84.6% for the test-placed comparison group) than those of their peers. Finally and most critically, since the pilot placement process required

students to reflect on which course might be best for them, the conversations with advisers at orientation shifted substantially. Instead of automatically asking for their test scores, advisers were able to ask about students' confidence, experiences, and sense of the courses. Choosing the appropriate first-year writing course became part of beginning the college experience for students who volunteered to participate in the pilot study.

Two additional pilot projects took place at two other institutions, the University of Idaho and Idaho State University. University of Idaho's pilot experimented with a model based on expert readers; faculty found it engaging but too labor-intensive to sustain beyond the initial pilot. At Idaho State University, the composition director piloted guided self-placement. For a variety of institution-specific factors, this approach also remained in place for only one year.

The range of these pilots served multiple purposes: among other things, they gave us renewed energy and interest in trying new approaches at our various institutions, offered a mechanism for important on-campus conversations and collaborations, and helped us all to identify processes that were more or less sustainable within our contexts.

Most importantly for the writing community in Idaho, the pilot projects provided data that we needed in order to make a sound argument about how this nuanced approach might work in our state. Although not all of us decided to continue with our pilots, trying the four different approaches to writing placement demonstrated that we could "use systematic, careful placement processes in addition to the ACT/SAT scores used for admission, without disrupting ease of transfer" (White Paper in appendix A). These collaborations seemed sustainable on a larger scale, and they demonstrated that all we needed was room to implement programs that were best for students after admission. We recognized that the opportunity to pilot these different approaches gave us the time and space to do exactly what a pilot should: test out ideas, try other approaches, and gather data. Our next step was to compile our data and generate recommendations.

2010–2012: Documenting Local Implications and Shared Expertise

After the pilot projects, we again collaborated on an extended report and presentations on our pilot project results for the statewide provosts' council in spring 2010. This time, our recommendations were made not only in light of others' research, as was the case with the initial white paper, but also in light of our research and for our state context. Following the pilot presentations, several of us met with SBOE policy writers and drafted recommendations with their input (see appendix C). Overall, the report continued to

communicate our priorities in light of what was best for students, and we made two primary recommendations: 1) implement the Idaho Placement Framework to encourage context-specific placement practices and 2) ensure that all college-level writing courses earn college credit, including English 90.

Those recommendations were forwarded to the SBOE in 2010. For the next two years, the SBOE "sunsetted"[2] the placement process so that our pilots could continue at NIC and Boise State, but they were still considered pilot (and optional) programs. At NIC, intensive advising and the integration of various aspects of reading assessments continued. At Boise State, half of the 2011 incoming class (898) used a newly revised and much more robust online system that had a more fully integrated a weighted algorithm in it. Data continued to demonstrate that a multiple-measures approach, responsive to the Idaho Placement Framework but adapted for our campus contexts, could have a positive impact on student performance. We shared these ongoing positive results and received some encouragement, but the placement cut-off chart remained in our course catalogs.

Throughout 2010–2012, we continued to meet with SBOE representatives to discuss next steps, but no clear changes emerged. Our SBOE did not prioritize implementing new statewide policy, and so conversations stalled. While it felt like we had established good relationships with our SBOE representatives by demonstrating our expertise, trustworthiness, and good will, we also did not feel as though we were continuing to intervene on how placement was understood by policy makers.

May 2012: Mandated ACCUPLACER Workshop

Meanwhile, in an effort to increase college enrollment rates, the SBOE began funding the SAT for all Idaho high school juniors. Included with the SAT package was the ACCUPLACER, a standardized test designed as a placement instrument. In April 2012, writing faculty from across the state were required by our provosts to attend a 3.5-day ACCUPLACER cut-score setting workshop. The ACCUPLACER, we were told, would serve as another option for writing placement.

The ACCUPLACER group was made up of many of the same faculty who had been involved with the English Placement Task Force for several years and was a challenging enterprise for us as writing specialists. The entire premise of the workshop—to identify specific standardized test questions that would identify someone as college ready—went against everything we had described in the white paper, discussed at the English Placement Task Force workshop and meetings, and developed on our campuses.

Though all worked to honor the best intentions of the workshop, it became apparent that at least one sub-group of workshop participants simply could not in good conscience make any specific recommendations. After consultation with our newly appointed SBOE Chief Academic Officer (CAO), our colleagues in that group wrote a memo explaining their concerns with the test. While we felt that our ongoing placement work had been devalued by the very premise of the ACCUPLACER workshop, our continued attempts to be both reasonable and principled resulted in the CAO's willingness to bring our concerns to the SBOE. This time, they must have listened. The ACCUPLACER has not yet become part of our statewide placement process, and further discussions of it have receded.

2012: Issues-based Collaboration via Complete College Idaho

Still reeling from the troubling workshop on ACCUPLACER in May, we were told during the summer of 2012 that our state had joined the Complete College America initiative (completecollegeamerica.com). Several of us had heard about Complete College America (CCA), and some faculty were deeply distrustful of the motives and intentions of external constituencies like CCA. Within the CCA literature, we realized that there were opportunities to realign our goals within a CCA-oriented perspective. For example, we had long advocated for students receiving college credit for doing college-level work in English 90, and that idea was reflected in our recommendations to the SBOE in 2010. In those recommendations, we had framed this issue in terms of awarding college credit for college coursework, acknowledging that our non-credit-bearing writing courses were not "remedial" in any pedagogical sense. CCA, on the other hand, used the research on the detrimental "cooling out" effect of non-credit-bearing coursework to advocate for reducing (if not eliminating) the number of "remedial" courses a student must complete. While there are reasonable professional concerns over the increasing involvement of organizations like CCA in higher education (see Adler-Kassner "Liberal Learning") we also knew that resistance to an approach that our SBOE had already adopted would be counterproductive. (Pragmatically, we also knew that our research-based, data-driven presentations to the SBOE were not persuasive on their own.) Beyond that, we would miss an opportunity to make changes for which we had long advocated.

To continue to have a voice in these statewide conversations, we shifted our language on placement and course credit. For example, our earlier report to the State Board in 2010 (appendix C) included the following recommendation:

1. The English Placement Task Force recommends a change in word-
    ing to SBOE Policy III.Q, "Admission Standards," to distinguish
    between admission and placement.

    Standardized test scores are suitably efficient, reliable tools for
    admission into our institutions at this time. However, educa-
    tional policy can permit the development of more sensitive place-
    ment mechanisms for introductory writing courses *after* students
    have enrolled and committed to a particular institution. A change
    to policy III.Q will permit institutions to expand and refine the
    placement processes that have been piloted.

With the Complete College Idaho plan at the forefront for the SBOE,
we knew our language needed to change. For instance, WPAs at Boise State
now stated, in response to our provosts' request that we detail our approach
to "reduce remediation" in English, that

> The SBOE goal to transform remediation has long been a goal of the
> First-Year Writing Program at Boise State University. This academic
> year, we are piloting several initiatives aimed at both reducing reme-
> diation and increasing retention in first-year writing courses (English
> 90, 101, and 102). . . . Continuing to rely on tests like COMPASS
> or ACCUPLACER, which have been demonstrated to misplace stu-
> dents, will force students into remedial coursework and will make
> the other proposed reforms of little effect. (see appendix D)

At each campus, others made similar tactical decisions. Critically, we had
continued to engage with one another across campuses throughout the
stalled period, and WPAs and other English faculty were contacted for col-
laboration as soon as the Complete College Idaho plan was established—
a sign that we were now seen as engaged partners rather than recalcitrant
faculty, a misperception that plagued our earlier work.

Barbara Cambridge suggests that WPAs should remain informed on
developing policy matters (141). In this case, timing was critical, and we
were already available, knew each other, and had established ethos with the
SBOE's Chief Academic Officer even before the Complete College Idaho
work emerged. In the Complete College Idaho initiative, the stated strategy
of "transforming remediation" through "[developing] a statewide model for
transformation of statewide remedial placement and support" intersected
with our 2010 English Placement Task Force recommendations for "con-
tinued institutional commitment to the collaboratively-developed Frame-
work for Writing Placement" and "a change in . . . [state educational policy]
to distinguish between admission and placement" even though they were
stated differently (see figure 4):

KEY STRATEGIES:

STRENGTHEN THE PIPELINE	• Ensure College and Career Readiness • Develop Intentional Advising Along the K-20 Continuum that Links Education with Careers • Support Accelerated High School to Postsecondary and Career Pathways
TRANSFORM REMEDIATION	• Clarify and Implement College and Career Readiness Education and Assessments • Develop a Statewide Model for Transformation of Remedial Placement and Support • Provide three options: Co-requisite model, Emporium model, or Accelerated model
STRUCTURE FOR SUCCESS	• Communicate Strong, Clear, and Guaranteed Statewide Articulation and Transfer Options
REWARD PROGRESS & COMPLETION	• Establish Metrics and Accountability Tied to Institutional Mission • Recognize and Reward Performance • Redesign the State's Current Offerings of Financial Support for Postsecondary Students
LEVERAGE PARTNERSHIPS	• Strengthen Collaborations Between Education and Business/Industry Partners • College Access Network • STEM Education

Fig. 4. Complete College Idaho Goals and Strategies

Certainly, the narrowing of the college and career readiness platform and the corporatization trend in higher education continue to challenge us, and we considered the implications carefully before engaging with this initiative. However, rather than resist these goals because of the substantially different values of the CCA organization, we instead subverted them by finding common ground and openly drawing on the Complete College Idaho plan's language when making our own arguments for policy change. For example, when a CCA representative emphasized implementation over modest pilot projects, Boise State worked quickly to scale up The Write Class as it was a proven and more flexible placement approach. While a full explanation of the immediate opportunities for new curricular approaches and placement strategies is beyond the scope of this article, the presence of CCA spurred the full implementation of this research-based, locally-controlled placement process at Boise State—after years of pilots. At the same time, Boise State was able to offer all students credit-bearing coursework via a new course, English 101 Plus, that allowed students to take English 101 concurrently with a one-credit writers' studio; the other Idaho institutions quickly moved in that direction as well. Both of these monumental changes would not have been possible without the added external perspective of CCA. Indeed, Idaho's participation with Complete College America gave writing program administrators an opportunity to present directly to the SBOE about these efforts, an opportunity we had asked for but had never been given in previous years.

Building from this initiative, we requested support for a week-long summer institute for faculty from across Idaho. Since we were able to frame our institute within the Complete College Idaho goals, this effort was funded by the SBOE. In June 2014, then, seventeen first-year writing faculty and administrators representing nearly all institutions in Idaho gathered for a full week of presentations, workshops, and small-team inquiries that resulted in productive, context-appropriate projects on curricular initiatives in first-year writing. In other words, rather than waiting for a top-down mandate on reforming remedial writing classes, we were able to leverage our established ethos to develop English 101 Plus curricula with pedagogical best practices and students' best interests in mind, all with the support of our provosts and SBOE.

Writing placement, then, became the issue that we returned to again and again. It provided the initial exigency for ongoing conversations, conversations that were often frustrating and even disappointing. At the same time, these collaborative efforts were exhilarating and productive as well—and without the groundwork of decades of work, we wouldn't have been positioned to engage with and define CCA-related initiatives in quite the same way.

Conclusion: Relentless Engagement on Educational Policy that Matters

As WPAs, we have learned from this extended collaboration across institutions throughout Idaho. While we know that our state is not yours, we offer the following strategies for engaging with state-level policy:

Engage now; don't wait for a crisis

The Idaho WPAs and English department chairs had met annually for over a decade; we were colleagues who already knew each other. Those relationships facilitated our early work together. Further, the years of the English Placement Task Force required us to collaborate beyond just WPAs and department chairs. In hindsight, it has been critical that we had established relationships with colleagues in advising, the registrar's office, and orientation programming across our campuses.

Practice patience—and know that change takes time

Initially, some of us had assumed that the one-year pilot placement programs—and the data that came out of those—would lead to policy change in the year after that. Seven years later, we still do not have revised state-

level policy. But change is on the horizon, and continued engagement has been crucial.

Honor institutional contexts and commitments while developing shared values

We quickly learned to listen to one another. Even among the WPAs in our state, there were substantially different beliefs about the kinds of placement processes that were realistic for institutions and useful for student populations. We grew to understand and respect one another's hard work and commitment to student learning—and that helped us see beyond differences.

Become flexible writers

Most of us teach first-year writing curricula that encourage students to be flexible, adaptive writers; our engagement with statewide policy required us to expand our writing repertoire as well. One of our goals in writing this article has been to document some of the genres that we learned to write together—white papers, reports, task force guidelines, funding proposals. We had to work to understand the purpose and context of these new-to-us genres; while our attempts are undoubtedly imperfect, administrators noticed that we were trying to speak to them, and we were able to build credibility through those efforts.

Keep an open mind

We were hesitant and more than a little dubious when we learned of Idaho's participation in Complete College America. By approaching the situation with an open mind, we were able to engage with the mission of this initiative and make significant changes that support our students. Through the implementation of English 101 Plus, for example, we moved more students into credit-bearing courses more quickly without sacrificing course outcomes or pedagogical beliefs. If engagement with initiatives such as CCA seems distasteful, we need to consider how to get involved even earlier. While larger efforts like running for public office or working for political campaigns may be beyond our capacity, consider volunteering for the Council of Writing Program Administrators' Network for Media Action or hosting small-scale meetings and conferences within your state. It is important to find ways to effect change and invest our energies early in reform processes.

Be present. Relentlessly

These documents also trace how our initial collaborative work as faculty, which largely began in frustration, changed into a kind of advocacy. As Linda Adler-Kassner describes, our work started with "individual principles—from an individual's anger, passions, and . . . *emotions*," and grew into a "change-making [movement]" (23). Throughout the past several years, we have become differently pragmatic as we've realized that refusing to engage with stakeholders whose values might differ significantly—even diametrically—from our own can lead to even worse results. Likewise, we have learned that we share at least one key value—a commitment to the success of our students—with administrators on our campuses, SBOE members, and state legislators. Balancing differing perspectives and deeply held beliefs with our shared dedication to our students has allowed us to make headway on reform in our state.

For us, placement policy became a critical focal point for intervening on commonplace understandings about writing development, literacy, and student performance. It is a big issue; in fact, placement is at the core of what Adler-Kassner identifies as one of three "central questions" of our field: "How should students' literacies be defined when they come into composition classes?" (*Activist* 14).

Many other issues might seem small and yet have the potential to spur statewide conversations and action: dual enrollment; transfer credit questions; accreditation; labor challenges. Because of the unique position of first-year writing, policies related to these kinds of issues can initially strike a WPA as either overly fine-grained policies that only affect specific students at one institution—or they can seem overwhelmingly complex. What we hope we have done here, though, is encouraged you to seek out these kinds of policy-related challenges to engage with colleagues from across your state; collaboration across institutional contexts can offer new opportunities to intervene on assumptions about student literacies and the teaching of writing.

In hindsight, we can see how important those years of conversation and pilot projects and reports were. Collectively, we turned placement into a focal point for careful, faculty-led research and experimentation which gave us a meaningful context (and a rich set of data) when the new statewide goals as outlined in the Complete College Idaho plan provided another way to consider and work through this challenge together. We are confident that we can help guide future policy changes. Patient listening and continued dialogue matter, and we will continue to engage. As we do so, we will advocate for approaches to placement that focus on the context of that

work. We find solace in Adler-Kassner and O'Neill's reminder at the end of *Reframing Writing Assessment* that this kind of work is important—and that it is never done (190).

Acknowledgments

Notes

1. We are well-aware of the problematic assumptions in the term *remedial*. As we describe later, we had long argued that the non-credit-bearing writing courses in Idaho were rigorous, pedagogically-progressive courses and that they were not designed to remediate students in any sense. However, State Board of Education policy clearly defined these courses and prevented students from receiving credit for them. The institutional and state-level perception of these courses as "remedial" remained.

