



# WRITING PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION

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“Singing Wonderfully”: Remembering the  
Scholarship of Linda Bergmann

Disabling Writing Program Administration

How Do Dual Credit Students Perform on College  
Writing Tasks After They Arrive on Campus?  
Empirical Data from a Large-Scale Study

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Writing Program Assessment

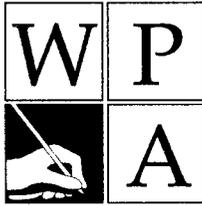
Making Space for Service Learning in First-Year  
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The WPA as Worker: What Would John Ruskin  
Say? What Would My Dad?

Absence and Action: Making Visible WPA Work

Writing Program Faculty and Administrators as  
Public Intellectuals: Opportunities and Challenges

Travelogue: Imperative as a River: Interview with  
Heidi Estrem



# Writing Program Administration

Journal of the  
Council of Writing Program Administrators

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## Council of Writing Program Administrators

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

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## 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.

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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](mailto:bookreviews@wpacouncil.org). If you are interested in reviewing texts, please contact the book review editor at [bookreviews@wpacouncil.org](mailto:bookreviews@wpacouncil.org)

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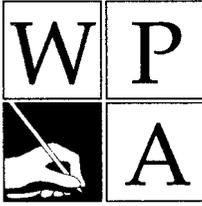
Relevant announcements and calls for papers and/or conference participation will be published as space permits. Announcements should not exceed 500 words, and calls for proposals/participation should not exceed 1,000 words. Please include contact information and links for further information. Submission 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](mailto:journal@wpacouncil.org) and include the text both in the body of the message and as an MS Word or RTF attachment.

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Correspondence relating to the journal, submissions, or editorial issues should be sent to [journal@wpacouncil.org](mailto:journal@wpacouncil.org)

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# Writing Program Administration

Journal of the  
Council of Writing Program Administrators  
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## Letter from the Editors

We are excited to bring to you this issue of *WPA: Writing Program Administration*. It was wonderful to see so many of you at CCCC in Tampa and to have so many productive discussions about the journal. We look forward to seeing many of you and continuing our conversations in Boise at the 2015 CWPA Conference.

We have had a number of changes to our editorial team. Jarod Daily, our excellent assistant editor, has graduated. Our sadness at his leaving has been tempered by the addition of Sarah Ricard and Alora D. Crooms on our team. Like Jarod, they have brought expertise and energy. We deeply appreciate their willingness to work with us and their commitment to the journal. In addition, we are thrilled that Lisa Mastrangelo has joined our editorial team. She brings with her tremendous experience as an editor; her experience includes two edited collections and four years on the *Peitho* editorial staff. She has recently become the director of composition at Centenary College of New Jersey. We look forward to working with her.

As promised, our new book editors, Norbert Elliott and Jacob Babb, have offered an overview of the types of reviews that will be showcased in the journal. We think these reviews will be both exciting and helpful to you in your work as a WPA.

This issue of the journal includes a variety of texts. The journal opens with a tribute to the late Linda Bergmann titled “Singing Wonderfully.” She was a kind friend and wonderful colleague to many, and her sudden loss resounded throughout our field. Lisa and Barb had the honor of working with her and were witnesses to her careful thinking and writing. We all are grateful to Lauren Fitzgerald, Rita Malenczyk, and Kelly Ritter for the warm memories and scholarly attributions to a giant in our field.

In the first feature article “Disabling Writing Program Administration,” Amy Vidali writes about “disabling” writing program administration—bringing the insights of disabled people and perspectives in order to innovate, include, and transgress expected and exclusionary norms in writing program administration. Such disabling asks us to re-think our disciplinary narratives and our professional identities and working conditions.

“How Do Dual Credit Students Perform on College Writing Tasks After They Arrive on Campus? Empirical Data from a Large-Scale Study” investigates how the writing of DC/CE students compares to the writing of students who had no first-year writing credit yet or who earned FYW credit another way. Authors Kristine Hansen, Brian Jackson, Brett C. McInelly, and Dennis Eggett call for more complex and layered studies of student experience with previous writing instructions.

In “Making the Most of Networked Communication in Writing Program Assessment,” Sonya Lancaster, Heather Bastian, Justin Ross Sevenker, and E.A. Williams provide methods for a “fuller theoretical framework from which rhetorical strategies outlined in the CWPA Communication Strategies document and other assessment scholarship can be implemented and developed.” The authors offer a three-step strategy for communications using network theory.

Tom Sura’s “Making Space for Service Learning in First-Year Composition” describes the use of four keys of postmodern planning—context, travel, connection, and scale—as a means to implement and create “healthy spaces for service learning in . . . programs.” Sura offers his own course as an example of how WPAs might use the four keys to understand and plan service learning differently.

In this issue, we are also happy to continue the tradition of publishing the plenaries from the CWPA conference, “WPA as Worker.” We’ve labeled and published them in the order presented at the conference. In the opening plenary, Doug Hesse wrestles with the ideas of “*worker* which conjures . . . *laborer*” in considering the intentionality of the work we do as WPAs. Melissa Ianetta’s Saturday Plenary—an interesting counterpoint to Doug Hesse’s—explores ongoing problems in the representation and reception of our work as WPAs and how we can advocate for ourselves individually and for our work collectively by making ourselves visible institutionally. Duane Roen closed the conference with “Writing Program Faculty and Administrators as Public Intellectuals: Opportunities and Challenges.” He reminds us that “none of us need celebrity status to make a difference in the world, and that is the most important reason for serving as a public intellectual.” Roen asks us to consider how engagement with the public transforms “fence-sitters, skeptics, and even harsh critics into supporters, allies, and partners” of higher education.

Finally, we continue the tradition of showcasing the conference site. “Imperative as a River: Interview with Heidi Estrem” offers contextual information about the geographical and institutional location of the 2015 CWPA conference. Estrem offers an analogy to Boise State University’s first-year writing program as symbolic to the Boise River: “constant and yet

constantly changing. We're restless: Our instructors are consistently excellent, and they want to get better. We teach writing in ways that are rooted in our field—and we also work to unsettle our curriculum.” Many thanks to Shirley K Rose for doing these wonderful interviews.

We close this issue of the journal with four stellar book reviews. They begin with Asao Inoue's "Looking at Language to Learn about Race and Racism" which focuses on Robert Eddy and Victor Villanevua's *A Language and Power Reader: Representations of Race in a "Post-Racist" Era*. Inoue summarizes the "solid and unique collection" as "the dialogue around differences in interpretations, in assumptions about language, and in the ways each text represents various identities and cultures that makes the collection worth considering as a reader in a writing classroom." Inoue asserts the collection is "what we can do about understanding race and racism in language practices in the writing classroom while still holding our commitments to the study of rhetoric and writing."

Irv Peckham reviews Rita Malenczyk's *A Rhetoric for Writing Program Administrators* in "Stone Walls Do Not a Prison Make." Peckham states, "The collection is aptly named because, as most of the authors make clear, directing writing programs is a rhetorical act." The book, Peckham reflects, offers "important information and resources" for even the most seasoned of WPAs. The collective voices of scholars from the field offer both scholarship and practical application.

Deborah Coxwell-Teague and Ronald F. Lunsford's *First-Year Composition: From Theory to Practice* is reviewed by Jessica Nastal-Dema who says "[this] is the book I searched for as a new writing instructor and graduate student contemplating the leap from literature to rhetoric and composition studies." Nastal-Dema notes that this is a "foundational text to help novice instructors go beyond instinct and personal experience" and "[r]eaders will be impressed with the range of ideas, theoretical dispositions, pedagogies, policies, activities, and assignments contained in the volume."

The final book review, by Mary Jo Reiff, examines *Writing across Contexts: Transfer, Composition, and Sites of Writing* by Kathleen Blake Yancey, Laine Robertson, and Kara Taczak. Reiff states the text is a "useful reflection, particularly regarding the content of first-year composition and the role of reflective assignments—such as the innovative final assignment to develop a theory of writing—in fostering transfer." This text, Reiff states, is "a hybrid project that comprises both a comprehensive synthesis of transfer research and an innovative study of teaching for transfer."

It is our pleasure to bring you such a robust issue, just in time for your summer reading (or your "traveling to the CWPA conference" reading

time). We hope you enjoy reading the issue as much as we enjoyed editing it.

As always, please don't hesitate to contact us with ideas or concerns. Our email is [journal@wpacouncil.org](mailto:journal@wpacouncil.org). We encourage you to respond to the call for articles, and we hope you enjoy this issue.

Barb, Lisa, and Sherry



## Letter from the Book Review Editors

While it is daunting to follow Edward M. White as the book review editor, we take comfort that a grand tradition is now in place of elegant, comprehensive reviews especially prepared for WPAs. In following that tradition, we have identified twenty-two categories of reviews (also available on the website <http://www.wpacouncil.org/info-for-authors>) that are of foundational interest to our field:

Administration of Writing Programs	Professional and Institutional Issues
Assessment of Writing and Writing Programs	Professional and Technical Writing
Basic Writing Language and Identity in Pedagogy	Writing in Digital Environments
Disability Studies	Research Methods in Writing Studies
English Language Learning Public Policy and Writing Studies	Special Topics in Writing Program Administration
First Year Writing	Theory of Writing Studies
Graduate Education as Preparation for Writing Program Administration	Writing across the Curriculum and Writing in the Disciplines
Historical Studies	Writing beyond the Academy
International Issues in Writing	Writing Centers
Multidisciplinary Scholarship	Writing Transfer across Contexts

We plan to feature reviews under four genres: single book reviews in which individual volumes are featured; multi-book reviews in which volumes are reviewed under a common thematic framework; policy reviews featuring federal, state, and non-profit educational initiatives; and research report reviews targeting current work of substantial investigative impact.

At the present time, we want to build a new list of specialist reviewers. Our invited reviewers will be those who are working on an articulated program of research in Rhetoric and Composition/Writing Studies. Whether at early, middle, or senior levels of their careers, the specialists we seek are dedicated to the longitudinal pursuit of research identified in the twenty-two review categories.

If you are interested in helping us broaden our list of reviewers and perspectives for candidate volumes, please contact us at [bookreviews@wpa-council.org](mailto:bookreviews@wpa-council.org).

We look forward to serving as your editors.

Sincerely yours,

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## “Singing Wonderfully”: Remembering the Scholarship of Linda Bergmann

Lauren Fitzgerald, Rita Malenczyk, and Kelly Ritter

*Linda S. Bergmann, director of the Writing Lab at Purdue University and former secretary of the Council of Writing Program Administrators, was friend, colleague, and mentor to many members of CWPA and the International Writing Centers Association (IWCA). She was also an active, engaged, and versatile scholar. After Bergmann’s sudden death in 2014, the three of us—all of whom had been friends and colleagues of Bergmann’s and whose familiarity with her work spanned a range of contexts and disciplines—organized a panel for the 2014 International Writing Centers Association Conference/National Conference on Peer Tutoring in Writing that focused on Bergmann’s contributions to the scholarship of writing centers, writing programs, and the relationship of literature to composition. Thanks to the editors of WPA: Writing Program Administration for agreeing to reprint our papers here.*

### LINDA BERGMANN’S WRITING CENTER SCHOLARSHIP

*Lauren Fitzgerald*

My focus is on Linda’s publications in writing center studies, but there were so many other ways in which she contributed to the field. She was an ambassador for writing centers—at several institutions, across the country, and abroad. Under her watch, the already well-known Purdue Writing Lab was one of the first two writing centers to win a CCCC Writing Program Certificate of Excellence, and the Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL) expanded its services and reach. Moreover, she directed dissertations and served on PhD committees for many colleagues currently active in writing center studies. I want to convey some of the multi-dimensional nature of her contributions even as I focus on her scholarship by highlighting some-

thing I found quite remarkable as I was reading work by her and about her for this piece.

Memorials from the Celebration of Life to honor Linda were published in *Peitho*, and the Linda that emerges from these tributes is doubtless familiar to those who knew her: As a teacher, administrator, and scholar, she was a mentor, collaborator, and—necessary for both—a listener. She was also a supporter of research and, very much connected, a risk taker. What most strikes me about this portrait is how clearly it is reflected in her scholarship. If I'm honest with myself, the person I present in my own scholarship is more, shall we say, aspirational and idealized—someone I wish I were or will try to be later when I'm less busy or annoyed. With Linda, the person in the writing was the person in the life. Her scholarly *ethos* was authentic to who she was and therefore, ethical in several senses of this word.

As her colleagues and students remarked again and again at her memorial, Linda was an exemplary mentor. Her colleague and friend Irwin “Bud” Weiser noted her “commitment to the professional development of graduate students” (Sullivan et al. 63). The *Peitho* editors comment on how her students' tributes show us “feminist mentoring at work: generous and supportive without relaxing scholarly standards, intent on making the graduate experience for young women (and men) more humane than it was in the past” (Sullivan et al. 59). The same can be seen in her writing center scholarship. She consistently put a spotlight on the work of graduate students—for example, in her co-authored chapters for Macauley and Mauriello's *Marginal Words* and Bruce and Rafoth's *ESL Writers* as well as her chapter on writing center engagement for a Rose and Weiser collection. It's telling too that in the 2006 *Composition Studies* article that she wrote with five other writing center directors (including me), she was the only one to focus on graduate students and how writing center studies could better serve their needs.

Essential to Linda's mentoring was collaboration. For example, among her many co-authored publications in writing center studies, her last was written with graduate students (Bergmann, Brizee, and Wells). She collaborated in other ways as well, some of which were what Shirley Rose called “off-the-record collaboration” between friends (Sullivan et al. 65) but many on the record. Much of the writing center work that her scholarship describes was between and among different individuals, programs, and institutions, and she used these experiences to explicitly argue for the necessity of such cooperation. Her Purdue colleague Patricia Sullivan noted that Linda connected the Writing Lab to other disciplines while exploring “the knots and gnarls of the in-between” (Sullivan et al. 60, 62). In her co-authored chapter pointedly titled “Dialogue and Collaboration: A Writing

Lab Applies Tutoring Techniques to Relations with Other Writing Programs,” Tammy Conard-Salvo and Linda link what Linda calls elsewhere the “highly communal environments” of writing centers (“Writing Centers and” 528) to collaborating with Purdue’s First-Year Composition and Professional Writing programs.

Presenting writing centers as deeply collaborative is common in the field, but Linda had her own reasons for maintaining this position. Rather than independent operators, for Linda, writing centers and writing center directors are squarely within writing studies, as full-on writing programs and writing program administrators. In answer to the question of the title of the *Composition Studies* article, “Are Writing Center Directors Writing Program Administrators?” she wrote that

Writing Center Directors’ intellectual disputes with other sub-sets of Rhetoric and Composition are important ways of defining our specific place within that discipline, but in a larger context, we have more in common with Rhetoric and Composition than we have differences with it. (Janetta et al. 32)

As a result, when Melissa Janetta and I were editing *Writing Center Journal*, we asked Linda to review Linda Adler-Kassner’s *The Activist WPA* because we knew that she could make this book relevant to the journal’s readers.

Linda also acknowledged what distinguishes writing center directors from other WPAs, yet for her, this too was reason for collaboration. As she suggested in her chapter arguing for writing center engagement with the university and the community, working across boundaries is easier for writing center directors because they “have traditionally held mixed commitments that efface some of the boundaries that other faculty and even other WPAs have a greater need to remain within” (“Writing Center as” 160). And there are other benefits to this “life on the margins” since it offers “opportunities to experiment and change, [and] open up some time and space with which to develop new ways of thinking, learning, and interacting” (“Writing Center as” 160). As I discuss below, such interactions “create research opportunities for both graduate and undergraduate students” (Bergmann and Conard-Salvo 194).

Necessary both to her success as a mentor and a collaborator was her commitment to listening, which those at her memorial service repeatedly noted. Linda not only listened; she insisted that others do so too. Liz Angeli, a former student, said in her memorial that Linda mentored graduate students to “have the humility to listen” (Sullivan et al. 68). In Linda’s chapter on writing center engagement, she similarly advised her readers to “*really listen*” (“Writing Center as” 167; emphasis in original), because, for

one thing, well versed as writing center practitioners are in “*listening* to clients,” it is already what we do. For another, it helps us solidify our collaborations (“Writing Center as” 174; emphasis in original).

I find evidence of the value she placed on listening elsewhere in her scholarship, in two articles not directly tied to writing center work but nonetheless relevant. Her well-known co-authored article “Disciplinary and Transfer: Students’ Perceptions of Learning to Write” and her chapter “Higher Education Administration Ownership, Collaboration, and Publication” are both testimony to her ability to pay careful attention to what others say. Both pieces report on research derived from deep listening, the first using focus groups with undergraduates who discussed the writing instruction they’d received and the second drawing on interviews with higher education administrators about the complicated nature of their authorship. In both cases, and as the result of such careful listening, these pieces honor and find meaning in what these individuals said, especially when their remarks did not follow the expected disciplinary script about writing.

Linda was a staunch advocate of research in a field that is only now fully embracing it and not yet always comfortably. She seemed to feel a profound sense of urgency about this issue; we *need* research less for individual advancement than to base our decisions and actions on knowledge rather than lore. We can see Linda articulating this sentiment in her 2008 review essay for *Pedagogy*. Describing then-recently published books in the field, she called out—albeit politely—one collection (to which I’m chagrined to admit I contributed) for lacking “sufficient critiques of the established assumptions most writing center administrators and staff rely on, as well as a critical agenda for future writing center research” (“Writing Centers and” 533).

Ever the mentor, Linda was especially interested in graduate student research. In her *Composition Studies* contribution, she recounts her graduate students managing to do what established scholars apparently could not—“reading [the field’s] now-canonical literature critically and asking difficult questions about our ideas and practices, such as ‘do they work?’ and ‘how do they work[?]’ and ‘how do we know?’” (Ianetta et al. 33). No doubt thanks to her mentoring, her students were “asking how accepted ideas and practices can be tested by empirical research, both qualitative and quantitative, with clear and repeatable methodologies and falsifiable hypotheses” (Ianetta et al. 33). In her memorial, Patricia Sullivan recollects that research was “the core” of Linda’s graduate Writing Center Research and Theory course: “For writing center faculty to reach their full potential,” Sullivan recalls Linda saying, “they need to be researchers” (Sullivan

et al. 61). Sullivan goes on: “Often after that statement [Linda] would pause and twist her glasses and add, ‘While there is more research than before, so much more is needed . . . we just need more research’” (Sullivan et al. 61). Of course, the real testimony to Linda’s championing of research are the graduate students who have gone on to succeed as knowledge-producers in the field. Dana Driscoll, Linda’s former dissertation advisee, for example, co-authored an article on writing center research that won an IWCA Outstanding Scholarship Award. In her memorial, Driscoll aptly described Linda’s students “her living legacy” (Sullivan et al. 70).

Particularly in Linda’s promotion of research, it is clear that, though a listener, a collaborator, and a mentor, she was no shrinking violet. Indeed, her friend Shirley Rose called her a “woman warrior . . . a warrior who had the courage to challenge dogma” (Sullivan et al. 65). Likewise, Linda’s scholarship on writing centers is punctuated by calls to embrace what is dangerous and threatening. One reason we “need to embrace difficult moments” (530), she wrote, is that it’s the “funny and frightening” issues of day-to-day work that “are of considerable use to developing students . . . into effective teachers of writing” (“Writing Centers and” 531).

Intriguingly, and I think insightfully, Linda identified research as the most dangerous area of writing center work. For instance, she attributed the changes in the field over the last ten to fifteen years largely to the newer generations of writing center directors with degrees in Rhetoric and Composition and expertise in social science research methods—a shift that those of us of a certain age who hold literature PhDs can find “threatening” (Ianetta et al. 32). Even as she asserted that we must embrace these changes, she acknowledged reasons for this fear. Research that demands that we look beyond the confines of our individual centers and practices and leads to

comparisons across institutions *can* be dangerous, and empirical research can challenge established practices and those who rely on them, because they raise questions that might offer difficult answers, and because if we are doing genuine research (be it qualitative or quantitative), we cannot know in advance what the answers will be: we can only work with what we find. (“Writing Centers and” 534)

Yet, in a phrase that I want to hold on to, she wrote that “these dangers are good dangers” (“Writing Center as” 175). She used this phrase to describe the importance of our letting go of disciplinary language and assumptions when working across disciplines (which she did a lot of) because doing so “demand[s] that we question and test our beliefs” and in turn can “lead us to more and better empirical research into how writing is learned” (“Writing Center as” 175). But I especially want to hold on to this idea of good

dangers because it describes a way of finding virtue in—or what Linda Adler-Kassner might call reframing—potentially all threatening and frightening situations, not only in our work but in our lives.

Perhaps it is presumptuous of me to say that Linda in her life and her writing remains an example for us all, but I can say that she is so for me. Another of what Angeli and her fellow graduate students referred to as a “Linda-ism” that I want to remember is “Don’t be a jerk (and if you have to be a jerk, don’t be a discouraged jerk)” (Sullivan et al. 68). Instead—as the memorials and the scholarship exhort—be a mentor, a collaborator, a listener, a courageous researcher, and a warrior. I want to give Linda the last word, so I’ll end with a quotation from her review of that other Linda’s book, a review I edited—lightly because she was an immaculate writer—for *Writing Center Journal*. In another moment of her writing reflecting her life, in this passage, I think you’ll agree that Linda could well be talking about herself:

Her calls for conversation, for listening carefully, for finding allies and understanding opposition, and for making our own stories rather than trying to refute frames imposed by those who would cut our resources and diminish our influence—these are calls we should heed and projects we should join. (Rev. 133)

## THE “TRULY COLLABORATIVE” WORK OF THE OUTCOMES COLLECTIVE

*Rita Malenczyk*

What I’d like to do here is revisit a classic essay in writing center scholarship, Andrea Lunsford’s “Collaboration, Control, and the Idea of a Writing Center” and read Linda Bergmann’s work—specifically, her collaboratively written chapter in the 2005 *Outcomes Book* about the development of the first WPA Outcomes Statement—through the lens of that essay. I’ll conclude by talking about what Linda herself brought to the process of developing the Statement and book chapter, both of which were, and are, unique in the degree to which they were what Lunsford would call “*truly* collaborative” (emphasis added).

Lunsford was arguably the first to make us all aware, twenty-three years ago, of collaboration’s considerable appeal and significance for writing centers. She cautions, of course, about how authority can creep into seemingly-collaborative writing center sessions (that’s the control part), but I want to focus on how she outlines the benefits of collaboration and the circumstances under which true collaboration occurs or can occur. Lunsford makes the following seven claims:

1. Collaboration aids in problem finding as well as problem solving.
2. Collaboration aids in learning abstractions.
3. Collaboration aids in transfer and assimilation; it fosters interdisciplinary thinking.
4. Collaboration leads not only to sharper, more critical thinking (students must explain, defend, adapt) but to deeper understanding of *others*. . . .
5. Collaboration leads to higher achievement in general. . . .
6. Collaboration promotes excellence.
7. Collaboration engages the whole student and encourages active learning (49–50; emphasis in original).

Collaboration, Lunsford argues,

reflects . . . a shift in the way we view knowledge. The shift involves a move from viewing knowledge and reality as things exterior to or outside of us, as immediately accessible, individually knowable, measurable, and shareable—to viewing knowledge and reality as mediated by or constructed through language in social use, as socially constructed, contextualized. (48)

Lunsford then discusses the difficulties of developing, finding, or creating a truly collaborative environment. She writes that “collaborative environments and tasks must *demand* collaboration” and that research on collaboration in the workplace defines three such environments and tasks: “high-order problem defining and solving; division of labor tasks, in which the job is simply too big for any one person; and division of expertise tasks” (50; emphasis in original). Lunsford goes on to note that

a collaborative environment must also be one in which goals are clearly defined and in which the jobs at hand engage everyone fairly equally. . . . In other words, such an environment rejects traditional hierarchies. In addition, the kind of collaborative environment I want to encourage calls for careful and ongoing monitoring and evaluating of the collaboration or group process, again on the part of all involved. In practice, such monitoring calls on each person involved in the collaboration to build a *theory* of collaboration, a theory of group dynamics. (50; emphasis in original)

I don’t know if I can say that the group that developed the Outcomes Statement (or, as the chapter authors call that group, the Outcomes Collective) got as far as the kind of theorizing Lunsford speaks of at the end of that passage. This was in large part because the group’s boundaries were so porous—people moved in and out of it, a circumstance I’ll discuss in

more detail later. However, the chapter “The Outcomes Project: The Insiders’ History” written by Keith Rhodes, Irvin Peckham, Linda Bergmann, and William Condon in *The Outcomes Book* reflects—as does my own experience as a member of the Collective—the benefits of collaboration as Lunsford defines them. Most importantly, however, it chronicles the development and history of what she would, I think, call “a truly collaborative environment.”

That such an environment developed was due not only to the personalities of the people involved but to the fact that the Statement began so weirdly. It started with a question on WPA-L, about whether there existed any kind of document that articulated what students should know at the end of first-year writing. Hearing that there was none, the question “well, why isn’t there, and shouldn’t we be able to come up with such a document?” was asked. From there, momentum simply developed in discussion. Conversation took place on the listserv for about a month and continued at informal meetings at the annual convention of the Conference on College Composition and Communication in Milwaukee. (Reading the listserv archives from this period is fun, as people try to nail down meeting dates and times, anticipating the chaos that will ensue when they all start running around CCCC trying to find each other.) After the conference, it became clear that a smaller group needed to be formed to really push the idea of a draft forward, so Bill Condon stepped up to submit a workshop proposal for CCCC the following year. Over thirty volunteers wanted to help lead the workshop, and so he had to select a limited number of leaders. He chose folks based on stage in career, geographical location, and institutional type. I was one of the people chosen; at the time, I was the most junior and had only lurked in the conversation up to that point. Linda was another (see the WPA-L archives, March–April 1996). She and I both became part of a group that held sessions to work on the Statement at the annual conference of the CWPA, CCCC, and elsewhere for a few years. In the end, as the authors write, “As many as twenty-five people spearheaded the writing and over forty contributed phrases and ideas” (13). It’s the history of this continually-evolving group that the *Outcomes Book* chapter chronicles.

While all the characteristics Lunsford attributes to collaboration and truly collaborative environments were, I would claim, features of the group as well as of the chapter that describes it, I want to focus on the two that are most relevant for my purpose here and that were also, I feel, inseparable in the process of developing the Statement. First, Lunsford claims that collaboration and collaborative groups foster and feature not only problem-solving but also problem-defining (or, as she words it, *problem-finding*).

Second, she asserts that collaboration leads “not only to sharper, more critical thinking” because collaborators must “explain, defend, adapt,” but to “deeper understanding of others” (49). Both of these characteristics reveal themselves in the Outcomes Collective’s struggle with audience and content—more particularly, with conflicts about what should be in the Statement—and with the multiple audiences that would use as well as read it. While the Collective’s initial problem or task was to develop a statement of common goals for first-year composition, it didn’t take too long before that problem/task was redefined in a twofold way: First, how do we accommodate a range of sometimes conflicting ideas about what those goals should be? Second, how do we accommodate audiences from both within and outside the discipline (Rhodes et al.)? These two questions actually *became* the problem—after all, it could be argued that the initial problem of developing some kind of statement was more or less solved when people started to address it—and they remained the problem up until the final product was approved. The way that twofold problem was solved reflects, to my mind, true collaboration—in other words, it wasn’t solved by imposing hierarchy.

The chapter authors describe the problem-solving process in some detail. Regarding conflicting ideas about what should be in the Statement and for whom it should be written, they write of the group’s intention to present a set of professionally-validated outcomes that were nevertheless flexible enough to accommodate local circumstances (10). Noting that the document had been written by writing program administrators with a range of theoretical positions and from a variety of institutions, regions, and so on, they write that, though the group had many disagreements,

we kept returning to the point that we were looking for what we had in common, what best ideas and best practices we could all agree on. Flurries of disagreement were most commonly resolved by moving to a level of generalization that could accommodate multiple positions. When there was a major argument in 1999 about whether the Outcomes Statement should mandate computer technologies, the issue was resolved with a line about technologies in general, to keep the issue open enough that it would not exclude particular institutions in the present or become obsolete a decade hence. (11)

You’ll note the passive voice in that passage—for example, “the issue was resolved.” It’s used a number of times, and all writing teachers understand that the passive voice elides the question of agency: If you have to use the passive voice, it means you don’t know who did something, and you go find out. However, in this case we really *didn’t* know. As the chapter authors write,

not only did we have a complicated reader who might lie anywhere on a continuum from rhetorician to concerned parent, we also had a complicated author. The number of authors expanded and their identities changed as some dropped out and new authors entered. The problem of revising for a complicated set of readers was additionally complicated by having to change a document with no recognized authors. (13)

As you might guess, then, the question of audience was an even more difficult one to address. Because the authors, all sixty-plus of them, were WPAs, and because the document was intended for use by WPAs, we considered ourselves “our own first audience” (Rhodes et al. 12–13). However, the Statement would also be read by people outside of the discipline, and that presented a conundrum. As the chapter authors put it,

professional language, characterized by words like *rhetoric*, *genre*, and *conventions* (and *register*), is useful to people who have grown used to a common set of associations. . . . But to others, it smacks of snotty language people use to show that they understand because they are on the in—and of course people who don’t understand are on the out. Having earned our PhDs, we sometimes display our badges through our language; people who have not similarly emblazoned themselves may interpret that display as self-privileging. (13–14; emphasis in original)

Various solutions to this problem were considered, including sidebars that were addressed to a variety of other audiences. However, the group decided that solution would be condescending, and in the end, the problem was solved only to a degree: The final Statement included a clearly-worded (readable by anyone) prologue explaining why the Statement was written in writing program administrators’ professional language (13). It was the best we could do, and it was something we were all able to agree on.

Of course, other characteristics of collaborative environments, as Lunsford defines them, were present in the Collective’s work as well. The task of producing the Statement, as it wound up being defined and completed, could not have been done by just one person. We rejected traditional hierarchy, which is reflected in our problem-solving about audience and content, and ongoing reflection on and monitoring of the group process was a feature of the process itself, as was division of expertise. For example, when it came down to the production of an actual draft statement for presentation to the CWPA Executive Board, we saw that this couldn’t be done by a group of ten or more (we’d never get anywhere), so the process of decision-making was delegated. We wound up forming a small task force composed

of some people who were good at keeping things on task and pushing forward, as well as some who were particularly good at placing themselves in other readers' shoes and reconciling divergent points of view. Lastly, one trait of true collaboration I've identified in re-reading this chapter and remembering our work on this project—but that Lunsford doesn't discuss in detail—is its messiness. Not only does a range of minds at work on a project produce a certain chaos that is difficult to contain, it also generates ideas and circumstances that are impossible to predict in advance and that remain in existence because of the absence of hierarchy. The Outcomes Collective embraced this messiness. As the chapter says, "The collaboration we envisioned was always extending outward; the idea was to let the Outcomes Statement fly and see what happened, not to try to contain it" (10). And it continues to fly, in two subsequent versions, the most recent of which was just approved by the CWPA Executive Board this past July.

I wish Linda were here to see it. Her voice, however, remains present, both in my memory and in the *Outcomes Book* chapter. At the beginning of the chapter, the four co-authors explain that each of them had initially written a separate chapter for the book, but that space considerations required them to condense what they'd written into one. Talking about how that particular collaborative process influenced the chapter's style, they wrote:

We hope to illuminate some key features . . . of the Outcomes Statement's rhetorical situation by presenting some part, at least, of the inside story in the inside voices. We will not be so dramatic as to make this an obvious dialogue; but along the way there will be some obvious changes in voice, some disjunctures of flow. Rather than smooth them all out, we have left just a bit of a textual reminder of the multitude of voices that came together in the Statement itself. (9)

I like to think I can pick out Linda's cadences in at least one of these textual reminders; she was always aware of the human element in all scholarly gatherings, so I hear her voice in the following:

In the archived discussions, I see the flow of lives through the project, as we made our plans for meeting at conferences, said our good-byes to the list as we left for vacations, disclosed pregnancy and birth, illness and recovery, retirements and job changes. The human factors helped keep our debates civil—for the most part—and helped build the community of human respect that allowed for this collaboration of cobblers. (11–12)

A “GENUINE COMPLEMENTARY RELATIONSHIP”: LINDA  
BERGMANN AND THE COMP-LIT DIVIDE

*Kelly Ritter*

This is my first visit to the IWCA conference because, in part, I don't work in a writing center. That's not really a valid excuse, though, and one I'm sure Linda Bergmann would frown upon, were she here with us today. Despite my woeful showing amongst my writing center colleagues, which illustrates on a personal level a remaining split in our larger field—that between the subfield of writing center teaching and research in relation to the umbrella of teaching and research done in rhetoric and composition—I still knew Linda and considered her a friend, a valued colleague, and an incredibly important scholar. That's what brings me here to this panel today. As Rita and Lauren have both outlined in their discussions, Linda Bergmann made indelible contributions to writing center studies and provided a legacy for others to model, in particular in working with graduate students. I knew Linda from the profession more generally—and from great opportunities to work closely with her in settings like the CCCC Executive Committee, which showed me exactly how generous a colleague she was. But I want to present an aspect of Linda's work here today that hasn't been spoken of thus far in our panel, and that is her work on the fraught relationship between composition studies and literature, particularly as it is executed in the first-year classroom.

It's fitting that Rita has spoken of how Linda collaborated on both the WPA Outcomes Statement and the chapter in the *Outcomes Book* describing that statement and process because my focus is on how Linda saw a collaborative possibility between the fields of composition and literature. Unlike many of her colleagues (myself included), Linda saw opportunities for dialogue between these two fields, most eloquently outlined in the introduction to her book, co-edited with Edith M. Baker, *Composition and/or Literature: The Ends of Education*. I want to talk about the value of that endeavor and that overall attempt on Linda's part at cross-disciplinary conversations—assuming we all agree that rhetoric and composition *is* a discipline and not just a subfield of English studies; more on that later. I want to also frame the importance of this contribution as I currently see it, in my role as a journal editor for the NCTE publication *College English*.

I will start by saying—as I've already alluded to—that I'm not the person to be up here advocating for a warm and happy relationship between literature and composition. I am not, nor likely will I ever be, as forward-thinking and welcoming as Linda in this regard—or probably in any regard, reflecting on what Lauren has shared with us about Linda's unwav-

ering dedication to writing centers and her graduate students' roles within them. We all should be so good to our future colleagues. While I embrace working in a large English department at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign that is, to a significant degree, dominated by literature faculty concerns and perspectives, I have my own separate concerns about the viability of freestanding writing and rhetoric departments, from both an administrative and a political standpoint. But these departmental politics and values aside, and regardless of where the first-year composition course is or may be located institutionally speaking, I am most deeply skeptical about the inclusion of literary works in first-year writing courses. As I frequently tell new teaching assistants when I justify why our first-year course at Illinois is rhetoric-based and essentially literature-free, the separation in this course of expository texts from imaginative/creative/literary ones (and I realize those labels themselves are problematic, but please work with me here) is because students in high school are amply exposed to the study of literature and are often asked to write mostly (or exclusively) about literary texts in their so-called English classes. First-year students really don't have the nuanced understanding of how composition is not English writ large; they further don't understand how writing an essay for English class isn't just dissecting a novel or short story. They call articles *stories* and typically have a poor understanding of the genres that comprise non-fiction writing, let alone the tenets of rhetoric that would inform those genres—even as they read and write more now than ever before due to portable technologies, digital texts, and social media spaces. So, I tell new teaching assistants, making first-year writing a pretty exclusively non-fiction experience is reasonable—to me—and does a service that's separate from other English courses. I also point out that not to worry, Susie (my standard exemplar student in these scenarios) will get her literature course in due time—maybe even in her first year, right after completing her composition course. There's always plenty of lit to go around, I say. What the students need now is immersion in other forms of writing, both to read and to compose.