2. Our State Board of Education's term for a policy that is temporarily suspended.

Appendix A: Placement White Paper Presented to Provosts' Council in June 2008

Placement in First-Year Writing Courses at Idaho Colleges and Universities

Prepared by Heidi Estrem, Director of the First-Year Writing Program, Boise State University

Endorsed by colleagues from the following Idaho colleges and universities:

[List of Names]

May 14, 2008

Recommendation: Idaho college students can be placed more appropriately into first-year writing courses (English 90, 101, and 102) by research-based, pedagogically-sound placement systems developed at each university or college. We propose that a task force be established to explore placement options and initiate pilot systems at different universities.

A more accurate placement system will both enable students to take course work for which they are prepared and ensure that all universities and colleges are able to

deliver their first-year courses more effectively and efficiently. A revised placement process will also address the SBOE goal of "develop[ing] and maintain[ing] strong . . . placement programs, particularly in reading, writing, and mathematics."[i] A strong placement program for first-year writing courses will also correct many of the problems with the current system, as outlined below.

Background on the Current Placement System: Incoming students at all Idaho public colleges and universities are placed into English 90, 101, or 102 based on ACT/SAT scores. Institutions also use COMPASS scores to place students into 101 or 102. Additionally, students can receive credit for English 101 based on their COMPASS score or ACT/SAT score.[ii]

Problems With the Current Placement System:

1. *Standardized test scores are not valid or reliable as placement instruments.* Research on standardized tests and placement in writing courses has documented, time and again, that placement decisions almost never match with future performance.[iii] Our professional organizations agree. A recent white paper by a joint NCTE (National Council of Teachers of English) and C-WPA (Council of Writing Program Administrators) task force notes that "A single off-the-shelf or standardized test should never be used to make important decisions about students, teachers, or curriculum."[iv] Even the testing agencies for ACT, SAT and COMPASS advise that their test scores be used as only one piece of data on which to determine placement.[v]

2. *Placement based on standardized tests misplaces students.* According to a survey of Idaho English department chairs and writing program administrators who have been analyzing the effectiveness of the current system, this placement system allows under-prepared students to take courses for which they are not ready and hinders others from advancing to coursework for which they are prepared.[vi] Standardized tests prioritize speed and efficiency; however, they do not take into account either students' reading and writing abilities or the first-year writing curriculum. Students who are inappropriately placed are often frustrated when they are placed into a course for which they are not ready.

3. *Standardized test scores have never been intended to be used as a basis for awarding course credit.* No standardized test meaningfully represents the experience of a full college writing course. None of the testing agencies claim that their tests are valid or reliable indicators upon which to give course credit.

4. *Awarding course credit based on standardized test scores inaccurately represents the content of college-level courses.* At all colleges in Idaho, first-year writing courses are taken seriously and taught with rigor and care. When students are able to take and re-take a test (e.g., the COMPASS) that has nothing to do with the curriculum, the reputation of Idaho universities is harmed by communicating to students that one $5 grammar and usage test is equivalent to an entire sixteen-week college-level writing course.

5. *Using standardized tests for either placement or course credit does not reflect best practices or current research on writing.* Seventy-seven percent of the English

department administrators in Idaho universities and colleges are dissatisfied with the ACT/SAT as a placement method, and 92% are dissatisfied with the use of COMPASS.[vii] There are many other robust writing placement methods that better reflect recent understandings of first-year writing courses. Program administrators charged with providing high-quality first-year writing courses for all incoming students view writing placement as an opportunity for positive programmatic development that will directly enhance the educational experience of Idaho college students.

Writing Placement Models: While there are many possibilities for placement systems that might be developed, briefly outlined here are two current systems that adhere to sound principles for placement system design: guided self-placement and portfolio placement. According to current research, the most effective writing placement systems

- Use multiple samples of writing
- Encourage student self-efficacy through engaging them in the placement process
- Align placement with the content and pedagogy of courses
- Are locally developed and responsive to student population needs.[viii]

Guided self-placement is based on current research in learning and self-efficacy, for it "present[s] students with real and important choices about their education."[ix] Students are provided with detailed descriptions of course work and expectations; they have the opportunity to discuss each course with advisors or program directors; they are guided in self-reflection on their past writing experiences. Then, students place themselves into the appropriate course. According to research done at universities where directed self-placement is in use, students place themselves *more accurately* than previous placement systems had placed them.[x]

Portfolio placement recognizes that writers should be placed into course work on the basis of multiple writing samples and the judgment of "expert readers," or those most closely engaged with teaching the course sequence.[xi] For portfolio systems, students prepare and submit a portfolio of multiple writing samples to a committee of instructors from the targeted courses. The students' writing is directly assessed according to the course goals and expectations, and the portfolio readers then decide on the most appropriate course for that student.

There is real interest in addressing placement creatively and thoughtfully through different approaches to placement at each university. Over 75% of the survey respondents would like to develop some version of directed self-placement; others are interested in exploring portfolio-based or online writing placement. A change in placement, then, is both an opportunity to enhance students' educational experience and an opportunity for writing scholars at each college to implement a pedagogically sound, research-based placement system that best serves each campus.[xii]

Statewide Support: The challenges of the current placement system have been of concern to Idaho writing program administrators and English department chairs for many years. The time is right for reconsidering writing placement structures in

Idaho colleges. Locally-based, ethically sound writing placement systems can serve to help students have even more positive and educationally appropriate experiences in their first years in college while also upholding the integrity of college-level work. We welcome the opportunity to work with our local and state-level colleagues to implement writing placement systems that better place students, more accurately represent the content of these courses, and reflect current best practices in writing placement research.

[i] (Section III. R. f. (3)). http://www.boardofed.idaho.gov/academics/index.asp

[ii] The ACT "tests emphasize reasoning, analysis, problem solving, and the integration of learning from various sources, as well as the application of these proficiencies to the kinds of tasks college students are expected to perform." Its tests "are designed to assess students' general educational development and their ability to complete college-level work" (www.act.org). The SAT assesses "the critical reading, mathematical reasoning, and writing skills students have developed over time and that they need to be successful in college." Its tests are designed "to assist students, their families, and educators in assessing students' ability to succeed in college-level studies" (http://professionals.collegeboard.com/k-12/prepare/sat). The COMPASS diagnostic exam only measures grammar and usage: "Punctuation, Spelling, Capitalization, Usage, Verb formation/agreement, Relationships of clauses, Shifts in construction, Organization"

[iii] Haswell, "Post-Secondary"

[iv] NCTE/WPA White Paper on Assessment (forthcoming)

[v] www.act.org; www.collegeboard.com

[vi] See survey, attached

[vii] See survey, attached

[viii] see Haswell, "Post-Secondary;" Broad, *What We Really Value*; Huot, *ReArticulating Writing Assessment*; Harrington, "Learning to Ride;" NCTE/CCCC Statement on Assessment http://www.ncte.org/cccc/resources/positions/123784.htm

[ix] Harrington, "Learning to Ride"

[x] Royer and Gilles, *Directed Self-Placement*

[xi] Yancey, "Looking Back"

[xii] Student needs and populations differ at each Idaho university. Writing program administrators across the state are committed to providing similar kinds of experiences in similarly numbered courses while also remaining sensitive to local needs for specific kinds of curricula. So, while these courses may remain comparable in content—and Idaho writing program administrators and English department chairs are committed to and value this kind of articulation—individual campuses can and should implement placement methods most appropriate for their student population and that best represent their curriculum.

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Appendix B: English Placement Task Force Charge, Membership, Timeline

English Placement Task Force
appointed by Provosts' Council July 2008
Updated September 24, 2008

English Placement Task Force Co-Chairs: Heidi Estrem, Boise State University, and Whitney Smith, College of Southern Idaho

Charge:

The English Placement Task Force (EPTF) is charged with studying, piloting, and recommending new placement systems at Idaho state colleges and universities. The task force is guided by the understanding that all constituents—students, faculty, administrators—will be best served by placement systems that are valid, pedagogically reliable, and responsive both to best practices in writing placement and to local needs and contexts.

The EPTF is charged with

   a) surveying current best practices in English placement at a range of institutions nation-wide;
   b) soliciting the input of writing placement experts to devise new placement systems;
   c) piloting new placement systems at identified volunteer institutions;
   d) assessing and reporting on those placement systems;
   e) presenting recommendations for English placement at Idaho public colleges and universities to the provosts' council

Membership: The EPTF should have robust representation from a range of institutions and constituents.

Faculty:

   [Names and Institutions]
   Registrars and Academic Advising:
   [Names and Institutions]
   Administration:
   [Names and Institutions]
   Designee from Office of State Board of Education:
   [name]
   Designee from Idaho State Department of Education:
   [name]

Timeline:

AY 2008—2009; Fall 2008:
   • Explore benefits of current models for writing placement and related benefits for Idaho schools through written materials and through attending a placement workshop

- Consult with writing placement/assessment scholars during the placement workshop on current innovative and reliable models
- Identify the appropriate placement programs for different kinds of institutions in Idaho
- Provosts' Council will inform and brief SBOE at the SBOE October 9-10 meeting in ___
- Establish an appropriate assessment plan for the placement models
- Solicit institutions to host pilot placement programs

Spring 2009:
- Begin implementing pilot placement programs on a voluntary basis for incoming students

AY 2009—2010
- Continue implementing pilot placement programs
- Generate and interpret preliminary data on the pilot placement programs
- Report on research and make a proposal for English placement to Provosts' Council

Deliverables to Provosts' Council:
January 2009—Initial Writing Placement Report, detailing:
- The placement programs that are being piloted and an explanation of how that placement model meets the charge for this task force
- The placement programs considered and an explanation of why each institution chose to pilot the program
- Projected benefits and challenges of each pilot placement program
- Projected costs, if any
- The assessment plan for each pilot program

October 2009—Preliminary Pilot Programs Report, detailing:
- The results from each pilot program
- Assessment of each pilot program
- Actual costs, if any
- Unexpected challenges and/or benefits.

Spring 2010—Recommendation Report for English Placement in Idaho Colleges and Universities, detailing:
- Proposed recommendations for statewide English placement
- Rationale for each placement program chosen
- Budget proposal, if needed
- Ongoing assessment plan for each placement program

Appendix C: Placement into Writing Courses at Idaho Post-Secondary Institutions

Findings and Recommendations
Submitted to
Council of Academic Affairs and Programs (CAAP; a statewide provosts' council)
June 2010
by
The English Placement Task Force

Entering college students need clear, flexible, and appropriate initial course placement to ensure early success. As detailed in the full report submitted to the CAAP in May 2010, the English Placement Task Force (EPTF) has researched and gathered data for recommendations on changes to initial writing course placement at colleges and universities across Idaho. We were charged with surveying best practices in placement; soliciting the input of writing placement experts; piloting new placement systems at volunteer institutions; and assessing and reporting on those placement systems. This condensed report presents our findings and recommendations to the Provosts' Council. We look forward to continuing to address these issues with you.

Part One: English Placement Task Force Findings

In 2009-2010, four institutions (North Idaho College, Idaho State University, Boise State University, and the University of Idaho) drew from the EPTF-designed cohesive Framework (see attached) to design pilot placement programs that were both responsive to the Framework and adaptable to local needs. For example, North Idaho College's unique student profile led them to use individual advising and additional assessment measures to better place students into first-year writing courses. Alternatively, the much larger numbers of incoming students at institutions like Boise State University and Idaho State University led them to develop placement programs that were online and interactive.

Overall, the pilot studies demonstrated the potential for locally-developed post-admissions placement processes to place students more accurately and effectively than test scores alone. The changes in writing placement procedures made in the pilot studies had two significant effects:

1. Instructional Appropriateness and Greater Self-Efficacy: Additional placement measures led to a positive initial experience in college during a critical transition period into college.
    a. At North Idaho College and Boise State, students who participated in the pilot placement performed better in their courses than did a peer comparison group.
    b. At North Idaho College and Boise State, assessments demonstrated that students appreciated knowing more about the courses and having the opportunity to give additional input into their first-semester options.

2. Efficiencies: Institutions and students managed resources more efficiently.
   a. The number of sections each institution needed to offer could be reduced through more accurate placement. Potentially, for example, Boise State University might be able to reduce the number of course offerings by at least four sections per year, resulting in an institutional savings of at least $13,000.
   b. Students placed more effectively are retained in higher numbers and make quicker progress toward their degrees. (One example: in Boise State's pilot, 18 students who would have been required to begin in English 90 were able to begin in English 101 and yet still successfully completed the course. Those eighteen students saved that cost.)

Part Two: English Placement Task Force Recommendations for Placement

The pilot projects offer an initial demonstration that institutionally-developed placement processes for first-year writing can be effective and efficient. However, current SBOE policy (see Policy III.Q Admission Standards) does not permit further expansion of placement processes. Our recommendations for continuing this work follow.

1. The EPTF recommends continued institutional commitment to the collaboratively-developed Framework for Writing Placement (see attached).

   The Framework offers consistency in focus, even though the particular methods adopted at each institution may differ. As institutional needs, national best practices, and student demographics evolve, the Framework will need periodic review and discussion.

2. The EPTF recommends a change in wording to SBOE Policy III.Q, "Admission Standards," to distinguish between admission and placement.

   Standardized test scores are suitably efficient, reliable tools for admission into our institutions at this time. However, educational policy can permit the development of more sensitive placement mechanisms for introductory writing courses *after* students have enrolled and committed to a particular institution. A change to policy III.Q will permit institutions to expand and refine the placement processes that have been piloted.

3. The EPTF recommends that the current placement chart for first-year writing (III.Q "Admissions Standards") be reviewed and placed differently within the policy.

   The current ACT/SAT cut-off scores can serve as admissions guidelines, and they *may* serve as placement guidelines for any institutions that do not adapt locally-responsive placement models. However, we recommend

removing the "COMPASS" column so that institutions may continue to develop other placement processes that better address current student needs.

4. The EPTF recommends that CAAP consider how to award students college credit for course work actually taken.

    Currently, students can receive up to six college-level course credits based on test scores alone. We have discussed the possibility of moving the core composition requirement to a 3-6 credit requirement. One advantage of this system is that students would earn credit for course work actually completed; another is that it may allow for more rapid progress toward degree for some students. The disadvantage, though, is that students may feel more pressure than ever to take only the second first-year writing course. We welcome further discussion of this issue.

Appendix D: Reduce Remediation Campus Proposal Example

MEMO

Date: September 13, 2012
To: Marty Schimpf, Provost
From: Heidi Estrem, Director of the First-Year Writing Program; Dawn Shepherd, Associate Director of the First-Year Writing Program; Michelle Payne, Chair, Department of English
Re: Transform Remediation Plan and Budget Proposal—English

Writing Plus: Transforming Remediation in First-Year Writing

The SBOE goal to transform remediation has long been a goal of the First-Year Writing Program at Boise State University. This academic year, we are piloting several initiatives aimed at both reducing remediation and increasing retention in first-year writing courses (English 90, 101, and 102). Below, we have described the three main initiatives within this program (collectively known as "Writing Plus") and the outcomes linked to each initiative. Then we delineate the funding needs if these are to expand into permanent program offerings.

Evidence-Based Placement

The cornerstone of the Writing Plus Program is an evidence-based placement procedure that incorporates multiple measures to position students for a successful first-year writing experience. A long line of research within writing studies has demonstrated the need for an approach to placement that takes into account multiple measures, and we have been working alongside our colleagues at other Idaho institutions and partners from the SBOE toward a placement solution for years. In addition, we have successfully piloted an online placement process during summer orientation sessions.

Continuing to rely on tests like COMPASS or ACCUPLACER, which have been demonstrated to misplace students, will force students into remedial coursework and will make the other proposed reforms of little effect. Two examples: First, in the late 1990s, when the COMPASS scores were changed by the SBOE, suddenly more students were required to take English 90. Subsequently, English 90 students were not retained at twice the rate of their 101 counterparts. Second, this spring, the Institutional Assessment office looked for any statistically significant correlations between SAT, ACT, or COMPASS scores and success in English 101 or 102. There were none. Instead, we propose a streamlined evidence-based placement procedure based on the following weighted factors:

- *60% Digital Evidence-Based Placement* score: Students are guided through The Write Class, an online self-assessment that gathers data about each student. It also includes a question about SAT/ACT scores as a general assessment of college readiness.
- *40% Prior Academic Writing Evidence:* High School English GPA for traditional students OR an additional portion of the online Write Class assessment for returning students who have been out of high school for more than five years. As was presented by the Western Governors' Association representative at the Reduce Remediation provosts' meeting this summer, a student's GPA is a far better predictor of collegiate success than her test scores.

Key Performance Indicator: With this placement approach, students will both have a better sense of collegiate work expectations and feel as though they've been better placed in the appropriate course for them. We will use student satisfaction surveys, institutional research on GPAs and retention, and direct assessments of sampled student writing to assess the placement process.

English 101+

The second aspect of the Writing Plus program is a reconfigured credit-bearing first-year writing course, English 101+. In our efforts to reduce remediation at Boise State University, we seek to support all first-year writing students who might otherwise be required to begin in English 90, or who might choose to begin in English 90. To that end, we have created a four-credit English 101+ experience. In this program (pilot beginning spring 2013), students who would have formerly taken English 90 will be mainstreamed into English 101 classes and enrolled in a one-credit writers' studio with their English 101 instructor. Research indicates that additional time, focused instruction, and increased feedback are what many English 90 students need, and those aspects will be key in the one-credit studio courses. At the same time, less-confident writers will benefit from being integrated immediately into credit-bearing courses. Our approach draws from many features of the Accelerated Learning Program at the Community College of Baltimore County, coordinated by Peter Adams (see http://alp-deved.org) and referenced in the Complete College America materials.

Students will benefit immediately by no longer being required to take three credits of pre-credit-bearing work. Additionally, students who *want* the additional

support can obtain it within the context of a credit-bearing course. Institutional research in 2008 revealed that our English 90 students perform just as well as their counterparts by the time they reach English 102—but that more than three times as many of them drop out along the way. With this model, students will gain confidence in coursework and won't feel as though they are "behind."

Performance Indicator: In alignment with Progress Metric 3 in the Complete College America technical guide, we will compare student cohorts from 2007-12 (under the current remedial sequence of English 90-101-102) to the 2013-14 cohort (who complete the English 101+ and 102 sequence). Our goal is that English 101+ students will be retained at a higher level than and complete English 102 as successfully as the comparison cohort.

Projecting Learning, Understanding Success (PLUS) Program: Support for Repeating Students

The third aspect of this program to reduce remediation is a new initiative for students repeating a critical gateway first-year course (English 101 or 102). Institutional research here and elsewhere indicates that students who repeat a course are more than twice as likely to be unsuccessful the next time they attempt it. Drawing from research within writing studies, psychology, and adult learning, we have developed and are currently piloting our PLUS program for repeating students, which includes:

- early-semester communication with repeating students;
- a checklist of low-stakes tasks for these students, designed to foster ownership, confidence, and planning for success;
- faculty-initiated check-ins;
- guided reflective interviews with peer mentors.

Repeating students too often reproduce the same problematic behaviors. To remedy this challenge, the PLUS Program aims to help them reframe how they work in first-year writing and what they're doing differently during the repeated experience.

Performance Indicator: This initiative is aligned with Progress Metrics 3 and 5 in the Complete College America technical guide. Over time, this program, in addition to the availability of 101+, will increase the opportunities for the success of repeating students, thus saving students and the institution emotional and financial costs.

Writing Plus Budget

The success of these placement, curricular, and student-support initiatives, designed to directly impact the vulnerable population of first-year students, hinges on two critical yet realistic requirements: a careful implementation and a stable team of experienced instructors. We anticipate some one-time startup costs as these significant changes take place, followed by the use of ongoing funds to main-

tain them. Here, then, we first delineate the one-time costs that we predict with this significant shift in how we support and retain students. Then, we delineate the two proposals for ongoing funds.

Writing Plus Implementation

As a result of the ongoing commitment by SBOE, at colleges and universities across the state, and on the Boise State campus in particular, we have already invested in piloting the placement, curricular, and student-support initiatives. Effective full implementation of the Writing Plus program requires investment in one-time startup costs that will ensure that all parts of the program run smoothly.

One-Time Startup Costs	
Placement Implementation Revisions to online placement (The Write Class) ($1000/website changes, $2000/new student videos; $1000/website editing and revising $300 annually for data hosting) Summer Placement coordinator at orientation sessions, as liaison with faculty and staff advisors and to handle Informational outreach related to these changes (for high school counselors, parents, on-campus advisors, and so on) (200 hours @ $10) *Note: Once fully implemented, The Write Class will be fully funded through a minimal student test fee of $5.*	$4300 $2000
Writing Plus Launch Program materials to communicate with internal and external stakeholders Communication campaign to academic advisors and campus programs, Direct mail campaign to incoming students, high-school guidance counselors Table tents and banner for use at orientation and other campus events	[pending quote from University Printing]
total anticipated one-time costs	**$TBD**

Writing Plus Budget—Ongoing Funds

Evidence-Based Placement

Once implemented, placement costs will be minimal for both the institution and for students. Periodic Write Class updates and one-on-one placement advising for unusual student cases (e.g., returning students, unusual transcripts) will be covered by a $5 student fee for The Write Class (in lieu of offering the COMPASS

test for $10). This solution and will generate enough funds to cover both revisions to the assessment tool and administrative support.

Writing Plus and PLUS Support Program:

For the Writing Plus program to succeed, it will be critical to have full-time, innovative instructors who are able to engage in the additional mentoring and support that this approach requires. Currently, over 84% of first-year writing courses are taught by either "part-time" adjuncts or new graduate teaching instructors. We need to begin by investing in resources that provide the greatest immediate impact. The bulk of our proposal, then, is for labor costs: five lecturer positions. These will be positions specifically dedicated to English 101+ instruction. Five new positions will cover current projections and will allow for expansion of these offerings in the immediate future as we account for the large number of pre-English 101 international and multilingual students currently in the pipeline. English 101+ is well positioned to support their needs in college-level writing courses, as well.

On the following chart, which proposes a fully funded Writing Plus program, we have included data on current costs so that savings are also reflected. Our program improves and *replaces* a portion of existing funds rather than only adding to current costs.

Current Institutional Costs and Fully Funded Writing Plus Proposal			
Current University Costs of English 90		Writing PLUS Program: Proposed University Costs of ENGL 101+	
Instructional staff		Instructional staff	
PT Faculty: 11 sections (81%)	$30,657	5 lectureships[1]	$232,791
Lecturers: 3 sections (19%)	$11,400		
Total instructional cost for 14 sections of English 90	**$42,057**		
Total instructional cost for 14 sections of ENGL 101 students would take after ENGL 90	$42,057		
Total instructional cost for 6 credits of 90/101	$84,114		
Additional support for course		Additional support for 101+	
Course release for mentoring and training (from department's summer revenue)	$2,787	Course release for mentoring and training	$2,787

Ongoing professional development for instructors to ensure skilled pool (every other year, 5-10 participants @ $500 stipends) Estimated figure here is 7 participants @ $500 stipends (from department summer revenue)	$3,500	Innovative First-Year Pedagogies Fund (stipends for summer pedagogy workshops, ongoing professional development, teacher-research grants)	$5,000
Assessment (% of sections of 90 & 101 students would take) = 11% x Assessment budget of $4000)	$440	Assessment	$1,000
Tutors for English 90 (using # of students registered for FY12)	$9,090		
Staff hours: permission #s, verifying test scores, etc. (approx 10 hours per week @ $16.06 per hour over 52 weeks)	$8,351		
		PLUS Support Program:	
		GTA Coordinator (communicate with students, outreach, follow up with instructors, monitor and asses program)	$5,574
		Undergraduate Peer Mentors ($200 stipends for 14 mentors/year)	$2,800
Total costs for ENGL 90 & 101 (English 90 cohort in English 101)	$108,282	**Total Ongoing Funds Requested for Writing PLUS (101+ AND PLUS)**	$249,952
		Less A260 funds & Lecturer salaries for 14 sections	-$84,114
			$165,838

[1] $38,000 + ($38.000*.2165) + $8550 x 5

Partially Funded Writing Plus Proposal

With a partially funded approach, we would lose a lecturer position and would fully cut the PLUS initiative to support students repeating first-year writing. At this level, we would meet 2012 student needs but would not have enough capacity to accommodate projected growth from multilingual/international students in the pipeline, thus hindering this growing and important student population's progress toward degree.

Proposed University Costs of 101+ Only (one fewer lecturer, no PLUS program)	
Instructional staff	
4 lectureships	$186,232
Additional support for 101+	
Faculty support position (course release for faculty to lead mentoring and training)	$2,787
Innovative First-Year Pedagogies Fund (stipends for summer pedagogy workshops, ongoing professional development, teacher-research grants)	$5,000
Assessment	$1,000
Total Funds Requested	**$195,019**
Less A260 funds & Lecturer salaries for 14 sections	-$84,114
	$110,905

Student Savings

In addition to a streamlined curricular approach that supports students' progress toward degree, the monetary savings for individual students are critical as well. As the next chart demonstrates, a full-time in-state resident saves over $400 with this model, and an international student saves nearly $1200.

Current Student Costs, Writing Plus Student Costs, and Proposed Savings

	Current Costs[1]	Writing Plus Costs[2]	Proposed Savings[3]
Resident (59% of Fall 12)			
PT ($252 per credit)	$1,512	$1,008	**$534**
FT ($2942)	$1,177	$785	**$422**
Non-Resident (41% of Fall 12)			
PT (252 + $101 per credit)	$2,118	$1,412	**$736**
FT ($5720)	$2,288	$1,525	**$793**
International (24% of Fall 12)			
FT ($8662)	$3,465	$2,310	**$1,185**

[1]Total of 6 credits per student (3 for ENGL 90, no elective credit; 3 for ENGL 101, core credit)

[2]Total of 4 credits per student (3 for ENGL 101, core credit; 1 for ENGL 197, elective credit)

[3] Includes removal of $30 ENGL 90 course fee

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Revising FYC Outcomes for a Multimodal, Digitally Composed World: The WPA Outcomes Statement for First-Year Composition (Version 3.0)

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For the WPA Outcomes Statement Revision Task Force

Abstract

The Executive Board of the Council of Writing Program Administrators first approved the WPA Outcomes Statement for First-Year Composition in April 2000. Since then, it has exerted a considerable impact on first-year writing programs throughout the U.S. and beyond, serving as a guide to the establishment of programmatic outcomes in a wide range of secondary and postsecondary institutions (Selfe and Ericsson; Harrington et al.; Behm et al.) In 2008, the Statement was formally amended with a new section, "Composing in Electronic Environments," intended to speak specifically to recommendations for composing and researching using electronic technology. In December 2011, then-CWPA President Duane Roen charged a Task Force to revisit the Outcomes Statement and determine how it could be updated to reflect changes in the field and current practices in first-year writing. Here we present the latest revision of the Outcomes Statement, approved by the Executive Board of the CWPA in July 2014. In addition, we share our processes of and timeline for revision, examine what has changed from the 2000 version (version 1.0) and the 2008 version (version 2.0), and offer commentary on what this document is and how it can be used.

In 1997, in response to a conversation begun on the listserv WPA-L, a group of faculty started brainstorming to see whether it was possible to create common outcomes—not standards, but common outcomes—for

the multiple versions of first-year writing courses at the wealth of institutions constituting postsecondary education, especially in the US. The group, which came to be known as the Outcomes Collective, had a loose steering committee and encouraged the participation of any interested writing teacher. Unaffiliated with any professional organization, the Collective spent "thousands of hours of discussion and drafting" (Harrington *xv*) both online and at professional conferences, producing and testing several drafts of what became the WPA Outcomes Statement. Eventually, the group approached the CWPA Executive Board, requesting an endorsement of the document. The CWPA adopted the WPA Outcomes Statement for First-Year Composition in 2000[1] and in so doing, encouraged writing programs to adapt the document to reflect their own programs' priorities and values. Those involved in the original Outcomes Statement assumed that they were creating a living document, one that in the present could and should be adapted to local needs and one that in the future should be revisited and revised. The Statement's language was designed to encourage local adaptability in order to combine guidance and freedom while also striving to be applicable to the widest possible range of postsecondary institutions. For this reason, the Statement deliberately avoided an explicit position on computer literacy issues, largely confining this topic to a sub-goal advising that students should "use a variety of technologies to address a range of audiences" (Harrington et al., "WPA Outcomes Statement for First-Year Composition" 325). Not only did the Outcomes Collective wish to avoid exacerbating digital divide issues by recommending specific technologies that might be unavailable to many writing programs, but it also recognized that any specified technology would soon be obsolete. The original wording was thus strategically ambiguous; after all, such technologies need not be electronic for students to make important conceptual gains about the uses and limitations of different composing and presenting affordances.

In 2006, given the increasing ubiquity of digital composing, CWPA President Shirley Rose asked Kathleen Blake Yancey to lead a process focusing on a possible revision of the Statement; Yancey invited Irv Peckham to co-lead this effort, and in 2008, the Statement (which we might now think of as version 2.0) was amended to include "Composing in Electronic Environments," which was based on the "Technology Plank" addendum. In the fall of 2011, motivated by the sense that the field had a broader view of composing than it did a decade ago, Duane Roen, President of the Council of Writing Program Administrators, with the approval of the CWPA Executive Board, recruited ten faculty members (see appendix) from various institutions to form a Task Force to explore whether the Statement needed a more systemic overhaul. The Task Force completed its work, and

a revision of the Outcomes Statement was approved by the CWPA Executive Board in July 2014.

In addition to the revised Statement, below we provide context for the development of the WPA Outcomes Statement 3.0 keyed to three goals. First, we share our processes and timeline; second, we examine what has changed from the 2000 version (version 1.0) and the 2008 version (version 2.0); and third, we offer some commentary on what this document is and how it can be used.

Collecting Input

As the Task Force began work in March 2012, our first and most pressing goal was to understand the current context of the Outcomes Statement: who was using it in their programs and/or courses, how it was being used, whether faculty and WPAs using it believed it needed revision, and if so, what revisions they would recommend. To begin this inquiry, each Task Force committee member informally contacted colleagues within their local networks and asked them to respond to these questions:

- Does your writing program have an outcomes statement?
- Are you familiar with the WPA Outcomes Statement (WPA OS)? If so, do you use it? If not, would you use it? Why or why not?
- In what ways does the WPA OS serve your interests?
- Are there specific areas of the WPA OS that you would like to see revised? If so, what and how?

Collectively, we heard from twenty-seven WPAs and faculty at colleges and universities of different institutional types—large and small, public and private, two- and four-year. Only four of the institutions surveyed did not have learning outcomes for their writing program. The remainder either used the Outcomes Statement as-is or had adapted it to serve local interests. Moreover, as we heard repeatedly throughout our research, the Statement plays several important roles: it legitimizes and justifies writing pedagogies and the work of the local WPA; it facilitates conversations about writing instruction and values; and it guides curriculum design, teacher development, and assessment practices.