But as we careen closer to the mass implementation of initiatives such as Common Core Standards, my own justifications become less, well, justifiable, because the Grade 7–12 standards for English in the Common Core documents specify a pretty robust examination of both literary and non-literary forms, arguments, and writing exercises and conventions. In fact, the Common Core—if followed to a T—promises to school our incoming first-year students pretty deeply in writing about literature and writing about non-fiction texts. For a more interesting take than mine on this hypothesis, please talk with Doug Hesse, so he can summarize for you his excellent “Cloudy with a Chance of Rain” plenary talk from the October

2014 University of Maryland Writing Conference. No longer, from the perspective of the Common Core Standards document, does English mean just literature. Students will come to our courses, theoretically, well-versed in the very rhetorical techniques we aim to show them for the first time. It might be my old justifications are going to soon become obsolete, if they aren't already. Alternatively, I suppose, the bifurcation already in place will become even stronger. That would be unfortunate. But if a stronger merging emerges from this attempt at deeper secondary school literacy instruction, what will a naysayer like me do to ease her own conscience or at least understand the arguments of her vocal opponents—among them, in about five to ten years, the very high school students who were schooled under the Common Core, now graduate teaching assistants in my own program?

Enter Linda's important scholarly contribution to this age-old debate about what writing is or can be in the university setting. Unlike so many submissions that I see submitted to *College English*, Linda's work in this area recognized that the study of literature could have purposes beyond the replication of stock analyses of texts and authors—that it could mean something to a first-year student struggling to find her way into a discourse community whose boundaries are ever-shifting and whose values are bound up in (frequently illegitimate) institutional politics as much as legitimate curricular goals. There exists in many of the submissions to *College English* a fairly clear lit-comp divide: The submissions I typically receive on literary matters perceive that the journal is interested in only how to teach a particular literary text or author. Another type of submission, of course, is the type that doesn't know what *College English* does or is at all—and thus sends a jargon-filled literary analysis that is best suited for almost any other venue besides ours. Precious few submissions bring together the causes of the teaching of writing and the employment of literary texts in that teaching, let alone in meaningful ways. As a subset of all manuscripts, real and viable manuscripts on literature and writing are essentially zero. *College English*, perhaps, no longer means English to many potential contributors but instead means English as represented by Rhetoric and Composition which is where writing instruction is perceived to live. This is really a discussion for another day, but suffice it to say that in certain circles, Rhetoric and Composition is not only not part of English-as-literature, it's also more powerful and more omnipresent. This perception, borne out in the ratio of tenure-track Rhetoric and Composition jobs to literature jobs advertised each season, can only be threatening to our literary-focused colleagues, especially those who are assigned to teach first-year writing but truly don't know another paradigm for doing so other than comp-as-lit, or litcomp, to recall the Tate-Lindemann debates (which Linda also does in her book).

This problem with manuscript construction may be because the split between lit and comp is seen as finalized and longstanding—backed by folks like me, who don't want, figuratively, their chocolate in their peanut butter. But Linda and her contributors to *Composition and/or Literature* resisted that bifurcation in a particular way. In light of the convergences required in curricular design these days—secondary to Common Core but also to so many other models of “efficient” learning and shortened time-to-degree, not to mention the ever-in-jeopardy state of literary studies in Gen Ed curricular discussions—maybe it's time to revisit how valuable Linda's hypotheses were by focusing on her introduction to *Composition and/or Literature* as representative of many of the concerns voiced in the larger project.

In her introduction “What Do You Folks Teach Over There, Anyway?” Linda articulates that this book is not about the pros or cons of creating separate departments of writing out of literature-focused English departments but rather about “the pressures the relationship between literary and composition studies put on the teaching of writing” as well as whether a “broader examination of whether and how the study of literature can be compatible with and integrated into composition studies” (1–2). She additionally notes that the intellectual background of literature faculty is “substantially different” from those specializing in composition and rhetoric, and this either adds to or is the problem at hand. Linda acknowledges that the “common sense” of most writing programs is to exclude literature in their teachings, yet this practice is impractical in smaller colleges and/or programs where the teaching of writing is exclusively offered by literature faculty (2). There is, then, a need for productive discussions and “mutual accommodation” between literature and composition faculty, even as the move here would not be toward reconciliation, but instead a more productive employment of the tensions that exist, and will continue to exist, between lit and comp (3).

I especially appreciate Linda's mention of “literature through the back door” (4) as it gets practiced in the classrooms of graduate students training in literary studies. As a WPA, I think I may be overly concerned, at times, with how open this back door is—especially as I fret when I hear a TA go into a deep analysis of something like *A Room of One's Own* that veers fairly far away from understanding that text in relation to the students' own writing (as I heard just last week in an observation) or when I struggle with an instructor's entirely metaphysical take on a David Foster Wallace essay—which in itself is not “literature” but to my ears is quite literary and thus gets picked up by this instructor as the latter, bringing comfort to his own instructional experience when otherwise he's clearly out to sea. The end

result of both of these observations, of course, is a classroom of students *themselves* out to sea, as I ask, how again is this a *writing* classroom? Linda told us that this is the wrong question; instead, we should be asking how to make lemonade out of the sometimes-sour conditions we currently face and what the benefits of that might really be to ourselves and our students.

Because Linda makes no bones in the construction of this book that either my or my TAs' discomfort will be alleviated any time soon, even if one of us gives more into the perspectives and values of the other. She reminds readers that the useful paradigm for going forward might be not to say how composition courses *should* be taught, but rather recognize how they *are* taught alongside the lit-comp divide and work to making sense and meaning of that, especially since graduate training only lasts for so long, and more and more faculty are contingent—meaning the sites of writing that make up their working conditions are always in flux and frequently divorced from the instructors' own institutional origins or values. And, as Linda also notes, this is in addition to the existing perception amongst many literature faculty that the knowledge and teaching of literary texts is a higher calling, and a more dedicated activity, to English studies than the teaching of writing—a historical argument I doubt anyone here needs for me to rehearse. Citing Sharon Crowley, Linda acknowledges that this perception often leads to current-traditionalism, i.e., all the writing with none of the content or intellectual curiosity. This, too, is likely familiar to many of us, even as we think we are, as a field, past such bifurcations of skill or activity from the rhetorical situation.

I've certainly seen this in my own past WPA work: The instructors who were trained in literary studies thirty, forty, or more years ago, and who have taken to giving separate grades for content and for structure (or writing) which they think is actually quite progressive because they can't hear my teeth grinding as they describe this pedagogy. I've seen these instructors dig in their heels when I talk about the value of something like portfolio assessment or peer review or anything that complicates the notion that content can be separated from form (wherein form stands in for grammar, surface cleanliness, and document design). This is an important problem that undergirds Linda and her co-editor's attempts to understand, rather than simply re-educate, the faculty who see the value of literary approaches and literary content in a composition course. Her work makes me feel that I should be more generous and open to conversations about the teaching of writing that involve faculty who don't think like I do. Her work also makes me hopeful that mass initiatives like Common Core are going to be important building blocks, hopefully, rather than gross hindrances, in our having this conversation and including students in it. How will students

coming out of instruction in the Common Core Standards see the position of so-called imaginative writing? Where will their lessons on context and exigence lead them to in their analyses of literature, and will those lessons eventually bring literary-focused composition teachers back to the table with more willingness to listen to *us*? We can only hope.

As I close, and as I think about hope both personally and professionally, I am reminded that what characterized Linda's work as a scholar and as a person was her ability to combine a sharp wit and keen employment of skepticism—what we might today call snark—with an abiding sense of real hope. She saw promise in everyone she met. She inspired the people she worked with, and I know this because I attended her memorial service at Purdue in January 2014 and heard that very testimony of which Lauren spoke—and she inspired those who had only interacted with her through her words on the page. With the olive branches she extended in the form of works like *Composition and/or Literature*, she reminded us that we are all about the conversations in our work—and not about the shouting past one another. As a writing center scholar, she knew all too well the power of dialogue and coming together, across a table, to find a solution to a problem—whether that was a writing problem or something else. That eternal hopefulness is best expressed in the very last posting she made on her Facebook page before her death. Dated December 1, 2013, that posting reads:

I took my son to see *La Traviata* at the Lyric last night. He really enjoyed it. I'm so pleased that he is beginning to share my passion (well, for him, perhaps appreciation) for the opera. I keep hoping that Violetta will not die at the end—but, alas, she always does, singing wonderfully as she dies.

I ask that we always imagine Linda just this way, thinking about the nature of possibility and singing wonderfully.

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## Disabling Writing Program Administration

Amy Vidali

### ABSTRACT

*This article suggests “disabling” writing program administration, which means bringing the insights of disabled people and perspectives in order to innovate, include, and transgress expected and exclusionary norms in writing program administration. Focusing on the stories we tell about ourselves, I analyze how WPA narratives are structured to shun or tolerate disability and how these narratives establish normative expectations of who WPAs are and can be, in terms of disability status. Using the critical and activist lens of disability studies, I identify how anxiety and depression often feature as inevitable and intolerable in our narratives; I examine how triumph-over-adversity tales are dangerous for disabled WPAs and all WPAs; and I punctuate my analysis with my own narrative of depression. More broadly, I suggest that disability can inform all writing program work by drawing attention to the bodies that do such work.*

There is rich scholarship on disability and the teaching of college writing, but less attention has been paid to how disability can and does influence writing program administration beyond classroom practice.<sup>1</sup> Noticeably absent in the discussion is consideration of how disability shapes the identities of writing program administrators because a WPA is disabled and/or affiliates with disability studies perspectives.

In the many first-person stories published by WPAs, often called WPA narratives, few WPAs claim disability (on claiming, see Linton). Arguably, there is little discussion of and by disabled WPAs because, as Patricia Dunn states in her exploration of multiple literacies in the teaching of writing, “Composition specialists today were most likely yesterday’s linguistically talented students moving up in a linguisto-centric school system that privileged our way of knowing” (50). Put another way, it seems easy to assume that scholars with disabilities, particularly disabilities that impact writing and communication, aren’t likely to end up running writing programs. But

this isn't the reality; there *are* WPAs with various disabilities (including those that affect language and interaction), and disabled scholars in rhetoric and composition are increasingly securing faculty positions. Further, because a WPA can become disabled at any time, and because many universities expect rhetoric and composition scholars to rotate into an administrative role in a writing program at some point in their careers, it's important that WPA work be accessible to those with disabilities.

There are many ways that we might make writing program work more accessible, as disability is not only relevant when a disabled person is in a classroom or writing program but wherever bodies, figurative or literal, gather.<sup>2</sup> Most importantly, we must consider how WPA narratives are structured to shun or only tolerate disability and how these narratives establish normative expectations of who WPAs are and can be, in terms of disability status. In response, I suggest that we *disable* writing program work, which means knowingly and innovatively thinking through and with disability, particularly in terms of the stories we tell about ourselves. Disabling WPA narratives means making our writing program work accessible and inclusive which involves creating new narratives and critiquing existing ones. In doing this, we challenge the ways these narratives suppress disability and discourage disabled scholars and teachers from becoming WPAs, and we recognize how disability can inform all writing program work by drawing attention to the bodies that do such work.

I suggest *disabling* writing program administration in order to emphasize the term *disability* and explicitly invite disabled WPAs to join the discussion. By *disabling*, I mean the process of bringing the insights of disabled people and perspectives in order to innovate, include, and transgress expected and exclusionary norms.<sup>3</sup> In some ways, what I am suggesting is similar to Brenda Brueggemann's articulation of enabling in her work on enabling pedagogy, where she notes that "disability enables insight—critical, experiential, cognitive, sensory, and pedagogical insight" (795). However, for me, the idea of enabling can sometimes eclipse disability and focus on how changes can be made to benefit all people, disabled or not.<sup>4</sup> While benefitting all people is an admirable and often important goal (and one I'll make some reference to below), my intentions are a bit more activist at this stage, as I intend to welcome (not tolerate) disabled WPAs; recognize the discrimination they have experienced or might experience; and explore the perspectives that disability invites (not persists in spite of). To accomplish these goals, I use a disability studies lens to analyze published WPA narratives, and I punctuate that analysis with my own WPA narrative, in the context of my depression. While my story is not emblematic, my telling reveals the ways that disability hides in our narratives and suggests how

disability can more prominently figure in ways that challenge the rhetorical tropes of WPA work (and disability). My story invites further discussion about how to construct innovative narrative spaces for disabled WPAs to share their experiences and expertise.

My analysis is informed by the simultaneous abundance and dearth of disability in our WPA narratives. I begin by tracing how anxiety and depression often feature in our narratives and how these “conditions” are narrowly conceptualized as the result of WPA work. The ways in which anxiety and depression frequent our narratives position disability as both inevitable and unwanted (as these mental states never pre-figure WPA work), are assumed to be solvable, and are the only disabilities consistently mentioned in our stories. In response, the second part of my analysis asks how we can revise our WPA narratives to better include disability and diverse embodiment, and I argue that the WPA who inhabits our narratives is hyper-able, as she dashes to meetings, problem-solves around the clock, and confronts those who have the power to ruin her career. At the same time, the WPAs in our narratives are wounded by such work, often in the form of emotional and mental trauma that rhetorically manifests in her WPA narrative and, assumedly, in her body. To critique the common depiction of WPA-as-hero, I employ disability studies’ critiques of overcoming, which suggest that when we expect disabled people to work hard to “overcome” barriers, we ignore that those barriers are institutional inequities, not personal traumas to be surmounted. I re-purpose these critiques to assess how (ableist) hero narratives obscure broader inequities in our work as WPAs. Throughout my analysis, I posit that the deployment of this WPA figure, who is both hyper-able and disabled, does damage to abled and disabled WPAs as mental suffering cannot be par for the course nor can disability be a disqualification, for being a WPA.

In her analysis of discourses of disappointment in WPA work, Laura Micciche asks,

Enroute to hope, can we speak candidly about professional inequities and disappointments without being regarded as doomsayers, as spoilers of democratic identity that composition studies has constructed of itself? (98)

Similarly, in disabling WPA narratives, I suggest that we not view disability as a spoiler or problem to solve, but as Micciche suggests, as an opportunity to candidly assess professional inequities and how we delimit the quality of our work and ourselves.<sup>5</sup> Because disabled can be something we are, and disabling can be something we do, in the name of inclusion and social justice in writing program administration.

## VALUING WPA NARRATIVES

*My department chair slides a sheet of paper with my annual review scores across her desk to me, and the score in writing program administration is, again, lower than I expected. I explain to her how much work I am doing, how I have met the categories in the criteria, and how I was explicitly told to do less administrative work the year before in my mid-tenure review (though I wasn't doing much less). She explains that the people on the committee who assigned the score don't really understand the nature of my contract or the criteria; she says that I can appeal. I begin to shake and cry, she hands me a tissue, and I look down. I quickly sign the form and collide with a newly-hired faculty member as I exit the building. I become so anxious that I start going into the department office on weekends to do my photocopying. It seems impossible that I will get tenure as a WPA.*

The WPA narratives that are popular in our field typically involve a WPA sharing her experience of success and/or failure in the context of a particular college or university setting. While some have questioned the value of these typified narratives (more on this below), my purpose is not to determine whether we should be telling these stories but to examine how such narratives delimit WPA identities. In my mini-narrative above, I have emphasized my stress and hard work, as WPA narratives often do, but have elided the depression that informed but was only tangentially caused by my WPA work. Put another way, when I read this narrative, I know it's a story of depression, but WPAs may read it as a typical tale of WPA work.

Many have articulated the value of WPAs narrating their stories, and my analysis of these narratives similarly assumes that they are influential. In her analysis of the professional narratives of George Wykoff at Purdue, Shirley K Rose suggests that WPA narratives “give meaning and value . . . to what might otherwise seem to be singular, inexplicable experiences without significance, representing them in terms of familiar shared metanarratives” (222). Rose focuses on how to construct these narratives from less expected materials, and she concludes that we read “these stories with the expectation that they will help us better understand our work, be better at it, derive greater joy from it” (222). In her piece on documenting WPA work, Karen Bishop similarly suggests diverse ways of narrating WPA work, noting that whether the stories are positive or negative, “our challenge is to discover ways to appropriate those narratives and make visible the intellectual dimensions of our work” (42). She suggests a “consistent model” for doing this, using the metaphor and practice of documentary (43), and considers,

as does Rose, how we can revise the ways we produce narratives in order to push our field forward. In *The Activist WPA*, Linda Adler-Kassner focuses on how we tell stories of student writers and writing, and she highlights the ways these stories not only share identity but frame it, as they “to some extent prescribe the roles that we set for ourselves as WPAs” (183). She is more tentative about revising these narratives, as she asserts that “building a base and developing alliances” must come first (184). While each of these scholars suggests that WPA narratives importantly frame who we are and what we do, and that such narratives are necessarily informed by race, gender, and class (particularly Adler-Kassner), none mentions disability.

Others are more critical about the rhetorical work of WPA narratives, and these scholars frame them as cautionary tales (Pinard) or victim narratives (Dew and Horning). A thoroughgoing critique comes from *GenAdmin: Theorizing WPA Identities in the Twenty-First Century*, whose authors claim that these narratives offer a view of WPA work as agonistic and impossible without tenure. In arguing that “there doesn’t seem to be much space for our stories in the narrative patterns established by the field,” the authors focus on the ways WPA narratives are framed by “old metaphors, along binary continuums, and by the identification of rank” (Charlton, Charlton, Graban, Ryan, and Ferdinandt Stolley 35, 36). These authors’ arguments are useful because they drive us to identify and critique the metaphors in our narratives and to ask, “How do these stories include and exclude, liberate and oppress?” (38). The *GenAdmin* authors “encourage alternative, localized renditions of what might otherwise become grand narratives that could limit our field” (47); however, they seem to conclude that we already understand the common rhetorical strategies of WPA narratives and can move to re-inventing and re-invigorating them. Instead, I suggest that we revisit these narratives and critique what they have to say about who is qualified to do WPA work, especially in relation to disability.

#### MAPPING ANXIETY AND DEPRESSION

*I’m pulling into a campus parking lot when my phone rings. My colleague, and chair of my mid-tenure committee, kindly but urgently says it’s time to turn in my dossier, that it will reflect poorly on the department and on me if it goes out late to my external reviewers. I tell him I have most of it done but that I just got back in town from the funeral, or rather four funerals over a three-day period. I don’t say that I’ve been spending most of my time figuring out how to get a copy of a coroner’s report, and not long after, I’ll receive the wrong report in the mail (for an*

*88-year-old woman, not for my 35-year-old friend) and begin the process again. My colleague says to hurry up with the dossier, and I just say okay, then nearly smash the phone to bits on the hot July asphalt.*

In some cases, anxiety and depression are explicitly mapped to writing program work in WPA narratives. Such mapping is always part of the story but not the point of the story. Differently, in my story above, grief and budding depression intervene and intersect with my WPA work, instead of my WPA work primarily causing the anxiety. This conversation with my colleague and friend, who was kindly trying to help me and ultimately saved my job, was impossible—there was no allowable space for me to say that it had to be late. But when I've told the story in other places and spaces, I've focused on the stress of having to build both typical and administrative dossiers and the pressure of having additional reviewers. I've highlighted how the university tenure committee emphasized how overworked I was but how my position never changed. I've placed the anxiety and depression I was feeling, which was related to the death of my friend, off the map, or rather, kept the emotion and hid the cause. I just didn't see a space for figuring depression and anxiety into my WPA tale, or at least anxiety and depression that wasn't primarily related to my WPA work.

The ways that anxiety and depression figure and hide in WPA narratives are problematic for three reasons. First, anxiety and depression are represented as caused by WPA work, which suggests that WPAs do not enter the field disabled or become otherwise disabled. Second, these narratives mark anxiety and depression as intolerable and curable, leaving little space for disabled WPAs who are not passing through these health states. Third, these references to anxiety and depression appear to be the dominant (if not the only) representation of disability in these narratives, leaving little room to imagine WPAs with other disabilities. In analyzing these references, my goal is not to discourage people from being WPAs, suggest that WPA experiences are not legitimately difficult, or claim that having health problems should prevent someone from being or continuing as a WPA (unless they so choose). Instead, I analyze these references as indicators of the chilly climate for disability in WPA work.<sup>6</sup>

In existing WPA narratives, anxiety and depression are caused by WPA work, are not particularly concerning or unusual, and are relieved through hard work and/or tenure. In "On Coming to Voice" from *Kitchen Cooks, Plate Twirlers and Troubadours*, Mara Holt discusses her time as the "unofficial associate director of composition," where she did everything from running faculty workshops to training TAs to selecting textbooks (28–29). She

describes how she felt after going through the tenure process as an untitled administrator:

Wounded. Crazy from having kept my mouth shut for the previous year and a half, just in case I might inadvertently plant some malice where it could unconsciously sabotage me. I was developing physical symptoms of stress that I'd never seen any sign of before. (27)

She further frames her WPA experience as debilitating when she claims that she “was amazed at the physical and emotional effects” (27). Her experience of disability (or anxiety, though she uses neither term) as a consequence of her WPA work seems more than metaphorical, though she may not have had physical wounds or a DSM diagnosis.<sup>7</sup> While she is disturbed by these bodily effects, she does not comment on them as extraordinary for a WPA in the position she was in. Disabling conditions appear to be par for the WPA course.

In the same collection, Mary Pinard focuses on the delight and worry of first directing a program, and anxiety is in her article and its title: “Surviving the Honeymoon: Bliss and Anxiety in a WPA’s First Year, or Appreciating the Plate Twirler’s Art.” She narrates her experience re-invigorating a writing center and then thinking twice about doing so after attending the WPA Workshop. In her section entitled “The Anxiety,” she describes: “Naked power. Power games. Broken promises. Funding cuts. Professional denigration. Slippery slopes. Fickle review standards . . . Burn out” (60). She goes on to note her bodily consequences: “I became overextended, exhausted, and worried about the expectations I’d set everywhere, like traps, for myself” (61). In describing both literal exhaustion and a metaphorical “whiplash” (62), she suggests that the best strategy is to make (better) use of the honeymoon period when you first arrive as a WPA, though this does little to resolve the ensuing anxiety she describes. The information Pinard received at the WPA Workshop was both a salve and a source of anxiety (60), and her piece makes clear that anxiety is simply part of being a WPA. It isn’t clear, however, how those who are unable to productively cope with such anxiety or who already have anxiety conditions that might be unreasonably exacerbated would fare in these positions. As such, this type of narrative—which embraces anxiety as part of the job and not something that can interfere with the job—places WPA positions out of reach for those without a certain kind of emotional fortitude. In my case, it made my persisting anxiety, not caused by WPA work, unspeakable.

Narrations of anxiety as necessarily part of WPA work also appear in *The Promise and Perils of Writing Program Administration*. In a piece on her time as a pre-tenure WPA, Camille Langston describes a bodily reaction

in a section entitled “Frantic Fall,” when she reacts to an email noting her administrative position is not recognized by her university: “After reading her response, I ‘sucked air,’ as my family fondly calls my immediate panic reaction” (185). Though perhaps intended to garner a laugh, it is another instance of a bodily, anxiety-ridden reaction to WPA work and one that Langston is only able to resolve by escaping her WPA position through a temporary overseas appointment, as she claimed that the “time and stress” could not be worth it (190). While her experience is not necessarily indicative of short- or long-term disability, the narrative frames anxiety as something that must be escaped, even if one loses her job as a result. Depression and anxiety are primarily metaphors *for* the job, rather than something real.

A more tragic article in the same collection warrants attention, as it is one of the few that directly identifies diagnosis and medication for anxiety. In “Identity Theft of a Writing Center Director: The New Art of Academic Punishment,” Margaret Weaver describes the “identity theft” she felt upon resigning as Writing Center director which ultimately led her to seek mental help and medication. She explains that she could not understand why she was “so filled with anxiety” upon resigning as Writing Center director (her resignation resulted from a scantily-described incident between two graduate student TAs). She notes: “[T]he anxiety I experienced in regard to my resignation was so immobilizing that my doctor mandated I take a two-week medical leave and started me on Zoloft” (282). Though clearly of concern to her, the incident is primarily articulated within a narrative of how powerful writing program or writing center identity can be. Again, anxiety and depression are articulated as par for the course, though at the same time, intolerable and in need of treatment. While I don’t want to diminish Weaver’s job-related anxiety or her sense that she was “the victim of some sort of violence” (281), such anxiety is positioned as a problem to solve and, in some ways, a badge of honor for being dedicated to your work. In narratives like Weaver’s, anxiety isn’t something that pre-exists or co-exists with WPA work, and while her narrative certainly lends insight into being a WPA, increased attention to the embodied consequences of WPA work—in terms of what it looks like to care for oneself and invite others to care for you—is important but intolerable within the bounds of typical WPA narratives.

WPA narratives more subtly negate disability by positioning health as a highly desirable and attainable state and by using health as a metaphor for success. In a non-narrative piece entitled “Developing Healthy Management and Leadership Styles: Surviving the WPA’s ‘Inside Game,’” Irene Ward iterates how WPA work can cause illness: “So as much as burnout will lessen your ability to be effective in your WPA position, more impor-

tant, it can cause serious health risks, and it can cause illness” (50). She also references the “resultant anxiety” when WPAs are not supported (54).<sup>8</sup> That WPAs might be otherwise anxious is not considered, and Ward sketches what types of WPAs are more “likely” to become anxious, noting that certain “personal characteristics” can “help predict if a person will suffer from job stress,” including “being ‘anxiety prone,’ introverted, or flexible” (58). Though this would seem to be circular logic (anxiety-prone people tend to be more anxious), her identification of personal characteristics that are likely to lead to job stress locates anxiety as originating in WPA bodies which discounts how anxiety might be produced in the interaction of bodies and environments, as disability studies scholars often claim. She simply suggests that people fix their own anxiety: “Stop thinking you are a victim; take control” (61).

Equally interesting are the ways that Ward’s piece conflates being healthy and being successful, which pushes disability to the margins. She suggests that “[d]eveloping coping and leadership skills can help ensure that WPAs remain healthy and effective in the position of WPA” (49), making health and effectiveness linked (and a matter of choice) and disability unwanted. This occurs again when she urges WPAs to “move toward a sound healthy approach to their work that will sustain them over the long term” (52), as it isn’t clear if *healthy* means bodily health (as she’s discussed elsewhere in the article) or figurative health that she equates with success, or both. This is mirrored in the introduction to *Kitchen Cooks, Plate Twirlers and Troubadours* where Diana George similarly uses metaphors of health and disease to frame her four-page introduction, as she explains that “the health of the writing program is crucial to the health of many departments” (xii). Though health metaphors are certainly not unique to discussions of WPA work (and divorce metaphors are also common<sup>9</sup>), framing problematic on-the-job issues in terms of (ill) health stigmatizes those WPAs with existing health issues and subtly, if not eugenically, implies that only the fittest survive as WPAs.<sup>10</sup>

The goal of the foregoing analysis is not to pick out each time the word *anxiety* or *health* is used in a WPA narrative or to argue that WPA work always leads to anxiety or even to suggest that anxiety is always bad. Instead, my concern is that we are ignoring the ways that anxiety and depression are characterized in stories of WPA work, and we are not considering how we want to respond to those characterizations. If disability is only ever something bad that happens to WPAs and programs, there is scarce space for the disabled WPA to articulate her value and perspective, but more than this, there is no space to articulate an interdependent model

of WPA work where we care for ourselves, and each other, in the ways disability studies teaches.

#### DISABLING WPA NARRATIVES

*In the months before my friend's death, I finish an article about the rhetorics of gastrointestinal distress. In the weeks before, I research detox programs, mail my friend a letter and a packet, and coordinate the beginning of an intervention. A few weeks later, after he's gone, I leak bad poetry, about taking suitcases of his photos on the plane, about throwing apologies down the drain, about what my friend taught me about my husband, his best friend. One of the poems details my struggle to tell the tale of my friend's death and my fear that I might write the story and "send it out," as I would an academic paper. It ends, "I'm not sure when the depression is talking, though, when I'm going down with the ship." I start going to all the poetry readings my department offers, coordinated by my mid-tenure review chair, who will suddenly die a few years after my friend. I'm running the writing program, but I'm not doing any academic writing. Nothing that "counts."*

In my case, depression wasn't only a mental state; it was a textual intervention in my life as a scholar and administrator. My scholarship and teaching wandered one way, informed by my depression and disability studies research, while my WPA identity remained firmly rooted in a masquerade of health and success as I forced myself to attend meetings and maintain an open-door policy. As a consequence of this splitting of my WPA work from my embodied reality as a depressed person, my WPA duties felt unreal and burdensome and my depression more onerous.

How can we reframe WPA narratives to include disability in more productive ways? How might I have done so? What are the rhetorical strategies and risks? Beyond the risks of disclosing disability, a significant barrier to sharing disabled WPA narratives is the expectation to overcome the problem(s) highlighted in the narrative; this expectation of overcoming is common to both WPA narratives and typical/stereotyped disability narratives. Engaging the rich scholarship on overcoming in disability studies helps identify the damage that triumph-over-adversity tales pose for disabled WPAs and all WPAs and helps resist simply encouraging "more" disabled WPA narratives if they only reify existing expectations to independently overcome disability and all WPA hardship.<sup>11</sup>

Disability scholars have long critiqued the expectation that people overcome their disabilities. Hero narratives are particularly dangerous for dis-

abled WPAs because they intersect with existing expectations to overcome disability, creating a double-overcoming bind for the disabled WPA. These overcoming narratives also function problematically for those without disabilities (or those in the space between disability and ability), as they provide little room to reflect upon and grieve the failures that are inevitable to WPA work, as hero narratives require a relentless search for solutions. In “The Second Phase: From Disability Rights to Disability Culture,” from his collection *Why I Burned My Book*, Paul Longmore asserts, “In order for people with disabilities to be respected as worthy Americans . . . they have been instructed that they must perpetually labor to ‘overcome’ their disabilities,” which involves “continuous cheerful striving toward some semblance of normality” (221). He explains that this pressure to overcome is “rooted in nondisabled interests and values,” which tucks disability away and fails to recognize or rectify the power differential between disabled and nondisabled people. Simi Linton argues that overcoming narratives locate disability in particular problem bodies, rather than in interactions of bodies and environments. She notes the consequences:

If we, as a society, place the onus on individuals with disabilities to work harder to “compensate” for their disabilities or to “overcome” their condition or the barriers in the environment, we have no need for civil rights legislation or affirmative action. (19) (On overcoming, see also Dolmage in *Disability Rhetoric*.)

Asking the disabled WPA to “compensate” might take the form of tolerating an inaccessible office, failing to provide needed technology, or construing a disability-related personal assistant as a “bonus.”

In “The Empire of the ‘Normal’: A Forum on Disability and Self-Representation,” G.T. Couser identifies the impediments to writing and publishing disability autobiography, and his analysis speaks to some of the narrative barriers of writing and sharing disabled WPA narratives. He explains that while disability autobiography “offers an alternative to patronizing and marginalizing (mis)representation by others,” as it is likely to represent disability as “a ‘living condition’ not a metaphor for some undesirable moral status” (306), disabled people struggle to publish autobiographies because their stories often cannot conform to the “tyranny of the comic plot” (308). The alternative to the comic plot for disability narratives is a narrative of failure and abjection, and typically death, as evidenced in mainstream movies that prominently feature disabled characters. (See Dolmage and DeGenero on *Million Dollar Baby*.) These options are mirrored in WPA narratives which push the WPA to save the day or narrate her tragic fall. Finally, Couser highlights the practical challenges of writing disability autobiogra-

phy such as using sometimes slow-moving adaptive software in the writing process, and I suggest that we encourage and create more diverse textual spaces for WPA narratives beyond published collections and articles.

While the intersection of overcoming themes in disability and WPA narratives is particularly problematic for disabled WPAs, the overcoming narratives of WPA work also position all WPAs as needing to fix impossible issues on their own. While such narratives have been critiqued as hyper-masculine hero narratives (see Charlton et al. on Ed White's "Use It or Lose It: Power and WPA"), so are these narratives hyper-able. For example, in "Tenure-Track Faculty as WPAs: Notes from a New WPA," Megan Fulwiler claims:

I am a magician, physician, fix-it person, exorcist, exterminator. I am the solution, the cure, the answer. I am lieutenant and janitor, reformer and rookie. . . . I am an untenured administrator of a writing program at a small liberal arts college . . . . (92)

Though intended to elicit a knowing laugh, this model is not reasonable for most folks but particularly not for disabled people, who may not have the ability or energy to be the "solution" to everything and/or have come to understand that they shouldn't be. Similarly, in "Why I Won't Keep My Head Down or Follow Other Bad Advice for the Junior Faculty WPA," Stephanie Roach passionately argues for the value of her WPA position, and she claims that her job is about "keeping her head up, serving on more committees, going to more meetings, not staying out of trouble, and actively, vocally paying out dues" (117). This model leaves little room for a disabled WPA who may not be vocal, literally or figuratively. Finally, in a narrative focused on the benefits of being a pre-tenure WPA, Lauren Sewell Ingraham states, "In short, I earned tenure because I performed well in all aspects of my position and didn't give composition-resistant faculty much to complain about" (295–96). These are tough acts to follow for any WPA, particularly for disabled WPAs who may work at different paces and in different manners. While these WPAs have clearly worked hard, I am countering with a disabled model of WPA work that honors productive delegation of tasks to a support team, encourages reliance on communication modes that work best for the WPA and her program (which may be electronic and/or less confrontational), and broadly imagines WPAs as embodied, but not the embodiment of their programs.

In addition to reifying unreasonable job expectations, these overcoming narratives assume that we all enter WPA positions with the same abilities, tools, and goals, when disabled WPAs may enter with different (though not necessarily lesser) abilities, skills, and mind-sets. For example, in *Praxis*

*and Allies: The WPA Game*, Bras et al. introduce a board game designed to teach readers/players about being WPAs. Their game offers a new, smart take on the often-told tale of road-weary WPAs, and each player is allotted seven knowledge tokens, seven *ethos* tokens, eight funding tokens, and twelve energy tokens. They note that “successful WPAs must avoid burnout by managing stress and caring for themselves” (79); however, by suggesting that all WPAs have the same tokens (including plenty of energy tokens), there is little room for those whose disabilities may require adaptations to “play the game.” This assumption is paralleled when WPAs are metaphorized as hyper-able figures, particularly runners. For example, Roach notes that being a WPA was the course she “wanted to run” (111), and in a chapter aptly titled “Overcoming Disappointment: Constructing Writing Program Identity Through Postmodern Mapping,” Sharon James McGee provides this analogy: “She does not harness her power to beat the other runners—for many marathon runners, success is not in beating others but in finishing the race—she harnesses it to endure” (61). This leaves little space for a disabled WPA, who may smash against the hurdles of inaccessibility (and be blamed for that), rather than weaving and darting toward the finish line.