Although several respondents suggested that the Statement was fine as it was, most suggested specific revisions. These included defining composing as a multimodal activity; expanding the document to encompass topics such as information literacy, reading and research, and plagiarism; and explicitly connecting the document to other statements that dealt with the desired outcomes of writing instruction, such as the *Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing*, written by CWPA, National Council of Teach-

ers of English, and National Writing Project. Based on these responses, we realized that if the document were to be revised, the new version would have to remain expansive enough to be useful for the greatest number of people and institutions but not be so broad as to be meaningless.

Just three months after our initial meeting as a Task Force, several members facilitated a workshop session at the 2012 CWPA conference in Albuquerque. The purpose of the session was twofold: to report on the results from the informal survey data and, more importantly, to engage in an extended conversation about possible revisions to the WPA OS, particularly in the area of writing in a digital world.

About forty attendees were posed a series of questions that we developed from our informal, local surveys:

- What constitutes multimodality?
- Does multimodality (in any form) have a place in the first-year writing classroom?
- What are the liabilities of incorporating multimodal writing into our pedagogy?
- What are the advantages of incorporating multimodal writing into our pedagogy?
- What kinds of texts do students need to be able to read and produce at the university? In work and life beyond the university?
- What skills and knowledge should students acquire in first-year writing?

Attendees made notes on large pads posted on the walls, talked with one another about what they'd written, and then participated in a large group discussion. There was strong (and often enthusiastic) approval of incorporating digital literacies into the Statement. As many in attendance reminded us, students are already avid and active participants in a range of new technologies, thus pointing to a need to focus more attention on our students' needs and knowledge. Further, participants were concerned that students were becoming consumers and producers of digital media without having much opportunity to reflect critically and capitalize on "affordances" that digital media provide (version 2.0).

Members of the workshop also explored potential problems, drawbacks, and challenges, in the process raising many questions. What are the places of digital media in writing classes? When does the study of digital media cross over into aesthetics? Where will the time come from to teach this? How can we prepare faculty and students who aren't ready for this or who don't have access to advanced technologies? What about the fact that a considerable amount of writing instruction is done by contingent faculty?

How much can reasonably be asked of teachers and students working in technologically impoverished institutions? How do we assess students' multimodal projects?

Formal Survey

Based on the input from our convenience sample and the notes generated by the Albuquerque focus groups, the Task Force designed an online survey and distributed it through a number of listservs, including WPA-L, WCENTER, WAC-L, ATTW-L, and Techrhet. Of the 223 people who responded, about 86% were faculty and/or administrators who self-affiliated with four-year colleges; 48% identified themselves as writing program administrators; 67% as full-time faculty; 10% as part-time faculty; and 15% as graduate students. The questions asked respondents if they were familiar with the WPA OS and, if so, how they used it. In this survey, we took a more focused approach to digital literacies, interrogating possible terminology (*digital literacy*, *new media*, *visual rhetoric*) and if or how both terms and practices should be incorporated into the WPA OS.

Two-thirds of the respondents said the Statement should address digital literacies, and 65% preferred the option of weaving new language about digital literacies into the existing areas of the Statement rather than adding a new plank. When asked how incorporating digital literacies into the Outcomes Statement would help their program, as well as what concerns they had, participants' responses were very similar to the responses in the previous survey and the discussion at the WPA workshop.

Drafting

After a full year of collecting input, we presented our findings in a featured session at CCCC 2013 in Las Vegas and again invited response from roughly two hundred attendees. Task Force members presented issues to consider and possible directions for revisions; after distributing copies of the Outcomes Statement 2.0, we invited participants to work in small groups, making notes and revisions on the copies. We collected these notes at the end of the session and took notes while listening to colleagues in the plenary discussion that followed.

As expected, participants provided valuable comments, questioning terms and assumptions (about *outcomes*, *writing*, *composition*, *digital*, *multimodal*) as well as questioning the target audience for the document. Others sought an expansion of the document to include important and neglected areas (e.g., reading, basic writing, translingualism). Participants also looked carefully at the structure of the document, with most suggesting that an integra-

tion of the outcomes from the standalone "Composing in Electronic Environments" plank would be the preferred approach. After the CCCC session in Las Vegas, we reopened the survey with the intention of securing more feedback from community college writing program directors and faculty, whose responses had been underrepresented. The final survey result had 345 respondents; demographics were more diversified and with a stronger two-year college representation than before (31%). Responses were consistent with earlier patterns regarding current uses of and suggested revisions to the Statement.

Drawing on the suggestions for revision collected from the surveys and from attendees' notes on the existing Statement collected at the 2013 CCCC, the Task Force put together a working draft to share with approximately sixty attendees at the session at the 2013 CWPA conference in Savannah. In this session, participants provided a wealth of feedback to the draft—both substantive and editorial; in particular, participants were concerned about perceived binaries between written texts and digital compositions. We also discussed the implications of word choice in a document that incorporates digital literacy, especially what word choices mean for terms such as *reader*, *writer*, *audience*, and *compose*.

In response to the feedback received at CWPA in Savannah, the Task Force revised again, this time crafting what we hoped would be a penultimate draft, which was presented at CCCC 2014 in Indianapolis. Again, the roughly seventy-five participants were asked to respond to the draft and, this time, also to consider how they would incorporate the new WPA Outcomes Statement into their writing programs. In addition to discussions about terminology (e.g., *multimodal composing*) and ways this document could be used more broadly than in only FYC (e.g., in WAC and WID courses and first-year seminars), participants brainstormed ways to make more people aware that this document exists. Suggestions are included in the categories listed below.

In April 2014, we submitted a final draft of the WPA Outcomes Statement 3.0 to the CWPA Executive Board for feedback, in anticipation of its final submission at the CWPA conference in July 2014. At the July meeting of the CWPA Executive Board, three members of the Task Force also met with the CWPA Executive Board and responded to Board members' questions and concerns and then adjusted several sentences of the introduction in response. The new WPA OS was then approved at the Executive Board meeting. At the CWPA conference session shortly after, members of the Task Force shared the approved WPA OS with about forty participants and asked them how we might extend the reach and the value of the WPA OS. Their preliminary recommendations, in addition to those from CCCC

2014, are included below in five categories; these recommendations suggest that participants believe follow-up is critical for the WPA OS.

Faculty Development

- Use the Statement 3.0 as an exigence to begin conversations
- Use the Statement 3.0 as an exigence to restart conversations begun in 2000 and 2008

Curriculum

- Use Statement 3.0 as a framework for first-year seminars (not just first-year composition)
- Explore the role of Statement 3.0 in prompts for writing and ways Statement 3.0 might support portfolio reflections
- Bring Statement 3.0 to general education meetings, asking "Are these writing and thinking objectives being incorporated in your general education classes, too?"

Curriculum/Research

- Explore productive ways to incorporate Statement 3.0 into first-year writing courses, especially approaches keyed to important questions in the field (e.g., how much terminology from our discipline do first-year students need?)
- Research the impact of Statement 3.0 on student learning in writing classrooms as well as throughout the university

Documentation

- Provide a website where WPAs can upload local versions of Statement 3.0—both to help others see how local institutions have adopted and adapted it and to provide a record of the kinds of uses we have collectively made of the WPA OS

Outreach

- Share the Statement 3.0 with other educational organizations and initiatives, for example, The National Council of Teachers of English and its college section; the Conference on College Composition and Communication; the Two Year College Association; the Association of American Colleges and Universities; the Modern Language Association; and the American Council of Research Libraries.

Key Features of the 2014 Revision

Statement 3.0 remains the realization of a set of beliefs about what writing is and can be and how it should and shouldn't be taught in the first year(s) of US postsecondary education. Its aims have always also been manifold: 1) to articulate and disseminate these beliefs, and, in so doing, to affirm certain practices and, by omission, to discourage others; 2) to model certain ways of thinking and talking about writing and reading in the hope that those ways would eventually permeate textbook selection, curricular design, job descriptions, assessment priorities, course titles, hiring practices, faculty development, and—of course—college students' writing abilities; and 3) to invoke by a kind of disciplinary speech-act the existence of writing studies and to claim its knowledge on behalf of local WPAs.

The charge to examine and potentially update the Statement was less a critique of the 2000 or 2008 versions' performance of any of these aims and more an acknowledgement that, given both time and the experience of working with an outcomes statement, the field had learned more about composition, enough to warrant revisiting the construct of "writing" assumed in both the earlier Statements.[2] Critiques of the tacit print-based construct of writing in the 2000 Statement, which began almost upon its publication (Selfe and Ericsson; Oddo and Parmalee), developed concurrently with field-wide questions about the proper scope of "composing" in "writing classes" (Walker et al.; Cope et al.; Dobrin). Our survey respondents broadly affirmed that what were once speculations staked out by theorists in many areas had, as we neared the midpoint of this decade, become operating assumptions. In fact, analogous documents composed more recently—the *Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing*, the *NCTE Definition of 21st Century Literacies*, and even parts of the *Common Core State Standards*—suggested that academic, workplace, civic, and private constructs of writing had already been refashioned by distributed composing practices, new genres, and unprecedented access to and ability to manipulate images (Yancey). The consensus was that the construct of writing assumed by the Statement was becoming underrepresented.

To be sure, the 2014 version affirms many of the foundational concepts of the original WPA OS: for example, the idea that writing has epistemic purposes beyond recording, that writing processes should be flexible, and that one of the most important goals of FYC curricula should be to develop students' abilities to "integrate their ideas with those of others" (version 2.0). Relative to the zeitgeist of the late 1990s, however, stage-process models had continued their retreat, the research paper had lost some status as the main or even the only goal of first-year composition, and most

researchers had conceded that neither they nor students were likely ever to fully "understand the collaborative and social aspects of writing processes" or entirely "understand the relationships among language, knowledge, and power" (version 2.0). Meanwhile, other important concepts deepened in specificity (e.g., what's meant by *critical thinking*) while still others moved out of theory and into mainstream operating assumptions (concepts such as *distributed cognition*, *rhetorical genre studies*, and *linguistic heterogeneity*).

Although the 2014 revision preserves the original architecture of the first Statement—a framing introduction and four outcomes, followed by descriptive sub-goals and suggestions for coursework in both general education and in the major—its optics differ in some important respects from the original. It's longer (by about 25% over the 2008 amendment) and admittedly denser, about which more below. Much of the additional length accrues from the new descriptions, repurposed from the *Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing*, of what each of the four Outcomes means in the context of writing instruction. This precedent was set by the 2008 "Composing in Electronic Environments" (CIEE) plank, and many respondents wanted to see it extended to the other four Outcomes. Likewise, wherever possible, the Task Force aimed to preserve the earlier language. For example, while we responded to the consensus of our survey participants that the CIEE plank be integrated into the original four Outcomes, those familiar with the language of that amendment will recognize much of it in new locations throughout the 2014 document. (An only slightly modified version of the second CIEE sub-goal, for example, can be found in its new home in "Critical Thinking, Reading, and Composing.")

If the original charge to the Task Force was to reconsider what kinds of writing the Statement should assume are routine in FYC, then questions about how and what students compose were not separable from other beliefs realized in the original language of the document, which naturally remained static while the field grew and shifted its priorities. Original questions that the Outcomes Collective faced in the late 1990s needed re-asking: What do we mean by *writing ability*? What do we mean by *writing*, for that matter? In fact, the earlier versions of the WPA OS offered no definition of *writing*. The new version introduces its fundamental understanding of *composing*:

> In this Statement, composing refers broadly to complex writing processes that are increasingly reliant on the use of digital technologies. Writers also attend to elements of design, incorporating images and graphical elements into texts intended for screens as well as printed

pages. Writers' composing activities have always been shaped by the technologies available to them, and digital technologies are changing writers' relationships to their texts and audiences in evolving ways.

The recognition of an explicit working definition of *composing* points to what may be the largest revision apparent in the new WPA OS: where the former versions approached writing as more a stable act—even among emerging technologies—the new version embraces emerging forms of composing in a world of fluid forms of communication. Consequently, the new version stresses terms and expressions such as "addressing a range of audiences," "adapting," and "evolving" and calls for instruction that helps students to "explore," to "discover," and to make "purposeful shifts in voice, tone, level of formality, design, medium, and/or structure" when reading and writing across "a range of texts" and "a variety of technologies." Even the term *critical thinking* demonstrates a conceptual shift in the new WPA OS in its explicit recognition of "the kinds of critical thinking important in their [faculty's] disciplines." Such revisions openly embrace the plurality of situations writers face today and remain open to the inevitability of continuing changes in media, genres, and writing acts to come. Thus, the Statement 3.0 moves primarily from descriptions of learning and controlling known rhetorical situations and stable forms of writing to examining and questioning rhetorical situations and making informed decisions about how to interpret and contribute. Overall, where the former versions of the WPA OS used verbs such as "learning," "understanding," "using," "controlling," and "writing," the new version employs verbs such as "practicing," "experiencing," "choosing/adapting," "reflecting," "questioning," "reasoning/deciding," and "composing." These changes stress the importance of developing critical and rhetorical listening skills in order to prepare students for emerging rhetorical situations—even ones that we may not be able to imagine at present.

If we no longer believe that composing processes and composing media are productively distinguished, then other beliefs related to the central construct of writing needed to be re-thought as well; for instance, the construct of genre and the modeling of productive use of linguistic heterogeneity also required refurbishing. Statement 3.0 revises its construct of genre by consolidating it with the purposes and foci we now understand to be shaped by genre (Liu "Genre"; "More"). This draft also adjusts the assumption that FYC is primarily focused on a research paper while preserving the original goals of synthesis of sources and integration of ideas. In addition, this version reframes the imagined student writer by shifting the pedagogical focus of Rhetorical Knowledge from monodirectional "appropriateness" toward rhetorical "dexterity" and "awareness" with a substantially post-

process framing of composing and revising cycles (Haller). This point in particular is reinforced by a pronounced shift in the Conventions section away from a "tacit native-speaker" standard or "control of surface features" and toward an explicit suggestion that all language users can profitably develop declarative knowledge of language practices (Matsuda 145; Matsuda and Skinnell 232). In that spirit, "develop knowledge of conventions" has shifted to understanding as well why conventions vary; "practice documentation" has become "explore what motivates documentation concerns;" and "control surface features" has become "develop knowledge of linguistic structures through practice." Following the advice of Mutnick and of the CCCC Reading SIG, the revised Statement also acknowledges in several new places that improved reading practices is a desirable outcome for FYC. Finally, the Task Force was guided by the original drafters' shrewd chariness about naming specific technologies or practices; accordingly, wherever possible, the new language can be read for both analogue and emergent composing technologies, but it more consistently emphasizes the interrelatedness of composing technologies and processes than versions 1.0 and 2.0 (Callaway 275-76).

Finally, as to the density of the revision, the language of the revision itself signals a different stance to our stakeholders, most explicitly by its increased assertiveness about the need to base programmatic decisions on disciplinary knowledge. More generally, Statement 3.0 signals this sense of a discipline in nearly every line (Dew). The introduction of version 1.0 struck an exceptionally difficult rhetorical balance between terminology that "the general public can understand" and "communicating effectively with expert writing teachers and writing program administrators." Yet as the substantial scholarly literature on the WPA OS points out, most of those encountering the document are neither the general public nor expert writing teachers (see especially Jacobsen et al.); rather, they range from faculty with expertise in other disciplines to a significant number of contingent and/or novice instructors with disparate beliefs and instructional priorities, too many of whom are still without much formal professional development in writing studies or teaching. Statement 3.0 thus offers writing programs considerably more descriptive language in many of its sub-goals, as well as composition-specific definitions of the Outcomes themselves. While some may find that this has come at some cost to the user-friendliness of the original wording, the Task Force believes it is a necessary compromise that also will benefit many composition instructors who need more explicit unpacking of the assumptions operating in the Statement.