Another challenge in narrating disability in WPA work is the lack of data about how many disabled WPAs there are, where *we/they* are geographically located, how disability intersects with other identities, and how disability positively and negatively impacts WPA work. Disabled WPAs have not typically been queried about their experiences or seen themselves represented in survey results (though disability has cropped up in some responses anyway).<sup>12</sup> In *The Promise and Peril of Writing Program Administration*, Skeffington, Enos, and Borrowman discuss their WPA survey and the nine questions that they wanted to ask WPAs but felt “no one would have answered in a survey, regardless of assurances of anonymity” (8). I am particularly interested in their question about anxiety and depression: “Have you ever been under a physician’s care—or been prescribed medication—for anxiety or depression related to your work?” (9). While I have concerns with how this question is framed, it is not unaskable and could signal that those experiencing mental stress or mental health conditions due to or alongside WPA work require and deserve support. The WPA Census asks about disability with a single question: “Do you identify as disabled?” The question was designed to match the “Writing Center Directors and Diversity: A Survey,” created by Sarah Banschbach, Rebecca Day Babcock, and Karen Keaton Jackson. Of the 313 people who responded to their survey, ten noted they had disabilities, and the authors sent these respondents follow-up questions and ultimately wished they had asked more about dis-

ability in their original survey.<sup>13</sup> Current research on faculty disclosure of disability can also help shape future survey questions directed at learning more about and from disabled WPAs.<sup>14</sup>

We must make more rhetorical room for narratives by disabled WPAs so they can articulate how disability may not only limit but also benefit their WPA work. In line with blossoming discussions of multimodal and multimedia approaches in writing classrooms, disabled WPAs can narrate how they are implementing universal design practices to create accessible and innovative spaces for all teachers and students *and* for themselves. Disabled WPA narratives can sometimes disclose disability *and* tell a story of failure, without an assumption of a relation between the two or that either will be overcome. And when safe to do so, narratives by disabled WPAs can identify disability discrimination whether that occurs overtly (through the tenure process and beyond) or covertly, as when I played able while depressed. Broadening our WPA narratives in these ways invites all WPAs to figure their embodiment in sharing the stories of what we do and who we are.

#### INNOVATING DISABLED WPA NARRATIVES

*In early summer, my husband learns his best friend is gone, one year and one month after attending our wedding as best man. He has died of alcoholism and, I think, unresolved grief from his sister's death more than a decade before. We fly to California and sort through his jumbled apartment. Over five days, we coordinate a memorial for friends and attend another for family, drive deep into the desert for the funeral of a grandparent, then fly to Texas that night for the burial of our friend the next day. I assemble photo packets and scan the rest to a memorial site, and we begin a long debate about whether to tow our friend's old VW bus from Texas to Colorado. At the same time, I assemble my mid-tenure dossier and run a week-long TA training; then in the fall, I teach the graduate-level practicum for new composition TAs. My husband gets up for work each day, and most days, I pretend I'm getting up too, then I eat a lot and go back to bed after he leaves. I teach, sort email, and get lower course evaluations than usual. After a rough winter break, I am diagnosed with "major depression," which I do not disclose to my department or anyone else on campus, out of fear and confusion.*

*In the spring of my depression, I receive a report from my university's tenure committee, stating that my administrative load is not reasonable and needs to be rectified. This was the good news I had*

*longed for, but to turn the letter's contents into the reality of my work-life, I needed to singularly advocate for myself and implement the loosely-described changes by meeting with my dean and other power-brokers on campus. Uncharacteristically, I find that I am unable to engage in such high-stakes negotiations or to do so well. I end up making the situation worse (or believe that I have) then give up and wait for what feels like an improbable tenure. I don't have the words, or can't find the rhetorical space to articulate that it is my depression that is impacting my ability to be a WPA, and that while being a WPA isn't helping my depression, it's not at the heart of my embodied circumstance.*

In *Mad at School*, Margaret Price describes what she calls “kairotic space,” the key element of which is “the pairing of spontaneity with high levels of professional/academic impact” (61). She notes that these spaces can be “fraught” for those with disabilities, as they are typically real-time social situations which are high-stakes, in-person, and impromptu (61–62). The actions I needed to undertake to renegotiate my contract functioned in such a space, and in the end, I missed the moment in which to address my own exploitation. By the time I emerged from my depression, it made little sense to me, and I figured to anybody else, to be trying to act on a letter—and in a “kairotic space”—that was now more than a year old. My mentor had since left campus for a visiting professor gig, and my unfettered access to emotional situations that directly impacted my future employment compounded my depression.

The temptation to put a happy ending on my story is almost irresistible. Did the depression resolve? Did I get tenure? Did the latter help resolve the former? Maybe, but that's not the center of my story. This is where disabling writing program administration moves beyond the story of the struggle because while I did not enjoy my depression, it shaped me as scholar, teacher, and WPA in ways that are important, in ways I want to keep.

*I come to realize that disability has had far less impact on the writing program I direct than it has on my teaching and research. When I take a look at my assessment procedure, I realize the rushed timed session isn't accessible to anyone (including me). When textbook reps appear in my office, I ask them about accessible textbook options and get promises to find out “something about that.” I slow down the week-long TA training I coordinate—what the TAs call boot camp—to leave more time for informal interactions and problem-solving and for life outside of camp. I re-craft*

*the syllabus for the graduate TA practicum to focus on TAs exploring their own embodied needs and identities as teachers, in contrast to the one-size-fits-all pedagogy that dominated my previous curriculum. I find that my teachers, some disabled and some not, want to take up making their courses accessible. I begin to take the anxiety some of my graduate student TAs disclose to me more seriously, realizing it's not just about the new teaching situations they are in. I speak about my depression in my undergraduate classes, if and when the time is right, and some students start sharing the real reasons they missed class and turned in late assignments. Together, we find ways to work around these issues, ways that weren't available when they were just "lazy." I finally write about my chronic pain and connect with a new realm of disability scholars. I learn, a little late in life, to productively (de)tangle work priorities and bodily priorities, as crip time requires.*

My depression is not the only key that could have opened these doors, but in my case, it shifted the locks. Though I've been in the field of disability studies more than a decade, I'm still learning how to speak about (my) disability without negating or resolving it. This is the challenge of disabling WPA narratives: We must invite disability in new and diverse ways. I intend my story to prop open the inaccessible door for more narratives. At the same time, I know how hard these stories are to write; this article took me longer than anything I've written, and it simply could not find its ending until after my tenure decision because deep down, I felt unsafe with it in my tenure dossier.<sup>15</sup> This was not only because my story didn't fit with the ways our narratives position anxiety and depression but also because discrimination often happens when disability is disclosed. This is why disabling writing program administration isn't only about disabled WPAs telling their stories: It's about creating inclusive environments for all WPAs, not only at the time they are hired, but in ways that account for the embodied realities that come with time. For me, those embodied realities came with grief and manifested as depression and will likely come again.

In sorting through the stack of poetry I wrote after my friend died, I found a poem that I don't remember writing. It begins, "In the cold of our basement, I admitted depression, I said it out loud." The poem details the process of coming to terms with my depression through my experience of getting rid of old plastic hangers in favor of sleek faux-velvet-covered hangers and the fierce competition that ensued when I listed the plastic hangers for free online. In experiencing depression and moving away from it, at least for now, I traded in old hangers for new ones, but equally important,

I learned to see how my clothes laid differently on those hangers, in my work as WPA and in my life. In disabling our WPA narratives, we not only remove problematic and dysfunctional practices but also innovate in the ways that disability invites. Because disabled WPAs aren't fundamentally unlike other WPAs, but we hang a little different. And I'm glad.

## NOTES

1. Existing scholarship considers the use of disability studies pedagogy and curricula in writing classrooms (Price, "Accessing"; Stuckey and Agnew; Vidali, "Embodying"; Walters); the ways that specific university programs and technologies might support particular disabled students (Carmichael and Alden; Barber-Fendley and Hamel; Yergeau, Wozniak, and Vandenburg); how disability and rhetoric more broadly figure in higher education and our field (Dolmage, *Disability*; Jung; Price, *Mad*; Vidali, "Performing"; Wilson and Lewiecki-Wilson); the relationship of multimedia and disability in writing studies (Yergeau, Brewer et al.); the role of disability in/and writing centers (Hawkes; Banschbach, Babcock, and Jackson); and why disabled teachers are both successful and necessary (Brueggemann and Moddlemog; Lindgren), among other topics (see Lewiecki-Wilson and Brueggemann). There is also a disability studies CompPile bibliography (<http://comppile.org/wpa/bibliographies/Bib19/DisabilityStudies.pdf>), though as Lucchesi notes, most of these (important) articles do not focus on "the WPA's unique role in making a writing program more accessible" ("Disabling"). A dated exception is McLeod and Garretson's "The Disabled Student and the Writing Program: A Guide for Administrators" published in *WPA: Writing Program Administration* in 1989. While this article reveals progress around disability and writing programs (as the article suggests that teachers with extra energy work with disabled students, which wouldn't now be acceptable [47]), some of the issues raised by the authors remain salient, particularly their suggestions regarding "alternatives to written composition" (48, see also Dunn).

2. For example, the theory and practice of assessing college writing can draw on scholarship on alternate assessment from primary and secondary education which sometimes discourages the creation of truly inclusive assessments in favor of alternate versions for disabled students, but more often, advocates a rethinking of assessment to be more inclusive for all, with alternatives limited to those with severe disabilities (see Kleinert and Kearns; Taylor, Phillips, and Joseph). A disability approach to textbook selection suggests attention to the availability of electronic copies and accessible textbook websites (see AccessText; Kolowich) as well as accessible electronic learning platforms (see Burgstahler, Corrigan and McCarter). To get started on making college programs more accessible, see Burgstahler and Cory.

3. In *Disability Rhetoric*, Jay Dolmage disables the history of rhetoric and notes, "When I use the term *disabled* here, I gesture both to pejorative disablism and to the idea that disability can be a positive thing" (81). I position *disabling*

in a similar way, in contrast to typical uses of disabling (which now often refer to removing or suspending technology on a computer or mobile device, typically because the function is useless, uninteresting, or annoying.) Also, enabling and disabling are often counterpoised (see Adam and Kreps 216), and I seek to challenge that binary.

4. Another option is to cripple writing program administration. As Carrie Sandahl notes, “Crippling spins mainstream representations or practices to reveal able-bodied assumptions and exclusionary effects” (37), and disabling does something similar in highlighting ableism and exclusion. Crippling has been productively articulated in relationship to queering (see McRuer; Elman; Sandahl), and while I find this connection important, I do not take up the relationship of queering and disabling writing program administration here (see Lucchesi, “Crippling”).

5. Micciche variously engages disability in her book, including her discussion of a course on eating disorders and her analysis of teaching anxiety. She also mentions disability in her discussion of “deep embodiment,” where students engage in activities “designed to generate empathy for the embodied life experience of others” (54–55), though this raises concerns regarding disability simulation exercises (see Burgstahler and Doe).

6. The broader issue of representing and including disabled faculty in higher education is more than I can explore here, though it surely impacts disabled WPAs. See Margaret Price’s *Mad at School*, particularly her critique of how disabled faculty are represented as difficult (114–15). Scholarship on accommodating disabled faculty is also relevant but beyond my scope here (see Kerschbaum et al.; Vance).

7. Micciche analyzes this same moment and reads Holt’s symptoms and experience as “a form of emotion management that enhances and affirms the emotional and professional well-being of others often to the neglect of one’s own emotional stability” (88). We might consider emotion management in the context of mental health, illness, and disability.

8. Ward notes that she is focusing on burnout, not anxiety, though both terms appear in her chapter. The research she cites locates burnout solely in employment and not in private life, though the boundaries between these realms feel blurred for WPAs (if not everyone).

9. Alice Gillam speaks of “reliving the nightmare of her divorce” in a debate about assigned course readings in her program (66), and Doug Hesse narrates the relationship of his WPA work to his divorce and uses metaphors of health (and following Ward, burnout): “After nine years of being WPA, I hadn’t exactly burnt out, but I felt it was healthier for both of us, the program and me, to move on” (53). Though these are not explicit indications of anxiety or depression, the mapping of WPA work to divorce implies a high level of mental stress.

10. To some degree, WPA narratives are tenure narratives that similarly position depression and anxiety. In a recent essay on the impact of the tenure process, Cheryl Ball argues for something called Tenure Brain, which she describes as a “precious, and precarious, mental state” akin to paranoia which ensues when waiting for a tenure decision. She explains that Tenure Brain sometimes turns to anger after the tenure decision, when you realize you spent so much time “under a mighty, mighty emotional weight” that probably “made you a little less human.” Though not specifically a WPA narrative (though Ball is in rhetoric and composition), the discourses of anxiety and depression are again prominent as Ball notes,

It’s not healthy. I got tenure and thought about seeing a psychiatrist just to talk through some of the pain, and I definitely had to see a physician and several physical therapists to work through the health-related issues that arose because of the stress. (n. pag.)

She adds that she’s still “working through some of the emotional and physical baggage” five years later, and that the “ravages of tenure” are known to most. In another *Inside Higher Ed* piece that Ball cites, Trish Roberts-Miller discusses how much of the tenure advice she received assumed that “panic = motivation.” She says: “They say, ‘You need to publish more!’ Or, ‘You need to finish your book now!’ That’s like telling an anxious person they need to calm down, or a depressed person they need to cheer up. Duh.” While I appreciate Roberts-Miller’s note that those who are depressed or anxious shouldn’t be told to get over it, such comments again position depression and anxiety as useful allusions and metaphors but not as spaces scholar-teachers regularly inhabit.

11. For critiques of simply increasing disability representation, see Martin on composition textbooks and Sheppard on *Glee*.

12. For example, in Sally Barr-Ebest’s survey, “Gender Differences in Writing Program Administration,” disability was not surveyed, but two male respondents noted, “The pressure can easily lead to depression,” while another declares, “Thanksgiving in the Cardiac Care Unit! Enough said!” A female respondent also noted, “Of course my duties have affected my personal life. I might be able to have a healthier life if I weren’t always in service of the institution” (59–61).

13. The follow-up questions focused on the type of disability and experiences of discrimination. Four respondents sent back information, and the disability descriptions included a “reading processing problem,” dyslexia, chronic illness that affects stamina, and having no left hand. Three of the four identified as having experienced some discrimination.

14. A study led by Margaret Price, Stephanie Kerschbaum, Mark Salzer, and Alyssa Balletta surveys faculty respondents about how they have identified as disabled in higher education. Their survey questions approach disability in multiple ways, such as asking about services received and supports provided, and their phrasing importantly allows for multiple and contradictory disability identifications. Similarly, in asking about disability, I suggest that questions allow

respondents to discuss their experiences without disclosing diagnoses (“If you consider yourself disabled, in what ways has your disability shaped your work?”), and emphasize disability’s positive valence (“How has disability shaped your administration of a writing program?”). Questions can also be attentive to how disability is perceived (“How have/do your department and university colleagues respond to your disability?”), and consider issues of intolerance and exclusion (“In the context of your writing program work, have you experienced discrimination because of your disability?”). Finally, surveys can ask disabled WPAs for their input (“What sort of policy work needs to be undertaken to support disabled WPAs? Who should perform this work and what should it look like?”).

15. I ultimately disclosed my depression in my research narrative in my tenure file, carefully and quickly, both to claim my disability and contextualize my work. This pre-tenure disclosure felt notably safer than including a draft of this article.

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## How Do Dual Credit Students Perform on College Writing Tasks After They Arrive on Campus? Empirical Data from a Large-Scale Study

Kristine Hansen, Brian Jackson, Brett C. McNelly, & Dennis Eggett

### ABSTRACT

*Dual credit/concurrent enrollment programs are proliferating because of state and national political support, yet WPAs have almost no national empirical data for judging the nature and quality of dual credit/concurrent enrollment students' writing. This study compared the writing performance of dual credit/concurrent enrollment students in a first-year university course on American history and politics with that of students who had already earned credit for first-year writing from either AP or our institution's first-year writing course and with that of students concurrently enrolled in first-year writing or still planning to take first-year writing—five groups in all. No statistically significant differences for dual credit/concurrent enrollment students were found when they were compared to other groups. Interpreting the results in light of other data from two surveys and four focus groups, the authors surmise that the kind of curriculum or instructor in any particular variant of first-year writing is likely less important than student maturation, cognitive development, and exposure to more writing instruction in improving students' writing abilities. The authors recommend replication (with modifications) of this research at public state and regional universities with more diverse student bodies. Given the national emphasis on making students “college and career ready,” the authors also endorse the recommendations of the 2013 NCTE policy research brief “First-Year Writing: What Good Does It Do?”*

WPAs are committed to designing effective writing programs that serve the purposes of the institutions where we work and the needs of the students on our campuses. But our efforts are complicated by what we don't know about the kinds of education that students received in previous writing courses—particularly in courses taught in high school, courses meant to substitute for

first-year writing (FYW) courses when students matriculate. Presently, one of the biggest unknowns is the nature and quality of dual credit or concurrent enrollment writing courses (DC/CE) that students take in high school. (Such courses may also be offered under the name of dual enrollment, concurrent credit, postsecondary options, and college in the schools.) In 2010, the National Center for Education Statistics reported that DC/CE courses were being offered by 98% of public two-year institutions, 84% of public four-year institutions, and 49% of private four-year institutions. At the 2013 National Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships conference, Sandra Gonzalez reported that 1.4 million high school students nationwide were enrolled in college courses (qtd. in Mobley). Yet no nationwide studies offer empirical data about the quality of DC/CE writing courses, as measured by student performance in college.<sup>1</sup> This article is an attempt to fill in some of that gap.

Because we know so little about most DC/CE courses, the fact that they are proliferating like kudzu may be worrisome to many WPAs, a group that includes three of this article's four authors who have served, at various times, as the WPA at Brigham Young University (BYU), where the administration decided to grant college first-year writing credit for DC/CE courses without consulting any of us. Governors and state legislatures are enthusiastic about DC/CE because they believe moving some of the college curriculum into the high schools cuts the cost of college. Legislatures frequently mandate that higher education systems develop DC/CE programs. Of the fifty states, forty-six now have statewide policies governing at least one statewide DC/CE program.<sup>2</sup> In the other four states, DC/CE programs are administered by local district and institution-level policies. Now the federal government has joined the states in encouraging DC/CE. In October 2013, education committees in both houses of Congress passed amendments to support DC/CE (Mobley). On August 22, 2013, President Obama released *Fact Sheet on the President's Plan to Make College More Affordable* as part of a "better bargain for the middle class." In addition to providing financial aid, encouraging competition among states for lower tuition, and rewarding technological innovations that get students through college faster, the *Fact Sheet* states,

Colleges can also award credit for prior learning experiences, similar to current Administration efforts to recognize the skills of returning veterans. Dual-enrollment opportunities let high school students earn credits before arriving at college, which can save them money by accelerating their time to degree.

The administration's efforts imply that a major objective in pursuing a university education is getting credentials in the quickest and cheapest way possible.

The national emphasis on speed, efficiency, and cost ought to be accompanied, we believe, by some national performance data. Because we lack such data, the rapid growth and powerful political support for DC/CE programs causes us concern, as does the lack of uniform national standards for preparing teachers and determining student readiness for DC/CE. Various states have implemented standards of their own for DC/CE programs, but there is little uniformity from state to state. As of 2008, according to the Education Commission of the States, only twenty-nine states had written laws stating the qualifications high school teachers should have before teaching DC/CE courses. The requirements students had to meet before enrolling in a DC/CE course also varied widely:

- seven states required students to meet a minimum GPA requirement
- twenty-two states required written approval or recommendations from teachers or other school personnel
- twenty-five states required students to achieve a specific score on a standardized test
- twenty-seven states required other minimum criteria, such as parents' permission or prerequisite courses

States also do not specify a uniform age at which students are allowed to participate in DC/CE. As of 2008, the following variations in age were evident among the states:

- nine states allowed—but didn't necessarily encourage—ninth graders, age fourteen, to participate
- two states permitted tenth graders to participate
- twenty states permitted eleventh graders to participate
- fifteen states reserved DC/CE for twelfth graders (Education Commission of the States)

This is clearly new territory that state education systems are entering into, and as yet, no national map for DC/CE curricula, teachers, students, and outcomes exists. In order to formulate best practices and establish national accreditation standards, in 1999 a coalition of twenty institutions created the National Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships ([www.nacep.org](http://www.nacep.org)). As of 2011, the National Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships (NACEP) had issued seventeen accreditation standards related to curriculum, faculty, students, assessment, and program evaluation. These standards are meant to ensure the comparability of a high

school DC/CE course to the corresponding course at the postsecondary institution that offers credit for the DC/CE course. However, NACEP accreditation takes five years, and currently only eighty-nine programs nationwide have met the standards. Only three states—Arkansas, Indiana, and Minnesota—require that all DC/CE programs in their system meet NACEP standards. NACEP is still a small organization: in 2014, it had 261 postsecondary institutions among its members as well as twenty high schools/school districts and thirteen state agencies. Perhaps over the course of many years, NACEP’s influence will spread, and its benchmarks for DE/CE will become well-established norms widely followed. Perhaps also recent policy statements will become influential, including the 2012 Policy and Best Practices Statement of CCCC on Dual Credit/Concurrent Enrollment (Farris et al.); the Council of Writing Program Administrators’ 2013 position statement on pre-college credit for writing (Hansen et al. *CWPA Position Statement*); and the NCTE’s “First-Year Writing: What Good Does It Do?” published in 2013.

However, until NACEP’s benchmarks are more well-established and accepted as norms, WPAs are left with few ways to evaluate the experience students may have had in DC/CE courses and to judge its relative equivalence to first-year writing (FYW) at their institution. Perhaps this doesn’t matter much, since postsecondary institutions have long accepted each other’s credit for all kinds of courses. But perhaps it does. Living in a time when professional careers require ever higher levels of literacy in more diverse forms, we may be shortchanging students by tacitly telling them the writing they did in high school at the age of seventeen, sixteen, fifteen, or even fourteen has made them successful writers, and they have “taken care of” that part of their education (see Hansen and Farris, “Introduction”; Taczak and Thelin; Tinberg and Nadeau).

Some students may have experienced instruction in high school similar to that of the FYW course they would otherwise take on the campus where they eventually matriculate. But we, like WPAs elsewhere, are inclined to think the FYW course we offer adds value to the abilities students bring with them from high school simply because the FYW course is designed for the needs of students at that institution at that moment in the students’ development. The 2002 study of AP students conducted by Hansen et al. demonstrated that FYW enhanced the writing of students who took the course even though their AP scores were high enough to exempt them from it. That study compared two writing samples from four different groups of sophomore students in the same course. Students who had AP scores of 4 or 5 and who had also taken FYW produced significantly better writing

than the comparison groups, as measured by statistical tests (Hansen et al. “Advanced Placement”).

The study presented here replicates some elements of that study but investigates how the writing of DC/CE students compares to the writing of students who had no FYW credit yet or who earned FYW credit another way, such as by taking BYU’s FYW course or getting credit for AP scores. This study attempts to answer the question: When first-year students have to produce academic papers in a required general education course other than FYW, how strong is the writing of those who earned credit for FYW by taking DC/CE in high school? We believe we could provide answers to this question that can have some national utility. Brigham Young University (BYU) draws students from across the US. In 2010, approximately two-thirds of its 29,000 student population came from outside of Utah (“Where”), and this diverse student population allows us to draw a somewhat representative national sample and present a snapshot of performance by students with a wide array of high school experiences.

## METHODS

The BYU IRB approved the research design in the summer of 2012, and the study began in September of that year.<sup>3</sup> Student participants were recruited from a required first-year course with a semesterly enrollment of about 2,500, roughly half of each new entering class. The course, dealing with American history, politics, and economics, is called American Heritage (AH). We chose this course for three reasons:

1. Well over 95% of BYU’s students take the AH course in a large lecture format, giving us a good chance to get a representative sample of first-year students.
2. The professors teaching the course in fall 2012 required two substantial writing assignments. This is not always the case since requirements change as professors do. In addition, the professors were willing to participate in the study.
3. We wanted to see the academic writing of students as early as possible in their BYU career.

On the second day of the semester, long before their performance in the class might skew their interest in our study, each of the 2,524 students in the AH course was invited to sign a consent form allowing us to email them two surveys and to see copies of the two essays they would write. The consent form stated that students agreed to participate in “a research study of how high school writing courses and college freshman writing courses influence college writing proficiency.” About 61% of the students, 1,552 in

all, signed the consent form; they were emailed a link to a Qualtrics survey, which 713 students completed. The survey results indicated what path—if any—students had taken to complete the FYW requirement, whether through BYU’s first-year writing course, DC/CE, or Advanced Placement (AP).<sup>4</sup>

From the 713 students who responded to the survey, 189 or about 4% of the entire first-year population were randomly selected for closer study.<sup>5</sup> The sample was selected from a population of students who were willing to sign a consent form and fill out a survey, so the sample has a self-selection bias. However, this was unavoidable because IRB principles of voluntary participation and informed consent made it impossible to get a truly random sample from the whole AH class. From the 713 students who completed the initial survey, a random sample of students was chosen from each of five possible options for earning FYW credit. Because of the study’s particular focus on DC/CE students, those student were sampled more heavily in order to ensure robust statistical measures. Table 1 shows how many students in the sample had chosen each of the five options for earning credit and how they compared to each other on high school GPA, mean ACT composite score, and gender.

Table 1.  
 Sample of Students Taking Different Paths FYW Credit in 2012 (n = 189)

Pathway to FYW Credit	n	Mean high school GPA	Mean ACT composite score	Gender Ratio M/F
Had taken BYU’s FYW course	30	3.79*	26.54**	43% / 57%
Taking FYW concurrently with AH	19	3.88	27.79	37% / 63%
Planning to take FYW at a later date	28	3.81	28.43**	57% / 43%
Earned credit by DC/CE	74	3.90*	28.77**	38% / 62%
Earned credit with a score of 4 or 5 on the AP Language and Composition exam****	38	3.85	30.18***	26% / 74%
<b>Totals or Means</b>	<b>189</b>	<b>3.85</b>	<b>28.34</b>	<b>39% / 61%</b>

\*p < 0.01

\*\*  $p < 0.01$

\*\*\*The AP students' mean ACT score is significantly different from that of all four other groups ( $p < 0.01$ ).

\*\*\*\*About 34% of the 713 students who completed the first survey had received FYW credit for the AP Language and Composition exam.

Despite the self-selection bias, the students whose essays were chosen for analysis were fairly representative of the entire AH class and reasonably representative of the first-year student population in fall 2012. Table 2 compares pertinent characteristics of the sample to the AH course and to the 2012 first-year class.

Table 2.  
 Sample Characteristics Compared to AH Course and Entering Class in 2012

	n	High School GPA	Mean ACT Composite Score	Gender M / F	Average Age
Study Sample	189	3.85	28.3	39% / 61%	18.3
AH Course	2,524	3.75	27.6	49% / 51%	19
First-year class	5,526	3.81	28.7	45% / 55%	18.5

As table 2 shows, the GPAs, ACT composite scores of students, and ages of students in our sample were not significantly different from those of students in the AH student population and the first-year student population. However, female students in our survey were overrepresented (61% female and 39% male) as compared to the gender distribution in AH and first-year class. One or both of two explanations may account for this overrepresentation. First, more female students may choose to take AP and DC/CE courses in high school (see the first endnote). Second, women students have been found to comply more often than men with the request to complete a survey (Sax, Gilmartin, and Bryant). The gender imbalance in this study had possible implications for the results; in 2011 the NAEP reported that female students outscored male students in writing at both eighth and twelfth grade (“Nation’s Report Card”). When we separated women’s scores from men’s in this study, women scored higher than men on both essays, although the differences were not statistically significant, a finding consistent with previous studies (Willingham et al.; Lane and Stone). Thus, we maintain confidence in the sample’s representativeness.

The few statistically significant differences among the five groups in table 1 require comment. The average high school GPA of students who

had already completed first-year writing—which almost certainly would have happened in the summer term of 2012—was statistically significantly lower than that of the DC/CE students. Moreover, the average ACT score of students who had already completed FYW was significantly lower than that of three groups: 1) students planning to take FYW later, 2) DC/CE students, and 3) AP students. We know anecdotally that BYU often accepts new first-year students for summer term on a probationary basis because these students might be less academically prepared than first-year students who matriculate in the fall. Our analysis supports this understanding: The students who took FYW during the summer term had the lowest GPAs and ACT composite scores. They seem to have started with a possible disadvantage and then compounded it by taking the condensed first-year writing course (seven and one-half weeks rather than fifteen) in the summer.

Other demographic features of our samples may impact the results. BYU is a private institution that draws students from all over North America and 130 nations beyond. As a result, the sample included a wide range of geographic representation: Students came from forty-seven of the fifty states (none from Delaware, Rhode Island, or Vermont). There is a westward tilt due to our location: About 40% of the sample were from Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, and Washington. BYU also has very selective admission standards, so the average high school GPA of 3.85 in the sample is significantly higher than the average GPA of 3.0 reported by the National Assessment of Educational Progress in 2009, the most current data available. The sample students' high grades are supported by their ACT scores. According to the ACT, the average ACT composite score in 2012 was 21.1, a score that is just above the 55<sup>th</sup> percentile nationally (ACT); by contrast, the students in the samples had an average ACT composite score of 28.34, about the 90<sup>th</sup> percentile. We were clearly studying an academically motivated segment of the national student population.

We did not ask students who took the first survey questions about their parents' educational achievement and income, but in 2013, we received information from the College Board that indicated the students we were studying likely enjoy other academic advantages. In 2012, the 3,962 students applying to BYU had scores from 17,154 different AP exams reported to the registrar; in other words, students who want to attend BYU take, on average, about four different AP exams. Forty-eight percent of the students who had their AP scores sent to BYU in 2012 have one or two parents with a graduate degree; this figure is nearly twice the 25% reported to the College Board by all other students who took AP tests in 2012. Moreover, only 8% of students sending BYU their AP scores in 2012 came from low-income homes; by comparison, 23% of all AP test-takers nationally in

2012 reported being from low-income homes. We think it likely that not only AP students, but also DC/CE students and others who matriculate at BYU, come from homes with well-educated and possibly affluent parents. So the student writers we studied were not only high achievers in their high schools but also more likely to have gone to strong high schools and received educational encouragement and support at home.

After creating the samples, we obtained copies of the two essays written in AH by each student in the five groups. The first essay, which required students to take a position on a particular political philosophy, was completed in late October 2012 (see prompt in Appendix A). The entire essay was to be no more than 900 words and was supposed to include an introduction, thesis, evidence, consideration of one or two counter-arguments, and a conclusion. Students wrote the first essay in three stages. Stage one required students to write an opening paragraph that included a thesis statement, due by September 6<sup>th</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup> (depending on TA groups they were assigned to). In stage two, the revised opening paragraph and two supporting paragraphs were due September 20<sup>th</sup> or 21<sup>st</sup>. Students received feedback and grades on these two partial drafts from their TAs, who helped the students improve the final draft of their first essay, which was due October 11<sup>th</sup> or 12<sup>th</sup>. We examined only the completed essay.

The second essay was due November 15<sup>th</sup> or 16<sup>th</sup>. Student work on the essay was expected to start the third week of October. First, students were to watch a video opinion piece by David Frum about issues such as the collective good, the causes of political gridlock, and the idea of patriotism and then select one of Frum's arguments to write about. They were to construct a compelling thesis agreeing or disagreeing with Frum and write an essay of no more than 900 words in response (see prompt in Appendix A). Then they were to attend a peer review workshop on October 25<sup>th</sup> or 26<sup>th</sup> and present their one-page thesis and outline of their planned argument to two fellow students for feedback. Although students were also required to give a copy of this one-page thesis and outline to their TA to prove they had done it, no formal TA review and grade on the thesis and outline was part of the process. After students handed in their second essay in mid-November, we surveyed them a second time about the process they had gone through to complete the second essay.

We received electronic copies of both Essay 1 and 2 from our 189 student sample.<sup>6</sup> We removed all identifying information and put our own identification numbers on the papers. In December 2012, the 378 essays were graded by raters from our part-time and graduate student teaching pool. Raters used a holistic rubric, with possible scores from 1 to 6, developed from the rubric the AH professors provided as part of their writing

prompts. The rubric described the traits of a 5–6 paper, a 3–4 paper, and a 1–2 paper (see Appendix B). Readers were trained to use the descriptors for the following seven traits in order to come up with holistic scores: thesis, critical awareness, evidence, counter-arguments, organization, grammar and style, sources and citations. After training sessions to clarify the standards and norm raters, ten papers were then rated by all readers. Because our time to conduct the reading was limited, one day later the raters met again and rated the same ten papers so that we could measure intra-rater reliability. Our informal measure of 0.86 (based on exact or adjacent ratings) satisfied us that raters were quite consistent in their judgments, and we moved forward with rating all the essays. Each essay was read at least twice, and 15% were read a third time. Our informal measure of inter-rater agreement was calculated by determining the rate of exact or adjacent agreement, which was 0.85 for our scoring session. However, our statistician, Eggett, calculated an inter-rater reliability measure of 0.4 based on comparing the variance between judges to the variance between essays. While this statistic is not as high as desirable, it is due to the fact that our 6-point holistic scale inordinately magnified every 1-point difference between ratings.<sup>7</sup>

In addition to the quantitative analysis of the students' essays, we conducted four focus groups with students from the sample during January and February 2013. We wished to probe more deeply into students' reasons for choosing a particular path to FYW credit and to gather information about the instruction and curriculum they experienced in the high school versions of FYW they took. Initially, we expected twenty-five to thirty students in the focus groups, but difficulties of coordinating schedules and the failure of students to appear meant we interviewed only eleven students, not sufficient for making broad generalizations. Nevertheless, the results gathered offer valuable insights into students' motivations for taking pre-college credit options and the learning experiences they had.

## RESULTS

### *Quantitative Results*

The first survey, emailed to the 1,552 students who signed the consent form, was started by 839 students and completed by 713. From this survey, we learned a sizable percentage of the 2012 first-year class had chosen an option for potentially earning FYW credit while still in high school, as shown in table 3.

Table 3.  
 Survey Results about Students' FYW Choices in High School

High School Path to College Writing Credit	Number	Percent of Total
AP Language and Composition with score of 4 or 5	247	30
Dual Credit/Concurrent Enrollment	128	16
International Baccalaureate	14	2
Took a college writing course but did not get credit*	231	29
Did not take a college writing course	219	27
<b>Total</b>	<b>839</b>	<b>104**</b>

\*This category includes students who got less than 4 or 5 on the AP test, those who took DC/CE but didn't get credit for some reason, or those who took some other path in high school that failed to bring them college credit.

\*\*The percentage is more than 100 because some students marked more than one answer, suggesting that students are perhaps hedging their bets by seeking more than one avenue to college credit while in high school.

Before comparing the sample of 189 students' two essays group by group, we tested the limited null hypothesis that the scores of students who took DC/CE courses would not differ significantly from the scores of their peers who chose other ways to complete FYW. The initial analysis of variance showed that there were marginal differences between groups ( $F_{4, 184} = 2.17, p = 0.074$ ). After getting the ANOVA results, we did pair-wise comparisons of all mean scores between groups and within groups to see if any differences were statistically significant. Table 4 presents the results of these *post hoc* tests.

Table 4.  
 Mean Essay Scores of Students in the Sample Groups (df = 184) (n = 189)

Pathway to FYW Credit	n	Mean Score of First Essay	Mean Score of Second Essay	Standard Error
Students who had taken BYU's required FYW course	30	3.52	3.53	.16
Students who were taking FYW concurrently with AH	19	3.13*	3.13	.20

Pathway to FYW Credit	n	Mean Score of First Essay	Mean Score of Second Essay	Standard Error
Students planning to take FYC at a later date	28	3.73	3.36	.16
Students who earned credit by DC/CE	74	3.69	3.49	.10
Students who got FYC credit with a 4 or 5 on the AP Language and Composition exam	38	3.89*	3.58	.14
<b>Means</b>		<b>3.59**</b>	<b>3.42**</b>	

\* $p < 0.01$

\*\* $p < 0.05$

The results of the pair-wise comparisons can be divided into two parts: differences between groups and differences between essays.

*Group differences* For the first essay, the only statistically significant difference was between the mean score earned by AP students and that of students concurrently taking FYW. There were no statistically significant differences between any pairings of the other groups; this supported our limited hypothesis that DC/CE students would score the same as their peers. For the second essay, there were no statistically significant differences between any pairs of groups. The scores of DC/CE students, the group we were focused on, were not significantly different from those of the other students in any group on either essay.