Summing Up

Nearly three years ago, work on a new version of the WPA Outcomes Statement began with brainstorming, revising, horse trading, wordsmithing, sharing, teleconferencing, Google Doc-ing, note-taking, consulting, Skyping, and composing. After considerable consultation, collaboration, and collective composing, we have developed a statement that, like its cousins, is imperfect, but that also offers several improvements on the 2.0 version: providing a more robust construct of composing, for example, and a more variegated definition of research. At least as important, the Statement 3.0 explicitly positions students as knowledge-makers as well as practitioners. In earlier versions of the document, students were positioned as practitioners; in the current document, however, they are positioned as practitioners who understand why we engage in specific composing practices. Consequently, students need to understand something about the theory explaining the logic of a given practice, a move congruent with other pedagogical reform efforts such as signature pedagogies. Likewise, research is much more capaciously defined as a more sustained and complex exercise, and students are positioned as agents who can conduct such research.

WPA Outcomes Statement 3.0 continues to function as a boundary object: a statement speaking to common outcomes that can be adapted to local conditions. Its function is thus twofold. On the one hand, the Statement articulates what students should know and be able to do by the conclusion of first-year composition, regardless of the form it takes; in this way, a local program using the outcomes is in dialogue with a common definition of expectations. On the other hand, the Statement is at the same time a public draft, one that ensures individual programs need never undergo in isolation "several years and thousands of hours of discussion and drafting" to articulate what they think writing is and how it should be taught (Harrington *xv*). Because WPA Outcomes 3.0 may not include terms and concepts considered to be foundational by certain programs, it also provides an exigence, a point of invitation, for local adaptation of the Outcomes Statement. Writing program decisions about adaptations—what to keep, reword, reorder, or delete when it comes to "the writing knowledge, practices, and attitudes that undergraduate students develop"—can thus always be intentional and in dialogue. Not least, the Statement, by focusing on outcomes, has maintained a firewall between outcomes and standards. An anxiety characterizing all three iterations of the Statement is that someone—a student, a colleague, an administrator—will mistake outcomes for standards. As the document continues to say prominently, this is an *outcomes* statement; it's up to each local campus to decide 1) if it wants stan-

dards; and if it does, 2) how to establish them. This distinction has been both maintained and strengthened.[3]

The Council of Writing Program Administrators didn't initiate what has become the WPA Outcomes Statement, but once the Council adopted it, support for the Statement never wavered. Just as importantly, the Council deserves credit for ensuring that this Statement has always been what Bill Condon promised it could be: a living document—one that can be re-formed in both senses of the word—through practice. In sum, WPA Outcomes Statement 3.0 is both a document that can guide our programs and a text that will be remixed in the future as we work and learn with it.

Notes

1. Some historical resources, including proto-drafts of version 1.0, are available at http://comppile.org/archives/WPAoutcomes/index.htm. The full text of the 2000 WPA Outcomes Statement appeared in *College English* 63.3 (2001), pp. 321-325.

2. A *construct* is a model that must stand in for problem or a subject of study that is too complex or at too different a scale to examine directly: a syndrome, an economy, an ecology, an attribute such as personality, intelligence, or writing ability. A valid construct has to account as thoroughly as possible for the complexities involved in the phenomenon we're defining; when it doesn't, the construct is said to be underrepresented. If an underrepresented construct is the basis for decision-making (a course of treatment, a fiscal intervention, a curriculum, an assessment plan), the outcomes of those decisions will have—at best—a peripheral relationship to the issues actually at stake.

3. We are expecting that in future iterations—the assumption being that there will be future iterations, sometimes addressing continuing issues, other times addressing issues newly surfacing—the methods we have used in creating and revising this iteration might provide a model for newer conceptions of composing—ones that include collaboration, modified crowdsourcing, and the remixing of earlier documents, practices central to our iterative process but that we did not specifically endorse in the document. It may be that these practices represent where the full field is going, but it's pretty clear that it's not there yet. That's a question we all need to consider. Another: we'd like to see a more systematic and sustained effort to collect information about how the WPA OS 3.0 has been adapted locally, a practice we pursued more energetically with WPA Outcomes Statement 1.0 than we have more recently. Perhaps most important, especially given the field's interest in transfer, we'd very much like to see how this version of the WPA OS is viewed by our colleagues in WAC, that is, we'd like to see this FYW-WAC connection taken up in some systematic way.

Appendix—Task Force Members

Darsie Bowden—DePaul University (chair)
Joseph Bizup—Boston University
Beth Brunk-Chavez—University of Texas at El Paso
J. Elizabeth Clark—LaGuardia Community College
Doug Downs—Montana State University
Dylan B. Dryer—University of Maine
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WPA Outcomes Statement for First-Year Composition (Revisions adopted 17 July 2014)

INTRODUCTION

This Statement identifies outcomes for first-year composition in US post-secondary education. It describes the writing knowledge, practices, and attitudes that undergraduate students develop in first-year composition, which at most schools is a required general education course or sequence of courses. This Statement therefore attempts to both represent and regularize writing programs' priorities for first-year composition, which often takes the form of one or more required general education courses. To this end, it is not merely a compilation or summary of what currently takes place. Rather, this Statement articulates what composition teachers nationwide have learned from practice, research, and theory.[1] It intentionally defines only *outcomes*, or types of results, and not *standards*, or precise levels of achievement. The setting of standards to measure students' achievement of these outcomes has deliberately been left to local writing programs and their institutions.

In this Statement, *composing* refers broadly to complex writing processes that are increasingly reliant on the use of digital technologies. Writers also attend to elements of design, incorporating images and graphical elements into texts intended for screens as well as printed pages. Writers' composing activities have always been shaped by the technologies available to them, and digital technologies are changing writers' relationships to their texts and audiences in evolving ways.

These outcomes are supported by a large body of research demonstrating that the process of learning to write in any medium is complex: it is both individual and social and demands continued practice and informed guidance. Programmatic decisions about helping students demonstrate these outcomes should be informed by an understanding of this research.

As students move beyond first-year composition, their writing abilities do not merely improve. Rather, their abilities will diversify along disciplinary, professional, and civic lines as these writers move into new settings where expected outcomes expand, multiply, and diverge. Therefore, this document advises faculty in all disciplines about how to help students build on what they learn in introductory writing courses.

Rhetorical Knowledge

Rhetorical knowledge is the ability to analyze contexts and audiences and then to act on that analysis in comprehending and creating texts. Rhetorical knowledge is the basis of composing. Writers develop rhetorical knowledge by negotiating purpose, audience, context, and conventions as they compose a variety of texts for different situations.

By the end of first-year composition, students should

- Learn and use key rhetorical concepts through analyzing and composing a variety of texts
- Gain experience reading and composing in several genres to understand how genre conventions shape and are shaped by readers' and writers' practices and purposes
- Develop facility in responding to a variety of situations and contexts calling for purposeful shifts in voice, tone, level of formality, design, medium, and/or structure
- Understand and use a variety of technologies to address a range of audiences
- Match the capacities of different environments (e.g., print and electronic) to varying rhetorical situations

Faculty in all programs and departments can build on this preparation by helping students learn

- The expectations of readers in their fields
- The main features of genres in their fields
- The main purposes of composing in their fields

Critical Thinking, Reading, and Composing

Critical thinking is the ability to analyze, synthesize, interpret, and evaluate ideas, information, situations, and texts. When writers think critically about the materials they use—whether print texts, photographs, data sets, videos, or other materials—they separate assertion from evidence, evaluate sources and evidence, recognize and evaluate underlying assumptions, read

across texts for connections and patterns, identify and evaluate chains of reasoning, and compose appropriately qualified and developed claims and generalizations. These practices are foundational for advanced academic writing.

By the end of first-year composition, students should

- Use composing and reading for inquiry, learning, critical thinking, and communicating in various rhetorical contexts
- Read a diverse range of texts, attending especially to relationships between assertion and evidence, to patterns of organization, to the interplay between verbal and nonverbal elements, and to how these features function for different audiences and situations
- Locate and evaluate (for credibility, sufficiency, accuracy, timeliness, bias and so on) primary and secondary research materials, including journal articles and essays, books, scholarly and professionally established and maintained databases or archives, and informal electronic networks and Internet sources
- Use strategies—such as interpretation, synthesis, response, critique, and design/redesign—to compose texts that integrate the writer's ideas with those from appropriate sources

Faculty in all programs and departments can build on this preparation by helping students learn

- The kinds of critical thinking important in their disciplines
- The kinds of questions, problems, and evidence that define their disciplines
- Strategies for reading a range of texts in their fields

Processes

Writers use multiple strategies, or *composing processes*, to conceptualize, develop, and finalize projects. Composing processes are seldom linear: a writer may research a topic before drafting, then conduct additional research while revising or after consulting a colleague. Composing processes are also flexible: successful writers can adapt their composing processes to different contexts and occasions.

By the end of first-year composition, students should

- Develop a writing project through multiple drafts
- Develop flexible strategies for reading, drafting, reviewing, collaborating, revising, rewriting, rereading, and editing

- Use composing processes and tools as a means to discover and reconsider ideas
- Experience the collaborative and social aspects of writing processes
- Learn to give and to act on productive feedback to works in progress
- Adapt composing processes for a variety of technologies and modalities
- Reflect on the development of composing practices and how those practices influence their work

Faculty in all programs and departments can build on this preparation by helping students learn

- To employ the methods and technologies commonly used for research and communication within their fields
- To develop projects using the characteristic processes of their fields
- To review work-in-progress for the purpose of developing **ideas** before surface-level editing
- To participate effectively in collaborative processes typical of their field

Knowledge of Conventions

Conventions are the formal rules and informal guidelines that define genres, and in so doing, shape readers' and writers' perceptions of correctness or appropriateness. Most obviously, conventions govern such things as mechanics, usage, spelling, and citation practices. But they also influence content, style, organization, graphics, and document design.

Conventions arise from a history of use and facilitate reading by invoking common expectations between writers and readers. These expectations are not universal; they vary by genre (conventions for lab notebooks and discussion-board exchanges differ), by discipline (conventional moves in literature reviews in Psychology differ from those in English), and by occasion (meeting minutes and executive summaries use different registers). A writer's grasp of conventions in one context does not mean a firm grasp in another. Successful writers understand, analyze, and negotiate conventions for purpose, audience, and genre, understanding that genres evolve in response to changes in material conditions and composing technologies and attending carefully to emergent conventions.

By the end of first-year composition, students should

- Develop knowledge of linguistic structures, including grammar, punctuation, and spelling, through practice in composing and revising

- Understand why genre conventions for structure, paragraphing, tone, and mechanics vary
- Gain experience negotiating variations in genre conventions
- Learn common formats and/or design features for different kinds of texts
- Explore the concepts of intellectual property (such as fair use and copyright) that motivate documentation conventions
- Practice applying citation conventions systematically in their own work

Faculty in all programs and departments can build on this preparation by helping students learn

- The reasons behind conventions of usage, specialized vocabulary, format, and citation systems in their fields or disciplines
- Strategies for controlling conventions in their fields or disciplines
- Factors that influence the ways work is designed, documented, and disseminated in their fields
- Ways to make informed decisions about intellectual property issues connected to common genres and modalities in their fields

Notes

1. This Statement is aligned with the *Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing*, an articulation of the skills and habits of mind essential for success in college, and is intended to help establish a continuum of valued practice from high school through to the college major.

Review Essay

Writing in Digital Environments: Everything Old Is New Again

Norbert Elliot

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The web is a fabulous—and dangerous—resource.

—Anonymous survey respondent in Braun

Claude Shannon liked to work in the old West Village headquarters of Bell Laboratories. Trains ran right through the building, and Shannon preferred it there to the New Jersey location where most of his colleagues kept their offices. His Murray Hill employers, tucked away in the pastoral suburb of northern New Jersey, were not really sure what he was up to, rambling around Manhattan. That was for the best because he was secretly working on cryptography that would allow Franklin D. Roosevelt and Winston Churchill to communicate across the Atlantic without interception from the German military. As Shannon would later tell interviewer Robert Price, his original interest was information theory, and he used cryptography as a way of legitimizing his work.

When "A Mathematical Theory of Communication" was published in the October 1948 issue of *Bell Systems Technical Journal*—the paper that would first use the term *information theory* and ensure Shannon's legacy as founder of the digital age—few libraries carried copies of the journal, and fewer still were those who could understand the mathematics. But Warren Weaver grasped the implication. As the director of natural sciences for the Rockefeller Foundation, he wrote an essay that made Shannon's ideas intelligible for general readers with definitions of terms ("The word communication will be used here in a very broad sense to include all of the procedures by which one mind may affect another" [Shannon and Weaver 95]) and analogies drawn from the lecture circuit ("By direct analogy, if you overcrowd the capacity of the audience you force a general and inescapable error and confusion" [Shannon and Weaver 116]). Along with Shannon's paper, Weaver's translation of it was published as a book in 1948. Calculations for bit storage, the estimation of entropy that could account for information capacity, became the blueprint for the world we now know.

"Information is what our world runs on: the blood and the fuel, the vital principle," James Gleick wrote in 2011 as he told the story of information theory as it sprung from the imagination of Shannon and became manifest in the socially networked world of Web 2.0. As Gleik demonstrates in his engaging history, information permeates and transforms. Because information is about communication, as Shannon well knew, words have multiple meaning even if we have to deny that fact to develop the technology for channel capacity and bit storage.

There are many ways to legitimize work. "Naming is an ideological act," Jacqueline Rhodes and Jonathan Alexander remind us in their 2014 special issue of *College English* (483), and the social turn that examines relationships among language, meaning, and context is everywhere apparent in remarkable books on writing in digital environments that have appeared over the past four years. As this review of digital writing's history, theory, pedagogy, identity, representation, research, and future demonstrates, our field—classified under the title Rhetoric and Composition/Writing Studies (Phelps and Ackerman)—is especially well positioned to make sense of what happens when Shannon's encoded signal gets complicated by its destination: the humans at the end of the information flow.

It Happened in Athens

There is only one problem with Shane Borrowman's edited collection *On the Blunt Edge: Technology in Composition's History and Pedagogy*: it's just too brief. Adopting the analytic framework of Science, Technology, and Society studies (McGinn), Borrowman has assembled leading scholars to provide perspectives on the history, values, politics, and economics of those technologies that came before IBM PCs and Macintosh computers found their way to our desktops in the early 1980s. Present scholarship suggests that the origin of graphical representation of language is found in Mesopotamia and Egypt at the end of the fourth millennium BCE, in China at the end of the second millennium BCE, and in Mesoamerica by the middle of the first millennium BCE (Houston; Woods et al). The collection of nine case studies begins with a cultural analysis of the range of writing in classical Athens, an ideal selection of a city that prized the social turn of its literacy. Analyzing the educational, civic, commercial, and expressive uses of writing allows Richard Leo Enos to reveal a rich culture of functional literacy in the city extending beyond utilitarian commercial transactions into broader ranges of daily life. In a related demonstration of cultural complexity associated with the technology of writing, Daniel R. Frederick examines the development of the Greek alphabet by focusing on modes of transpor-

tation facilitating rhetorical education. If Gorgias walks the twenty-two miles from Leontini to Syracuse on the first leg of his lecture tour, Frederick reminds us, he will need a boat to carry him over the sea to Athens. From Greek shoes (*anthrokinetic* power) to Roman roads (*Via Appia*), Frederick provides an absorbing account of the material world facilitating the convergence of teacher, student, and facility in ancient education.