*Differences between essays* Although, at first glance, three of the groups appear to have performed worse on the second essay, none of the differences between first and second essay within any group were significant. The only statistically significant difference was between the overall scores on the first essay and the second essay. We used t-tests to determine whether the difference between men's and women's scores may have influenced the overall outcome since women scored an average of 3.73 on the first essay and 3.42 on the second while men scored an average of 3.54 on the first essay and 3.36 on the second. However, the differences between genders were not statistically significant (for Essay 1,  $t = 1.33$ ,  $p = 0.19$ ; for Essay 2,  $t = 1.18$ ,  $p = 0.24$ ).

When students handed in their second essay in mid-November, we asked the 189 students in the sample to take a second survey answering questions about the process they followed in composing their papers. A total of 169 answered most or all of the second survey. Space does not permit a complete presentation of the results, but inspection of the open-ended answers to the questions about process showed that nearly all students claimed to have followed a careful process of planning, drafting, and revision—including seeking feedback from friends, roommates, TAs, tutors, and even their professors—as they wrote their second essay. They reported spending an average of 7.4 hours on all the steps of planning, drafting, and revising the second essay.

### *Qualitative Results*

To learn more about our students' experiences in their pre-college courses, we invited students in our study to participate in one of four different focus groups. This invitation went out to all 222 of the students whose writing we initially planned to analyze. (This number included the IB and transfer students, who were later dropped from the study.) Of the twenty-five students who agreed to participate, eleven came to a focus group. Of these, six arrived on our campus with DC/CE credit, four with IB credit, and one with AP credit. Three of these students came from Utah, two from California, and one each from Colorado, Idaho, North Carolina, Texas, Virginia, and Washington. Of the eleven, only one had taken the course at a college near his high school; the rest, including ones with IB and AP credit, had taken their course at their local high school. By comparison, 60% of DC/CE students in our first survey reported that their course was taught by a high school teacher at a high school.

Students in the focus groups told us that earning college credit early was not their main motivation for taking a college-equivalent course in high school. Only two admitted to taking a pre-college writing course in order to “get FYW out of the way.” When asked why he took a DC/CE course, Joe (this and all subsequent names are pseudonyms) explained, “My main reason was mostly to get it out of the way, and I knew it would be easier at a community college . . . and [that] it would be easier to get a good grade and just less work.” Lisa also claimed, “I wanted the easy way out. I did dual enrollment to try and get rid of freshman writing.” Their language indicates that some of our students (and perhaps their parents and advisors) view FYW as a nuisance to be dealt with swiftly and painlessly, and they believed that they could complete it more easily by taking a DC/CE course. Perhaps in their high schools, DC/CE courses had the reputation of being

easier than the course students were likely to encounter in their first-year on a college campus.

More often than not, the students reported that they took a DC/CE, AP, or IB course because they wanted a more challenging curriculum in high school. For example, Jake, who took an IB course in North Carolina, stated, "I took the IB credits because they were the hardest classes offered [at my high school]." He went on, "I wanted a challenge. It was nice to get college credit, but that wasn't really [my] motivation." Valerie's explanation was similar: "My main motivation . . . was because I didn't feel pushed or stretched in my abilities in regular classes." These students also wanted to be in classes with equally motivated peers. "I took my [AP] classes because I didn't want to be in a bunch of classes with a bunch of potheads," said Steve. Many of these students admitted that college credit factored into their decisions—because it "saved time and money" and "knocked out" FYW once they came to college—but they were more interested in an academically rich experience in high school that would help them prepare for college. After explaining that she had "been scared of all the stuff that I had been hearing about college," Allison said, "my main motivation was just being at the level of writing I would need to be at for all the different [college] classes."

The courses taken by the students in our focus groups were, in almost every case, literature based. A notable exception was the DC/CE course Joe took at a community college. In fact, he claimed that there was "no real reading at all" in his course. He described writing argument, research, analysis, expository, and descriptive papers. By contrast, the students who took IB and AP courses routinely wrote timed essays in preparation for exams. In addition to writing literary analysis papers, they also wrote narrative, personal essay, descriptive, and comparison/contrast essays. Only six of the students reported writing a research paper; five students claimed that they did not write a research paper, or they noted research played "a minor role" in their course. The six who wrote research papers reported their topics ranged from Jane Austen to the role of Swiss banks during World War II to the effects of energy drinks on teenagers. Four of these six had access to a college library. The others used their high school and public libraries, along with the Internet.

What the students reported to us about the kinds of writing they did differs somewhat from the data generated by our first survey regarding the genres practiced in DC/CE courses (see table 5). Based on what students reported in the survey, we believe the students in the focus groups may be somewhat atypical since they reported writing more about literature than the students who completed the survey. Another explanation might be that

our survey respondents didn't really understand or remember the kind of writing they did in high school.

Table 5.  
Genres Students from DC/CE Courses Reported Writing in High School

<b>Genres of Writing Assigned in DC/CE</b>	<b>Percent of Surveyed Students (n = 118)*</b>
Argument/persuasion	84%
Personal narrative or essay	77%
Informative/expository essay	76%
Library research paper	75%
Analysis of literature (fiction, drama, poetry)	61%
Analysis of speech, essay, ad, film, etc.	54%
Creative writing (poem or short story)	49%
Description	40%
Opinion editorial	25%
Other	3%

\*This number is higher than the DC/CE number in table 1 (n = 74) because some students who took DC/CE did not end up receiving credit for it.

While 64% of students in our first survey indicated that their papers were four or more pages long, students in our focus group reported writing papers of a variety of lengths. For example, Valerie, who took an IB course in Washington, wrote four papers between her junior and senior years, the longest of which was a research paper on women in history that was fourteen pages. Fiona, who took a DC/CE course in Idaho during her senior year, wrote four essays on literary topics, each three to four pages in length; she did not write a research paper. In a DC/CE course in Utah, Tess wrote a paper every week (one to six pages in length) and a research paper.

Regardless of the content of the DC/CE, AP, or IB courses, students reported receiving writing instruction that reflects current best practices. Students reported writing multiple drafts, doing peer review, and consulting with their instructors. Even if consultations were not required, the students explained that their instructors made themselves available for one-

on-one conferences, and the majority of the students we talked with took advantage of these opportunities, showing once again their eagerness to succeed. The responses in the focus group confirmed the survey data which indicated students thought their DC/CE course had prepared them to write in various rhetorical situations (80% surveyed said “agree” or “strongly agree”), to use flexible writing strategies (69%), to participate in peer review groups (83%), and to write using sources found through library or database research (70%). While these percentages are relatively high, there is still clearly room for concern that nearly a fifth of students surveyed did not believe that their DC/CE courses helped them write in various rhetorical situations or participate in peer review, and about a third reported they hadn’t been helped to use flexible writing strategies or do research.

Perhaps most importantly, the students in the focus groups believed the skills they acquired in their college-equivalent courses transferred to the university. “I felt really well prepared,” Fiona said of her DC/CE course. Tess likewise stated, “I feel like I can do it [writing] just fine.” Lori explained,

I came here already used to the high demand and knowing what was expected of me. . . . Even though [the AH papers were] different than the English papers that we would write [in the DC/CE course], I still knew the format and the best way to go about writing that because [my teacher] prepared us so well for it.

In our survey, 78% of DC/CE students also said their course was “good” or “very good” preparation for college writing assignments.

By contrast, a few of the focus group students admitted to struggling with some writing tasks. Allison, who took an IB course in Texas, described having “problems . . . with field-specific types of writing.” Lisa, whose main motivation for taking a DC/CE course in Virginia was earning college credit, said, “I don’t know how well prepared I felt for it [college writing]. I think that probably taking the writing class here would have been the smarter choice.” One of the more confident writers we interviewed even acknowledged that there may be more to the first-year experience than college credit. Cathy, an IB student from California, explained,

People are trying to cram all of these college courses in [high school] so that education will be cheaper. . . . And they tell you it will be faster and cheaper, and I don’t know that that is a good thing.

She went on:

Even if I came here as a sophomore with all these credits, I’m still a freshman; I still don’t know what’s going on. I still need to figure

out how it works and what's going on. I think that high schools are becoming more and more obsessed with college.

Such a sophisticated perspective is rare but suggestive of the pressures put on students by the pre-college credit industry and perhaps by parents, advisors, and even politicians.

Interestingly, four of the eleven students in our focus groups had either taken the FYW course at BYU or were taking it concurrently with their AH course. When we asked them how their experience in our FYW course compared to high school, one of those four described the course as “kind of repetitive for me.” Jake, who was writing a rhetorical analysis paper in FYW at the time he participated in our focus group, believed that the FYW course “is basically the same thing as I had been doing in high school.” The others similarly viewed it as redundant, although they were not sorry to have taken it. Allison called it “a good refresher.” Even though they did not think the BYU FYW course offered them much that was new, three of the four students appreciated the opportunity to practice and refine their skills. As one said, “I feel confident that I can write, and I know that I can write well. And I'm still taking in as much as I can to improve myself.”

## DISCUSSION

This study yielded four kinds of results:

1. survey data from a sample of 713 students from across the United States, 390 of whom, or nearly 55%, had taken some version of FYW in high school before coming to our campus;
2. scores on two essays written by 189 of those students enrolled in a first-year required American Heritage course, 112 of whom (59%) had taken AP or DC/CE before they came to BYU, and 77 of whom (41%) had either taken, were currently taking, or were planning to take our FYW course;
3. survey data from 169 students who answered questions about their writing process on the second AH essay;
4. interview data from eleven students, seven of whom were part of the group whose essays we scored.

What do the results of these inquiries imply for us, for our fellow WPAs, and for future research?

A main purpose of this research was to test the hypothesis that the scores of DC/CE students would not differ significantly from those of students who earned FYW credit by other means. We found no significant differences between the scores of DC/CE students and those of other groups

for either essay. Thus, it seems clear that, for the students whose writing we analyzed, taking a DC/CE course in high school prepared them as well for the AH writing assignments as other pre-college or college versions of FYW did. In that respect, some concerns we expressed at the beginning of this article were allayed. But when we also consider that students in our sample who had not yet taken *any* FYW course wrote as well as every other group we studied, we are a bit perplexed by the results. Three main findings demand some explanation:

1. None of the groups differed significantly from each other on either essay except on Essay 1, where the AP group performed better than the group concurrently taking FYW with AH.
2. The majority of students' scores clustered around the middle of the rubric—which described adequate writing but not writing of a quality one might predict given the students' high GPAs, high ACT scores, and high socioeconomic status.
3. On the whole, students did better on Essay 1 than Essay 2.

We will discuss each of these in turn.

The first finding was that, although we might have predicted more variability among the groups, they were all about the same. Students who had not yet taken any version of FYW, either in high or in college, wrote as well as the other groups. Students with significantly lower high school GPAs and ACT scores who had taken FYW in a rushed seven-and-one-half weeks wrote as well as students who had taken a year-long AP or DC/CE course in high school. Students concurrently taking FYW with AH posted the lowest scores, although they were significantly lower only on the first essay and only when compared to the AP group. These results may lead some to question whether FYW even matters. We are not ready to say it doesn't matter because we think these results are consistent with other findings about the level of proficiency in writing demonstrated by students of a similar age and stage of development.

For example, we've learned from excellent longitudinal studies, such as those of Haswell's *Gaining Ground* and Sternglass' *Time to Know Them*, that first-year students are only setting out on the learning-to-write quest. While they may receive excellent college-level instruction, they may not be able to show what they've learned quite yet—they may have declarative knowledge about writing or rhetoric without the procedural ability to put those knowledge domains onto the page (Sommers, "The Call of Research" 154; see also Carroll 72 ). It is difficult to demonstrate exactly what students have learned from a course shortly after they take it—or while they are still enrolled. Echoing White, Haswell has argued persuasively that "a

causal relationship between an instructional program [such as FYW] and writing improvement is very difficult to establish” (Haswell, “Documenting Improvement” 340), especially when one college-level writing class is taken as the treatment. “The story of the freshman year,” write Nancy Sommers and Laura Saltz, “is not one of dramatic changes on paper; it is the story of changes within the writers themselves” (144).

Furthermore, as Sommers has learned from “The Call of Research,” her massive and heroic study of student writing at Harvard, writing development doesn’t follow a tidy linear trajectory:

Writing development involves steps both forward and backward, gains and losses, and requires some amount of “bad” writing while new skills are practiced. These steps backward, which often defy our best attempts to describe progress, are often indicators that students are struggling to learn something new. It is not uncommon to see students regress in one area as they practice another. From a longitudinal perspective, writing development is neither linear nor sequential, nor entirely predictable. (154)

Sommers’ observation seems particularly pertinent in the case of the students who were concurrently taking FYW with AH. These students were in the throes of learning something new in both courses. Their scores were the lowest of all groups studied on both essays; nevertheless, it is interesting that the students concurrently enrolled in FYW and the students who had already taken FYW maintained the same level of performance on the second essay, rather than losing some ground as the other groups did. It may be that their ability to demonstrate the same level of performance had something to do with their instruction in FYW.

The second main finding was that the quality of student writing in any group was not as high as we might have predicted. As noted in table 4, the overall average score on Essay 1 was 3.59; on essay 2, it was 3.42. These scores indicate that readers found most of the papers were described by the following criteria found in the middle of the scoring rubric:

*Thesis* announces an identifiable claim, though it may be ordinary and uninteresting, ambiguous or too broad.

*Critical Awareness*: the writer does not fully identify or explain the gap, tension, or question he/she is addressing; arguments and reasons are adequate but unqualified.

*Evidence*: connections to the thesis may be tenuous, and the evidence may be inadequate (only one source, for example) or lack credibility; sources may not be adequately analyzed or discussed.

*Counter-Arguments* are considered only in passing and the refutation is not convincing.

*Organization*: the paper has an introduction, thesis, evidence, counter-argument, and conclusion, but the various parts come without the connective tissue of transitions; the conclusion may summarize without offering compelling implications for the argument.

*Grammar and Style*: generally clean prose, with some grammatical errors.

*Sources/Citations* are not always suitably incorporated or documented, but there is an attempt at correct citation style (APA or Chicago).

While we recognize that, because of our holistic method of scoring, some of these traits perhaps carried more weight for raters than other traits, we did provide a summary statement to guide the holistic scoring, describing a 4 or 3 paper this way: “Solid, if not perfectly developed or reasoned; mostly clear and correct writing with some mistakes, but without an engaging style.” Perhaps, when one is eighteen or nineteen and in the first semester of college, it may be good enough to have one’s writing described in this way. (We note, however, that the Common Core State Standards for Writing for Grades 11–12 are far more rigorous than the criteria above.) We may feel more encouraged about the students’ performance by looking at their mean scores from another perspective. If the scoring rubric is considered in a binary way, more than two-thirds of the students’ first essays were judged to be in the upper half of the scoring grid because 69% of the students scored a 3.5 or higher (when two readers’ scores were averaged), and 44% scored 4 or higher. The same way of looking at the second essay shows that 57% of the papers were judged to be in the upper half of the scoring grid. These statistics draw some attention away from the descriptors of ordinary performance.

Nevertheless, scores are one thing and performance standard another. Cizek and Bunch quote Kane, who states that “the performance standard is the conceptual version of the desired level of competence, and the passing score is the operational version” (15). Cizek and Bunch also note that “all standard setting is unavoidably situated in a complex constellation of political, social, economic, and historical contexts” (12). Taking these contexts into account at our institution, we would define a score of 4 or 3 on this assessment as competent, or just barely meeting our performance standard for students receiving credit for FYW. Still we would have expected such high-achieving students as we studied to write at a somewhat higher level, particularly on papers they had several weeks to complete—and this is a cause for concern. Their high school GPAs and ACT scores and their

ability to meet other admission requirements at a very selective university suggest they are bright, motivated, and capable of high performance. But as we have noted, it may simply take more time and practice for knowledge about writing to manifest itself in the performance of even high-achieving students.

The less-than-impressive results tend to support the observations of Haswell, Carroll, Sternglass, and Sommers and Saltz. We have learned from cognitive development research that writers develop from novices to experts only after a significant apprenticeship period in which they develop genre awareness, domain-specific knowledge, working memory, audience awareness, and task schemata appropriate to various situations (Bazerman, "Genre"; Kellogg; McCutchen, Teske, and Bankeston). This is one reason we look askance at attempts to shorten students' "cognitive apprenticeship," as Ronald Kellogg has called it (19), by encouraging students to take FYW in high school, especially as young as fourteen or fifteen. Doing so may ask them to practice writing skills before they are developmentally able to do so (see Taczak and Thelin for evidence of this), and it may actually decrease the amount of deliberate practice with writing that students are able to have.

The third main finding is that, overall, students wrote significantly better on the first essay than the second. There are a number of explanations for this. It's possible that the second essay prompt was more difficult than the first. It may have been intrinsically harder for students, or they may have perceived it as harder. Even if it wasn't more difficult, perhaps students chose to invest less time and effort on the second essay, since it came later in the semester; they may have been busier or not convinced they could change their overall grade in the course. It is also possible that students could have performed as well on the second essay as on the first with more time and the same amount and type of feedback they experienced with the first essay, which was developed over a longer period of time and had at least two partial drafts graded by TAs before the final draft came due. The AH professors told us that their objective was to help students enough on the first paper that the students would be able to go through the writing process on their own for the second essay. Although students were required to participate in a peer workshop with two classmates to review their thesis and outline, and most of the 169 students who answered the second survey reported they followed sound writing processes, those who had taken a high school version of FYW or no FYW at all scored lower on the second essay (no group scored significantly lower by itself). Perhaps peer review of a thesis and outline was not as helpful as the TA review students got with partial drafts of the first essay. Perhaps more peer, TA, and teacher review

as well as more time to mature as a writer are precisely the benefits provided by an additional writing course after matriculation at college.

With maturation and more experience, students who achieved the average level we measured in this study may simply become better writers on their own. Yet we can't help but think that students who have had a high school substitute for FYW would profit from taking another writing course after they matriculate. The Hansen et al. study of AP students' writing, after which the present study was partially modeled, showed that some students start college with an advantage by taking *both* a high school AP course and then an appropriately challenging course (honors or second-semester FYW) when they get to college. In that study, students who earned an AP score of 4 or 5 but still took FYW in college posted scores on two essays that were significantly higher ( $p < 0.002$ ) than those of students who had only AP and no FYW. The authors speculated that by taking FYW in college—even when they could be exempted—AP students may solidify the gains they have made in writing and “expand the repertoire of texts they know how to write well” (489). Students who avail themselves of more opportunities for writing instruction will be able to revisit and reapply what they learned initially as well as learn more, as indicated by recent scholarship on distributed learning and optimal intervals for learning (Carey 65–79). Taking the ostensibly unnecessary college writing course is likely to help even the best students see writing as an iterative, open, and perpetually improving activity. We're inclined to believe the same would be true for DC/CE students or those who have taken some other high school path to earning FYW credit. In all honesty, we must add that students who don't take a high school DC/CE or AP or IB course and depend on a single semester of FYW at college to become strong writers also need to have opportunities to revisit and reapply their learning—whether in a sophomore course, linked courses, a WAC program, or all of these. We need to help students understand that learning to write is not like learning to ride a bike but is, instead, like learning to play the piano. Students can always improve their style and technique and expand their repertoire.

#### IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

We believe the quantitative results of this study support the recommendation of the NCTE's 2013 policy research brief, “First-Year Writing: What Good Does It Do?” The authors of this brief state unequivocally, “Allowing college credit for writing courses completed while in high school will not help students to fully develop capacities for engagement, persistence, collaboration, reflection, metacognition, flexibility, and ownership that

will help them to grow as writers and learners.” That’s a large claim, but it aligns with the claims of the *Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing* which stresses the importance of allowing students opportunity and time to develop the habits of mind exhibited by more mature students as well as greater rhetorical knowledge, critical thinking, flexible writing processes, and knowledge of writing conventions. The NCTE policy brief recommends that any decision to grant FYW credit for high school work “should be made on an individual basis and should be based on actual writing samples from the student that are read by instructors at the school they will attend.” If college writing programs have specific outcomes for their campus that they aim to produce in students, it behooves the administrators of those programs to determine whether students coming to campus with AP, IB, and DC/CE credit can demonstrate they have already met the outcomes.

We believe the qualitative results of our study also offer support for the NCTE position. In our surveys and focus groups, students reported having done significant amounts of writing in high school and having experienced solid process pedagogies. According to our first survey, more than 70% of students who took substitutes for FYW in high school wrote papers in the genres of argumentation/persuasion, exposition, and library research—genres that FYW courses typically focus on. But high percentages also reported writing analyses of literature and of speeches, essays, ads, films, and so forth—genres that are less common in FYW. Nearly half of the students also reported writing fiction and poetry in their high school classes meant to substitute for FYW—whether they were AP, IB, or DC/CE. The respondents in our focus groups described reading literary works almost exclusively in their DC/CE, AP, and IB first-year writing courses. Oddly enough, students who had experienced a literature-based curriculum in high school *and* BYU’s first-year writing curriculum did not see any major differences between what they did in high school and what they were doing in their FYW course, a course which includes a strong focus on rhetoric, with assignments to write arguments from sources, to analyze rhetoric, and to combine media and modes of presentation.<sup>8</sup> The different purposes and genres of writing that constitute the focus of our course did not seem to make much of an impression on the students we interviewed. For most of them, writing is writing, and whatever it is about or what form it takes doesn’t matter. (In that respect, students may be the strongest proponents of faith in general writing skills, a notion roundly criticized by Petraglia, Russell, and others.) In our discussions with students, we saw a need for them to become more sensitive to many concepts of rhetoric and to prac-

tice with more genres of reading and writing than they had encountered by their first year in college.

Based on the evidence provided in this research, we add our voice to the NCTE's in recommending that, rather than stop their study of writing after they have completed a FYW option in high school, students study writing after they come to college—in an additional first-year course, a sophomore course, linked courses, WAC/WID courses, or all of these. The NCTE research brief states,

Decisions regarding college writing course requirements and student placement should acknowledge that writing development occurs over time and reflects students' emotional, social, and cognitive maturity. Writing competence—for students of all ages—is continually developing and depends on exposure to many diverse experiences requiring writing, revision, problem solving, and creative thinking. ("First-Year Writing")

We realize that requiring more writing of students who already have FYW credit would mean that WPAs would have to create appropriately difficult and different writing courses for AP, IB, and DC/CE students to place into when they come to campus. But taking a challenging writing course early in their college careers, we believe, will strengthen the gains those students have begun to make by taking a challenging path in high school such as AP, IB, or DC/CE (see Whitley and Paulsen's study of AP students for evidence of this).

We understand the desire to have students finish their college education in an efficient time frame to keep their college expenses and debt as low as possible. We understand why government officials, parents, and students believe that taking pre-college writing courses will help achieve these objectives. But perhaps students and parents are trying to economize on the wrong things. At our institution, students who matriculate with anywhere from six to sixty credit hours earned in high school—including for first-year writing—don't graduate from college significantly faster; at most, they graduate about half a semester ahead of their peers. Perhaps these students realize that they are not as well-prepared or as well-educated as their transcripts seem to imply. Perhaps they come to realize what Cathy told us in a focus group:

They tell you [taking college courses in high school] will be faster and cheaper, and I don't know that that is a good thing. Even if I came here as a sophomore with all these credits, I'm still a freshman;

I still don't know what's going on. I still need to figure out how it works and what's going on. I think that high schools are becoming more and more obsessed with college.

We are also learning that, even though our admissions office allows students to bypass FYW on the strength of high school learning, some departments at BYU are requiring first-year writing as a prerequisite for their majors anyway. Departments such as psychology and English want their majors to write better, thinking it folly to excuse students from further writing instruction because they were able to pass tests or produce a few essays when they were fourteen, fifteen, sixteen, or seventeen but have done little in the meantime to maintain and develop their skills or to add to their repertoire of writing genres.

To help students see the value of additional writing instruction, we recommend that WPAs consider how they package and advertise courses to students who come to college with credit for first-year writing already on their transcripts. Students in our focus groups tended to describe our FYW course as a repeat of what they had already learned in high school. We may tend to dismiss such claims, believing that our curriculum is different from and more rigorous than high school courses, particularly when students with pre-college credit describe having taken literature-based writing courses, having written mostly timed essays, and having done minimal to no research. But perhaps we should be less concerned with selling students on the idea that FYW offers something new or different and be more concerned with convincing them that it offers them something *more*—more opportunity to refine and develop their skills as writers. Administrators and faculty on college campuses often wrongly assume that FYW is a one-stop fix-all course from which students emerge fully prepared to do the kinds of writing expected of them at the university. WPAs rightfully respond by noting that writing acumen develops over time through practice. College-equivalent writing courses, theoretically, prepare students to do college writing (whatever that entails). But given that most of the students in our study—whether they came to us with pre-college credit or took our FYW course or took no course at all—did not perform as well as their academic profile seemed to predict they would, perhaps the real issue is not that students need to be sold on the distinctive nature of FYW. Rather, perhaps the real issue is that they need to be shown how an additional course presents another, and needed, opportunity to develop their writing skills.

We also believe it is important to examine the broader culture in which DC/CE, AP, and IB courses have now become a growth industry. We feel compelled to ask what is behind the effort to try to fast-forward students' literacy development. Why are so many students feeling pressure to enroll

in so-called college level courses at ever younger ages? Deborah Brandt's research has taught us to pay attention to what she calls the "sponsors of literacy," any agents "local or distant, abstract or concrete, who enable, support, teach, model, recruit, regulate, suppress, or withhold literacy and gain advantage by it in some way." In short, "sponsors are those agents who want our literacy as much as we do" (xiii). One of the most powerful sponsors of literacy is, collectively, the businesses and industries competing for an edge in the economy by trying to get the best human capital to improve production and profit. What we often view as "literacy crises" that must be addressed in our schools are really economic demands, Brandt says, on "more and more people at younger and younger ages to do more and more things with symbols" (xiv). The constant pressure to change standards for literacy achievement are driven by economic competition and the changing communication technologies our economy now runs on.

The growing pressure put on today's high school students to take so-called college-level writing courses in high school and thus get FYW "out of the way" is one manifestation of what Brandt describes. Some of the most prominent lobbyists encouraging state governments to establish concurrent enrollment programs and to mandate participation in AP, IB, and DC/CE programs are organizations such as Achieve, the American Youth Policy Forum, the Institute for Educational Leadership, Jobs for the Future, and the National Center for Educational Accountability. Representatives from these organizations authored many of the chapters in the 2007 book *Minding the Gap: Why Integrating High School with College Makes Sense and How to Do It* (Hoffman et al.), and their main argument is that, without college credentials, today's adolescents will be left out of the mainstream economy. But who bankrolls these organizations that make this argument to the state legislatures? The answer is the non-profit foundations established by such well-known for-profit corporations as Microsoft, Eli Lilly, Ford, General Electric, Boeing, IBM, and Wal-Mart (see Hansen and Farris, Introduction).

We understand the desires of corporate America to have well-educated workers. But what if the acquisition of deep, wide, versatile, and easily deployed literacies is not something that can be sped up? We believe corporations would be better served by hiring employees whose educational experience has been deep, deliberate, and relatively slow, rather than superficial, compressed, and rushed, with advanced instruction presented to ever-younger students instead of instruction that is appropriate to their cognitive, emotional, and social development. What if, instead of pushing more and more college learning into high school, we set the bar for graduating from high school higher, and we laid the foundation deeper? What

if we had challenging courses like AP and IB in high school but didn't allow double counting of high school courses for college credit? What if we gave adolescents more time to become mature writers, developing audience awareness and working memory through a more complete cognitive apprenticeship? Would we get a better prepared cadre of workers for the knowledge industries? We think the answer is yes. We believe students would be far more "college and career-ready" if they studied writing in many different contexts rather than being led to believe that writing is a low-level set of skills that one acquires once and for all, as one might purchase a set of pliers and wrenches to use again and again. As Adler-Kassner has recently argued, "*Competencies are always situated within contexts*. Just as there is no such thing as 'general skills writing,' competencies are not generic; they are developed and closely linked to specific sites" (449; emphasis in original). As Bazerman has stated, perhaps the most important thing students will learn from taking multiple writing courses and practicing writing in several domains is that it is "worth working hard at writing" ("Response" 257).

We hope this study causes readers to think about their institutions' policies and practices concerning high school versions of FYW. We strongly recommend that this study be replicated elsewhere because, like Anson, we believe decisions about writing program policies and instruction should be based whenever possible on empirical evidence, not simply beliefs. Although we began this study with the hope that our national student population might give us generalizable findings, we caution that the findings may not be generalizable to institutions where entering students have different academic and demographic profiles. With Haswell ("NCTE/CCCC's"), we believe that replication studies are too few and infrequent, so we particularly encourage state and regional public institutions to adapt our methods to study their own populations to see whether they find similar results. We would be happy to advise WPAs on how they might adapt our methods (particularly scoring methods) to get results that would contribute to a robust set of national findings about the nature and quality of pre-college writing programs.<sup>9</sup>

## NOTES

1. Some local studies offer support for the value of DC/CE courses in writing. Oregon University System and Oregon's Department of Community Colleges and Workforce Development discovered that DC/CE writing students who received credit for the first semester of a FYW sequence passed the second semester at close to the same rate as students who took FYW in the Oregon University System (North and Jacobs). While some studies show that college-level writing does not serve students who haven't yet reached a critical adult-like level

of maturity (Taczak and Thelin), other studies—like one by the Community College Research Center—demonstrate that high school students who take DC/CE are more likely to graduate from high school, more likely to enroll in college, and more likely to stay in college after the first semester than students who do not (Karp et al.). The CCRC also noted that DC/CE students were predominantly white, female, and unlikely to be labeled English language learners.

2. According to 2008 data from the Education Commission of the States, twelve states required “all high schools and eligible public postsecondary institutions to provide dual enrollment opportunities.” In twenty-one states, “dual enrollment programs are based on voluntary partnerships between K-12 and postsecondary partners,” and in nine states, “policy does not specify whether the offering of dual enrollment is mandatory or voluntary” (Education Commission of the States).

3. Our IRB Protocol number was 20291.

4. For a quick summary of the differences among these various paths to FYW credit, see Hansen’s “What Is Pre-College Credit?” in *A Rhetoric for Writing Program Administrators*.

5. At first, we had intended to include International Baccalaureate (IB) students and transfer students. However, there were only fourteen IB students in the population, and we found that a high proportion of them were taking or had already taken FYW because BYU does not yet grant first-year writing credit for IB. The IB students’ scores were left out of the statistical analysis of scores. Additionally, after reading the students’ answers to the question of whether they had transferred credit from another institution, we realized nearly all of them had not understood the question and had misidentified themselves, so we left their scores out of the analysis as well.

6. We acknowledge there are problems related to holistic scoring of student papers—challenges that have been considered and debated since White’s article “Holisticism” was published in *CCC* in 1985. White argues that holistic scoring has two general weaknesses: 1) it lacks diagnostic power and 2) it tends to bias us into thinking that the scores represent some kind of absolute value. We accept that scoring writing is an inescapably subjective process and that values assigned to writing can be no better than approximations (Haswell, “Rubrics” 244). We also know that in some cases analytic or primary trait rubrics, when used ethically and rigorously, can provide more nuance for a study such as ours, regardless of the reliability that might be sacrificed when training raters to rate across domains. Cizek and Bunch do allow for holistic rubrics that allot points based on the quality of various characteristics in the response, but they caution that rubrics yield data only about the item being scored with them, e.g., the whole paper. These data, they caution, must then be related to performance level descriptions or definitions (31). In the end, we believed a holistic rubric was suitable for our purposes because we were looking for overall impressions of writing ability based on shared

standards of rhetorical knowledge, argument, style, and conventions—something “qualitatively different than the mere aggregate of many parts,” in the words of one research study (Singer and LeMahieu). With Huot, we believe that holistic scoring can be “a sound and valid measure of directly assessing student writing,” but we understand its limitations (228).

7. Undoubtedly, it would have been better to have more writing from the students—either another essay or longer papers or both—to base our judgments on, as opposed to two 900-word essays. However, the sample we got was representative of the course under examination. We were fortunate that the AH professors who cooperated with us valued writing enough to assign even six to eight pages of writing to every student in a course that enrolled over 2,500. We admire the thought the professors put into their assignments and rubrics, as well as their efforts to use sound pedagogical processes to teach writing and to norm the grading of such a mountain of papers with their small army of TAs. Further, we note that the AP English exams also use a relatively small amount of holistically scored writing (three first-draft essays completed in forty minutes each) to judge students’ ability; nevertheless, important decisions about whether to have a student take first-year writing or not may rest on the scores of these short, timed AP essays. We were fortunate to assess student writing that had been drafted, revised, and edited over a period of weeks.

8. Christine Denecker’s dissertation speaks to this point as well. Studying DE/CE writing courses in Ohio, Denecker found that “secondary and post-secondary writing instruction are rarely aligned” in such programs (iii). She argues particularly that the site of instruction matters and that so-called college-level writing instruction provided by high school teachers in high schools may serve simply to “re-inscribe already established gaps, assumptions, and misconceptions between writing instructors at secondary and post-secondary levels” (iv).

9. We thank the Council of Writing Program Administrators for the targeted research grant that made this study possible. We also thank our colleagues Danette Paul and Delys Snyder for reading early drafts. We are particularly grateful to the rigorous reviewers and the editors of the journal, who made this article stronger.

## APPENDIX A: WRITING PROMPTS

*[Authors’ Note: The following prompt was composed by two professors who taught American Heritage in fall 2012. For our study, only Essays 3 and 4 were scored; what the professors call Essays 1 and 2 below (actually only a few paragraphs) were assigned as partial drafts building up to Essay 3.]*

This semester, you will write **four** essays. The first three essays will give you practice constructing the various parts of an academic essay, and the fourth essay will give you another opportunity to practice those skills by constructing a full essay from beginning to end. Each essay will come with specific word limits.

The essays are worth the following point totals:

Essay #1: 10 points

Essay #2: 20 points

Essay #3: 50 points

Essay #4: 70 points

Together, the essay assignments are worth 150 points – as much as the final exam. You should, therefore, take each assignment very seriously. Due dates for each essay are listed in the course syllabus and in this document. Please pay careful attention to these dates, as the penalties for late work are severe. The grading rubrics the TAs will follow for each assignment are available on the American Heritage website.

The essays you will write are not book reports or mere summaries of someone else's position or 5-paragraph descriptive essays of the kind many of us wrote in high school. Instead, they should be essays in which you announce a thoughtful, compelling thesis and construct an effective college-level argument, using appropriate evidence and analysis to defend your position. Each essay should include the Honor Pledge (see the "Policies" section of the syllabus).

Your first three essays will be drawn from one of the topic statements below, each of which touches on one or more key themes of the course. The statements are designed to be controversial – people of good will may agree or disagree with them, sometimes passionately. You should critically evaluate the topic you choose. Your goal is to construct a thoughtful, compelling, insightful argument about the topic.

1. Government action invariably means a loss of individual liberty.
2. When designing a government (or writing a constitution), you should focus more on individual rights than on virtue or on community welfare.
3. An individual can achieve the greatest freedom only when bound to a community.
4. Inequality is a natural condition of human society, not a reason for government intervention.
5. Economic systems work best when producers and consumers set virtue aside.

### *Essay #1*

For this essay, you will choose a topic from one of the five topic statements above, and you will formulate an effective introduction and thesis for a paper that deals with that topic. Your thesis should not merely be a restatement of the topic sentence, but should, instead, be the main idea or proposition that could be the heart of a longer essay. To complete this assignment, though, you will only write the introduction and thesis statement. You are limited to **NO MORE THAN 150 words**.

As you construct your thesis statement, it may be helpful for you to consult a few scholarly sources. The course readings also address the topics listed in this writing assignment. [. . .]

Writing this essay will help you learn to...

- **Identify a problem worth writing about (a motive).** A successful essay must attract the reader's attention and explain the intellectual puzzle or challenge you will be discussing. Why should readers care or want to read further?
- **Formulate an arguable thesis in response to the motive you have identified.** Your goal is to create a compelling argument. Without a thesis, your essay will be mere description of someone else's ideas.

### *Essay #2*

For this essay, you will write on the same topic that you chose for Essay #1. Based on the feedback you received about Essay #1, you should revise your introduction and thesis statement. In addition, you will write two new paragraphs in which you provide evidence in support of your thesis as well as some analysis of that evidence. You are limited to **NO MORE THAN 400 words**, including both the revised introduction and the new evidence. [. . .]

Writing this essay will help you learn to...

- **Revise your writing in response to comments.** Writing is a process. To produce high-quality academic argument, which is our goal, your written work should be much more than what you type in to the computer at 2am the day the essay is due. Revision will be a key part of this process. Revision literally means "seeing again." When engaged in effective revision, a writer begins to see an argument from a different perspective and can therefore articulate a sharper focus. Writing specialist Nancy Sommers has found that when experienced writers revise, they often radically alter their idea and reorganize the entire essay. By contrast, when inexperienced student writers revise, they change a few words here and there but leave the essay essentially unaltered. Think hard about your TA's evaluation of your first assignment. Try to see your thesis anew, and make changes that will strengthen your introduction.
- **Use appropriate evidence to defend your thesis and analyze the evidence.** A thesis needs to be defended with compelling evidence. But usually, the evidence does not just speak for itself. It needs to be analyzed and interpreted. You should think hard about the case you are trying to build for your thesis. What evidence supports your thesis and why? As you incorporate evidence, think hard about the sources of that evidence.

### *Essay #3*

This assignment is your opportunity to expand upon the work you have already done and to develop a full essay that includes an introduction and thesis, evidence, consideration of one or more counter-arguments, and a conclusion. You will write on the same topic you chose for the first two essays. You should revise your

introduction, thesis, and evidence after considering the feedback you received from Essay #2. For this essay, you should add any additional evidence and analysis that is needed to fully develop your argument. You should also consider and respond to at least one counter-argument. The essay should include a thoughtful conclusion. You are limited to **NO MORE THAN 900 words**. [ . . . ]

Writing this essay will help you learn to...

- **Structure an essay effectively.** Writing an effective academic essay is not an exercise in stream of consciousness or associative writing, nor is it a mere summary of the arguments of others. You should develop an argument of your own that grows and develops (and does not merely restate the thesis multiple times). As you develop your argument, you should articulate and respond to potential counter-arguments to your main idea. Every good idea has potential counter-arguments, and you should engage with those in the course of your essay. Choose the strongest counter-argument you can think of, not a weak or straw-man objection. If you cannot think of a suitable counter-argument, your thesis is probably not as strong as it could be.

#### *Essay #4*

This assignment is your opportunity to bring all of the elements of the academic essay together once again, but this time for a different topic. In order to choose a topic, please view the following video opinion piece from David Frum: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uD3NTGO5CCM>. (A link to the video is also available on the American Heritage website.)

Frum is well-respected author and public intellectual who writes about contemporary politics, generally from a conservative perspective. Your essay should take up and respond to one of the arguments Frum makes in the video. For example, Frum addresses such issues as the collective good, the causes of gridlock, and the idea of patriotism, among other themes. Select one of his themes or arguments, construct a compelling thesis, and write an essay of no more than 900 words. Your essay can agree or disagree with the position Frum takes. As with Essay #3, your work should include an introduction and thesis statement, evidence and analysis, a counter-argument, and a conclusion.

#### APPENDIX B: SCORING RUBRIC

*5–6 Paper: Perceptive and fully developed; reasoned and organized effectively; an obvious command of conventions with a rhetorically-effective, engaging style.*

- *Thesis* is clear, perceptive, and focused; leads to an incisive, creative argument; is specific and limited in scope.
- *Critical awareness*: the writer sets up the argument by identifying an inconsistency, gap, tension or question; the student may offer a qualification for his or her argument.

- *Evidence* includes compelling and reliable sources (*plural*) and specific examples, which are analyzed insightfully.
- *Counter-Arguments* (objections, alternatives, or problems from skeptical readers) are considered and are responded to, building the writer's case.
- *Organization*: the argument builds effectively with connective tissue such as transitions; the intro and conclusion are compelling, and they support the thesis and suggest implications or consequences for the argument.
- *Grammar and Style*: clean, polished, and sophisticated prose with virtually no grammatical errors.
- *Sources/Citations* are appropriately incorporated and documented with a clear citation style (APA or Chicago).

**3–4 Paper:** *Solid, if not perfectly developed or reasoned; mostly clear and correct writing with some mistakes, but without an engaging style.*

- *Thesis* announces an identifiable claim, though it may be ordinary and uninteresting, ambiguous or too broad.
- *Critical Awareness*: the writer does not fully identify or explain the gap, tension, or question he/she is addressing; arguments and reasons are adequate but unqualified.
- *Evidence*: connections to the thesis may be tenuous, and the evidence may be inadequate (only one source, for example) or lack credibility; sources may not be adequately analyzed or discussed.
- *Counter-Arguments* are considered only in passing and the refutation is not convincing.
- *Organization*: the paper has an introduction, thesis, evidence, counter-argument, and conclusion, but the various parts come without the connective tissue of transitions; the conclusion may summarize without offering compelling implications for the argument.
- *Grammar and Style*: generally clean prose, with some grammatical errors.
- *Sources/Citations* are not always suitably incorporated or documented, but there is an attempt at correct citation style (APA or Chicago).

**1–2 Paper:** *Poorly supported and/or reasoned; weak style—errors impede reading.*

- *Thesis* is nonexistent or is too obvious, broad, or vague; the sentence-level writing might be adequate, but the argument is weak.
- *Critical Awareness*: the topic is addressed too personally or matter-of-factly, and there is no sense of a gap, tension, or question.
- *Evidence* is inadequate (e.g., no sources), of poor quality, not analyzed, and/or not connected to the thesis.
- *Counter-Arguments* are nonexistent or, if present, are not adequately stated and responded to.
- *Organization* is mysterious or confusing; the transitions are weak or nonexistent; the conclusion merely summarizes the argument.

- *Grammar and Style*: simplistic, unpolished prose, with noticeable and distracting grammatical errors.
- *Sources/Citations* are not incorporated and documented correctly or effectively; there may be no works cited page or citations at all, or the works cited page is made up only of links.

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## Making the Most of Networked Communication in Writing Program Assessment

Sonya Lancaster, Heather Bastian, Justin Ross Sevenker, &  
E.A. Williams

### ABSTRACT

*This article builds on the rhetorical insights of the Council of Writing Program Administrator's Communications Strategies document and writing program assessment scholarship by conceptualizing communications about assessment in terms of network theory. Drawing on the work of Bruno Latour, Albert-Laszlo Barabási, and Mark Granovetter, we advocate a three-step process for mapping and analyzing assessment networks. The first step traces the origins of the network; the second step maps the current structure of the network; and the third step explores the potential of weak ties to build bridges within that network. From this, we argue that such work allows writing program administrators to gain an intimate knowledge of their networks' structures that they then can use to communicate on behalf of their assessment projects and programs.*

When we began to think about how to present the results of our five-year assessment of a first- and second-year writing program at a Research I university in the Midwest, we imagined our communications about the project in terms of the Council of Writing Program Administrators' Communication Strategies document and the current scholarship that informs it.<sup>1</sup> This scholarship advocates a site-based rhetorical approach to assessment, encouraging WPAs to join and shape conversations about assessment at the local level (Adler-Kassner; Adler-Kassner and Harrington; Adler-Kassner and O'Neill; Haswell; Haswell and McLeod; Huot; O'Neill; White). As Linda Adler-Kassner and Peggy O'Neill suggest, assessment is not simply an administrative task; it is an opportunity for WPAs "to build alliances with others and to communicate messages about writing instruction based in their own values as well as the values articulated in the field of composition and rhetoric" (143).

Following CWPA's suggestion "to identify the individuals or groups who seem to care (or should care) most about what you do" (Council 2), we identified as relevant audiences our writing program's teachers, the English department, the dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, the board of regents (BOR), the provost, students, and the public. Following the suggestion to "carefully listen" to our audiences' "concerns about student learning and how those concerns are expressed," we analyzed documents our audiences produced (per Richard H. Haswell and Susan McLeod's advice) and engaged in conversations with them when possible in order to understand their values, motives, and expectations regarding education and, more specifically, writing.

During the five years of the assessment, though, our understanding of the concept of audience changed, as did the audiences themselves. Existing audiences fluctuated as the university experienced unusually high turnover in administration, including two chancellors, three provosts, three deans of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, and three English department chairs. New audiences such as institutional curriculum committees developed, and distant audiences such as the BOR became important as they defined and required assessment of new learning outcomes. With these changes, we found that while acting locally and considering the language of our stakeholders were relatively easy, building alliances, developing messages, and disseminating our messages were far more complicated. The Communication Strategies recommendations for choosing, forging alliances with, and directly communicating with compatible audiences for assessment ran into the reality of a complex assessment network in which our audiences were nodes variously linked to and separated from our writing program. Various audiences demanded our attention at different times, and we could not directly communicate with many of them since our access was limited and our messages were often mediated by others. To make visible the often invisible connections between audiences, we turned to complementary strands of network theory to understand the various stakeholders in our assessment, their relationships to each other and to our program, and the ways that language and power traverse and affect those connections.

In this article, we describe the structure of our assessment's network, mapping its development through time and noting how specific audiences, or nodes, gained or lost prominence and how pathways between nodes changed. Specifically, we employ Bruno Latour's work in actor-network theory to trace the origins of our network; Albert-Laszlo Barabási's contributions to network theory to map its scale-free structure; and Mark Granovetter's "strength of weak ties" theory to identify opportunities to

build alliances and disseminate messages by creating bridges between distant nodes. We believe that viewing assessment as a network in these ways can help WPAs—as spokespersons for their assessment projects—communicate strategically with their audiences.

The networked nature of audiences is already present in some writing program assessment scholarship. Most explicitly, Adler-Kassner and O’Neill offer *assessment as networked infrastructure* as one metaphor for understanding assessment. Specifically, they compare assessment to “networked infrastructure” or “a loosely networked group of alliances that is fairly flexible” (186). While this comparison helpfully draws on the network metaphor to describe how assessment can work to create alliances between interested groups, we suggest that these groups are always and already networked. In other words, assessment occurs within a complex network of audiences/nodes that are fluid and must be navigated and exploited by WPAs.

Our understanding of networked audiences is more akin to Richard H. Haswell and Susan McLeod’s discussion in “Working with Administrators” of how four separate assessment reports travel to and through audiences as well as how they are subsequently used. They do not discuss networks directly or use terms specific to network theories, but implicit in their essay is the importance of understanding networked audiences and communication. They demonstrate, for instance, how one report travels through the “usual routing” to the provost and vice-provost via the general education director and how it could also potentially reach additional audiences along the way, such as an All-University Writing Committee, the dean of the College of Liberal Arts, the president of the university, the BOR, and the state’s Higher Education Coordinating Board (176). By tracing how documents traverse a network, Haswell and McLeod help WPAs understand how their communications may be used within their own institutions. We build on Haswell and McLeod’s work by making the implicit explicit; that is, we provide direct attention to concepts established in network theory to more fully map the dynamic pathways of writing programs’ communications.

In what follows, we advocate specific steps for mapping and analyzing assessment networks, using our own institution’s assessment project as an example. We begin by tracing the origins of our assessment network, arguing that such analysis identifies significant network nodes and the power relations that have shaped communication in the network. Then, we describe our network in the current moment and illustrate that the structure of the network regulates the flow of information about assessment, providing us direct access to some of our colleagues and only mediated access to some of our stakeholders while removing other stakeholders beyond the reach of our messages entirely. We argue that by performing this kind of

mapping and analysis, WPAs gain an intimate knowledge of their networks' structures that they then can use to communicate successfully on behalf of their projects and programs.

### TRACING THE ORIGINS OF THE NETWORK

As we shifted our efforts to tracing our assessment network, we found that our audiences, our messages, and the network itself were more unstable and less predictable than much assessment scholarship indicates. For example, the CWPA Communication Strategies document presents audiences and communication in traditionally rhetorical terms: communication occurs between a speaker and an identifiable, influential audience; communication is direct; and communication, when successful, culminates in action or identification on the audience's part. But when audiences are considered in a network, people and their offices become nodes alongside many others, including the writing program. The pathway between any two given nodes often is not direct (so communication rarely reaches only the targeted nodes), and certain nodes may change a message or send it in unanticipated directions. Moreover, a network is not stable or even entirely visible to those who must navigate it. It gains and loses pathways over time, and the nodes a WPA might target might gain and lose power. As a result, our assessment network when we began five years ago does not look like our assessment network today, nor does today's network look like it might five years from now in another assessment cycle.

For those who would map an assessment network with the goal of disseminating messages, its instability is further compounded by its limited visibility. When we map, we necessarily bring to the forefront only selected nodes and pathways within a larger, evolving network that encompasses all sorts of communication among and within institutions of higher education. There are many nodes that we leave out when we map such as other departments in the university that are simultaneously assessing their programs, other institutions in the state and nation, and national accreditation entities. Despite the fact that any assessment network map will only highlight a small portion of a communication network, establishing maps can provide WPAs a sense of the shifting parameters of networks and the residual pathways of power and communication in them. This is especially true, as we argue below, when WPAs map the origins of their assessment networks.

To outline the parameters of our assessment network, we began as Bruno Latour recommends by "laying continuous connections leading from local interaction to other places, times, and agencies through which a local site is *made to do something*" (173; emphasis in original). In this case,

the local site is the writing program, and the other places, times, and agencies are the nodes from and through which the impetus toward assessment was communicated to the program. The nodes and pathways (*actors* and *communications* to Latour) through which these historical communications traveled “leave many more traces in their wake than already established connections which, by definition, may remain mute and invisible” (Latour 31).<sup>2</sup> Figure 1 depicts the map of our original assessment network. The arrows in figure 1 demonstrate the flow of information and the power structure that initiated our assessment project.

We found as we examined the assessment history that, as is surely the case with many projects, the exigency of this one was the potential threat to funding. In 1999, our state legislature approved a statute that tied state moneys for higher education to performance indicators. To create performance indicators, the legislature required the BOR and institutions of higher education in the state to enter into performance agreements. These required the BOR to set goals for each institution and for those institutions to demonstrate “directional improvement.” Fortuitously, in 2004, the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) Initiative for Effective Education Practice conducted a site visit at our institution in response to high student engagement scores on the NSSE survey. The consultant-evaluator team then wrote their Documenting Effective Educational Practice (DEEP) report. Drawing from this report, the provost emphasized the quality of undergraduate education in both that year’s performance agreement with the BOR and the self-study for the Higher Learning Commission accreditation. In the performance agreement, the provost linked the BOR goal “Improve Learner Outcomes” to the institutional goal “Enrich the Undergraduate Learning Experience.” That same year, the provost asked the dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences to revise the general education goals and requirements. To involve all of the university faculty in changing the goals, the university’s Center for Teaching Excellence Teaching Summit in fall 2004 focused on a campus-wide discussion of the general education requirements. After the learning goals for general education were revised, the dean asked the departments to design assessment plans to determine how well students were achieving the revised goals. In 2006, the English department chair charged the writing program’s curriculum committee to work with the department’s assessment committee to devise a plan for assessing the courses. Finally, in 2008, the chancellor convened a Teaching and Learning Task Force, part of Initiative 2015. The task force recommended defining learning outcomes for all academic programs at the university.

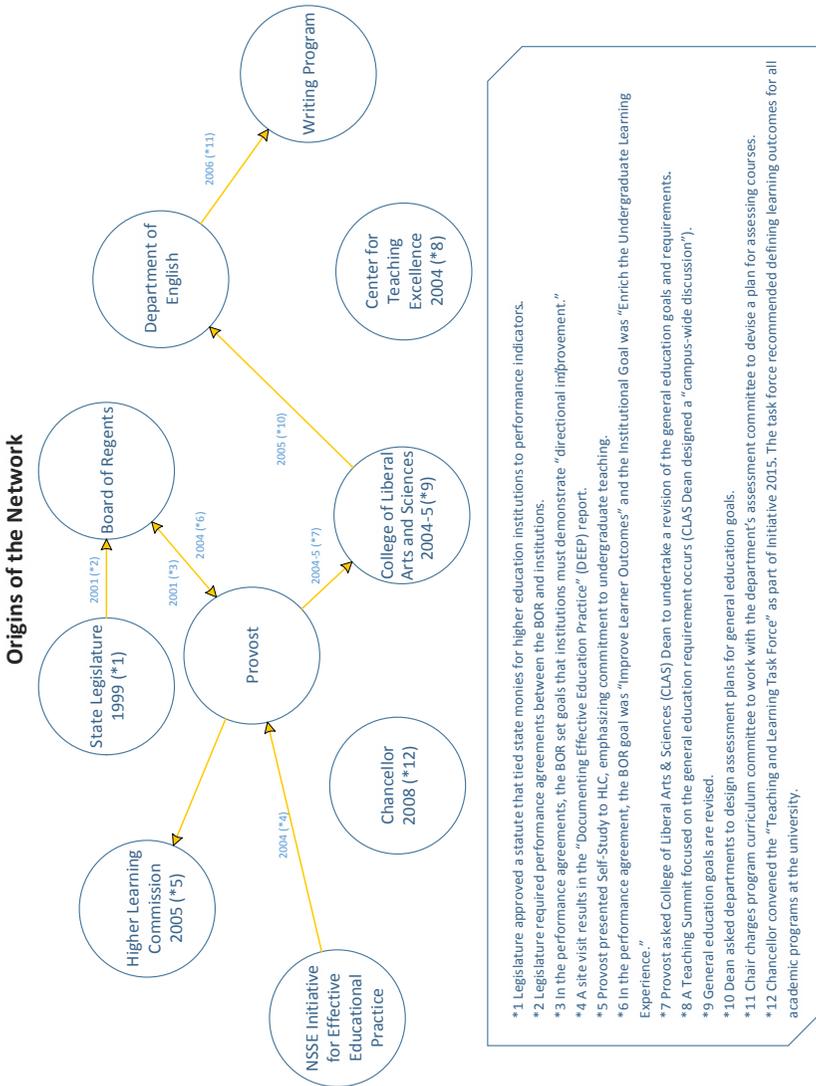


Figure 1. Origins of the Network

This historical account identifies the significant nodes in our assessment network and the movement of communication between them that ultimately prompted our assessment project. Additionally, this mapping reveals the two ways that nodes can act in our network: as intermediaries or as mediators. Latour says that in all groupings for communication purposes, intermediaries “transport meaning or force without transformation” while mediators “transform, translate, distort and modify the meaning or the elements they are supposed to carry” (39). In figure 1, we see the BOR and the provost’s office acting as mediators, combining and redefining the messages

from the state legislature that passes through them. The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences also mediates by linking the message of improving learning outcomes to reforming general education, and the department acts as an intermediary, passing the message from the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences directly to the writing program. Knowing whether a node is acting or might act as an intermediary or a mediator is important because “no matter how apparently simple a mediator may look, it may become complex; it may lead in multiple directions which will modify all the contradictory accounts attributed to its role” (Latour 39). This potential for mediation, Latour says, adds an element of uncertainty to the movement of a message through a network (39). A node that acts as a mediator of one message may not act as one with another message, so a WPA who originates a message must be prepared for it to be mediated unexpectedly. That said, certain nodes in our assessment network seem inclined to mediation, so tracing the history of a network could predict where some mediation can be expected.

Our historical mapping also highlights how the network is subject to change. Specifically, we see that calls for measurable learning outcomes and directional improvement from the state legislature and BOR disrupted the network and prompted whole-scale rethinking of undergraduate education at the university. As a result, our general education requirement shifted from one based on a collection of courses to a set of measurable learning goals attained through various courses and experiences. This transition did not happen smoothly as new nodes and pathways were created to facilitate the transition and in response to changes in administration. Tracing the development of our network highlights its structural instability and alerts us to the possibility that our messages will be mediated. Consequently, it allows us to anticipate the structure of our current network and provides a starting point for mapping and navigating it. Specifically, it gives us the ability to compare our current network to the historical moves that inform it, to contextualize the pathways among nodes we see today, and to illuminate important traces of links that may have broken or weakened as well as those that have strengthened or been developed. This historical mapping is especially useful for orienting new members of our writing program and assessment team. Similarly, a WPA who is new to her institution or who may be the sole administrator overseeing an assessment project can use the information-gathering process needed to develop a historical mapping as an opportunity to build relationships with those who have that institutional knowledge and perspective. It also serves as a resource for explaining the context of an assessment project to department colleagues and university administrators.

## MAPPING OUR CURRENT NETWORK

In mapping our current assessment network, we aimed to describe the connections and power relations between our program and other relevant nodes in our network as well as any strictures on communication between them. To that end, we began with Barábasi's descriptions of networks because they allowed us to represent our network's power structure and scale-free nature. In a random network, all nodes have the same number of links. As an example, Barábasi points to the national highway network, "in which the nodes are the cities, and the links are the major highways connecting them" (71). There, few nodes are more connected than others as "most cities are served by roughly the same number of highways" (71). Alternatively, in a scale-free network, the distribution of links is unequal because some nodes become highly connected hubs. Barábasi says that "this is very similar to the air traffic system, in which a large number of small airports are connected to each other via a few major hubs" (71). The power of the hubs in scale-free networks comes from the number of links they have and thus the number of communications that must flow through them. This increases the potential for a hub's mediations to have an unusually large impact if it chooses to mediate a message; however, it might be possible for a message to go through a large hub unmediated because of the volume of messages since one may not be noticed. Two powerful hubs in our assessment network are the BOR and the provost's office, as most information about the assessment moves through and often is mediated by them.

The second step to understanding our network, then, was to map it as a scale-free network organized into hubs, clusters, and the pathways between them (see figure 2). In figure 2, nodes appear as circles with dotted lines and hubs as circles with solid lines while arrows represent pathways of directional communication between nodes and hubs. Large ovals group nodes and hubs into clusters (some of which share hubs, e.g., the English department), which Barábasi describes as small, fully connected circles connected by strong ties. For Granovetter, strong ties occur between family and close friends, and "the strength of a tie is the combination of the amount of time, the emotional intensity, the intimacy (mutual confiding) and the reciprocal services which characterize the tie" ("Strength" 1361). These close personal

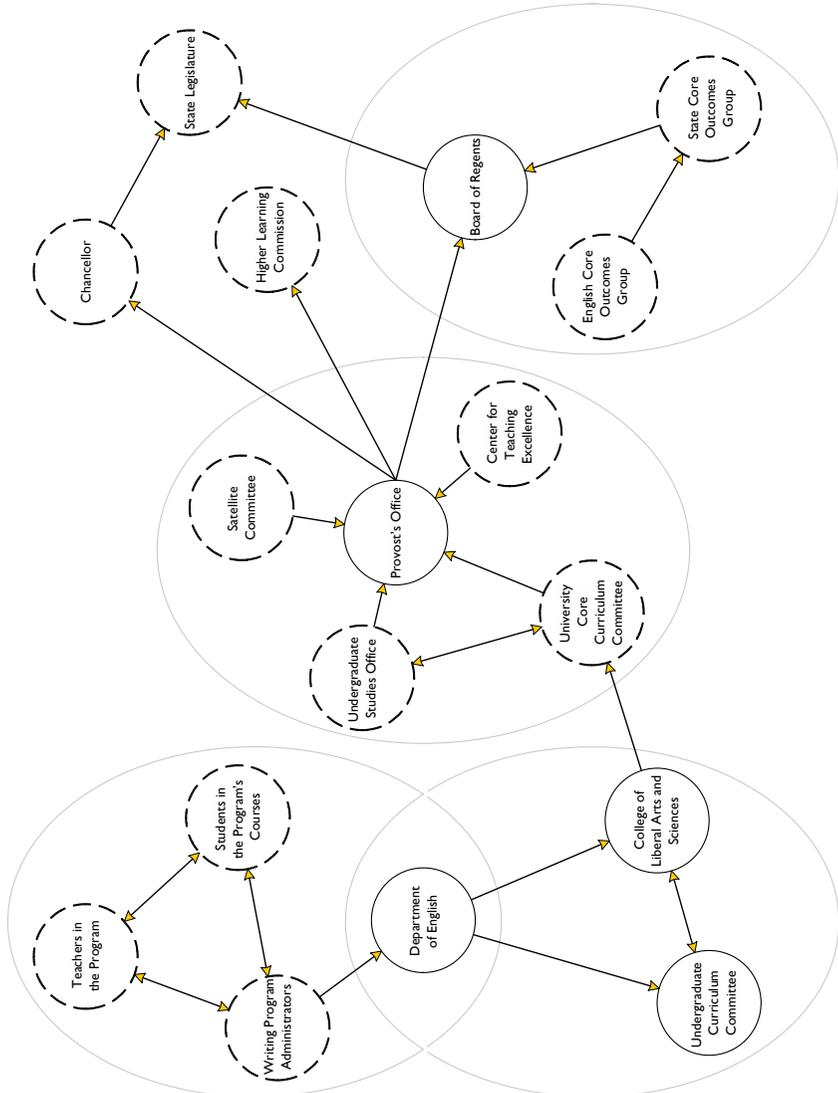


Figure 2. Current Network Map

ties can form clusters if the friends and family in one person's social milieu develop close personal connections to one another. For Barabási, however, clustering is ubiquitous, a generic property of all complex networks (51). An example of a cluster in our network is the one containing the writing program and the English department. The administrators in the department and program are extremely collaborative, and there are many connections with the teachers in the program, who primarily are graduate students in the department.

In addition to the appearance of hubs and clusters, we also saw new nodes develop in the current network in response to the transition to assessing learning goals. The Satellite Committee and the University Core Curriculum Committee (UCCC) were formed to establish learning goals, approve courses for inclusion in the curriculum, and assess those courses. The BOR hub repurposed existing committees to form new nodes to approve common learning outcomes for core courses across institutions, and the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences added duties to an existing committee to approve courses for the core curriculum. All of these new nodes have the potential to act as mediators in the network.

The benefit of mapping the scale-free, clustered nature of our assessment network is that it highlights the varying levels of restrictions WPAs may face when communicating to particular nodes. As messages traverse the pathways, they must often obey pre-established rules governing the timing and direction of their movement that determine whether messages can reach certain nodes and to what extent they may be mediated along the way.<sup>3</sup> Our mapping revealed that links between nodes in a cluster in our assessment network are largely unregulated and unmediated. For example, in the cluster that contains the writing program and English department, information flows easily in many directions, as between the writing program administrators, teachers, and students shown in figure 2. However, pathways between clusters are more constrained as only specific nodes in one cluster, usually a hub, have the ability to directly communicate with those in another cluster. For example, the arrows in figure 2 represent the institutionally sanctioned route that assessment information is expected to take starting at the writing program and moving toward the powerful hubs in other clusters that could allocate resources and effect change for the program. If we focus on this pathway through the nodes, we see that our report of assessment results will not be able to travel directly from our node to any other location on the network of our choosing. Thus, a message aimed at the BOR must pass through a series of intermediary and mediator nodes, including the English department, the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, the newly formed Office of Undergraduate Studies which now oversees the UCCC, and the provost's office before arriving at the BOR. Much of this movement occurs according to traffic laws that the writing program cannot control; however, by creating a record of our messages' movement and mediation, we may begin to anticipate how individual nodes will react to communications about assessment and craft messages with an eye toward using language that would accurately maintain the original meaning when extracted from the message and included in messages from the mediating nodes.

To demonstrate the transaction of a message on this network that was mediated in ways that we did not anticipate, we will examine what happened to one particular message that originated with the writing program but was mediated extensively before it reached its intended audience in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. In response to the proposed changes to core requirements at the university, the College decided to revise its BA requirements. The undergraduate director in the English department asked the writing program to provide a statement about how we assess our courses so that she could argue that students in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences need to take two English courses regardless of whether they fulfilled the core requirements or tested out according to placement. We gave her a copy of our initial assessment plan, a document created to describe the assessment project to the writing program and English department. The undergraduate director used language from the assessment plan in her rationale for the BA writing requirement but in a very different context than it originally appeared. Through these changes, the scope of the assessment became merely a “self-assessment proposal” whose implications would not go beyond our program. Sentences intended to place the assessment project within a broader scholarly context were taken out of that context and were instead used as an argument for the general importance of teaching writing, primarily for encouraging student engagement. The field of composition and rhetoric was characterized as “best practices in writing instruction is a research-based field in which the directors of [the writing program] participate,” followed by a description of teacher training.

This example of a message that was changed radically as it passed through a node reminds us of how little control the sender has of a message once it is in the network, even as it travels a sanctioned path. The message is a tool for shaping the thinking of people in the nodes through which it travels, and the message itself is changed by the nodes through which it travels. Steven Shaviro explains that a network is shaped by “the force of all the messages, as they accrete over time” (24). Because the documents and communications passing through the network are the network itself,

We cannot think of information as just a pattern imprinted indifferently in one or another physical medium. For information is also an event, not just the content of a given message but all the things that happen when the message gets transmitted. (16)

The message was mediated by the director of Undergraduate Studies, but the thinking of the Committee for Undergraduate Studies was also changed by the message. When the committee was considering the proposed requirements for the BA, the rationale for adding to the Core Eng-

lish requirement included information from the writing program's original assessment proposal linking the importance of writing to student engagement and touting the validity of the course goals because they were based on the WPA Outcomes Statement. Though this message was not precisely accurate nor did it reflect what we would have said about assessment, it did highlight for the committee that there was scholarship behind our writing courses. As messages pass through the network, WPAs should try to keep track of how and where the messages are mediated so that they can identify unanticipated or mediating audiences and think about future uses of documents and what parts might be extrapolated from these documents. In our situation, having our current network mapped might have helped us to anticipate the mediation of the document that the director of Undergraduate Studies was creating, and it might have been possible for us to suggest ways in which she could effectively incorporate the information about assessment. This experience also highlights the danger of repurposing a document that worked well for its initial audience without considering how it might work in a new context. Over time, the nodes through which a document travels change, and while no one can read every document and anticipate every movement, careful attention should be paid to these changes to the message.

#### CREATING NETWORK BRIDGES THROUGH WEAK TIES

Viewing our assessment as a network proved immensely helpful for understanding how information and power were communicated. But as we reflected on our assessment network, we often found ourselves discussing the interpersonal, unofficial connections that facilitated much of the assessment. These interactions proved difficult to plot on our network maps because the links were often active only briefly or were based on connections established by individual people. Nevertheless, some of these interactions allowed us to communicate more directly with remote areas of the network. In an effort to understand the power of individuals in our institutional network, we turned to social network theory and specifically to Mark Granovetter's "strength of weak ties" theory, which helped us understand how interpersonal relationships can be powerful within an institution.

The strength of weak ties lies in the ties' ability to provide bridges to and from clusters so that new information and perspectives can circulate into and out of the cluster (Granovetter, "Revisited"). Strong ties, in this formulation, connect an individual to close family and friends. As briefly mentioned above, strength here is measured by familiarity, closeness of relationship, and shared values and identities. Because any individual's set

of close friends and family are likely “in touch with one another” in close relationships, they tend to form “a densely knit clump of social structure” known as a clique (Granovetter, “Revisited” 202). A social network with many dense cliques of strong ties and few ties among those cliques can become fragmented; individuals in these clusters “with few weak ties will be deprived of information from distant parts of the social system and will be confined to the provincial news and views of their close friends” (Granovetter, “Revisited” 202).

Whereas strong ties connect people in these close social relationships, weak ties are those that form between acquaintances. Through such weak ties, individuals can make their networks more diffuse, especially when a weak tie “becomes not merely a trivial acquaintance tie but rather a crucial bridge” between individuals in previously unconnected parts of a network (Granovetter, “Revisited” 202; 218–21). Bridges provide ties through which information, values, and “innovations cross the boundaries of social groups” (Granovetter, “Revisited” 219) that present opportunities for individuals to interact with a diverse array of people and encourage empathy and cooperation while discouraging the social-network fragmentation that happens when clusters form (204–5; 226–7). This is an especially important feature of weak ties for WPAs to keep in mind as they consider how to build alliances and disseminate messages to stakeholders. Building bridges can be crucial because, according to Lois Steinberg, “where innovations are controversial, a mobilization strategy based on the activation of weak ties is more likely to facilitate adoption of the goal and integration into the [institution’s] decision-making structure” (qtd. in Granovetter, “Revisited” 225).

One example of an influential weak tie in our assessment network connects the cluster that contains the writing program to the cluster containing the Center for Teaching Excellence (CTE). Institutionally, per figure 2, the writing program has no direct connection to CTE. The associate director of the writing program and the director of CTE, however, developed a weak tie that bridged these two clusters. Using this bridge, the associate director worked on the statistical analysis of the assessment with a graduate student who also worked part-time at CTE. The graduate student often spoke about the writing program’s assessment with the CTE director, who then asked the writing program’s associate director to create a portfolio of the program’s assessment as a model of the assessment process that CTE could share with other departments at the university. This weak tie was not strong in terms of social network theory, but it allowed our program to promote our assessment process and findings across three clusters more expeditiously than we would have been able to using only established institutional links.

CTE also benefited from this weak tie because it offered a new opportunity for that office to share a helpful resource with others in the university.

In another example, the associate director of the writing program also serves on the BOR English Core Outcome Group (ECOG), which is part of the BOR cluster in figure 2. She carpools to state-wide meetings with the senior vice-provost for Academic Affairs, who chairs the State Core Outcomes group—which is also part of the BOR cluster—and works closely with the provost. As a result of the infrequent social contact that this institutional arrangement affords, the associate director has the opportunity for informal discussion of assessment in the university, including the writing program's assessment. These discussions affect the mediation of information about assessment in the provost node and through other areas of that cluster. The associate director's presence on ECOG also establishes acquaintance ties with other members of the ECOG and BOR nodes, and her bridge to the vice-provost in the cluster containing the provost's office allows her to share our program's perspective on assessment and influence decision-making that regular committee work might not.

Interpersonal relationships in our network also opened opportunities for institutional arrangements not directly related to our assessment work. For example, the writing program director served as the elected humanities representative on the UCCC in the year that the committee began its work. This bridge between the writing program node and the UCCC was temporary in nature because the position is filled by elected members from among humanities departments, and so the weak ties that the director established to other members of the UCCC could not develop into more substantial social ties like those that the associate director established with the vice-provost. The director's presence, however, influenced the development of the learning outcomes on which our assessment is based. The social ties in this situation were quite weak in terms of interpersonal relationships, but they provided an opportunity for someone from our program's cluster to provide a public face for our program's interest in assessment and communicate our discipline's best practices to the entire university.

Generally, WPAs can make the most of weak ties by identifying opportunities to build alliances. Mapping the origins and current structure of an assessment network can reveal such opportunities and clustered areas of the network not easily accessible to the WPA. For example, a WPA may be able to build a bridge directly to someone involved in a mediating node, developing an acquaintance tie. Both parties gain improved understanding of the other's motivations. Weak ties remind WPAs of the importance of interpersonal dynamics on committees and task forces and foster awareness of the social nature of network connections. While membership on

committees may rotate, positive acquaintanceships can become enduring bridges.

## CONCLUSION

Network theory provides a helpful lens through which WPAs can understand communications regarding their assessment projects and any other activity they wish to implement on campus. Whether a writing program is within a large research university, a small liberal arts college, or a community college, it operates within networks, and while the nodes and pathways in any given network will vary, issues of power, directionality, and connectivity persist. We advocate a three-step process that maps the origins, then the current structure of a network, and explores the potential of weak ties to build bridges within that network. Most helpfully, this kind of analysis highlights the fluid nature of audiences as nodes and their ability to communicate or mediate (either positively, neutrally, or negatively) the messages that WPAs create. Additionally, it reveals nodes that WPAs otherwise might not have identified as important to their projects, as in the CTE example above. Initially, we did not recognize this node as a part of our assessment network despite its appearance on our maps because it was historically not a part of our sanctioned pathways (see Figure 1) and messages are not regularly routed through the CT node. Moreover, what network analysis makes clear is that a writing program's location and connectivity in a network shape and often limit the rhetorical options available to a WPA, especially in terms of how and to whom communications are disseminated, ultimately shaping the rhetorical power a WPA can wield through official and unofficial channels.