As might be expected in such a collection, market forces play a distinct role. From the moveable type of Johannes Gutenberg's printing press in 1450 to the first typewriter of Christopher Latham Sholes in 1873, there is a palpable absence of benevolent and philanthropic principles, as Richard W. Rawnsley demonstrates. Raw capitalism is the order of the day, and even our most beloved narratives must be jettisoned as we examine the role of efficiency in the pursuit of profit. The QWERTY arrangement of letters on the keyboard is not there for scientific principles associated with ergonomics after all; the letters are in that order to keep the typebars from sticking. Even handwriting, a technology that can express our most intimate selves in the most evocative ways, is a vehicle for the study of consequence. For Kathleen Blake Yancey, handwriting is shaped by, and shapes, culture— including the contact zone between students, the SAT Writing section, essay readers, and admission directors. As is often the case when technology and society intersect, there are occasions for what Yancey calls "a perfect storm of anxiety" as college admission is determined by handwritten essays (80).

Augmenting the Science, Technology, and Society approach of Borrowman is Jason Palmeri's *Remixing Composition: A History of Multimodal Writing Pedagogy*. Palmeri examines the heritage that compositionists bring to the study of multimodal composing—communication combining the verbal and the visual to achieve a desired aim. This perspective means that his history takes a dim view of an imagined death of print; instead of such fear mongering, Palmeri is dedicated to analysis of the complex role technologies have played within the field of writing studies. Avoiding the rhetoric of crisis surrounding literacy, a phenomenon explicated by Richard Ohmann through Marxist critique, Palmeri provides a history that challenges value-laden taxonomies of print versus digital writing and teleological narratives in which the past inevitably results in improved present practice.

Emphasizing a language arts approach, Palmeri begins his periodization with Janet Emig's classic, *The Composing Process of Twelfth Graders*. A 1971 write-up of research that occurred just before the enormous national push for state-wide assessments described by Edward M. White, Emig advocated for attention to "experiences in allied arts through creative arts workshops" (98). Painting, songwriting, and sculpting are all occasions for the study of

composing, as Palmeri notes, and he recalls Emig's emphasis on the value of instructors themselves composing in alphabetic, aural, visual, and spatial modalities to help them understand the complex processes that occur when one moves beyond formulaic, product-centered models that often accompany standardization through testing. In Palmeri's subsequent chapters, attention is turned to auditory pedagogy (1965–1987), composition's first multimedia turn (1967–1974), and the relationship of writing to photography and film (1971–1984). In addition to this meticulous and thoughtful history, Palmeri also provides "macro theoretical" sections accompanying each historical episode to help readers "reimagine what it means to study and teach composition in the contemporary digital moment" (44). His "refrains," as he calls them, range from the pedagogically aphoristic ("Alphabetic writing is a profoundly multimodal process" [44]) to the theoretically generative ("Media critique and media production are symbiotic activities" [145]). The brief epilogue is worth the price of purchase for its pedagogical goals. It is heartening to see such detailed, intelligent, reflective historical accounts from an early career researcher. As is the case with the Borrowman book, also by an early career scholar, one simply wants more.

8 Mile

Because they provide an excellent background for historical examination on the role of early technologies and multimodal practice in our literate lives, Borrowman's collection and Palmeri's study should be read just before *Digital Detroit: Rhetoric and Space in the Age of the Network* by Jeff Rice. As precious to Rice as the handwriting of her parents and grandparents is to Yancey, Detroit becomes the source of Rice's theory of the network. As a way to understand the relationships between rhetorical understanding and corporeal embodiment in the digital age, Rice proposes the network as a moveable trope that functions through fluidity, not fixity. To explain how this theory works, Rice provides an example. Imagine using Google Maps to locate a jewelry and loan shop on 8 Mile Road in Detroit. Because you watch the television series *Hardcore Pawn*, you find the street address of American Jewelry and Loan, the setting of the series. Provided by Google Maps, however, this address is mediated by interlinked, non-mapping programs such as Flickr and its micro-blogging feature. Ranging from casual comments on the reality series to reflections on the racialized transactions within the pawnshop, observations posted on the weblog accompanying Flickr restructure your interpretation of the physical location. The location is surely there, but the interpretations of it keep meaning in flux.

Because the network is not a thing but a concept (as Latour has noted), Rice uses it to examine the role of information in a digital society. The index of names trotted out to support this theory is as varied as its applications. References to Michel de Certeau appear alongside Bob Dylan, and both Marshall McLuhan and Eminem lend support to Rice's proposal of using the network to understand location. Because the use of theory always has an outcome, this one is no exception: Since there is no location, there is no sense of an ending. There is no resolution of stories captured in the network, no sad or happy ending. There is only that which is good enough. For Rice, interpretation is non-teleological, with final causes and consequences hustled off stage as fiction. There is no myth of progress for those along 8 Mile, a road where life is lived on *La Frontera* as complex as any described by Gloria Anzaldúa. All that can be hoped for in Rice's Detroit is to dispel myth with the realities of contingency.

While readers of philosophy may wonder if this project is merely an extension of that begun by Richard Rorty in *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, there is a difference that lies in Rice's reliance on narrative. While recognizing that Detroit suffers, Rice also realizes that repeating the narrative of failure has done little to alter the city's conditions. The result of the Grand Narrative of Failure has been only the repetition of failure. Rice, therefore, proposes that we use the digital environment to reconceptualize location, saturate it with meaning, and interrupt the existing dysfunction. To understand the nuance of Rice's proposal for reconceptualization, one need only to compare it with the capital projects in downtown Detroit sponsored by Quicken Loans billionaire owner Dan Gilbert (Austen). For Gilbert, success is measured by occupied commercial real estate; for Rice, success is measured by improved realism through better information. For Gilbert, a 99% residency rate is the outcome of success; for Rice, this outcome is only temporal and tangential to deeply ingrained problems such as those found along 8 Mile. In the network, those problems can only be understood through a process of information gathering that results in moments of understanding that are, well, good enough.

The concept of that which is good enough—a still place symbolizing a realistic level of decision-making in light of complex factors—also plays a role in *The New Work of Composing*, edited by Debra Journet, Cheryl Ball, and Ryan Trauman. In an especially intriguing chapter, Joddy Murray, who has also been reading de Certeau, uses cityscapes to extend the concept of non-discursive rhetoric he developed in his earlier book on image and artifact in multimodal composition. Augmenting concepts from Susanne Langer, Murray deals with the importance of non-discursive rhetoric and its reliance on simultaneous perception. In such a rhetorical environment,

the ends of logic (the series of strategies leading toward a 99% residency rate in, say, downtown Detroit) are set aside in favor of ineffable experiences (the voices of those living in the shadows of the restored National Bank of Detroit Building).

Significant in *The New Work of Composing* is both the message and the medium. Murray's ideas are presented in an 8:35 minute YouTube video. Sentences advance and recede, and architectural images cascade across the screen. "The work of composing must be entirely rethought in the digital domain," N. Katherine Hayles writes in the foreword, and one cannot help but imagine her delight after reading this digital collection that there may indeed be more pleasure than terror after all in a post-human world. The digital world need not be antihuman or apocalyptic, as Hayles described it in 1999; instead, it can be seen as a reflexive nexus between established and new ways of thinking about authors and authority, composing and production, scholarly genres, and new spaces and ecologies—the four central themes of this edited collection. Because the format is multimodal in this "born digital project," as Kaitlin M. Clinnin has described it, the table of contents need not appear as stacked. With a click, the twelve chapters swirl and reorganize themselves so that readers can visualize the themes and their connections to each chapter. The article by Murray is no longer Chapter 6. With a click, it is grouped with others chapters covering the theme of new spaces and ecologies.

With just such a click, the chapter by Jacqueline Rhodes and Jonathan Alexander stands out as indicative of the benefits of a digital nexus and the subsequent challenges of the network. Created by Rhodes and Alexander, "Experience, Embodiment, Excess: Multimedia[ted] [E]vsceration and Installation Rhetoric" is an account of a multimedia installation presented at the 2008 Watson Conference at the University of Louisville. Conference participants entered into a semi-dark room to view images of texts and bodies. The texts rotated among various quotations from *Writing Machines* by Hayles, *Publics and Counterpublics* by Michael Warner, and three questions: Where is my body? How can I imagine my body? Where are my desires?

As the authors reflect on their installation, "Our bodies *are* projected. Constantly. Ubiquitously. But in the lags, corruption, and error—even in the excesses of bodies in simulation—lies perhaps the possibility to think [about] our bodies, our desires, and our intimacies differently." Lest this connection between our bodies and our writing appear yoked together by will, we need only to remind ourselves that writing studies involves the production of texts that appear in both print and digital embodiment. We are thus always and everywhere obliged to understand the varied spaces of composition, as Nedra Reynolds recognized in *Geographies of Writing:*

Inhabiting Places and Encountering Difference. Indeed, bodily representation need not occur according to normative boundaries. Required, Rhodes and Alexander write, "are productive new ways of thinking rhetorics, thinking bodies, and thinking connections between rhetorics and bodies." Here is work in a new genre for writing studies, yielding benefits of theory-building that simply could not occur by focus on print alone. Winner of the 2012 Distinguished Book Award from *Computers and Composition*, *The New Work of Composing* is a substantial contribution to our field.

Seriously!

Among the many voices in *The New Work of Composing*, we also find those of students. Calling themselves The Normal Group, undergraduates who attended the Watson Conference posted a video of their experiences. In "Gotcha," at 2:27 minutes we hear the voice of a scholar telling the audience that he will read his slides to the audience. A sentence scrolls over his voice: "So you want us to read what you're reading as you read it to us?" Then, just after the word "Seriously?" appears, the camera pans to sleeping students in the audience. Cap on backwards, one of them then asks, "Whose fault is it that they're asleep?"

As only bright undergraduates can, The Normal Group presents an LOL treatment of the need for alignment between theory and practice. As they write, "We acknowledge that the conference is mainly for other teachers, not undergraduates, but through this video, we playfully question whether that assumption continues to be worthwhile in a world where digital immigrants (teachers) and digital natives (us) need to learn from each other in order to succeed."

Answering the call of these students are three new books that focus on instruction and assessment of writing in digital environments. *Because Digital Writing Matters: Improving Student Writing in Online and Multimedia Environments* is a project of the National Writing Project (NWP), the gold standard network of educators who have been collaborating since 1984 to improve writing studies in the nation's elementary and secondary schools. For those welcoming high school students to their first college experience, Dànielle Nicole DeVoss, Elyse Ediman-Aadahl, and Troy Hicks of NWP have provided a wonderful guide to accompany the 2006 classic *Because Writing Matters: Improving Student Writing in Our Schools.* As education historian Robert L. Hampel has observed, grades 11 to 14 are often less coherent than the first two years of high school and the last two years of college. Add to this gumbo social networking and collaborative writing techniques that are the result of the Shannon-inspired bandwidth, and we

quickly realize the value of *Because Digital Writing Matters*. Here is a book that all post-secondary instructors specializing in first-year writing should have on their shelves.

Remarkable in this volume is the depth of the justification for attention to digital writing and the detailed mapping of its landscape. Whether the authors are synthesizing information from Pew Internet Research Studies or providing narratives from their own experiences, readers will appreciate the clarity of attention to key areas of importance to writing studies. From their treatment of the writing process to their use of the metaphor of ecologies, from their analysis of standards to their call for professional development of instructors, the authors have expertly charted the ubiquitous terrain of digital environments. "Something feels significantly different," they write,

> at this particular moment, both in terms of the larger field and in terms of what we have learned in our talks with educators across the nation. The tools and environments we have been discussing in this book are not particularly tools for schools to manage their job, as currently constructed, more efficiently. They are not primarily tools for institutions at all. They are tools for learners and writers, and as learners and writers begin to use them across many areas of their lives outside of school, these tools will have a profound impact on the core business of life itself—and that is the core business that schools and writing classrooms attend to. (142)

Linking in-classroom time to out-of-classroom time is an invaluable perspective of the volume, one that allows us to see students as active learners who have agentic roles in their own future.

But how will we make the new stick to the known? Duct tape, according to Bump Halbritter. In his *Mics, Cameras, Symbolic Action: Audio-Visual Rhetoric for Writing Teachers*, Halbritter has written a witty and perceptive account that ranges from Kenneth Burke's concept of the rebirth involved in terministic catharsis (linguistic transformation occurring when meaning shifts) to the necessity of always having a backup wired microphone (practical necessity when the net crashes). Winner of the 2013 Distinguished Book Award from *Computers and Composition*, Halbritter has provided a guide to multimodal writing as only a working musician can: by attending not to perfect systems but to that which is practically good enough. Arriving at a conference to present audio-visual research, he finds no screen so pulls a white table cloth off the stage and tapes it to the wall. An ad hoc fix, duct tape becomes the symbol of the way things are now as we scaffold our solutions together. Where there is enough duct tape, Halbritter proposes,

there may be more permanent answers. Imagined as a companion to *A Rhetoric for Writing Teachers* by his mentor, Erika Lindemann, Halbritter's book is just that. For two generations of writing instructors, Lindemann proved a reliable guide to rhetorical theory and practice, captivating readers with accounts of classical rhetoric that provided the bottom line on the nihilism of Gorgias and advice on how to handle the paper load. To help guide us through today's mashup, Halbritter quotes from John Dewey, provides layouts for mic placement in a presentation room, and lists tips for shot variety. May his guide be as useful as Lindemann's. Wise and full of tips for those teaching multimodal writing, *Mics, Cameras, Symbolic Action* should sit just beside *Because Digital Writing Matters* on the shelf.

Complementing calls for a more capacious understanding for digital tools and the student networks into which they are embedded is *Digital Writing Assessment and Evaluation*, edited by Heidi A. McKee and Dànielle Nicole DeVoss. The fourteen chapters in this volume provide a countermeasure to Michael R. Neal's 2011 treatment of digital assessment technologies. Aligned with the "values of efficiency, uniformity, speed, and mechanization," digital technologies hold the potential to usurp the values of teaching and learning, he warned (132). Emphasis on genre yields a different view. "Our focus with digital writing is on multimodal and/or networked texts for which essayistic assessment and evaluation of writing cannot necessarily port over seamlessly," the editors write in a remarkably understated sentence. Much of what we know about writing assessment is built on a single genre; shifting genres from the essay has allowed the editors to create a significant resource that will serve as a basis for future writing assessment scholarship.

Exactly what can be accomplished if we expand our genres? In 2003, the National Coalition for Electronic Portfolio research was founded. In 2006, to reflect its global membership, the organization was renamed the Inter/National Coalition for Electronic Portfolio Research (Cambridge, Cambridge, and Yancey). This period has witnessed the transition from ePortfolios as electronic filing cabinets into which files, often containing only essays, were uploaded to today's multimodal creations. Receding are the Web 1.0 static screens of the twentieth century; advancing are the twenty-first century Web 2.0 social networks with students anxious to use visual and audio techniques to produce the new work of composing. Offering a theory of assessing ePortfolios, Kathleen Blake Yancey, Stephen J. McElroy, and Elizabeth Powers focus on assessments that attend to the elements of personalization, coherence, reflection, context, and design. A new vocabulary for the traits to be assessed, the authors propose, is needed to

capture the complex, often non-discursive performances that emerge from the ePortfolios themselves.

Yet, although some aspects of assessment in digital environments are new (such as the increased potential for representations of the construct of writing), others endure (such as the need to ensure equity). Of special interest in this collection is the chapter by Mya Poe, "Making Digital Writing Assessment Fair for Diverse Writers." Advancing the work of her edited volume with Asao B. Inoue, Poe calls attention to enduring questions of fairness as they are addressed in large scale assessments that accompany digital writing instruction. Focusing on the *Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing* established by the American Educational Research Association, the American Psychological Association, and the National Council on Measurement in Education, Poe identifies the need for an accompanying set of digital writing standards for fair assessment to be developed by the writing studies community. Faithful to the contextualized demands of writing studies, her analysis extends beyond guidelines. Emphasizing the need for information on all groups of students, Poe recognizes the need for collecting information on diverse student groups in the design stage of the assessment. Identity formation—race, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation—can then be combined with information about the digital identities of students. Her precise identification of educational measurement concepts, combined with our field's demand for educational equity, deepens our knowledge of the issues surrounding contextualization in digital environments.