These insights, we suggest, provide a fuller theoretical framework from which rhetorical strategies outlined in the CWPA Communication Strategies document and other assessment scholarship can be implemented and developed. Armed with knowledge of their networks, WPAs can develop communication strategies that are informed by the actual structures of power and communication in which their programs are located, resisting the temptation to reuse existing documents or have them repurposed for us by mediators, as in the case with the BA requirements discussed above. For instance, when WPAs trace the origins and current structure of their networks, they can identify the locales in which their communications take place and act locally, develop alliances, and disseminate messages to develop partnerships strategically. In our own network analysis, we discovered that, over time, the dynamic nature of the network allowed the assessment project to be connected to wider projects of evaluation and reform

in our state education systems. This clarified many of the offices and individuals involved in our network as well as several situations in which they would receive and mediate messages about our work. At the same time, the connection of our local assessment work to state and national actions by the BOR and Higher Learning Commission diversified the scene of our work and imposed important implications on future dissemination of assessment results. As other WPAs face similarly diverse situations for local action, we suggest they allocate appropriate time and resources for undertaking their communications in the multiple locales that their networks dictate.

We also urge that WPAs be prepared to disseminate messages in the many genres of university communication. In lieu of preparing pointed, public messages for newsletters, newspapers, and campus events sites as the Communication Strategies document suggests, we often communicated about assessment during daily committee work and through the genres of university administration. Additionally, we learned we often had to disseminate messages well before the assessment was formally completed. Mapping our historical and current assessment networks allowed us to anticipate these situations and the explicit and implicit motivations that defined our audiences' interests. One place where we can see this in the maps is in the nodes that were created based on changes to the network. Committees, like the Satellite Committee, were created to write learning outcomes for the new core curriculum but disbanded after they created the goals. Other committees, like the Office of Undergraduate Studies and UCCC, were created to provide oversight of the core curriculum and the assessment of its courses as these functions became necessary. In these cases, our knowledge of the network allowed us to anticipate what nodes might be created and when nodes might be disbanded based on new requirements and mandates from powerful hubs. We suggest that network mapping can similarly serve other WPAs.

In addition to acting locally and developing and disseminating messages, this three-step process highlights in the Communication Strategies document the importance of developing interpersonal relationships that foster good working alliances among stakeholders. After tracing the origins and current structure of a network, WPAs can identify areas of the network that are either densely clustered or distantly connected. A WPA who needs to work with distant nodes might consider making strategic interpersonal bridges to them. The Communication Strategies suggests that after "identify[ing] the individuals or groups who seem to care (or should care) most about what [WPAs] do," it is important to ask questions of those individuals or groups and frame the message in ways that are consonant with their motivations and interests (2). Knowing that there is a wide range of

weak ties can help WPAs keep in mind that these interactions need not necessarily happen in formal settings. Viewing interactions with committees and various offices as opportunities for bridge building through personal connections can be a powerful conceptual shift; rather than seeing an opportunity to reframe our message in someone else's terms, WPAs can recognize the interpersonal connections that undergird all our assessment work as opportunities to learn from others and create shared values and goals.

The three-step process that we advocate in this essay is intended to assist WPAs, but we want to acknowledge that network analysis is not without its complications. As we learned through our own mapping process, not all pathways and nodes are clear on an individual or institutional level. Institutional documents can provide much insight into a network, but they often do not tell the whole story. In these cases, one can rely on institutional memory or others to piece together parts of the network. Even then, depending on one's position in the network, certain pathways and nodes—especially those that are far removed from a writing program—may not be visible. The goal with this analysis, however, is not necessarily to map the institution in its entirety; rather, the goal is to map and analyze the network with enough detail so that the WPA can roughly trace where communications will go, how they will get there, and what might happen to them along the way. The maps a WPA creates can be archived so that future WPAs don't have to start at the beginning but can look at historical patterns as a starting point.

A further complication is that the structure of a network is fluid; nodes and pathways can and do change. In some cases, nodes and pathways change or develop rapidly in response to administrative changes or pressures from governing and accrediting bodies. Other times, nodes and pathways change slowly as a result of other institutional developments. Given that networks are dynamic rather than static, origins mapping is especially useful as it grounds an assessment project and its communications in the structure that led to its creation, a structure that is likely to change over the span of an assessment project. Alternatively, current network mapping prevents that structure's reification, ensuring that WPAs track new changes that occur in the network that necessarily affect their communications. Constant current-network re-mapping seems unnecessary given the workload of a WPA, but WPAs might consider mapping or re-mapping their current networks when they are ready to disseminate the results of assessment projects, when key personnel changes are made, or when new projects or obligations are sent through the network. Moreover, as Jeff Rice observes, mapping one's current network constitutes a descriptive, genera-

tive method of assessment in its own right, one whose purpose is “to teach us about the relationships circulating in our own program that we have yet to see as being part of a given network” (38).

While network analysis presents some challenges that are important to keep in mind, the three-step process that we advocate nevertheless provides WPAs with useful and necessary insights into their communication networks. Network analysis could be applied to any program issue, allowing WPAs to map the various networks of communication in which they participate. For example, WPAs involved in revising a general education curriculum could benefit from tracing the communication network for that project. At our university, the assessment network could easily be modified to focus on communications about general education reform because many of the offices interested in assessment are invested in general education. In another example, WPAs responsible for developing majors and minors within Writing Studies or English departments might benefit from tracing a network containing advising, various professional schools, the honors program, potential employers, and others to recruit Writing Studies or English majors and minors. They also might benefit from tracing a network containing alumni, donors, endowment, and institutional sources of funding to develop scholarships for these majors or writing program interns. Overall, network theory allows WPAs to think strategically about their communications regarding any number of issues and concerns, and with this knowledge, they can more fully realize a writing program’s agency within complex and dynamic networks of communication.

## NOTES

1. We designed a comprehensive, program-wide assessment of the three individual writing courses, as well as of the three-course sequence. It comprises three interrelated studies: a survey of student and instructor perceptions of how well students are achieving the individual course outcomes, an assessment of instructor assignment sequences to determine the extent to which the outcomes are central to the assignment sequences, and an assessment of student writing produced for the courses to determine the extent to which students are achieving the course outcomes. This assessment was modeled on the University of Kentucky’s assessment of their first-year writing course found in the Writing Program Administrator’s Assessment Gallery (<http://wpacouncil.org/UK>). Connie Kendall generously provided us with additional information and documents. Our assessment took place over five years, between the fall of 2008 and the summer of 2013.

2. Latour discusses actors and groupings instead of nodes and networks in his actor-network theory, but his discussion of tracing boundaries of groups, how actors are “always engaged in the business of mapping the ‘social context’ in which

they are placed” (32), and how groupings are constantly made and remade is very similar to how other network theorists, like Barabási, discuss networks.

3. Barabási describes similar “traffic rules” in his account of directed networks in which a path may exist to move from node A to node B, but the inverse path may not (165–67). Our assessment network is not a directed network of this kind, with different institutional nodes clearly governed by unchangeable traffic laws; our messages can and do travel in multiple directions. Still, individual messages are often obliged to travel network pathways following pre-established rules, suggesting that to some extent directionality characterizes our network. For example, all communication about assessment outside our department must go through the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences and can often only be initiated by the chair.

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## Making Space for Service Learning in First-Year Composition

Thomas Sura

### ABSTRACT

*The promise of service learning as a high-impact educational practice has received ample scholarly attention, yet more research is needed to describe how writing program administrators can initiate flexible, healthy spaces for service learning within their writing programs. Through a description and application of four keys to postmodern planning—context, travel, connection, and scale—this article offers WPAs a productive heuristic for creating healthy spaces for service learning in their programs. This heuristic enables WPAs to extrapolate information from experiences as service-learning practitioners and connect it to what might be practiced on a programmatic scale.*

Developing service-learning curricula for first-year composition courses that are also general education curriculum (GEC) courses can be a daunting task for WPAs. The curriculum is already crowded, the teachers are already working hard to reach maximum output, and the benefits may seem underwhelming. In addition, one of the central tensions of initiating service learning as a WPA comes from the uneasy relationship between having a concrete and strategic plan for a programmatic service-learning initiative and the dangers institutionalized service-learning endeavors can pose to the overall vitality of a program (Mathieu). The role of the WPA is fraught, balancing issues of control and freedom, sustainability and turnover, reciprocity and outcomes.

Yet working on the programmatic scale is important because the push to incorporate service-learning opportunities into first-year composition comes from many directions: research in rhetoric and composition, educational research, and even institutional missions. To address the service-learning challenges, WPAs need new tools that help them to identify opportunities, act on those opportunities, and reflect critically on their

work. This article describes how postmodern planning concepts provide one such tool by connecting service learning in the classroom to service learning in the writing program. WPAs who have developed or want to develop service learning in their programs can better balance the inherent issues through a postmodern planning framework because it creates spaces for inquiry, invention, and revision throughout the evolution of service learning within a writing program. It allows service learning to develop as a process rather than as a lock-step strategic plan. In this way, it enables the creation of a healthy space for service learning.

#### THE WPA AND SERVICE LEARNING

The National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement asserts that social responsibility should be a core element of a twenty-first century education. Their report, *A Crucible Moment: College Learning and Democracy's Future* (available on the Association of American Colleges and Universities' website), advocates community-based service and research and "collaborative, generative partnerships" that teach students how systems work and can be changed (3, 8, 33). Undergraduate composition courses are one place for these collaborative and generative partnerships to take place because the course has a strong connection to public engagement through its emphasis on rhetoric and rhetoric's ties to public discourse. Bruce Herzberg sums up the disciplinary ideal best, writing

If we wish to claim that the composition course is truly about rhetoric, about civic virtue, and about public as well as academic discourse, we must learn how to conceptualize the connections between the academy and society in ways that our students, our administrators, and we ourselves find convincing. ("Service Learning" 396)

To teach rhetoric is, for many rhetoricians, to teach civic engagement. Yet, any foray into service-learning research in first-year writing courses will reveal both excitement and ambivalence. Even as Eli Goldblatt argues persuasively for the benefits of curricula incorporating service and community-literacy learning, he states plainly, "I do not particularly advocate for service or community-based learning in FYC courses" (294). The challenges are well documented and range from course and term structure to department structures to faculty and student assessment (Adler-Kassner, Crooks, and Watters, *Writing the Community*). Developing critical consciousness, one of the many purported benefits of service learning, has proven elusive in multiple contexts (Feigenbaum; Herzberg, "Community Service"; Hutchinson). Additionally, students may have other, more pressing, learning needs. They may not possess the maturity to follow through with the service. Their

writing may simply not be good enough yet to produce something of high quality about, for, or with a community partner. Likewise, as many service-learning practitioners will attest, the investment of time in identifying, developing, and sustaining relationships with community partners can be massive, intimidating, and ultimately prohibitive (Adler-Kassner, Crooks, and Watters, “Service-Learning” 1).

On a programmatic scale, there are even more considerations. In *Tactics of Hope*, Paula Mathieu gets “nervous about initiatives to expand and institutionalize service-learning programs” because faculty too often show up with predetermined agendas (85). To do so, she argues, “runs the risk of framing local communities as generic sites of need, eager to benefit from university largess” (90). Add to these challenges the constraints that many first-year composition courses have as GEC courses in terms of content, textbooks, grading, and so on, and it is understandable why WPAs might defer service-learning initiatives until some idealized future date.

Nonetheless, if WPAs accept the premise that service and community-based literacy practices are desirable in introductory writing courses, they need tools that will enable them to sustain these projects in healthy and productive ways. Fortunately, past scholarship describing a theory of WPAs as postmodern planners provides one way to develop such tools.

#### POSTMODERN PLANNING IN WRITING PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION

In “Program Administrators as/and Postmodern Planners,” Tim Peebles draws on urban and public planning scholarship to establish a new conceptual framework for thinking about writing program administration. There are many similarities between conceptualizations of planning and conceptualizations of WPA work. David C. Perry, whom Peebles relies on to make his own argument, suggests that “it’s hard to produce a plan that at once captures the conditions of the society, city, or policy area and also meets the demands of each of the citizens experiencing the problems society is mobilized to process” (211). He adds, “It’s hard to be both scopic and comprehensive and immediate and individually responsive” (211). In a similar manner, WPAs work to make sense of wide-ranging perspectives including individual student experiences, the training and needs of faculty, the goals of colleges and administrators, and the theories and pedagogies of other rhetoric and composition scholars while simultaneously advancing things like pedagogies, curriculum, and assessment. It is hard to be comprehensive and individually responsive.

Faced with these complexities, both WPAs and planners seek to articulate their roles. For example, as one means of navigating the complexities

of urban and public planning, Perry offers a spatial approach that suggests “what planners do is *not* simply make plans but rather ‘make space’” (223; emphasis in original). But what’s the difference between making plans and making space?

An answer resides in the distinctions we make between composition as a science and composition as a humanistic field. Compare David Perry’s “Making Space: Planning as a Mode of Thought” with David Foster’s “What Are We Talking About When We Talk About Composition?” for an excellent illustration of the tension in composition studies between science and humanism. Perry writes “planning is not so much a linear progression of practices—one displacing another—as it is an emerging spatial practice joining one new approach to another in the evolving production and reproduction of the relations of capital and the urban society attendant to it” (222). Then consider David Foster’s argument:

Science attempts to build knowledge cumulatively by drawing new understandings out of earlier, disproven understandings; the familiar example of a disproven Copernicanism illustrates this aspect of scientific inquiry. On the other hand, as North cogently argues, humanistic study—philosophy, theology, theories of the arts, even history—flourishes through dialectic, in which one mode of thinking draws life in response to all other major modes of thought, none ever permanently “disproved” or abandoned. (35)

Writing program administration, like composition, like planning, draws life from dialectic. It is not a linear march toward a goal. It is a fluctuating amalgamation of ideas, practices, people, and places. It is the aforementioned “evolving production and reproduction” of relationships, and it is the design of spaces where this dialectic can and does occur. Peeples, for his part, suggests that this model of planner as space maker is valuable to WPAs because it involves the WPA in “the ongoing, recursive, real-time, local making of healthy spaces” (123). In other words, conceiving of writing program administration as postmodern planning provides a dynamic and holistic description of the WPA that acknowledges the multiplicity of roles and the need for dialectic. In order to achieve this spatial approach to planning that facilitates dialectic, Peeples provides a new conceptual framework for the work of writing program administration: context, travel, connectedness, and scale.

#### THE FOUR KEYS

The first key to postmodern planning, *context*, is an easy concept to transfer to writing program administration because it is a foundational, disci-

plinary one. The most important feature of context is that it both shapes and is shaped by planning. Factors like institutional and geographic location shape how and why service learning might happen. A good example comes from Nicole Amare and Teresa Grettano who framed their own work in service and community literacy as writing outreach that was not course-based. Instead, they developed workshops of broad interest that were open to both students at the institution and community members at large. Their context shaped how they engaged in service and community-based learning, and their actions in turn reshaped the context. Context is doubly important for WPAs as postmodern planners because the context of a writing program also includes a multiplicity of other contexts such as instructors' classrooms and, in the case of service-learning initiatives, the contexts of non-profits and local community organizations.

The second key to postmodern planning is *travel*. The easy preconception of this key is that it means to go where the action is: Get out of the office or the classroom, and experience the world beyond. Peeples's adaptation is significantly more complex. The "practice of planning must be considered a dialectical one, always traveling between the lived space and the abstract space of society" (Perry 225) and to this, Peeples adds, "A dialectical approach to planning as a spatial practice requires us to travel between abstract, designed spaces, and everyday, lived ones" (125). Though the connection is not explicit, the sentiment here seems to echo the arguments of Chris Anson, Dirk Remley, Ellen Cushman, and others who call for course instructors—or planners—to engage in and model the same forms of critical reflection that they ask of their students. Writing program administration requires significant travel, moving back and forth between the abstract spaces WPAs design and the everyday, lived spaces they inhabit with their students, faculty, and institutional and community partners.

Travel enables *connection*, the third key to postmodern planning. Neither Perry nor Peeples offers abundant explanation of how connection plays out in planning. In fact, Perry specifically uses the term *connection*—something that joins or connects other things—while Peeples changes the term slightly to *connectedness*. This minor change is important. *Connectedness* implies a factor of degree, perhaps both in terms of quantity and durability. For example, I might say I have a *connection* to my undergraduate institution because I went to school there; however, my *connectedness* to the institution is determined by how many professors and friends I still talk with, how many athletic events I watch in person or on television, perhaps even if I donate and how much I donate to my alma mater. The quantity of connections as well as their strength, in essence, determines my connectedness to the institution.

The fourth key to postmodern planning, *scale*, and its connections, is shaped by the context in which it exists. In planning, scale signifies the process of establishing boundaries—social and geographical—between different places, locations, and experiences (Smith 64). According to Perry, scale “includes spaces of social activity; from the individual to the home and the neighborhood” (226). The work of (home) planners requires “jumping scales as they undertake the hard process of carrying out the dialectics of comprehensive housing services that produce homes for individual families” (Perry 228). If we shift this discourse back to the language of writing program administration, we are able to identify several similarities. Take, for instance, the different scales of academic institutions: the individual student, the student body, the individual instructor, the faculty, the WPA, the department, the college, and perhaps, the university as a whole. Each of these items constitutes its own scale because there are boundaries—social and geographical—between them. The work of the WPA as planner is to jump between them, establishing connections aimed at making healthy spaces both within and outside the program. For WPAs, this process is recursive and never fully complete:

Contrary to the more narrow professional interventions of almost all others at the site or scale of the production of space, the planner’s work is never done; it is, to repeat, a recursive spatial practice—meant to include both the design and building of physical infrastructure and the satisfactory use of the built space. (Perry 227)

WPAs as planners travel between the scales in an ongoing process of building and use. In this sense, they do not implement strategic, linear, lock-step visions. Instead, they inquire and listen to the “experiences of the lived spaces of the users” as well as the “institutional politics” (Perry 227). Informed by these scales, they use what they find to create healthy spaces that connect those scales in the most beneficial ways possible.

#### APPLYING THE FOUR KEYS

This section applies the framework for postmodern planning to a specific case—an attempt to initiate service learning in an introductory writing program.<sup>1</sup> It uses context, travel, connection, and scale to imagine and form a space for service and engagement to be both productive and healthy. What makes this approach postmodern is the embrace of complexity, the comfort with uncertainty, and the desire to “address” a challenge that possesses competing interests rather than “solve” it outright (Peeples 120). The uncertainty includes a willingness to let the number of service-learning courses in a program fluctuate and to accept the possibility that there may

be more than one programmatically approved means of achieving a successful service-learning course. This also means that there will be failures and mistakes. While they don't intend to make mistakes, WPAs know that they happen and, more importantly, that they provide important foundations for advancing knowledge. This framework provides a productive heuristic for initiating a service-learning program and a flexible tool for navigating challenges and sustaining qualities that service-learning practitioners and scholars advocate.

### *Context*

The context begins with the writing program itself. In this case, the identity of the program as part of the General Education Curriculum (GEC) heavily influenced its shape. The GEC requirements don't exactly impede service and community-based learning; however, the need to consistently retain certain characteristics across all sections posed several unique challenges. The writing program is a two-course sequence on composition and rhetoric required of almost all university undergraduate students; exemptions are approved if the student has AP credit or transferred into the school with credit from other institutions. English 101 and English 102 are portfolio-based, and these portfolios account for 70 percent of the students' final grades. In addition to the portfolio component, students complete another ten or more pages of informal writing worth 20 percent. The final 10 percent of the course grades comes from participation.

Making space for service learning required careful consideration of how it would count toward students' overall course grades as well as how to frame the service and the writing itself rhetorically in productive and realistic ways. It also required a community partner willing to participate in this initial endeavor.

The community partner for this project was the Appalachian Prison Book Project (APBP). APBP was founded in 2004 by a professor at the university and her graduate students as an outcome of a course on prison literature. The 501(c)(3) organization sends books to incarcerated people in a six-state region. It is run entirely by volunteers who open letters from inmates, match those letters as best they can to their collection of donated books, and mail the books to the inmates. The project is located in a donated space on the second floor of a public library. APBP is located within several city blocks of the university's campus, which also makes it manageable to walk there. APBP's location, focus on literacy, close tie to the institution, and the director's enthusiasm for participating in a service-learning course made it an excellent partner.

## *Travel*

In general, one section of English 102 in the Undergraduate Writing Program served as the primary vehicle for travel. It allowed me, as the WPA, to make connections between the different scales in the local context, such as connecting from the student experience, to the GEC requirement, to the instructor experience, and so on. Other methods enabled travel within the classroom itself. For example, classroom surveys yielded significant information that helped to shape my own thinking about how service learning could be integrated into the program.

Healthy spaces for service learning in introductory writing courses rely on three important principles.

*Service learning should be a manageable responsibility that enables students and instructors to travel between abstract ideas and lived experiences.* At the outset of the course, I decided that students would complete fifteen hours of service at APBP opening letters from inmates, filling the orders, and packaging the orders to be sent. This would mean roughly one hour of (home) work outside of class each week. To make sure students understood this as part of their coursework and not as an arbitrary add-on, I worked with a colleague at the Center for Service and Learning to compose a handout illustrating how the work fit into the course as well as its value (see Appendix A). Because of the GEC expectation that 90 percent of the students' grades would be based on their writing, the actual service hours would count toward the students' participation grade; however, the students' work at APBP would form the basis of several of their informal and reflective writing assignments as well as one of their four formal projects. As students worked to develop their facility with writing, they began to uncover the fact that the literacy skills of incarcerated people are significantly behind their "free peers" (Jacobi 4). We learned about and questioned the existence of for-profit prisons. Lessons about reading and writing as life skills vital to success in personal, civic, and professional spheres became juxtaposed with the understanding that many attempts to educate and improve the lives of incarcerated people are often met with staunch community resistance.

While this learning was taking place, there was growing concern about the amount of work students were asked to squeeze into their already busy schedules. In order to facilitate travel between my theorizing about students' time and their everyday lived experiences, I collected information through a brief questionnaire at the middle of the course (see Appendix B). As a result of the surveys and several in-class discussions, the students, APBP, and I collectively decided to change the hours of service from fifteen to ten.<sup>2</sup>

On the programmatic scale, these discussions with students as well as with the community partner and the Center for Service Learning helped us establish a model where both students and teachers could make a realistic and sustainable commitment in terms of both service hours and writing goals.

*Making service learning polyvocal creates connections and increases connectedness to a project.* Over the course of the semester, the course had three guest speakers: Alexis McMillen, program coordinator at the Center for Service and Learning; John Sura, retired Michigan State Trooper and Michigan Department of Corrections administrator;<sup>3</sup> and Katy Ryan, director of the Appalachian Prison Book Project.

On an abstract level, each speaker operated like a node connecting the students to service, writing, and social justice. As the instructor, I could help students access various information, but I remained one node, one connection. By making the classroom polyvocal, the entire project and its purpose became more connected. Alexis McMillen discussed the value of service learning as a pedagogical approach, how students would record their time volunteering, and what those records meant for graduation and post-graduation contexts. John Sura provided the course with lived examples of the challenges faced by the criminal justice system and those enmeshed in it. Katy Ryan's visit fostered active discussion and questions from the class about why and how APBP operates. Questions that came up included the following: How do prison book projects know that they work? Do prison book projects measure outcomes? Should prison book projects send violent books to inmates? Who is imprisoned? What are the relationships between reading, stress, and transformation? These questions provide starting points for inquiry, starting points that Ryan took very seriously (see Appendix C). They are pathways for travel between the abstract ideas, preconceptions, and assumptions about the subject and their real-world, lived experience.

This principle of polyvocality led to a vital realization on the programmatic scale. In designing the course, my assessment and information collection focused solely on the student experience. Using the framework for postmodern planning as a heuristic for critical reflection also suggests that such a survey tool would be valuable if a version was supplied to the other project partners such as instructors, community partners, and the university's Center for Service and Learning. Because questionnaires do have limitations, WPAs must thoughtfully administer questionnaires that solicit feedback and create dialogue about successes, identify shortcomings, or generate new ideas. On a rhetorical level, the questionnaire might serve to demonstrate that the program itself is engaged in the valuable work of service learning. Guided interviews might provide similar opportunities.

*Choice gives voice.* The natural inclination in service-learning courses is to make all writing in the course about the service-learning topic or partner. Yet, with this framework, I chose to leave some of the writing open. Students were free to make their own connections between their experiences, their class discussions, and their writing, which ultimately allowed a healthier space for their work.

This principle of choice translates to the programmatic scale because of the many ways that service learning can be taught. Instructors may want to work with one community partner or have students work in groups with several or have each student work with individual partners of their choice. They may also choose to modify assignments in order to move closer to a goal or a connection that they see taking shape. Providing students and instructors with choice, even in the midst of GEC requirements, can create a healthy space for service learning.

## CONCLUSION

This approach to making space provides a tool for integrating service learning within undergraduate writing programs. This implementation, however, has its costs. As Susan Wolffe Murphy has argued, “one cannot ask teachers to do ‘service learning’ quickly or cheaply, either in terms of money or time” (119). In this context and in many others I imagine, mandating that instructors develop service-learning courses may create unhealthy spaces. Yet at the same time, most likely, there are experienced instructors—both graduate teachers and adjunct faculty—who are interested in doing service learning and are unsure of how to proceed and even if service learning is allowed in GEC courses like introductory writing. To make space for this pedagogical approach, WPAs can employ the four keys to postmodern planning as a guide:

1. Context
  - What are the characteristics of the writing program, its students, and instructors?
  - What constraints must we work within?
2. Travel
  - What means are available for traveling between abstract ideas and lived spaces?
3. Connections
  - Who has a stake in service learning?
  - What kind of institutional support exists?
4. Scale

- What sort of commitment does my program/department/college/university/community have to service learning?
- What should the outcomes of service learning look like at different scales (student, instructor, program, department, college, university, community)?

In my own program, we have begun offering regular workshops on service learning that include information on the philosophies about service learning, how to incorporate it smoothly into the GEC courses, how to partner with the Center for Service and Learning on campus, and how to apply for the institution's service-learning course designation. Instructors are invited to explore and pursue service learning in their undergraduate writing courses voluntarily—when the time is right for them. The Undergraduate Writing Program does not have a mandate for service learning or a goal of integrating service learning into all of its courses. What it does have is space for service learning to happen.

## NOTES

1. This research was approved by West Virginia University's Institutional Review Board (Protocol #1301008764).

2. On student midterm surveys, the average rating among the research participants at the midterm was 3 on a scale of 5. The median value for that question was also 3. The standard deviation for the midterm survey was .93, suggesting some disagreement.

3. John Sura is my father, and his career is one of my personal connections to issues of social justice and incarcerated people.

## APPENDIX A: TOP REASONS TO COMPLETE THIS COURSE

I have a hunch about what you're thinking right now. It's probably something along the lines of, "Service? No way. I'm way too busy for this. This sounds way too hard."

To be honest, I think that is a completely fair and reasonable reaction. I know that you are a very busy person, and this work may seem daunting. Nonetheless, I want to present you with several reasons why, despite your hectic schedule, this may be an excellent course for you.

First, consider this simple study hour formula designed to help you achieve As in your courses.

Rule: Study two hours per credit hour for an easy class, three hours per credit hour for an average class, and four hours per credit in a difficult class.

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Course	Credit Hours	Difficulty	Calculation	Study Hours
English 102	3	Easy	(3 credits x 2 hours)	6
English 102	3	Average	(3 credits x 3 hours)	9
English 102	3	Difficult	(3 credits x 4 hours)	12

Based on your previous experiences with writing, decide for yourself whether or not English 102 will be an easy course, an average course, or a difficult course. The answer is different for everyone.

Now, 15 hours of service over 15 weeks equals 1 hour per week. Whether you feel English 102 is easy, average, or difficult, one hour of study time can be assigned to your service obligation while leaving significant time to study and write for the course. Even more importantly, I have reduced the typical English 102 workload to accommodate for this time so that the service is fully integrated into the work of the course. It is not in addition to the work of the course. For example, I am reducing the overall number of pages you need to write through peer response and short writing assignments. You will also work collaboratively on one of the major projects.

Here are a few additional things to consider:

1. This has the potential to be one of the most unique educational experiences of your career at WVU, and offers a whole different way of learning (learning by “doing”).
2. You will gain real-world experience, which is exceptionally valuable for job applications, résumés, internship applications, graduate school applications, and interviews.
3. Due to the number of students taking English 102, it can be very difficult to find alternative sections.
4. In this course, you will be part of a supportive and engaged community of writers (including me).
5. Service-learning is one of the methods I’ve chosen to teach this course so that you have the opportunity not only to learn and grow in your composition skills, but also to make a difference in the life of someone else through service. It’s a win-win situation for all stakeholders.
6. The estimated value for volunteer time in 2011 was \$21.79 ([http://www.independentsector.org/volunteer\\_time](http://www.independentsector.org/volunteer_time)). You each will have the opportunity to contribute the equivalent of \$326.85 to the community, which for our whole class can potentially total \$6,537.00.

## APPENDIX B: MIDTERM SURVEY

I value your feedback on English 102. This course should be helping you understand writing as a process, argue effectively and persuasively, explore and evaluate ideas, integrate research effectively into your writing, and understand the rules of writing. Please take a few moments at the midterm point to give me your comments and ideas for meeting the goals of this course.

1. Which assignments and activities have been most helpful, informative, or useful for you? Please explain why.
2. Would you change any assignment or activity? Please explain why and suggest an improvement or alternative.
3. Are there any aspects of writing that you would like to learn more about?
4. How helpful are class periods, handouts, comments on rough drafts, conferences, and email? Please explain.
5. On a scale from 1 to 5, (with 1 meaning not at all and 5 meaning exceptionally) how manageable has the service requirement been for the course?

1=Not Manageable    2    3=Neutral    4    5=Exceptionally Manageable

6. Please take a moment to explain your answer to question 5.

7. On a scale from 1 to 5, (with 1 meaning not at all and 5 meaning exceptionally) how valuable has the service requirement been for you?

1=Not Valuable    2    3=Neutral    4    5=Exceptionally Valuable

8. Please take a moment to explain your answer to question 6.

9. I welcome any additional comments or suggestions for improvement.

Please use the back of this page or additional paper if you need more space. Thanks for taking the time to give me your response.

## APPENDIX C: LETTER FROM DR. RYAN

Feb 1, 2013

Dear Professor Sura and ENGL 102 Students,

I really enjoyed visiting your class yesterday, and I am excited about your participation in the Appalachian Prison Book Project (APBP). Thanks so

much for your questions, which I continue to mull over today.

Our conversation has me thinking about several research topics that are relevant to the future of APBP.

How might prison book projects document the effectiveness of their work? Have prison book projects tried to measure outcomes? [There is an interactive list of prison book projects in the country at <http://www.prisonbookprogram.org/otherprograms.php>.]

Should prison book projects be concerned about sending books that depict violence into prisons? What are the assumptions about imprisoned people that prompt this question?

Who *is* imprisoned in our country today? (I recommend Michele Alexander's book *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*: <http://www.newjimcrow.com/>.)

Do other prison book projects limit book selection? What are the advantages and disadvantages of placing limits on books?

What is the relationship between reading and stress levels? Between reading and personal transformation? What evidence is available?

Inspired by our discussion, I found these video clips about teaching humanities in prison that might be of interest.

Reading classic literature in Brazilian prisons: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oLrqY-M3F3s>. Education in a women's prison: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9AmYT8TH7nQ> Teaching Philosophy: [http://www.ted.com/talks/damon\\_horowitz\\_philosophy\\_in\\_prison.html](http://www.ted.com/talks/damon_horowitz_philosophy_in_prison.html)

Thanks so much for your contributions to the Appalachian Prison Book Project this semester. Please feel free to contact me with questions, concerns, and ideas.

Very best,

Katy Ryan

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*Opening Plenary Address*

## **The WPA as Worker: What Would John Ruskin Say? What Would My Dad?**

Douglas D. Hesse

Twenty years ago, I was in the family room of our house at 204 William Drive, about a dozen blocks from this hotel, when the phone rang from Dad.<sup>1</sup> He was going to retire on his sixty-fifth birthday, and he was calling with a proposition. He and his partner were willing to sell me their business, greatly discounted, to keep it in the family. I'd worked with Dad and Fred for about ten summers starting when I was in seventh grade. I knew the work well. In fact, I'd just helped over Christmas. I reckoned that I was one of the few tenured full English professors in America who'd spent winter break slinging wrapping paper and turkey carcasses and desiccated pines into the back of a garbage truck. Dad was offering to sell me B&H Sanitary Service, DeWitt, IA.



Of course, I knew straight away that I wasn't interested. But I told him that I needed a couple of days to think about it. I wanted to be respectful.

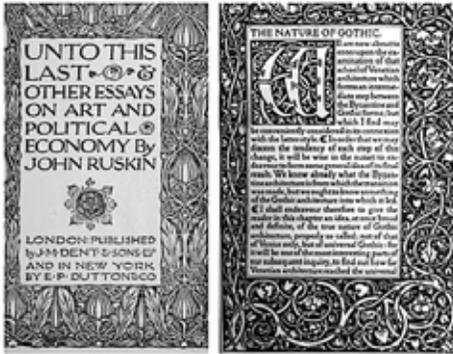
My dad never really understood teaching. Like many people, he fixed on the three-month vacation, the day ending at 3:00, the double-dipping local teachers who painted houses in the summer on the cheap. Now, he granted that I worked hard as a teacher; he saw me grading papers at Thanksgiving. But he deemed me an exception. After all, I'd demonstrated a real work ethic in the hot August alleys of DeWitt, Iowa. Other teachers? Doubtful.

If Dad didn't understand teaching, he surely didn't understand professing. When I got my PhD, he said earnestly, "I suppose you know all you need to know." He wondered about connections between teaching, conferences, and publishing—a job seemingly without boundaries, many of them self-inflicted. When I became a WPA, he saw it akin to my becoming a school principal. Now, Dad was—and is—highly supportive, even proud. Driving this week from Colorado to Illinois, I stopped to see him and Mom, sat on the front porch of my childhood, talked about returning to Normal after eight years gone. They recalled wistfully when I lived just three hours away and could meet them for dinner in Davenport or Galesburg. I was wistful, too.

Dad's experience of work was quite different from my own. But then, my own view of work, particularly teaching writing and most pointedly, being a WPA, is different now than it was twenty-five years ago when I attended my first CWPA Conference in Oxford, Ohio. I wonder about the career aspirations of people who, from grad school, want to be not English or writing professors but WPAs. What does the profession look like to them? In the same way, I suppose, people may have long aspirations to be a dean or a provost. But I'd suggest that, while being a dean or provost is an exalted and well-compensated and powerful position and even a career, it's not a profession. Rita's generous invitation and provocative theme give me the opportunity to share some rambling observations with you.

I'm wrestling tonight with the notion of *worker* which conjures to me *laborer*. Of course, anyone who earns a paycheck is a worker, and there is no doubt labor involved in being a WPA, even if it's more balancing budgets than hoisting hefty bags. But I'm thinking about the difference between having a job and having a profession. I'm thinking about how the identities we claim affect not only others' sense of us but also our sense of ourselves. For example, I might ask what it means for a physician to identify herself as a worker, her practice as a job rather than as a profession. What does it mean for WPAs?