Because this book is web-based, let's bookmark it along with *The New Work of Composing*. Let's also agree to keep track of journals featuring assessing performance in multimodal writing such as the 2014 special issue of *Computers and Composition* edited by Carl Whithaus.

Doing the Risky Thing

Let's ask that question about agency again, but this time, let's focus on the academic scene: As genres of writing are expanded, who is to gain and who is to lose?

In *Cultivating Ecologies for Digital Media Work: The Case of English Studies*, Catherine C. Braun has produced a detailed study of professional identity in the broad discipline of English Language and Literature. The first book-length empirical investigation of the challenges that face those in the field of writing studies as they pursue professional recognition of their own digital scholarship, this milestone volume is a clear-headed account that should be read by those who have the most to lose (administrators) and who have the most to gain (students).

As the sampling plan for her study, Braun selected departments in three public research universities in the Midwest. Each enrolled 35,000 to 40,000 students, with at least 10,000 undergraduate students. Because entering student data is not given, it is difficult to compare this study with other research on postsecondary education; nevertheless, it is probably safe to assume that these three universities are similar to either the flagship or state system universities identified in *Crossing the Finish Line* by William G. Bowen, Matthew M. Chingos, and Michael S. McPherson. Such comparison is important if we are to make inferences about the promotion and tenure practices in these departments as they are related to student success in our nation's universities. To deepen her study, Braun conducted interviews with key departmental administrators and surveyed seventy-eight doctoral students and twenty-seven assistant professors.

Analysis is drawn from three academic units: a print-centric department in which the products of both scholarship and teaching are understood solely in the essayistic tradition; a parallel cultures department in which print and multimodal scholarship and teaching are separate and sometimes equal; and the integrated literacies department in which interdisciplinarity is the order of the day. In an informed analysis appearing very early in the study, Braun identifies binary opposition—the value dualisms that insist on hierarchy of the book over digital scholarship—as a key interpretative framework. After analyzing a transcript of a graduate student in the parallel cultures department, Braun writes the following: "Digital media threaten the object of study central to [the student's] professional identity as a teacher and researcher; therefore, she navigates the binary opposition by emphasizing the book and distancing herself, as much as possible, from digital media" (26). In the integrated literacies department, an assistant professor expresses the polar opposite. "Everything I do," she tells Braun, "is mediated by the Web, Adobe Photoshop, MS Word, and Corel Word-Perfect, PowerPoint, etc. *Everything*" (26). And wedging the value dualism even deeper is the chair of the print centric department. For him, the question of digital scholarship "is moot as long as the monograph is king" (96).

Now in my own anecdotage, I confess to a great deal of sadness in reading *Cultivating Ecologies for Digital Media Work*. The wise advice of a senior scholar to graduate students considering digital scholarship—do the risky thing but make sure that someone's got your back—is all too common. Far too often, senior researchers have to intervene as systems designed to evaluative research and teaching falter due to the conceptual shortcomings and antiquated practices of chairs, deans, and provosts. In this war zone of conflicting values and personal cruelty, both early career researchers and capable students are collateral damage. As I sat waiting outside far too many

offices during a long career to make interventions on behalf of early career digital researchers due for promotion and tenure, I often reflected that those I was waiting to see had the most to lose by making these colleagues feel unwelcome in what was supposed to be their academic home.

If we take Braun's book as a way to understand more deeply the statistical findings of Bowen, Chingos, and McPherson regarding unacceptable retention and graduation rates, we gain a sense of why the "overall level of educational attainment in the United States today is both too low and stagnant" (223). In many ways, Braun's book provides a sense of context and detail absent from the quantitative research in *Crossing the Finish Line*. Official policy, chair and departmental leadership, public forums, curriculum design, mentoring, and facilities development are among the key areas identified by Braun as ways to obviate binary opposition for the good of students—those who have the most to gain. A remarkable book, *Cultivating Ecologies for Digital Media Work* is a superb way to understand the contexts for large scale studies that identify trends but fail to help us understand the deeply complex reasons for those trends.

Documentary Work

My anecdotage sadness is dispelled by turning to three marvelous scholarly works, each a model of new genres of multimodal research.

Winner of both the 2013 Conference on College Composition and Communication Outstanding Book Award and the Coalition of Women Scholars in the History of Rhetoric's 2012 The Winifred Bryan Horner Outstanding Book Award, *Technologies of Wonder: Rhetorical Practice in a Digital World* by Susan H. Delagrange is an elegant volume that substantiates just how to cultivate scholarship for digital media work. With "deep and satisfying roots in print culture" and "an equally intense and long-standing enchantment with digital media and visual rhetoric," Delagrange presents a hybrid project that must be read using Adobe Reader, Flash Player, and a keen mind. *Technologies of Wonder: Rhetorical Practice in a Digital World* is a detailed examination of the theoretical and pedagogical foundations for multimodal digital scholarship that also stands as an embodiment of such work.

With Rhodes and Alexander, Delagrange insists on reinscription—the fluid performance of rhetorical conceptualization—as a vehicle for legitimacy that is both theoretical and pedagogical. At the heart of her book is *Wunderkammern*, collections of natural and human-made objects that inspire. As a form of visual inquiry, wonder allows us to express perplexity ("I wonder . . . ?") and delight ("Wonderful!"), and her digital volume

is a demonstration of the richness of the concept. Images from Albrecht Dürer's *On Symmetry* and Robert Hooke's *Micrographia* accompany film clips from Pierre Janet on dance and Christopher Baker on toy guns. The result is a rich rhetorical *techné* of invention—not so much sets of tools but rather complex rhetorical acts. Lest such theoretical premises seem forced (Seriously?), Delagrange often reflects on her own classroom practice. Realizing that an assignment asking students to identify a social issue, research it, and produce a public service announcement resulted in clichéd videos, she revises the assignment to allow students to investigate topics from multiple perspectives, build personal digital workspaces, and to come to their own conclusions about whether a problem exists in the first place. Results of reinscription, these shifts in pedagogy foster inquiry and thus unify theory and practice. Because the framework for *Technologies of Wonder* is feminist, theory and practice are no longer viewed as the killer dichotomies described by Ann Berthoff—the binary value dualisms that insist on rigid dichotomous hierarchy of one term (theory, mind) over another (practice, body).

An objective correlative, *Technologies of Wonder* embodies what T.S. Eliot described as "a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events" that are the very essence of a response (92). What does high-level digital scholarship look like? It looks like this book. As Delagrange demonstrates in her insistence on the unity of form and content, the monograph need not be king. Here is a beautiful book that must be read.

In *Stories That Speak to Us*, editors Lewis H. Ulman, Scott Lloyd DeWitt, and Cynthia L. Selfe have selected literacy narratives—descriptions of how individuals learned to read and write—from the Digital Archive of Literacy Narratives (DALN) and asked researchers to come to terms with what they found there. From within this publically available online archive of over 3,600 such narratives, eighteen are featured and explicated in varied print, video, and audio formats. Because it is an unruly collection, as David Bloom characterizes it, the collection may be read as both an archive and a theory.

As archive, *Stories That Speak to Us* becomes a digital documentary study. Read in this fashion, Flash presentations and text capture a range of literacy narratives from African-American women to Nepal cross-generational English language learners. Defined by Robert Coles as both explicit description and implicit instruction for the reader, the documentary tradition provides a record made in many ways with "different voices and visions, interests and concerns" (144). The twofold struggle of the documentarist described by Coles—the attempt to capture what can be found and the need to craft its context—is met in new ways by the multimodality of the eighteen narratives and the amplifications that accompany

them. Due to multimodality so expertly employed throughout the collection, there is vividness and immediacy that Coles, writing in 1997, could not imagine. As theory, Cynthia Selfe and the DALN Consortium present a scholarly reading of the collection by focusing on narrative. Calling on research by Deborah Brandt among others, Selfe reminds readers of the deeply situated nature of literacy. As such, the narratives evoke themes of identity, cultural context, individual agency, social action, and education as we watch "people fashion their lives and make sense of their world" in these stories as they speak to us.

If that project may be understood as a broad documentary study, *Transnational Literate Lives in Digital Times* may be understood as a structured investigation of digital literacy practices. Authors of landmark research of a generation of students with global connections, Patrick W. Berry, Gail E. Hawisher, and Cynthia L. Selfe asked thirteen study participants born between 1969 and 1988 about the contexts in which they learned to use digital communication technologies, especially computers, and about their experiences in doing so. The researchers also asked certain participants to create process videos in which they recorded their activities as they wrote. Additional stories and videos were then collected about context: family history, literacy practices and values, memories of schooling environments and workplace experiences, and descriptions of digital media avoidance and use.

From Sarajevo to Sydney, from Bangladesh to South Korea, from Peru to China, we observe individuals communicating across geographically discontinuous communities. Records of these digitally literate practices validate Rice's theory of the network: There is no simple mapping of meaning onto the longitude and latitude of geographic space. Skype emerges as transnational software facilitating the making of meaning, and the social networking of Facebook allows community formation. Keenly aware of the benefits and costs of digital technologies, participants deploy a wide variety of information and communication technologies, from text messaging when there is limited Internet access to mobile phone calls to aging parents. Using cell phones to cultivate personal relationships and email to communicate workplace complexity to employers, these study participants are keenly aware of the need to align rhetorical strategy with audience. With such rich linguistic resources at their disposal, participants avoid the killer dichotomies identified by Braun and Delagrange and embrace both print and digital literacies, often seeking connections between the lives of their parents and their own in terms of the value of education. Far from the reckless crowd depicted by Andrew Keen, participants had a keen sense of appropriate technology use to forge transnational, culturally diverse identities.

Technologies of Wonder, Stories That Speak to Us and *Transnational Literate Lives*—and all of the digital books presented in this review—have been published by Computers and Composition Digital Press (CCDP). An imprint of Utah State University Press, CCDP was founded in 2007 and is an example of what can occur when a wide variety of colleagues—from provosts to researchers to web design specialists—come together in support of multimodal digital projects receiving rigorous peer review. In their acknowledgments, Berry, Hawisher, and Selfe thank Michael Spooner, Director of Utah State University Press, for his long-standing support for such work. In the new world of digital scholarship, it is comforting to know that values of integrity, creativity, and collegiality endure in publishers. Let's agree to bookmark these five volumes.

Into the Field

Methodologically, Berry, Hawisher, and Selfe conclude that digital media are powerful research tools for collecting and exhibiting life history interviews, literacy narratives, and writing process videos when these tools are put in the hands of both researchers and research participants. In *Language Online: Investigating Digital Texts and Practices,* David Barton and Carmen Lee present a detailed account of why that is so.

As a guide for research methods used in the study of digital communication, theirs is the first single volume of its kind. Due to overwhelming forces of multilingualism, migration, and digital communication, Barton and Lee have found the study of language is at a tipping point. In response, they have produced a highly organized and very readable book that demonstrates the benefits of using defined, methodological frameworks for analyzing language online. Building on their own extensive research, the book provides theoretical perspectives, unifying frameworks, interpretive directions, and educational implications.

In essence, the book is fueled by seven key concepts for the study of digital language use (practices, textual mediation, possibilities, multimodality, stance, affinities, and globalization) as they are manifested in four digital writing spaces (Flickr, Facebook, YouTube, and Instant Messaging). This design allows the authors a way to educate their readers on the need for study of the wide range of intercultural communication—a world in which 73% of users have either a first language other than English and in which Chinese users (444.9 million) are rapidly gaining on English users (536.6 million), according to Internet World Stats. In this fluid world, Google Translate plays a major role. The sentence "Please wait behind the one-meter line" is translated as "Please wait outside rice-flour noodle" (63),

yet the world does not end. As one study participant observes, "My English is Google translator" (118). These international users are not passive victims but creative users "gradually teaching the web," as the authors perceptively put it, "their native language" (63). The result: The multilingual Flickr group Translate Me invites translations of each other's micro blogging. As we find new friends on Facebook, we use the translation app to understand the interface in different languages. Even minority languages such as Assyrian are maintained as participants in digital chat rooms code-switch to strengthen their cultural identity. Everyone seems to be writing without teachers.

For novices to this multifaceted, multilingual and fluid community, Barton and Lee prove knowledgeable guides. For researchers, their book provides excellent frameworks for investigating language online.

IMAGINING MORE

"Don't throw the past away/You might need it some rainy day/Dreams can come true again/When everything old is new again." So wrote Peter Allen and Carole Bayer Sager in *The Boy from Oz*. On one hand, the play is pure bubble gum musical, young-kid-makes-good; on the other, it is a tale of identity about coming to terms with homosexuality. Recalling that little musical seems somehow appropriate in its reliance on simple themes and intricate extensions as I conclude a review about books that capture complex phenomena.

So, here is the big question saved till the end: Is writing in digital environments simply an extension of writing in print environments? The answer rests in our understanding of multimodality. Using as a key periodization event the 2009 publication of "The Movement of Air" by Selfe, Alexander and Rhodes emphasize in *On Multimodality: New Media in Composition Studies* that conceptualizing digital composition as merely an extension of writing studies co-opts the very nature of multimodality. As they make clear, their book is focused on examining how multimodality challenges our rhetorical perceptions. Following an essential question first raised by Anne Frances Wysocki and Johndan Johnson-Eilola—"Why are we using literacy as an extension for everything else?"—Alexander and Rhodes refuse to extrapolate what we know about print technology to the study of multimodal composition. Not everything, they claim, is writing. Practically, this orientation means that the seven key concepts for the study of digital language identified by Barton and Lee are are unique—that is, mediated—in digital environments. Writing in digital environments is therefore not simply an extension of writing in print environments.

If this is indeed so, then what precisely are we doing in United States composition studies with multimedia? Alexander and Rhodes make an excellent case that we are probably under-representing the concept of multimodality in the curriculum. Because the technology accompanying multimodal composing is often seen as mere *techné*, as Delagrange cautioned, the generative power of the new media is lost. If, however, we think synergistically about both new media and composition studies, much is to be gained conceptually: a historical understanding of the media involved in multimodal composition; attendance to the rhetorical power of such compositions; and a historicized sensitivity to the development of new genres freed from the discursive and ideological considerations valorizing the essay as best possible form of all human communication. Regarding praxis, this synergy also provides an expanded view of the process of composing gained from multimodal practice; awareness of the rhetorical richness of video production and photographic manipulation on their own terms; and investigation of massively multiplayer online role-playing games as a way of understanding literacy, transliteracy, and collaborative practice. In terms of democratization, such synergy also sets the stage for robust participation in always complex and often poetic public spheres; avoidance of critique at the expense of production; and refusal to constrain categories of identify formation implicit associated with race, gender, ethnicity, sexuality. For devotees of Marxism itching to unclasp the "charm bracelet of composition's embrace of identity politics" (120), *On Multimodality* provides "an expanded view of commodity fetishism that indicts consumer capitalism for its trade in images" (111). In essence, Alexander and Rhodes provide a précis of the way we might live now.

To figure out how this vast project envisioned by Alexander and Rhodes might be brought to fulfillment, one need only to look back to the books reviewed above. While all the answers may not be there, it is clear that we are asking important questions aligned with the project of multimodality before us.

Toward a Body of Knowledge

Writing studies grew up in rebellion, lurking in the parking lot with post-structuralism, semiotics, feminism, and political criticism. Waiting around for modernism and formalism to become last year's models, writing studies was tuned to dissent. Whether our accounts of ourselves are traditional (Berlin) or counter-historical (Hawk), our field is deeply sensitive to rhetorical context and, as such, must ask precisely what a digital environment for writing signifies beyond itself. Based on thirteen books published over the

past four years that were reviewed here, four conclusions appear plausible regarding the scholarship of those who study writing in digital environments. Each is congruent with the sound advice of Randall W. Monty in his review of recent scholarship in multimodality: After reading, aim for pedagogical implementation. There is much for writing program administrators to do as they prepare for the advent of Web 3.0 and the semantic webs of meaning to come (Berners-Lee, Hendler, Lassila).

First, we may conclude that *a body of knowledge exists regarding multimodal composition*. We now have histories, theories, pedagogies, identities, representations, research methods, and even a projected future. While there does not yet exist an articulated expression of this knowledge as presented in the Body of Knowledge initiative by the Society of Technical Communication (Coppola), key features of the ontological, epistemological, and axiological positions of the present state of the field can be made. Ontologically, multimodal scholarship is rebellious in nature, refusing to see itself as a mere extension of writing studies for fear of hegemonic influence. Because transnational feminism (Hesford and Schell) and queer studies (Alexander and Wallace) were not there to interpret the impact of Gutenberg's printing press as the first big thing, theorists are not about to miss this opportunity to advocate for principles ensuring interpretative equity. In their epistemological beliefs, multimodal scholars call for theory, empirical study, and pedagogical transformation in equal parts. An emerging field, multimodal research in digital environments requires theory building, mixed methods research, and informed teaching to ensure its own future. By extension, the axiology of the system demands rejection of value dualism and value hierarchy. Such an embrace of contingency does not signal the end of progress but, rather, a progress built on an ever-present impulse to understand first, with interpretation trailing somewhat behind.

Practically speaking, the existing and emerging nature of this body of knowledge compels writing program administrators to reexamine the way that composing in multimodal environments is framed. Such framing becomes especially important in consensus statements such as the WPA Outcomes Statement (Harrington, Malencyzk, Peckham, Rhodes, and Yancey;) and the *Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing* (O'Neill, Adler-Kassner, Fleischer, and Hall). In the WPA Outcomes Statement, for instance, the ability to compose in multimodal elements had been considered distinct from four other experiences of writing, reading, and critical analysis (rhetorical knowledge, critical thinking, writing processes, and knowledge of convention) at the time this review was going to press. The WPA Outcomes Statement was revised by a Taskforce that was appointed by the Council of Writing Program Administrators Executive Board. Along

with its historical evolution, the WPA Outcomes Statement 3.0 is included in this issue of the journal. As justification, the revision acknowledges the transformative power of technology: "Writers' composing activities have always been shaped by the technologies available to them, and digital technologies are changing writers' relationships to their texts and audiences in evolving ways" (142). Under rhetorical knowledge now appears the following curricular objective for first-year students: "Match the capacities of different environments (e.g., print and electronic) to varying rhetorical situations" (143). Such integration is a vast improvement over the way that technology was represented in previous versions—an attitude toward *techné* as a tool rather than as part of a complex rhetorical act. It remains to be seen if the habits of mind and the experiences with writing, reading, and critical analysis identified in the *Framework for Success* will be equally remodeled in recognition of the transformative power of multimodal composition. While such details are to come, it is important to note that scholarship such as that found in this review is having a direct impact on key consensus statements in our field.

Such re-examination leads to the second conclusion, w*riting is mediated in digital environments*. Whether the technology was the visible language created by movable type or digital pixel, all such mediation is a remix. Famously created by Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin and often present in the books reviewed here, this concept allows us to understand more fully the allure of digital representation: investigation of the ways digital environments refashion thought and the language accompanying it. Depending on the extend of the mediation and the standpoint of the writer and reader, this mediation may be akin to that witnessed in print environments since 1450—or it may not. Depending on the extent of the remediation, the ability to compose in multiple environments may be one in a list of writing, reading, and critical analysis experiences—or it may be its own framework that demands that rhetorical knowledge itself be reconceptualized. It appears as if the ideas proposed by the authors of these books are as complex as the humans who will benefit by them.

Third, we may conclude that *extensive professional development will be needed if digital writing is to be included in the curriculum in ways that are non-cosmetic*. To understand just why, consider how this review would be changed if the title had been "Multimodal Communication in Digital Environments." From the beginning, terms would need to be defined, and even the subject under review—written communication—would have become slippery. So, too, curricular reconceptualization will be needed if the theories and practices contained in these thirteen books are to be offered to students in meaningful ways. The solution will no longer be

an invitation to multimedia staff to teach instructors sound editing, for example. Accompanying such training in production must be discussions of multimodal theory and methods of inquiry for those working in the new genres. Because long-term strategic planning will be needed, technological fixes will no longer be sufficient. These are heavy lifts that are not easily addressed, and new strategies will have to be identified to align the demands for innovation with the realities of economic constraint. At least part of the answer rests in the students themselves as we reconceptualize hierarchy and enlist a variety of agents as our new collaborators.

Fourth, we may conclude that *incongruity must be an important part of planning*. Kenneth Burke, whose appearance is frequent in these books, told the story of reporter Lincoln Steffens emerging from the New York Public Library to find himself accompanied by a man who found a plan for saving the world. The more the man spoke, the better the scheme sounded. Then, somewhere on Fifth Avenue, they were joined by Satan. He liked the plan a good deal. "Wouldn't it put you out of a job?" Steffens asked. "Not in the least," the Devil replied. "I'll organize it." Burke concluded with a lengthy warning against bureaucratization of the imagination. Among the remedies he listed were planned incongruity which would allow a "*dramatic* vocabulary" resplendent with "weighting and counter-weighting" yielding, in turn, "a multiplicity of perspectives" (311). Because Burke's perspective gets us pretty close to the heart of the matter regarding the perils and promise of multimodal communication, it is good to return to Shannon who, after all, provided the equations that caused all of this.

Price, Shannon's interviewer in 1984, had gotten ahead of himself and began to raise questions about a driving force of inquiry that led to information theory. Shannon replied:

> Bob, I think you impute a little more practical purpose to my thinking than actually exists. My mind wanders around, and I conceive of different things day and night. Like a science-fiction writer, I'm thinking, What if it were like this? Or, Is there an interesting problem of this type? And I'm not caring whether someone is working on it or not. It's usually just that I like to solve a problem, and I work on these all the time. (126)

The moral: Innovation is unruly.

One cannot help but wonder if Shannon was a fan of duct tape.

Acknowledgment

Professor White has made my work better. From 2009 to 2014, he has been book review editor for this journal. An individual talent, his is an impossible act to follow.

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Norbert Elliot is Professor Emeritus of English at New Jersey Institute of Technology. With Jacob Babb, he is the incoming book review editor of *WPA: Writing Program Administration*.

Sustainable Writing/Program/Administrators

CWPA 2015 Call for Proposals

Boise, Idaho
July 12-19, 2015

AN INVITATION

At the 2014 CWPA conference in Normal, Illinois, attendees considered the work of writing program administration, often returning to questions of workload, distribution of labor, and realistic expectations for ourselves and others. As our scholarship has shown time and time again, the work of writing program administration is difficult and labor-intensive, yet many invent strategies for approaching that work in ways that make it manageable and exceedingly rewarding.

For the 2015 conference, we invite you to continue and expand that conversation by considering issues of **sustainability in writing program administration** from a variety of perspectives: the sustainability of the WPA, the sustainability of writing programs, and the sustainability of writing as we know it. In addition to other issues of concern to WPAs, we particularly invite papers, panels, conversation starters, and interactive workshops that explore possibilities and unsettle accepted practices related to the following questions:

- What are new visions for writing instruction in a wide range of institutions and programs—community colleges, tribal colleges, HBCUs, and colleges and universities of all kinds?
- What approaches to sustainable administration are practiced in writing programs, centers, and courses?
- How can we be more inclusive of voices that have been marginalized in conversations about writing instruction and writing program administration? How can the work of writing program administration be made more sustainable for a broad range of teacher-scholars?
- What is the future of writing? How might new technologies affect the sustainability of writing as we now know it? How might these changes impact writing instruction?
- How can partnerships at important transitional points help make post-secondary writing instruction sustainable? What might those partnerships look like?

- How can we make majors, concentrations, and newly-formed departments of writing more sustainable? What challenges do these programs face? How might we address them?
- How can writing instruction be supported by sustainable and ethical labor models? How do we make writing instruction a sustainable career for those who are often underpaid and overworked?
- How might we share effective practices across institutions?
- What are realistic expectations for WPA workload? How might we create and sustain reasonably happy, healthy lives and productive careers?

CWPA is eager to welcome the voices of those who participate in writing program administration writ large. This could include work with: writing centers; multiple sections or instructors of writing courses; community writing programs; WAC and WID programs; course and program assessment; or other work that is related to writing instruction or program direction.

Planning is already well under way to make sure our time in Boise is thought-provoking, restoring, and challenging. We look forward to learning from the following plenary speakers:

Plenary speakers:

- **Cheryl Ball,** West Virginia University
- **Elizabeth H. Boquet,** Fairfield University
- **Seth Kahn,** West Chester University

Q1: WHAT FORMAT CAN YOU PROPOSE FOR YOUR SESSION?

Proposal Types

1. **15-minute individual presentations**
Presenters may submit individual paper or presentation proposals; these will be combined into panels/sessions of three or four speakers by the program committee.

2. **Full session panel of multiple presentations**
These may take any form you choose. In the past, we've had success with the following:

- "Conversation Starters:" Panels in which a number of speakers give six-minute presentations on a particular topic and then open the floor to a conversation with the audience on the topic. Proposals should address (a) the question/topic you want to address or point

you want to make; (b) the exigency for your question—why is this important/significant for WPAs? (c) the issues you'd like participants to take up in conversation. Plan to allow at least 30-45 minutes for conversation among the participants.

- Extended Discussions: Individual 10-minute presentations that share ongoing research intended to lead to action. Proposals should summarize the presentations and include discussion strategies—how would you engage the audience in discussion after the presentations? (e.g., by posing 2-3 questions for them to address?) Plan to allow at least 30-45 minutes for discussion.
- Panel Sessions: Three or four 15-minute individual presentations connected by a particular theme. Proposals should illustrate the theme by providing summaries of each speaker. Plan to allow at least 15-20 minutes for questions and discussion.

If you are proposing a full session panel, please clearly indicate in the proposal description which of the above categories your proposal falls into; if you are doing something different, please explain that too. For our planning, we simply need to know what exactly you plan for your session.

3. **Interactive workshop**

A full session (75-minute) workshop designed to address a particular issue of relevance to WPAs. Workshops might address how to revise one's work for publication, how to put together a promotion and tenure dossier, how to prepare for a program review, how to lead as a new WPA, and so on. **Due to space considerations, we will be able to accept very few double workshops.**

Q2: SHOULD YOUR SESSION BE CONSIDERED FOR A SPECIAL STRAND?

At the 2015 CWPA conference, we will feature two strands of sessions on the program.

Mentoring Project Sessions

In response to the interest generated by the Mentoring Project sessions at past CWPA conferences, as well as feedback from the Mentoring Project Survey, a strand of sessions at the 2015 conference in Boise will again be devoted to professional development and mentoring issues.

If you are submitting a proposal in any format addressing mentoring (broadly defined), please indicate so in the proposal; the proposal will be directed to Joe Janangelo, chair of the CWPA Mentoring Project, for

review. Feel encouraged to email him at jjanang@luc.edu to let him know that you have submitted a proposal intended for the mentoring strand. For more details, please visit the CWPA Mentoring Project on the CWPA website.

People of Color Caucus Sessions

To celebrate the beginning of and emphasize the importance of CWPA's People of Color Caucus (POCC), a strand of sessions at the 2015 conference in Boise will be devoted to race and ethnic diversity issues in writing administration related to scholars, teachers, students, and administrators of color.

If you are submitting a proposal in any format that relates to issues appropriate for this strand, please indicate so in the proposal; the proposal will be directed to Genevieve García de Müeller, chair of the CWPA POCC, for review. Feel encouraged to email her at ggarciad@unm.edu to let her know that you have submitted a proposal intended for the POCC strand.

Q3: HOW CAN YOU SUBMIT A PROPOSAL?

We will begin receiving submissions for the 2015 conference on **November 15, 2014**. Submission instructions will be available on that date at the CWPA website.

We look forward to a variety of lively, engaging submissions from a range of participants and to a fantastic conference!

- **For local Boise, Idaho, questions** email Heidi Estrem (heidiestrem@boisestate.edu)
- **For proposal questions** email Susan Miller-Cochran (susan_miller@ncsu.edu)
- **For Mentoring Project Session questions** email Joe Janangelo (jjanang@luc.edu)
- **For POC Caucus Session questions** email Genevieve García de Müeller (ggarciad@unm.edu)

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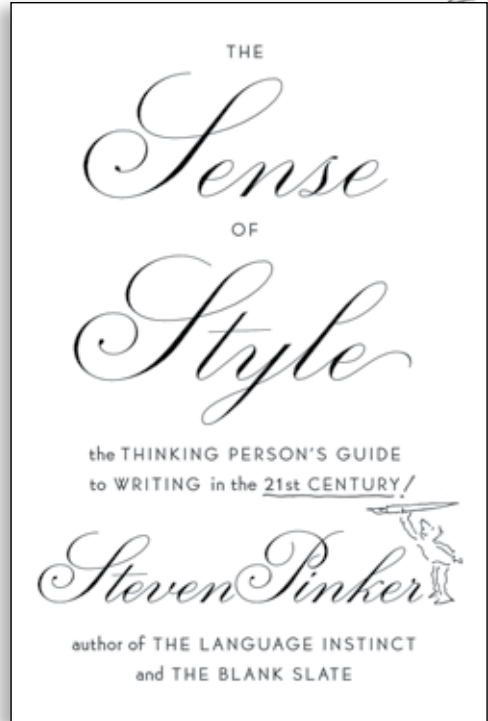
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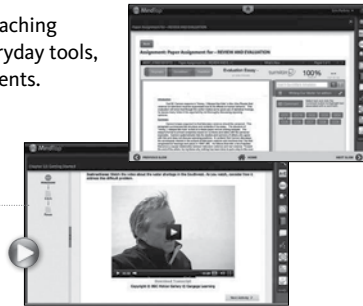
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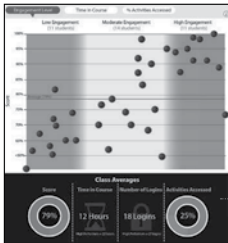
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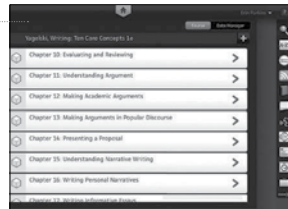
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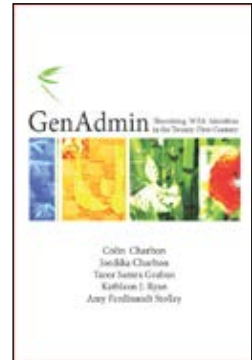
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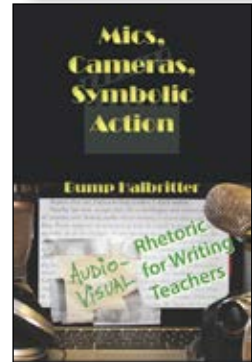
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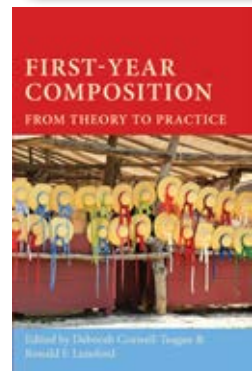
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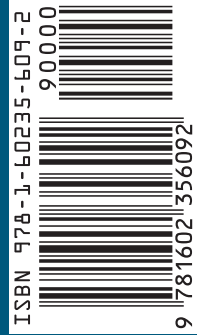Paid
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