II



At the end of May, I was invited to join a small task force, about fifteen of us, hosted by the Association of American Colleges and Universities in Washington, DC. The occasion was to draft “Future Faculty Models,” definitions of faculty roles that might befit a higher education system in which tenure is dwindling and contingency explodes.

Adrianna Kezar from USC, who has organized some of the best research on non-tenure track faculty, was leading the meeting. I suspect I got asked because I’d worked with her a few years back, and I’d kept in touch about MLA and Denver University initiatives. I was one of two professors in that room on Dupont Circle, everyone else being a dean, provost, or executive director of a professional association. We cycled through familiar themes of rising costs and falling funding, of education shifted from public good to private benefit, of competencies, of MOOCs, and of monetized testing. We discussed differentiated appointments. We taxonomized the vast terrain between adjunct law faculty, adjunct Spanish, and the clinical professorships that now dominate med schools. At one point, we were brainstorming qualities that were essential to any faculty position. I casually threw out “an identity as a professional teacher.”

This proved controversial. Many people in the room were eloquent in speculating that a central identity as a teacher wasn’t perhaps essential, especially as higher education was evolving. Sure, it was incumbent on all to know and care something about teaching. But teaching might be done by practitioners whose primary identity was something else. Now, I found the implications problematic, though I will say that these were smart and well-intentioned people.

But discussion countered my comfortable senses of disciplinarity. If *teacher* needn’t be the core identity of folks leading college classrooms—rather, just a transitory role among many—then what might that mean for WPAs? A sharper identity as managers and brokers? Teaching and writing are professions, and I think that it’s at our peril that we lose track of that professional identity, selling our birthright for a mess of managerial potage. OK, this sounds pretty harsh, but I think the stakes are high.

In a series of essays published in 1860 as *Unto this Last*, John Ruskin wrote a blistering analysis of the industrial age. Its title came from the biblical parable of the workers in the vineyard, which I've frequently found useful. That's the one where the guy hires some workers in the morning, some around noon, some in the afternoon, and some at the eleventh hour, promising them all the same pay. Even during Sunday School at Grace Lutheran Church, this bugged me. The workers hired first mount a protest—quite reasonably, it seems. They worked longer. They should get more. The vineyard owner replies, "I will give unto this last, even as unto thee." Fifty years later, Ruskin's essays picked up popularity. Gandhi translated them into Gujarati, for example.

In "The Roots of Honour," Ruskin wrestles with the question of the merchant's responsibility in a new industrialist/capitalist age. He identifies the merchant as one of "five great intellectual professions" in a "civilized nation."

The Soldier's profession is to defend it.

The Pastor's to teach it.

The Physician's to keep it in health.

The Lawyer's to enforce justice in it.

The Merchant's to provide for it.

He contends that each has a duty to die for the nation on "due occasion."

The Solider, rather than leave his post in battle.

The Physician, rather than leave his post in plague.

The Pastor, rather than teach Falsehood.

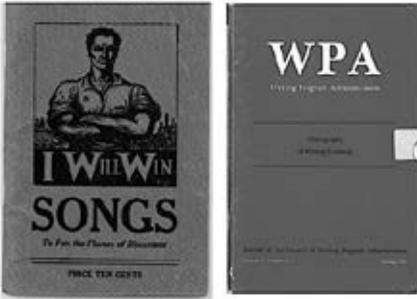
The Lawyer, rather than countenance Injustice. (241)

But what circumstances would constitute duty to die for the Merchant? Ruskin explains that even more directly than the soldier or pastor, the merchant is responsible for his employees' quality of life, responsible not only for producing "the purest and cheapest" goods but also making their production "most beneficial" to their makers. Merchants must therefore treat workers as they would their own sons and daughters.

So is the WPA soldier, doctor, pastor, lawyer, or merchant? Now, The Portland Resolution seems to claim the WPA as inhabiting many professions. But I'm going to muse that we seem to enamor ourselves as merchants these days, with writing programs as our products, and I think we need to consider the consequences. Oh, I know that we're hardly the capitalist profiteers that Ruskin had in mind. In fact, we generally think of ourselves as working at the designs of top administrators and trustees, as

intermediaries in the great chain of employment. So, it might be that we're more aspirational merchants than actual ones, measuring success by the reputation and well-being of our programs.

### III



I want to take another run at the WPA as Worker, stepping twenty years into the past once again, this time to 1994. It's February. I've driven to O'Hare airport to pick up a friend who is returning from the Lillehammer Olympics. When I get home that evening, there's a note to call Chuck Schuster. When I do, he invites me to

edit the WPA journal. I'm flattered and say yes, though I'm utterly naïve.

WPA in those days was fairly Mom and Pop, and the journal was no different. With the help of graduate students—first, Bill Weakley, then Anne Grenseth, and then Louise Freeman-Toole—I did all the production, from dumping files into PageMaker to taking disks to printers. When the boxes of journals arrived, we hand-stamped a stack of manila envelopes with the Normal, IL, postage permit and then the CWPA return address. We affixed address labels that Jeff Sommers had sent from Ohio, then stuffed and sealed and carted the lot to the post office about seventy-five yards over that way. A mailing took a dozen hours.

I rehearse the process because this is the sort of work we've all done. It's picking up donuts before a morning meeting. It's standing over a photocopier at night running off papers for the next day's orientation. It's restoring chairs to rows after workshops. For many years, CWPA held a holiday party at MLA, and there was ever the frugal adventure of smuggling wine bottles, trundling sacks of sandwiches through hotel lobbies with the likes of Bill Condon and John Heyda. Even when we outsourced the party, we went to blue collar joints like Chicago's Billy Goat Tavern, a Cheezeborger and Old Style for everyone.

Now, maybe this is bad use of WPA time. Stacking chairs isn't writing articles or chatting with the business college dean. Perhaps, even, such labor preserves the condescending perspective of writing program administration as caretaking work, feminine, to use an old parlance. Perhaps, even, to go Biblical on you, WPAs are too happy to play Martha rather than Mary and thus, we take our eyes off bigger prizes. I do think there's some truth.

Still, it has seemed to me that there's value in this kind of work which does seem particularly characteristic among administrators to WPAs. It might just be my working class diffidence, but I think that a certain kind of valuable *ethos* derives from being a steward to a writing program. It helped Jimmy Carter when he started picking up hammers for Habitat for Humanity. That said, men probably derive a more useful ethos from doing these things than do women.

When I mailed out my first issue of *WPA: Writing Program Administration*, I received a nice handwritten letter from Ken Bruffee, the journal's first editor. Bruffee was encouraging but also apologetic; he wasn't renewing his CWPA membership because he was moving along in the profession and in life. He wanted me to know it was nothing personal. He did have one bit of regret, though, that I'd changed the color of the journal from red to yellow. He explained that the red cover had been chosen very deliberately as a worker's color, to echo the 1930's Works Progress Administration and more directly, the International Workers of the World *Little Red Songbook*. As someone not only interested in history but also in song, I was chagrined.

Bruffee was seeing writing teachers as something like the Wobblies, exploited and undervalued, working the university kitchens and loading docks. More to the point, he identified the WPA him or herself as one among those teachers, inhabiting their roles more significantly than those of manager or merchant. Our publication was red in solidarity.

Volume 3.1 was the issue marking a transition from newsletter to journal. Bruffee wrote:

*WPA* is necessary to writing program administrations and to the larger educational community, we believe, because it helps define an important field within our profession. . . . WPAs also serve an institutional function quite distinct from that served by presidents, deans, chairs, provosts, and the like. Most writing program administrators continue to be writing teachers, differing from other writing teachers only in the nature of the people we teach. We teach not only college and university students, but often other college and university teachers as well. We are called upon sometimes to teach other administrators, trustees, and legislators, and even the general public. As a result, WPAs are not just teachers who administrate or administrators who also teach. We administrate in part *by* teaching. We teach in part *through* administration. (7; emphasis in original)

We've rightly, perhaps smugly, embraced Bruffee's characterization of the relationship between teaching and administration. I'd just urge that we pay more attention to the aspect *writing teacher*. After all, almost any col-

lege administrative position can claim a teaching element. Historically, it's been their primary identity as writers and teachers that marked the singular status of WPAs.

How true is that today?

The broad trajectory of writing program administration since 1979 has been from teaching and minimal management to development to advocacy. The progression is accretive, not substitutive. Each new focus layers on previous ones, like acetate overlays in old anatomy texts. The result is both more work for WPA as well as different kinds.

The managerial function was and is simply concerned with matters such as staffing and scheduling, handling placement and transfers, maintaining basic course goals and features, and so on. It allowed WPAs to choose identities as teachers and writers, including in areas not defined by administration.

The development function emerged with the perception that the individual classroom was not, finally, the unit for transmuting theory and research into pedagogy. Instead, the program was especially given the intractable transience of writing teachers. The WPA became a combination Peace Corps Volunteer and Missionary. On the one hand, she tried to better teaching and learning by bringing advanced practices to classroom villages. On the other hand, he preached the burgeoning religion of composition studies. Some teachers were happy to be in the church, some were there under duress, and some followed heretical doctrines: the Gospel of Modes, the Synod of Grammar. The WPA, then, became the chalice through which, not Rome but rather Urbana-Champaign, sought to convert the masses.

The more recent advocacy function focuses on the position of the writing programs on campuses, within higher education, and in the minds of publics and policy makers. Again, our motivations have been significantly altruistic. We understand how resources, working conditions, and expectations affect learning conditions. For example, writing programs are constrained when others on campus avow that they should foremost teach those kids how to use a damn comma.

But I don't think altruism is our only engine. A lot of us now must attend to program brands. These are the days of entrepreneurial education and innovation, of value propositions meshed with marketability, inflected by our own egos. Some years ago, Barbara Cambridge and I did a program review for a prestigious liberal arts college.



In the exit interview with its president, we were suggesting that the college might best concentrate on several fine initiatives it had developed rather than pursue new ones. He interrupted us by saying, “College X is like a shark; if it stops swimming forward, it dies.”

There’s some truth in the formulation, I think, but swimming can become its own end.

The rising tide of academic administration has no doubt lifted WPA boats. But I think we need to consider an overriding impulse to self-perpetuation to the point that the WPA’s self-identity shapes, however subtly, how we define our programs. In graduate programs, coursework in administrative concerns now joins, even displaces, coursework in rhetorical theory, textual analysis, even writing itself. How many rhet/comp students take workshops in creative writing or journalism? I’ve had conversations with good and trusted friends like Shirley Rose and Kathi Yancey about the rise of an administrative industrial complex within doctoral programs. Jeanne Gunner mused about this in a plenary speech in Charlotte some twenty-four years ago; more recently, Donna Strickland characterized *The Managerial Unconscious*. Shirley and Kathi point out, quite persuasively, that since an immediate or eventual administrative role is ultimately a feature of many comp studies jobs, it’s only practical and ethical to credential grad students for them. But are we meeting a need, or are we actually creating that need?

I’ll be blunt. How much of our work is thrust upon us versus self-inflicted? Might we be like Venkman and Egon and Ray, tasked by Gozar to choose the form of our destructor, our own version of the Stay Puft Marshmallow Man?

Might we further, in fact, privilege the kinds of writing program goals, and practices that are most susceptible to administration, goals and practices that need us as guides and supervisors? Absent the administrative imperative, how easily would we settle on academic discourse, genre, or argument? Mind you, I’m not arguing that our foci are unworthy. I’m just musing that documents like the WPA Outcomes Statement, whose revision I just happily teamed to produce, might be different if the writing experts who did it weren’t WPAs.

My simple point, a head-smacking doh!, is that writing program administration is centrally concerned with writing program administration. Con-

sider the number of surveys and questionnaires that circulate amongst us today, attempts to describe practices, working conditions, beliefs, and so on. We quest for implementable knowledge. How to do placement? How to develop a minor? How much to pay assessment scorers? What digital portfolio platform? Is this focus important? Absolutely. But this focus defines and reifies the nature of WPA work, and my talk is an ironic contribution to this WPA-centrism.

I've been circling around the point that how we've collectively conceived the WPA position has defined the nature of our work and shifted professional identities from teachers and writers to administrators. This might not be healthy for writing in the long run. It also might not be healthy for us.

#### IV



John Ruskin's writings on political economy were rather a sidelight during his lifetime. He was known better as an art critic and theorist, though even these writings have an economic status. In *The Stones of Venice*, Ruskin explores developments in architecture, relating aspects of building form and aesthetics to the process of their construction. His essay "The Nature of the Gothic" is particularly significant. Commenting on building cathedrals, Ruskin makes a case for creativity even at the cost of order, arguing that unfettered workers make more pleasing designs:

Wherever the workman is utterly enslaved, the parts of the building must of course be absolutely like each other; for the perfection of his execution can only be reached by exercising him in doing one thing, and giving him nothing else to do.

I would not impeach love of order. . . . Only do not let us suppose that love of order is love of art. (185)

Now, WPAs hardly exercise ourselves at only one thing. But I do think we've privileged the building of more orderly writing program cathedrals, and I wonder about the ways we might not be figuratively enslaving both our fellow teachers but also ourselves. Hey, we're not making art, someone might well argue. We're not alone among professions experiencing system-

atic order as the highest imperative. Witness physician diagnostic and treatment protocols. Across the board, we're not far from the anxiety of analytics. Do we in writing remember and prize our interpretive roots?

I've been suggesting that WPAs would do best to see their professionalism as vested in teaching and writing, enacted in affiliations to students, colleagues, and literacy, not in subscriptions to mercantilist bureaucracies. We might think more intentionally about the kind of working life we lead: Are we disciplined albeit well-compensated workers serving programmaticity, or are we professionals artistically and imperfectly serving writers and writing? Yes, I know that's a false binary. Pursuing the work of teaching and administration of writing as an art, however, raises a conundrum. Such work is seductive, sucking up all available shards of time. If you're somewhat pathological, like me, work pervades every aspect of your being, defines you, ultimately discards you.

That wasn't such a bad thing to another eminent Victorian, Thomas Carlyle. In *Sartor Resartus*, Carlyle narrates a crisis of faith that culminates in his chapter "The Everlasting Yea." Carlyle espouses the gospel of work: "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with all they whole might. Work while it is called Today; for the Night cometh, wherein no man can work" (149).

With all due respect, and looking at the last quarter of my career, I say to Carlyle, "No."

There's a lesson to learn from my father. He bought a garbage truck in 1970 because he was tired of working the graveyard shift painting tractors for Caterpillar after a day of delivering gas and diesel fuel to Clinton County farms. He wanted more stability and agency, even if that agency also meant working in the rain, working with the flu, working when your knees and hips and shoulders were shot until, literally, you stepped off of the truck on the day you turned sixty-five. While he liked being a small businessman, his choice was less romance than necessity. Who seeks prestige handling dumpsters? Neither did he aspire to make an empire, though he did buy a second truck. He picked up trash four days a week, sent out bills, paid his debts, worried about finances, and went fishing every Monday. His work was not his life. He knows that, to some large extent, mine is. He doesn't understand that. I wonder if I should.



## NOTES

1. The text here is as I delivered it on the evening of July 17, 2015, in Normal, IL, which means it's a conversational artifact of a certain time and place—though I trust still making sense. Missing are twenty-two slides, some of which displayed quotations, some of which added information but weren't easily reproducible, and some were mostly decorative and entertaining. I'm happy to share them if you email me, an offer and possibility that obviously will dwindle with time.

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*Friday Plenary Address*

## Absence and Action: Making Visible WPA Work

Melissa Ianetta

First, I would like to thank the conference organizers for the opportunity to address you, for I am well aware of the honor of speaking to this group that has been so important to my professional development.<sup>1</sup> One of the gifts of speaking on occasions such as this is the opportunity to think about the organization, the conference theme and, yes, oneself in a common place—such as this room—and through our commonplaces—the values of our field. In her 2004 CCCCs Chair’s Address, Kathi Yancey described such convocations as “inhabited with the echoes of those who came before and anticipating the voices of those who will follow—we pause and we commence” (297). The value of these moments, she tells us is, in part, “a function of how we understand them, how we connect to other moments, how we anticipate the moments to come” (297).

Such connections are what give this occasion personal meaning, for my experience with CWPA has been plaited into my scholarly understanding of administrative work since my first CWPA conference in 2005. I had just taken a job as assistant professor and director of writing at my current school, the University of Delaware. Like some other lucky new WPAs, I had negotiated attendance at the workshop and conference as part of my signing agreement. During that time in Anchorage, I was blown away by this organization—by its energy and vision and by the usable strategies I took away from the meeting. Increasingly over that week, however, I became apprehensive about the job to which I’d so recently committed. Along with my research and teaching, I, with the help of my staff, would be responsible for running the writing program, the writing center, and the WAC initiatives. Such a range of commitments, I was coming to realize, might not have been the smartest thing that I’d ever taken on. But it worked out. So to any new WPAs out there, who are also wondering what they got themselves into, I say: “Just first do the job they’re willing to reward, and you’ll be fine.”

I've been at every meeting of WPA since my first one (well, save one). During this time, I've moved from junior faculty to mid-career-verging-on-senior faculty, and I've experienced this organization from a variety of perspectives: as a member of its board and its committees; as its breakfast organizer; as a reviewer and author for its journal; as a conference institute facilitator; and of course, as a conference presenter. Through these experiences, it has felt to me like this is the conference where I shaped both my administrative philosophies and the means by which I work towards these newly-formed ideals.

Our conference theme, too, "The WPA as Worker," strikes a note dear to my interests because my research has long been concerned with how individuals' work—as authors, as rhetoricians, as editors, and as directors of writing centers and programs—gets described and institutionalized and with the implications of these identifications for our understandings of past events and of our current professional state. As one might expect, then, I drew inspiration from and hope to contribute to this conference's conversation about WPA as Worker. My ideal would be to contribute to that combination of vision and strategy that I have found so nourishing. (Even if that contribution is merely a resounding rejection of my argument!) Towards such ends, I would like to open with two stories for my time as director of writing that are, hopefully, suggestive of one challenge presented by our collective handling of WPA as Worker and that will serve as my focus today.

#### THE WPA AS INVISIBLE WORKER

*Scenario One:* I'm early in the second year of my term as director of writing. It's that idyllic time when I'm familiar enough to know all the nearby parking lots and important administrative deadlines but new enough that I don't yet know what everyone—including me—is going to say in Every. Single. Meeting. On a crisp fall day, one of the advanced graduate students in my department comes to me asking for a letter describing his teaching excellence. I am more than surprised, for this particular TA has told me, variously: that I take the teaching of writing too seriously; that my focus on the teaching of writing is unintellectual; and that I should be more like a friend than like an administrator with the new TAs, for they, too, take me and the teaching of first-year writing too seriously.

On the one hand, I get that. For him, I'm the new kid on the block and that my ways are not his ways nor the ways he has been taught. I get, too, that he's got the struggles of an obscenely competitive literature job search stressing him out. And he's actually a fine person, and I really do wish the

best for him. On the other hand, however, he's made his opinions of me and my ilk widely known. So I've got to wonder, why would you want a letter written by someone you think is kind of a nitwit? Moreover, I haven't worked with him at all. He hasn't taught first-year writing during my time, I haven't seen him teach anything, and I've assumed we would simply end our connection in cheerful, mutual un-interest.

While I can live with that, I can't imagine why he'd want a letter from me—or why he thinks I'd write him one. When I ask, he tells me that he wants one because, according to his advisor, it's expected that his teaching portfolio, like all the other TA portfolios, will include my letter of ringing endorsement. While he admits that he's never taught a writing class while I've been in this position, his advisor has assured him I will, nonetheless, write him laudatory lines. According to his advisor, you see, I am the Director of Writing, so it's actually my job to put my seal of approval on all TAs to help them get positions in this highly competitive marketplace and thus boost department placement rates.

That is one understanding of the WPA as Worker.

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*Scenario Two:* Now we are going to go further back in my tenure as a WPA, back to my very first days working with faculty-level associate directors in both the writing center and the composition program. One associate director, now retired, whom I'll call Pat (not a real name) and I have a very tense relationship right from the get-go because, while Pat is a really wonderful person, a long-term community member, and a solid teacher, I am unable to tell how Pat is spending administratively assigned time. Moreover, this individual hates it—*hates it*—when I ask for an account of this portion of the job. I think we realize that we are at an irresolvable impasse that day Pat looks at me in anger and frustration and says, “But you're an administrator. You know you can't list what we do! We go around cleaning up little piles of poop so that the program runs! And a program runs together—you can't separate out what I do from the work of the teachers! How do you want me to account for that? There's no predicting or inventorying this job!”

That is another understanding of the work of the WPA.

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I open with these stories because these are two moments that have stuck with me through my administrative term and because they signify for me ongoing problems in the representation and reception of our work as WPAs. For while my role in the scenarios may reverse—moving me from

the judged to the judging and the misunderstood to the misunderstanding—the root of the problem is the same:

- How is WPA work understood by others?
- How do we represent our work in a way that is legible?
- How are those representations working out for us?

More precisely, today I want to focus on individual representations of ourselves on our campuses, the problems we can associate with these public representations (and absence thereof), and to focus on new ways in which we can begin to advocate for ourselves individually and for our work collectively by asserting and rendering ourselves visible to our institutions in our work as WPAs. To these ends, the remainder of my talk will have three parts:

- First, I will share evidence from in- and outside our field that suggests to me this invisibility of many of our actions.
- I will then turn to the extant scholarship, both to incorporate voices that have addressed concerns contiguous to mine today and to look at ways in which our disciplinary common places abet the non-representation of our work.
- Finally, I will conclude by offering some practical suggestions for ways in which you (yes, you!) might make more present, more visible, your own work as a WPA.

First, then, I turn to investigate absence. I want to consider the invisibility of many WPAs at home and abroad. (By the way, as you will note as I proceed, I am using the designation WPA to include leaders of all kinds of writing programs—writing centers, basic writing, WAC, and composition programs.) It first became clear to me that some of our individual labors were obscured when I was co-editing *Writing Center Journal* with Lauren Fitzgerald, who so kindly introduced me today. As subscriptions were handled out of my school, there were occasions when I'd have to find an anonymous subscriber. The contact information would just say "Writing Center, Institution of Awesome," and I would have to figure out whom in that writing program to contact about subscription problems. A good twenty percent of the time, I would have to give up: There was simply no way of telling from its web presence who ran the writing center or program. While my fruitless clicking was admittedly frustrating, I wondered how the invisible administrator felt about their lack of representation. Was it an institutional or individual choice not to be associated with their center on the web? Did local culture not make visible the individual, or did the individual, believ-

ing attention should be on the program or center, not its WPA, submerge his or her identity?

During such hunts I noted that, even in those cases where WPAs were named, there was little or no representation of their expertise, their accomplishments—or most often, even their face. Contrast that absence, if you will, with the visibility of those administrators featured prominently, a group that included deans, provosts, or in departments like mine, the chair, individuals who are authorized to address cyberspace as a Voice of the Institution—as seen in figure 1, taken from a departmental welcome page of an institution in which the English department houses the writing program.

## Welcome from the Chair

Literature is central to the human quest for meaning. It's a unique vehicle for finding ourselves, for navigating our course in an often confusing and complex world. Because it speaks to our imagination, literature allows us to approach the moral, ethical, social, and political dilemmas of the human situation in an integrated way. The beautiful and the well-argued, the felt and the reasoned, the actual and the possible, the message and the medium: students of literature—undergraduates, graduates, and professors—do not treat these spheres as distinct aspects of human existence. In our department, they bring them together.

We take seriously the high promise of literary activity in the quest for meaning. This promise can only be kept, we believe, if our students develop a broad range of skills, including:

- Creativity
- Nuanced judgment
- Advanced reading, writing, and research skills
- Critical self-reflection
- Producing and communicating knowledge in open-ended, highly interactive settings
- Sustained attention, deep focus
- Understanding and working with theories of interpretation



Figure 1. Welcome from the chair.

When the writing program is housed in a department of English, then, its public voice and often, its face is that of the Chair—a figuration that may or may not align with the intended message of the writing program or its administrator. The work of the WPA, in such instances, is not publically visible. It is quite literally de-faced.

My experience, admittedly, could be merely anecdotal—impressionistic feedback from impatient, editorial clicking. In order to check this happenstance experience against a broader data set, however, I looked at twenty-two department profiles of WPAs at my institution's eleven benchmark schools. This survey improved my understanding of how some WPAs in environments similar to my own represent themselves, even as it confirmed my sense that some of us do not represent our administrative work in our

public self-imaginings. In general, we are scholars first, teachers second, and . . . administrators? Well last, if at all. Most WPAs whose pages I reviewed do not represent their administrative work, and those who do (which was, like, three people) merely name the program in which they work—not what they do in it, why they do it, or what they achieve.

Such lack of representation—and the acceptance, even embracing, of the resulting anonymity contributes, I think, to the problems outlined in my opening scenarios. For one, if we render our work only in those categories used by our faculty colleagues, whose professional identities and thus valuation systems are comprised almost entirely of teaching, research, and the zest of service, then we should expect that our colleagues will either presume our administrative roles fit whatever parameters suit their understandings, as in my first scene. Or as in my second vignette, remaining silent about our activities can make it difficult for us to articulate our own achievements as WPAs and to advocate for ourselves and our programs.

Arguably, and indeed accurately, one might say that many of the individuals whose representations I perused are not WPAs; they are rhetoricians, historians, and other scholars of writing studies merely serving as the WPA. Yet, if one is serving as the WPA, isn't that information as worthy of description as the classes one is currently teaching or the research project one is about to undertake? If we don't assert this work as worthy of being seen or being attended to, how can we suggest it is worthy of respect, reward, or resources?

I am not faulting my colleagues for this absence of their activities. For one, my own institutional web presence has been similarly mute. For another, it seems to me that this obscuring of our administrative work characterizes us collectively as well as individually—it comprises some sort of community commonplace. As an organization, for example, we have awards at the graduate and post-graduate level for scholarship, but there is no “WPA of the Year Award.” This observation is certainly not a criticism or call to action—I cannot imagine how such a thing could exist: Who would serve on the committee (not me!), and how they would decide?—but it does suggest to me that, as a field, we haven't nailed down what essential excellence in WPA work looks like. Yet we feel confident that we know what excellent scholarship *looks* like, and any of us who have won or awarded teaching citations can testify, we think we know what *that* looks like. So how do we think of administrative activity that we—the Council of Writing Program Administrators—do not seem to see its excellence clearly enough to offer similar citations?

This absence of administrative visibility and lack of tools to address it goes beyond individual institutional contexts and into the wider field.

We've got narratives of what we look like when we teach writing, and we've got tools to help us change those narratives, like Linda Adler-Kassner's *The Activist WPA* and Keith Rhodes's work on branding. But what about the narrative of the individual WPA? What are those images? Where are they located? Why are there no WPA memes on the "Because Rhet/Comp" Tumblr site?<sup>2</sup>

The lack of forwarding of the individual WPA on both our professional and play websites is unsurprising, however; for such a submersion of individual achievement in the collective community can be found in the scholarship, too. We have scholars such as Bruce Horner drawing our attention to the ways in which "WPA work, like 'women's work' appears to be more shared (and somehow less real) than other work" (168). It seems to me that we agree with—and so are constricted by—this idea of WPA work as "more shared" in the manner Horner describes. Indeed, we often embrace this innately collaborative work in the manner of associate WPA Pat, to whom I referred earlier, or as in the 2011 symposium of junior faculty published in *WPA: Writing Program Administration*. Invited by assistant editors Lori Ostergaard, Greg Giberson, and Jim Nugent to respond to these brief essays in print, I noted the means by which each untenured WPA placed him or herself as one among equals, forwarding an egalitarian ideal. I asserted that "we see the longing for and exaltation of a community of like-minded peers" (181). Such utopias might be a blissful place to live (or not, depending on your personality type). But offering a representation of the individual (particularly, as in this case, probationary individual) WPA as "but one among equals," especially when operating in a system such as the one Horner describes, seems to me to further erase those hard-wrought WPA labors that work towards the collegial ideal.

"But, Melissa," you might be thinking by now, "haven't you heard of the Evaluating Intellectual Work of Writing Program Administrators document? Doesn't that do the job of representation?" I do think quite frequently about and quite highly of this document. As a piece of collective action, it goes to great lengths to render WPA work as intelligible under a common faculty valuation system. But I don't think it directly addresses individual, ongoing issues of personal representation. For one, it's a document that argues a broad and general vision of WPA work, not the specifics for each of our positions. My thinking here profits from the thinking of James Porter, Patricia Sullivan, Stuart Blythe, Jeffery Grabill, and Libby Miles, whose "Institutional Critique: A Rhetorical Methodology for Change" describes and calls for "rhetorical practice mediating macro-level structures and micro-level actions" (612). Such practices, they claim, "insist that sometimes individuals (writing teachers, researchers, writers, students,

citizens) can rewrite institutions through rhetorical action” (613). While the *Intellectual Work* document articulates and circulates an important disciplinary vision, then, today I am more interested in local renderings of visibility in the vein described by Porter and his colleagues.

I am also interested in rendering visible those activities that may exceed the boundaries the statement describes. The enthymemic value of WPA work as intellectual work seems to be an address to traditional faculty—or those who have traditional faculty identities—arguing that “we as WPAs are as you are.” If that works for you on your campus, more power to you. Indeed, I’d say that such careful self-fashioning in an image that my colleagues would recognize and approve of accounted for a fair chunk of my own energies on the run-up to tenure. As we will see in a few minutes, the rest of my daily work and episodic achievements—that labor for which I was actually hired—alas, didn’t make it into my tenure file since it was not legible under my faculty’s traditional hierarchy of values.

So while I want to emphasize that I think the *Intellectual Work* document does a good job at doing what a document can do, the public absence of individual WPA’s work that I’ve sketched here suggests to me that this document isn’t enough—can’t be enough. Too much of my day and my achievements are unseen or diminished when I try to render them in the categories my colleagues embrace. So in addition to the collective action that the *Intellectual Work* forwards, we need individual action—strategies to render visible WPA work, leading to both the valuing of the individual and to a broader understanding of the professional WPA. Such action, I think, would help to counter the disappointment that Laura Micciche described in 2002—and was felt, respectively by me and my colleague in the vignettes with which I opened this talk.

Such a rendering of individual efforts, I think, might require large scale re-conception of the work we do, aligning our representation of at least some of our administrative efforts with the kinds of representational strategies used by senior administrators, rather than those of other faculty. I realize that such a suggestion might initially cause some of us to bridle, for it’s a WPA commonplace that our work is, essentially, faculty work. In a recent discussion of “street cred” on WPA-L, for example, discussants cited WPA authority as rooted in, variously, conversance with the appropriate theories, formal training in the discipline, political wisdom, knowledge of the history of the field of English Studies, an understanding of local students, and experience teaching those classes that one’s colleagues value (WPA-L “street cred”; “WPAs Housed”). All of these are good and worthy, I think, but they seem to me to emphasize the ways in which we argue that we are like our colleagues at the expense of some of our actual activities as WPAs.

Compared to your average English department schmo, I know a tremendous amount about disciplinary history, for example, but that's not where I spend my days. Indeed, my nine years as director of writing convinced me that my job is *not* like that of other faculty, and that is precisely where *my* persuasive powers lie. When I trim myself down to what is easily apprehended by my colleagues, I do fade into the pack; I do look like them, albeit like a lesser version of them—but perhaps at the expense of my own accomplishments. Put another way, most of what I do just doesn't fit into a typical faculty identity basket.

Consider these diminished depictions of administration and the strategies of erasure with the representations and attendant rights of other faculty-administrators on your campus: When was the last time that the chancellor or president of your institution felt like he or she had to assert that his/her role was, in fact, intellectual work? Or your provost had to argue that his/her work had real value? Or your dean had to prove that she/he was conversant with the theories and pedagogies dear to the heart of a particular group of faculty? What we want from senior administration, I think, is that they administer well, or at least in a consistent and predictable fashion, and that they conduct their business in such a manner that we know if they are doing a good job. It is my final contention today and my ongoing experience that both our desires for consistent and legible university administrators and the strategies of senior administration offer representational tactics that can be used to suit a range of WPA goals.

Such openings may seem counterintuitive and yet, as we now turn to the examples-and-call-to-action portion of my presentation, I hope to show that when it comes to strategies for representing our work, there are other places to go besides the limited options available at the overlap between one job (the WPA) and another (mainstream faculty).

To demonstrate both the kinds of scholarship that initially suggested this avenue of inquiry to me and the resources that might ground such an investigation, I turn now to a work I found close to home, an essay from the Associated Departments of English, a professional organization that might be thought of as the English chair's CWPA. This essay, called "You Want to Be a *What?* Transitioning from Chair to Dean," was written by one Iain Crawford (former chair, former dean, former provost, current director of undergraduate research, and current Mr. Melissa Ianetta—this last is an employment-secure position, pending ongoing and endless review and evidence of improvement). This brief informational essay was published during my last year of graduate school, and if it wasn't for the familial connection, I don't think it would have crossed my radar. In this essay, Crawford states that "the chair who contemplates advancing from what is a more or less

temporary leadership role and into a permanent administrative career will find the transition itself a complex and usually lengthy rite of passage” (66).

At the time this was being written down the hall from me, I didn’t give this argument—or, to be totally honest, the entire essay—much thought. But rereading this work now, I can’t help but note the difference between the chair’s temporary role and those who are pursuing a “permanent administrative career.” I wonder which category we in this room fall into? Perhaps each of us would answer this differently. Mine is only one story but not an uncommon one: I’ve been a WPA of one sort or another since graduate school, and I’ve just signed on to direct my writing center for another three years. By the end of my latest contract, that’ll be seventeen years in writing program administration. When I mentioned to my associate dean in passing that I might be ready to try the faculty life after a nice, round twenty administrative years, he pushed that I could never be happy out of leadership.

Exchanges such as this one make me realize that I am more of a permanent administrator than any department chair I’ve worked with. I’ve realized, too, that even those WPAs who may merely consider themselves as *servicing* as WPAs, who do not identify in their soul or their scholarship as *being* WPAs, nevertheless have seemed to continuously be administering something since they first started. Most individuals I know rotate among various administrative posts, merely taking a few years off here and there for a baby, a book, or a sabbatical. Even though they do not identify as a WPA, they do that work continuously—and invisibly. No wonder my senior departmental colleague thought I was a letter-writing machine—what other image had I given him? We need, I think, more strategies to make this work visible. Just as Linda Adler-Kassner and others have argued so eloquently that we need to reframe our stories about teaching writing, so too we each need our own WPA story to counter those our colleagues invent for themselves, such as that nice woman in the basement who writes letters. There are many ways to do this. In our scholarship, in our conversations, and in the very way we present and perform ourselves, we can educate our colleagues on what faculty administrative expertise is and why they should think it’s awesome. This might look different across contexts, but to show the ways in which we can hide and highlight this expertise, I’ll focus the remainder of my comments on administrative representation in one of our most ubiquitous professional genres: the vita.

#### MAKING VISIBLE: THE WPA VITA

The vita seems to me ripe for such inquiry. It’s an element we can use today for common comparison since we all have one. Usually when we pull ours

out, we're trying to prove something: that we're worthy of promotion, tenure, nomination, citation, accreditation—something. So we all have experience, expectations and use for this representational tool. At some point, many of us learned some lore-based strategies for writing one. In fact, in graduate school, you may have been taught to write two kinds of vita: research and teaching.

First, the research vita: In my department, the first page of a typical research faculty member's vita looks like figure 2. In fact, I'll go further than saying this is what a typical vita looks like: this is what our vitae are mandated to look like. Apparently, the year before I was hired, our tenured faculty—impatient with what they saw as increasingly incomprehensible padding—decided to go to a one-size-fits-all vita for tenure-track faculty. The template, I was told, is based on the vita of a friend of mine—a very smart literature scholar who had never administered anything and who progressed smoothly through our typical departmental book-for-tenure standard. It makes sense, then, that for a scholar whose promotion (and, indeed ongoing employment) hinges on the publication of single-author books with a university press, such an accomplishment would be front-and-center in the document that serves as their professional representation.

For my/our purposes today, figure 2 is what results when I used this departmentally-sanctioned form of legibility to make myself look very much like one of them. As you can see, I have a book (okay, a textbook, and a coauthored one at that, but at least it's from a publisher my colleagues will know well), articles (some from journals they've heard of and thus legible sources—although not as many as they'd expect to see at my stage in the professorial game if I were normal tenure-track faculty). Later on in the document, I list the courses I've taught. Although, my colleagues might think, there's not *nearly* as much as teaching as evidenced by many of my writing colleagues, most of whom are on teaching-intensive tracks in our department. Indeed there's not even as much teaching as performed by a tenure-track literature faculty member—scholars who will have individually-authored monographs as well as essays by the time they tenure. What do I show in this gap? Just those two lines naming my terms as director of writing and director of the writing center. That's it, and that seems to me a paltry substitution for scholarship and teaching that renders visible the respective accomplishments of my research- and teaching-track peers. In other words, this rendering of my research and teaching sort of brings up the question of what I've been doing with my time.

Later in this document, the sign of complete mismatch between my credentials and their expectation occurred again when I encountered the categories of *Professional Presentations Related to Teaching*. There, I just gave

up trying to use this form—how would I decide which of my professional presentations to put under teaching?

**Melissa Ianetta**

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**ACADEMIC EMPLOYMENT**

Associate Professor, English Department, University of Delaware 2010-

Director of the Writing Center, College of Arts and Sciences, University of Delaware 2014-

Assistant Professor, English Department, University of Delaware 2005-2010

Director of Writing, College of Arts and Sciences, University of Delaware 2005-2014

Assistant Professor, English Department, Oklahoma State University 2002-2005

**EDUCATION**

Ph.D. in English, The Ohio State University, 2002

M.A. in English, Bridgewater State College, 1998

B.A. in English, Bridgewater State College, 1995

**SCHOLARSHIP AND CREATIVE WORK**

**Authored or Co-Authored Books:**

*Published:*

Lauren Fitzgerald and Melissa Ianetta. *The Oxford Guide for Writing Tutors: Practice and Research*. New York: Oxford UP, 2015.

**Refereed Journal Publications (print and online):**

*Published:*

MacArthur, Charles, Zoi A. Philippakos, and Melissa Ianetta. "Self-Regulated Strategy Instruction in College Developmental Writing." *Journal of Educational Psychology*.

Figure 2. Typical research faculty member's vita.

More important to today's inquiry, where does administrative work fit into their rubric? Should I list it under service? I think we would all agree no, but perhaps not for the reason I was told at the time of tenure. I was advised that I had already listed it above under *Academic Employment*, so to refer to it again would be "padding." I could further go into detail here about the mismatch between the perspective of the faculty gaze and my achievements—for there is a *lot* of detail in this comparison. But the important take-away is

that when I frame my work in terms of my colleagues previously-held values, the system of representation based on their work, not mine, all the things that make me awesome—things on which I spend most of my time—disappear. Seeing how tepid this vita looked, I turned to the literature on administration to create an image that better represents my accomplishments.

In his essay on transitioning to become a dean, Iain Crawford describes how the administrative vita “demonstrate[s] leadership accomplishments . . . using bulleted lists to document your achievements . . . [and bring] the administrative information to the front of the document. . . .” As he describes, “Difficult as this structure may at first feel, composing your resume in this way privileges the . . . emphasis you have chosen for your career” (68). We can see this advice to pattern your vita after your experience and your goals as enacted in the first two pages of his administrative vita, as reproduced in figure 3. You will note, I hope, the stark contrast between the first pages of this vita and the first page of my own as it appears in figure 2.

The administrative vita foregrounds the subject’s primary activity just as the researcher’s vita should foreground scholarly activity. Accordingly, *Education* and *Employment* is followed by *Representative Leadership Accomplishments* whose subheadings seem well suited to WPA work, including things such as *Faculty Work*, *Curriculum Development*, and *Diversity*. Experience is organized into appeals appropriate to this evidence—or, if you will, this document works to help faculty find the distinct legibility of his accomplishments, not frame his achievements in terms of their identification with their own. I won’t spend overmuch time here, but it strikes me that other categories in this document—such as *Grant and Alumni Donor Development*, *Professional Training*, and *Professional Service*—are categories that could render much of our work visible.

Not that I’m saying that WPAs should precisely pattern their vitae after the upper echelons of administration. What I am saying, however, is that in addition to considering the representational strategies of arguing that we look like faculty, so too we can also argue effectively by looking like administrators. Compare, for example, this representation of administrative work with that of CWPA Past President Rita Malenczyk, as seen in figure 4.

Just as in the university-administrator’s vita, here too we see leadership forwarded. As suggested in the guidelines for an administrator’s vita, this document forefronts the professional decisions that this WPA has made in her career by making an argument about leadership expertise and impact. This is most definitely neither a teaching nor a research vita, but an administrative one—a WPA’s vita—one that makes arguments that would be obscured or relegated to the back pages of service on traditional vitae.

WPA 38.2 (Spring 2015)

<p><b>Iain Crawford</b> <b>Curriculum Vitae</b> <a href="mailto:icrawff@udel.edu">icrawff@udel.edu</a> 123-456-7890</p> <hr/> <p><b>Education</b></p> <p>Ph.D. University of Leicester, 1982. Dissertation: "Victorian Theme and Convention in the Novels of Charles Dickens." Director: Professor Philip Collins</p> <p>B.A. University of Leeds, 1975. English and Greek Civilization. 1<sup>st</sup> Class Honors</p> <p><b>Positions Held</b></p> <p><b>University of Delaware, 2010-</b> Faculty Director of Undergraduate Research and Experiential Learning, 2014 - ; Interim Chair, Department of English, 2011-12; Associate Professor of English, 2010-</p> <p><b>Senior Fellow</b>, American Association of Colleges and Universities, 2009-10</p> <p><b>Vice President for Academic Affairs and Professor of English</b>, The College of Wooster, 2003-09 Chief Academic Officer. Responsibilities include serving as the college's chief academic officer, coordinating the academic program, including faculty appointments, curriculum development, department and program budgets, and academic support services. In addition, oversee operational areas, including student life, admissions, financial aid, and athletics. Responsible for 1860 students, 34 departments and programs, 160 FTE faculty, 125 salaried staff, 100 hourly staff, and budget of \$32 million.</p> <p><b>Dean, School of Liberal Arts, and Professor of English</b>, University of Southern Indiana, 2000-03. Led School of 8 departments with 24 major programs, 98 full-time and 115 part-time faculty, 2050 undergraduate majors, and \$7.5 million annual budget. Supervised: Associate Dean; Department Chairs (8); Director of Center for Communal Studies; Director of Humanities Program; Director of New Harmony Gallery of Contemporary Art; Lincoln Amphitheatre; New Harmony Theatre; Ropewalk Writers Retreat; Society for Arts and Humanities; <i>Southern Indiana Review</i>; USI Theatre</p> <p><b>Chair and Professor of English</b>, Bridgewater State College, MA, 1995-2000. Led department with 40 full- and part-time faculty, 320 undergraduate majors, 75 graduate students, and budget of \$800,000</p> <p><b>Assistant/Associate Professor of English</b>, Berry College, GA, 1985-95. Coordinator (1994-95) for department of 12 full-time faculty and 75 majors</p> <p><b>Visiting Assistant Professor</b>, The University of Alabama, 1984-85</p> <p><b>Instructor/Assistant Professor</b>, Pedagoški fakultet, University of Osijek, Croatia, 1979-84</p> <p><b>Graduate Teaching Assistant</b>, Department of English, University of Leicester, 1977-79</p>	<p><b>ESL Instructor</b>, The Finnish-British Society, Varkaus, Finland, 1975-76</p> <p><b>Leadership Responsibilities, The College of Wooster</b></p> <p>Through supervision of the following 23 direct reports, provided leadership to the academic programs, supported programs, and grant-funded programs; developed budgets; coordinated hiring; and oversaw campus-wide operations:</p> <p>Dean of the Faculty; Dean of Students; Dean of Admissions; Associate Dean for Research and Grants; Registrar; Director of Art Museum; Director of Athletics; Director of Center for Entrepreneurship; Director of College Radio Station; Director of Educational Assessment; Director of Environmental Action and Analysis Program; Director of Financial Aid; Director of Howard Hughes Medical Institute Project; Director of Instructional Technology; Director of International and Off-Campus Study; Director of Learning Center; Director of Libraries; Director of Lilly Project; Director of Nursery School; Director of Summer Session; Director of Teaching-Funded Creative and Critical Thinking Project; Director of User Services; Director of Writing</p> <p><b>Representative Leadership Accomplishments</b></p> <p><b>University of Delaware</b> Co-Chair, College of Arts and Sciences Strategic Planning Committee: • Consulted with campus constituencies to develop comprehensive planning document Interim Chair, Department of English • Guided department through transitional period and national search for new chair • Facilitated hiring and mentoring of new faculty • Increased outreach to alumni • Developed alumni/public community outreach events</p> <p><b>The College of Wooster</b> Faculty Work, Evaluation, and Compensation: • Oversaw faculty workload modification, resulting in reduction of load from 6 to 5.5 courses per year and increased consistency of load across campus • Restructured faculty salaries by increasing entry level salaries to match market rates and then implementing equity initiative to address compression and inversion • Redesigned process for annual merit review to provide formal, specific feedback to each member of the faculty • Initiated task force to redesign compensation, support, and evaluation of department chairs • Initiated institutional membership in COACHE project to improve quality of life for pre-tenure faculty members • Initiated task force to review quality of life issues for faculty and staff</p> <p>Curriculum Development: • Collaborated with Dean of the Faculty and faculty colleagues to develop new summer programs in China and Tuscany • Collaborated with Dean of the Faculty to incorporate learning outcomes assessment into department and program review cycle • Collaborated with Department of Education and Educational Policy Committee on Ohio Department of Education and NCATE reviews and on developing resources to support teacher preparation programs • Hired first Director of Writing trained in composition studies</p> <p>Outcomes Assessment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Charged with developing strategies for increasing labor equity in writing programs</li></ul> <p><b>Member, Steering Committee, WPA Outcomes Statement for First-Year Composition</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Led workshops at CWPAA and CCCC conferences to develop Outcomes Statement, 1997-1999</li><li>• Produced final draft of Outcomes Statement, 1999; approved by CWPAA Executive Board in 2000</li></ul> <p><b>Regionally and Institutionally Appointed Leadership Positions</b></p> <p><b>Institutional</b> Director, Eastern Connecticut State University Writing Center, 2008-present</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Established and direct a Writing Center currently offering approximately 90 hours of tutoring per week and staffed by 15-20 undergraduate peer tutors</li><li>• Teach tutor education course, ENG 375: Tutoring Writing</li><li>• Oversee day-to-day operations</li><li>• Developed policies and procedures for the center</li><li>• Develop and implement assessments for center</li><li>• Liaison with ECSU faculty and administrators</li></ul> <p>Director, University Writing Program, 1994-present</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Led a writing program that encompasses two first-year writing courses and a WAC/WID program, with writing-enhanced and writing-intensive courses at the sophomore/junior and senior/capstone levels</li><li>• Created Writing Associates Tutoring Program, an undergraduate peer tutoring program of 25-30 students that now staffs the Writing Center and developmental writing courses</li><li>• Collaborate with members of the University Writing Board, a cross-disciplinary faculty committee of the University Senate, to develop procedures and standards for approval of courses; with UWAB also led a major revision of writing requirements in 2010</li><li>• Develop and implement assessments for WAC/WID program, including survey of over 1,000 students enrolled in writing-enhanced and writing-intensive courses to determine how they perceive writing knowledge as transferring from one course to another</li><li>• Work with faculty across the disciplines one-on-one to develop writing-enhanced and writing-intensive courses</li><li>• Lead annual faculty development workshops to educate faculty across the disciplines in the teaching of writing</li></ul>
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Figure 3. Iain Crawford vita.

<p><b>Rita Malenczyk</b> Director, University Writing Program and Writing Center <a href="mailto:malenczykr@easternct.edu">malenczykr@easternct.edu</a></p> <p>Department of English Eastern Connecticut State University 83 Windham St. Willimantic, CT 06226 (860) 465-4573</p> <p>56 Brandon Way Tolland, CT 06084 (123)-456-7890</p> <hr/> <p><b>EDUCATION</b></p> <p>Ph.D., English, New York University M.A., English, Washington University B.A., English, St. Louis University, <i>summa cum laude</i></p> <p><b>ACADEMIC EMPLOYMENT</b></p> <p><b>Eastern Connecticut State University, 1994-Present</b> Promoted to Full Professor 2006; tenured and promoted to Associate Professor 2000</p> <p><b>Massasoit Community College, 1993-1994</b> Instructor, English Department (part-time), 1993-1994</p> <p><b>Boston University, 1993</b> Lecturer, English Department (part-time), fall 1993</p> <p><b>New York University Expository Writing Program, 1987-1991</b> Graduate Teaching Associate, Writing Center Consultant, Graduate Student Administrator</p> <p><b>ACADEMIC LEADERSHIP</b></p> <p><b>Nationally Elected Leadership Positions</b> <b>President, Council of Writing Program Administrators (CWPAA)</b> Vice President 2011-2013; President in 2013-15; Immediate Past President in 2015-2017 in the U.S.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Elected by the membership of CWPAA, an organization with over 600 members, primarily in the U.S.</li><li>• Chaired two national conferences: "Queering the Writing Program" (Savannah 2013); "The WPA as Worker" (Normal, IL 2014)</li><li>• Initiated Task Force on Diversity, an effort to increase institutional, racial, and ethnic diversity in CWPAA</li><li>• Chaired national search for new editors of <i>WPA: Writing Program Administration</i></li><li>• Oversaw transition to new institutional home</li><li>• Spearheaded and oversaw new process for appointment of director of CWPAA's Consultant-Evaluator Service</li></ul> <p><b>Executive Board Member, CWPAA, 2006-2009</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Chaired Best Book and Best Article award committees</li><li>• Served on Nominating Committee and Liaison Committee</li></ul> <p><b>Nationally Appointed Leadership Positions</b> <b>Member, NCTE Special Drafting Group to Establish/Update NCTE Principles for Defending Intellectual Freedom in Education, October-December 2013</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Appointed by NCTE President Sandy Hayes</li><li>• Charged with contextualizing and updating NCTE statement on intellectual freedom for K-12 teachers</li></ul> <p><b>Chair, CCCC Committee on Academic Quality, 2004-2006</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Appointed by the Chair of the Conference on College Composition and Communication</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Charged with developing strategies for increasing labor equity in writing programs</li></ul> <p><b>Member, Steering Committee, WPA Outcomes Statement for First-Year Composition</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Led workshops at CWPAA and CCCC conferences to develop Outcomes Statement, 1997-1999</li><li>• Produced final draft of Outcomes Statement, 1999; 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with UWAB also led a major revision of writing requirements in 2010</li><li>• Develop and implement assessments for WAC/WID program, including survey of over 1,000 students enrolled in writing-enhanced and writing-intensive courses to determine how they perceive writing knowledge as transferring from one course to another</li><li>• Work with faculty across the disciplines one-on-one to develop writing-enhanced and writing-intensive courses</li><li>• Lead annual faculty development workshops to educate faculty across the disciplines in the teaching of writing</li></ul>
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Figure 4. Rita Malenczyk vita.

Aligning with the models then, the first two pages of my actual vita—the living document that I use to represent my accomplishments in my professional life and which is reproduced in figure 5.

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<p><b>Education</b> Ph.D. The Ohio State University, 2002 Dissertation: <i>Flowers of Rhetoric: The Nineteenth-Century Improvisatrice Tradition</i> Committee: Nan Johnson (Chair), Kay Halasek, James Fredal M.A. Bridgewater State College, 1998 Thesis: "Enabling Essentialism in Byron and London" B.A. Bridgewater State College, 1995</p>	
<p><b>Academic Appointments</b> Associate Professor and Director of Writing (2005-14) and the Writing Center (2014 - ) University of Delaware (Promoted and Tenured 2010)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Directed a writing program that annually provides approximately 4,100 seats<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Created "writing TA instructor preparation program"</li><li>Initiated semiannual in-service for all writing program staff</li><li>Chaired committee to develop outcomes and assessment cycle for first-year writing course</li></ul></li><li>Lead a writing center with a budget of \$350,000, a staff of approximately 35, and that annually conducts approximately 3,400 hours of tutoring<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Instituted peer tutoring and writing fellows programs</li><li>Created tutor policy and procedure manual</li><li>Initiated online assessment cycle</li><li>Over a six-year period, increased tutorial usage fivefold</li></ul></li><li>Administer a writing-across-the-curriculum initiative that annually offers approximately 330 hours of faculty workshops and individualized support<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Collaborated on development and implementation of annual multi-day faculty workshops</li><li>Created ongoing undergraduate peer tutoring program and course</li><li>Created ongoing undergraduate writing fellow program</li><li>Collaborated on development of semi-annual dissertation "bootcamp"</li></ul></li><li>Authored or coauthored proposals for<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>\$17,000 assessment grant (PI, funded)</li><li>\$18,000 writing-in-the-disciplines grant (PI, funded)</li><li>\$25,000 peer tutoring program grant (PI, funded)</li><li>\$30,000 literature pedagogy grant (PI, funded)</li><li>\$151,328 engineering education grant (co-PI, funded)</li><li>\$878,000 curriculum improvement grant (co-PI, funded)</li></ul></li></ul> <p>Assistant Professor and Director of the Writing Centers, Oklahoma State University, 2002-2005</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Mentored and assessed sixteen graduate student writing consultants, seven peer tutors, two departmental technology specialists and two undergraduate administrative assistants</li><li>Designed and administered OSU-Tulsa Writing Center</li><li>Created and supervised undergraduate peer tutoring program</li><li>Collaborated with department head to create and administer center's \$184,000 annual budget</li><li>Authored a successful proposal for a \$3,500 assessment grant</li></ul>	

Figure 5. Melissa Ianetta vita.

This document works to concretize the administrative emphasis of my position—reporting numbers related to grants, programs, and other documentable successes. While administrative work is, quite literally front and center(ed), it is followed by the highlights of my research agenda, which is appropriate, given the research emphasis of my university. While my development as a teacher is both important and ongoing, it is my tertiary area of activity, and as such, appears at a less prominent place in the document. Finally, and in contrast to the Crawford or Malencyk profiles, national leadership is not a primary trajectory of my professional activity; thus, my work with national and international board and committees is tucked in a service category that appears later in the document.

In these three examples, then, we see the ways in which faculty administrators in various institutional contexts and in a range of positions can render their expertise legible in a genre that typically serves as a frame for research or teaching credentials. As with all writing advice, these models are intended to be generative, not axiomatic; they are meant to argue less about

the precise means by which we represent our work and more to persuade that we must represent it exactly.

#### BEYOND THE VITA: BEING AN ADMINISTRATIVE ASSET

As with vitae, I think, such overtly administrative strategies can serve us well in other parts of our administrative lives. In my experience, other faculty are often mystified by the ways of administration, not understanding why or how decisions are reached, querying one another why this faculty line or that program did not receive funding, attention or other forms of decanal, provostial, and presidential love. As a new WPA, I found such queryings often misinterpreted written policy or stated priorities, and I couldn't understand how faculty members could work here for ten, twenty, thirty years and still not understand how things work. And yet, *that isn't their job*, in that it isn't their area of expertise, what they were hired for, or where they spend their time. Administration is where I spend my time, and by making that visible—pointing out, for example, what office on campus might fund a colleague's pet project—may not make me look like them, but it makes me look like an asset, one that is, in fact, more rare than an individual who is strictly a high-end scholar, the kind who at a research-extensive doctoral institution are thick on the ground and whose professional expertise is often only to be useful to other scholars in their area.

This is not to say that invoking an administrative rhetoric and strategies makes me well liked, I suspect. In fact, I've got dozens of stories about well-meaning faculty who admit they do not understand why I would run something when I could, well, *not* run something. But I'd rather get a bit of colleague side eye for administrative proclivities than colleague sad eyes because, once I fashion myself in their image, they're disappointed that I just don't do as much as other faculty. More importantly, however, I think my forwarding of myself as an individual whose expertise is, at least in part, purely administrative—not administration as teaching, not administration as peer-reviewed scholarship—but as a skill set of leadership that is useful, desired, portable, and rare—makes it easier for other WPAs who will come after me. None of my colleagues, I suspect, will ask the future directors of the composition program to write letters for all the graduate students on the market. They see me as an administrator—more to be respected than loved, perhaps. But at work that's a preferred sentiment.

Such administrative outings as the ones I describe here fulfill that performance of the institutional critique called for by Porter and his coauthors, for they provide a means of using local strategies to achieve the values articulated in our statements of ideals. For administrative *ethos* can be used to

improve curriculum, negotiate labor conditions, or otherwise improve local material conditions.

Admittedly, I might cave to The Man and use the state-approved vita when I go up for full professor next year, but I doubt it. For one, in-school evaluators have gotten used to the way I present my credentials; I even got the 2014 College of Arts and Sciences Outstanding service award (the closest thing we've got to an outstanding administrator award), so I feel like they have in fact rewarded my insurrection. For another, when I look at my truncated credentials in the form I presented them today, even I wonder what I was doing with my time. By trying to look like my colleagues, I think I end up just looking watered down.

At this point, I should probably offer a word aside to those beginning or early stage WPAs, to whom I spoke in my introduction—rejecting clearly articulated department and/or institutional norms in this manner is probably work for later in one's career, either after tenure or for those on other career tracks, after your colleagues have deep experience with you. You probably don't want the first thing widely known about you is that you're "that new guy who won't follow department rules." Remember my initial advice: if you want to advance at your institution, do first what they will reward. Then, do what else you think is needed for your personal satisfaction and professional success.

However, my larger point is less about what one WPA should do and more about the strategies we use to represent ourselves as workers. Whether in conversation about what we do and what we know or when we represent ourselves on our webpages or in our professional documents, we need to use these occasions not just to represent the ways in which we are like our colleagues and their pre-existing notions of achievement but also to educate them about the ways in which we exceed their previous expectations. Thank you.

## NOTES

1. While its argument remains the same as when presented at the 2014 CWPA conference, I have revised this talk to render it intelligible without the accompanying visual presentation. Thanks to Iain Crawford, Lauren Fitzgerald, and Rita Malenczyk for their assistance and support.

2. The Because RhetComp Tumblr site creates truncated enthymemes asserting individual scholars as the "reason" for concepts and movements in the field; examples include "Taste/Because Blair" "Technologies of Wonder/Because Delagrangé" (<http://because rhetcomp.tumblr.com>).

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*Saturday Plenary Address*

## Writing Program Faculty and Administrators as Public Intellectuals: Opportunities and Challenges

Duane Roen

Most of us in the academy communicate routinely with others in our field. In hallway conversations, we share ideas with colleagues in our programs and departments. On listservs and social media sites and at conferences, we talk about theory, research, and practice with others interested in teaching writing and in writing program administration. Many of us also write articles and books for audiences consisting of people who share our interests in writing studies and writing program administration. We find comfort in hanging out in our discourse community because, in my humble opinion, people in writing studies and writing program administration often function as role models across the academy in their widespread commitment to students and their learning.

Even though we spend all this quality time together advancing our field and supporting learning, we don't spend enough time and energy hanging out with the general public to talk about what matters to them. For instance, Nicholas Kristoff, a columnist for *The New York Times*, recently observed in a piece titled "Professors, We Need You!" that America has marginalized us academics because we have marginalized ourselves.

Sometimes we have done that by writing impenetrable prose. Jill Lepore, a professor of American history at Harvard, frequently writes for the general public, including pieces in *The New Yorker*. She notes in a 2013 column in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* that academics have "produced a great, heaping mountain of exquisite knowledge surrounded by a vast moat of dreadful prose." Sometimes we academics have marginalized ourselves by not adequately valuing work that appeals to the general public. Whatever the reason for our lack of participation in public discourse, Scott Welsh, in a 2012 article in *Philosophy and Rhetoric*, notes how unfortunate it is that scholars in our field too often sit on the sidelines:

. . . because rhetoric scholars spend a large majority of their time in faculty offices, classrooms, and archives of one kind or another, by necessity, mostly talking, reading, and writing about political action, the felt alienation from public life can feel like hypocrisy or, even worse, complicity in the perpetuation of brokenness. (3)

#### WHAT IS A PUBLIC INTELLECTUAL?

By many accounts, Russell Jacoby introduced the term *public intellectuals* in 1987 in his book *The Last Intellectuals: American Culture in the Age of Academe*. He defines public intellectuals as “writers and thinkers who address a general and educated audience” (5). That is, a public intellectual makes a difference in the lives of people. Collectively, public intellectuals—note the plural—have the potential to make a huge difference in the lives of people.

#### WHO ARE PUBLIC INTELLECTUALS?

For the purposes of this presentation, I will focus primarily—but not completely—on the United States because that is where most of us live and do our work as academics. I am also excluding persons who have not had careers in the academy as college or university faculty. Therefore, I will not include well-known public intellectuals such as Betty Friedan, Rachel Carson, Jane Jacobs, Thomas Friedman, and many intellectuals who have appeared since 2005 on the annual list of *Foreign Policy* magazine’s list “FP Top 100 Global Thinkers.” By the way, in 2005, 40% of the people on the list came from the United States and Canada, and only 8% were women. Number one on the 2005 list was Noam Chomsky, a long-time academic. On the 2013 list, I counted 39 women on a list that now includes 134 people.

Other lists of public intellectuals include those offered by the British periodical *Prospect*. *Prospect* and *Foreign Policy* have collaborated on several polls. To compile its 2013 “World Thinkers” list, *Prospect* counted more than 10,000 votes from more than 100 countries. The top three thinkers on that list are Richard Dawkins, Ashraf Ghani, and Steven Pinker, all of whom are academics.

If we exclude non-academics and limit our examples and exemplars to academics—that is, to university faculty—who work with “a general and educated audience,” names that come to mind most readily are probably those academics who have achieved celebrity status. For instance, Albert Einstein, a faculty member at Princeton University, has been a household name for many decades. Carl Sagan, who spent most of his career at Cornell University and who published more than 600 scientific papers, also

wrote books with broad appeal among the general public—*The Dragons of Eden*, *Broca's Brain*, and *Pale Blue Dot*. He immortalized the phrase “billions and billions” in his popular television series and book *Cosmos: A Personal Voyage*. In the summer of 2014, when I keyed in the word *Carl* in Google, the first name on the list is Carl Sagan—a clear sign of Sagan's status as a public intellectual.

Closer to home for those of us in rhetoric and composition, John Dewey was a faculty member at the University of Michigan and the University of Chicago before moving to Columbia University, where he spent the last twenty-six years of his career as a professor of philosophy. Many scholars in our field have quoted from his books and articles, and his work can be considered influential in the intellectual genealogy that led to some of the eight habits of mind in the *Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing*. As an indication of Dewey's status as a public intellectual, the United States Postal Service issued a postage stamp with John Dewey's name and image in 1967.

Deborah Tannen is a distinguished linguist on the faculty at Georgetown University. However, she has also written for the general public. For instance, her book *You Just Don't Understand: Women and Men in Conversation* raised her to celebrity status almost as soon as it was published in 1990. It stayed on *The New York Times* Best Sellers list for almost four years, and it was ranked at the top of the list for eight months. Since then, Tannen has published other popular books such as *That's Not What I Meant!: How Conversational Style Makes or Breaks Relationships*; *Talking from 9 to 5: Women and Men at Work*; *The Argument Culture: Stopping America's War of Words*; and *I Only Say This Because I Love You: Talking to Your Parents, Partner, Sibs, and Kids When You're All Adults*. Her more recent books *You Were Always Mom's Favorite!: Sisters in Conversation Throughout Their Lives*, and *You're Wearing THAT?: Understanding Mothers and Daughters in Conversation* have also appeared on *The New York Times* Best Sellers list.

bell hooks, born with the name Gloria Jean Watkins, has taught at Yale University, Oberlin College, City College of New York, and Berea College. Many of us have read, taught, and cited her works. When *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom* first came out in 1994, I was riveted. I was cheering.

Henry Louis Gates is another academic who has captured the attention of the general public. He has been on the faculty at Yale, Cornell, Duke, and Harvard, where he also serves as director of the Alphonse Fletcher University Professor and Director of the Hutchins Center for African and African American Research, formerly the W. E. B. Du Bois Institute for African and African American Research. I first became familiar with his work

when he was a featured speaker at the Wyoming Conference on English in the late 1980s. Of course, Gates has enjoyed a high public profile with his work on the PBS television programs *Wonders of the African World*, *African American Lives*, *Faces of America*, and *Finding Your Roots*. He is also known for having had a beer with the President of the United States on the White House lawn.

Even closer to home is Mike Rose, who seems to move effortlessly between the academy and the public sphere. Many of us in the field have read his books written for peers, as well as his books written for the general public. In both, Rose uses a prose style that is accessible and elegant. In both, Rose maintains a respectful tone. In both, Rose makes even the most complex ideas understandable. In his books, as in his life, he melds the academic, the professional, the civic, and the personal arenas of life. He shows us how they are interrelated. He shows us why the academy matters, especially in books such as *Why School? Reclaiming Education for All of Us*, *Possible Lives: The Promise of Public Education in America*, and *Lives on the Boundary: A Moving Account of the Struggles and Achievements of America's Educationally Underprepared*. His book *The Mind at Work: Valuing the Intelligence of the American Worker*, reprinted in its tenth anniversary edition in 2014, is the quintessential work of a public intellectual because it is an unapologetic analysis of and tribute to intelligence in the non-academic world. When I read *The Mind at Work*, I marvel at the intelligence needed to perform the work that some people consider outside the realm of the intellectual—plumbing, welding, electrical wiring, carpentry, construction, hair styling, serving food. Each time that I return to *The Mind at Work*, I am reminded of my great fortune to have grown up on a dairy farm in Wisconsin, where I learned to do the kinds of work that Rose describes—skills and knowledge that have served me well throughout my life.

Those of us who subscribe to WPA-L are familiar with Peter Smagorinsky's regular postings, many of which connect rhetoric and composition with English education. Smagorinsky has done much in recent years to show scholars how these two fields are linked, but he has worked to educate the general public. For example, in 2014, he published an article in *The Atlantic* titled "'The Ideal Head': Bizarre Racial Teachings From a 1906 Textbook." In the essay, he examines past and current representations of race in textbooks, and he ponders what they will be like a century from now. In this article, he encourages readers—the general public—to reflect on features of their textbooks. To reach the general public, Smagorinsky has also written blog entries for *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, and one of that newspaper's longtime reporters, Maureen Downey, has drawn

attention to Smagorinsky's work on her education blog *Getting Schooled* ("Assessing Teachers").

Among those who have introduced the general public to language and technology, Dennis Baron deserves special recognition. Since 2006, Baron has written insightful and witty entries in his blog, *The Web of Language*. With entertaining but informative entries such as "Thanks to Facebook, 'Like' Just Means 'Uh-huh,'" Baron has shown the general public that the study of language is relevant and interesting, and therefore, the work of linguists is relevant and interesting. He has also written for *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and the *Chicago Tribune*. A sure sign that he has street cred with the general public, he has also appeared on Joan Rivers' radio show.

Some academics have become public intellectuals because of their high-profile public service. For example, Condoleezza Rice was a professor of political science and provost at Stanford University when she was asked to serve as National Security Advisor and later, US Secretary of State. Likewise, Madeleine Albright was a faculty member at Georgetown University before becoming the first woman to serve as US Secretary of State. However, she had been active in public life before she became a university faculty member.

Elizabeth Warren, now a US Senator from Massachusetts, was a law professor before she entered public life. She taught at the Rutgers School of Law-Newark, the University of Houston Law Center, the University of Texas School of Law, University of Michigan, the University of Texas at Austin, University of Pennsylvania Law School, and finally, the Harvard Law School.

Some academics become involved in public discourse about political issues while remaining academics. For example, Lawrence Lessig, the Roy L. Furman professor of law and faculty director of the Edmond J. Safra Center for Ethics at Harvard University, has established a super PAC to "end all super PACs"—as noted in the title of a recent story in *The Huffington Post* (Blumenthal). As of November 13, 2014, his super PAC, named MayOne, had raised more than ten million dollars. The financial goal is to raise twelve million dollars—half of it from small donors—to support five congressional candidates. The overall goal is to fight the "corrupting influence of money."

Of course, I would be remiss if I failed to mention one of today's most popular public intellectuals. In a recent interview with National Public Radio's Terry Gross on *Fresh Air*, Tim Gunn made a profound observation, which happened to be about academics and teaching:

So I have to say, though, I am an individual who is always aware of how he's presenting himself. And I've certainly developed that awareness when I was teaching because I'm a role model in a manner of speaking for my students, and I have to say there is no population that is worst dressed than academics. (Gunn, *Fresh Air*)

I think that Gunn may have been talking about some of us in rhetoric and composition when he added,

They are horrible. I actually work with people who—they weren't *my* faculty. When I was chairing the Fashion Department, I had—I won't say rules, but there were certainly expectations. But when I was in a larger academic community, I actually knew of fellow faculty members who wore pajamas—I mean, can you—I mean literally pajamas with soccer balls on them and elephants and you name it. I thought this is horrifying, horrifying. What does this—what message does this send to your students? (Gunn, *Fresh Air*)

Incidentally, on *Wait, Wait . . . Don't Tell Me* on June 7, 2014, Tim Gunn offered a rhetorical lesson that all of us can use to improve our relationships in all arenas of life. He said that whenever a stranger asks him, "How do I look?" he responds, "Well, if that's the look you want, you sure have a good one." Gunn's rhetorical acumen is exemplary.

As I was working on this article, I became so engrossed in the biographies and bibliographies of academics who have been engaged with the public that I was tempted to simply share many of those biographical sketches. Others who were on my list of academics who are well-known public intellectuals include Cornel West, Anita Hill, Juliet Schor (professor of sociology at Boston College), Marian Nestle (professor of nutrition at NYU), Paul Krugman (economist at Princeton), Henry Kissinger, Chinua Achebe, Stanley Fish, Michel Foucault, Stephen Jay Gould, Lewis Thomas, Martha Nussbaum, and Margaret Mead. Colleagues have suggested other names for the list: Drew Westen (professor of psychology at Emory), Cathy Davidson (scholar of the history of technology), George Lakoff, Richard Miller, Anne Curzan (professor of English at the University of Michigan), Robert Boyce (history scholar at the London School of Economics), and John McWhorter (professor of linguistics at Columbia University). Of course, I also could list scores of academics who have written widely-read fiction, poetry, and drama.

One of my favorite public intellectuals is Michael M. Crow, president of Arizona State University (ASU). Among other things, he has tirelessly made the case that ASU has a responsibility to live by eight design aspirations for "A New American University":

1. Leverage Our Place: ASU embraces its cultural, socioeconomic and physical setting.
2. Transform Society: ASU catalyzes social change by being connected to social needs.
3. Value Entrepreneurship: ASU uses its knowledge and encourages innovation.
4. Conduct Use-Inspired Research: ASU research has purpose and impact.
5. Enable Student Success: ASU is committed to the success of each unique student.
6. Fuse Intellectual Disciplines: ASU creates knowledge by transcending academic disciplines.
7. Be Socially Embedded: ASU connects with communities through mutually beneficial partnerships.
8. Engage Globally: ASU engages with people and issues locally, nationally and internationally.

A common thread running through these eight design aspirations is that universities and colleges should reflect on the ways that they can make a difference in the world. In 2014, ASU took a big step in making a difference in the world when it announced a partnership with Starbucks to offer the Starbucks College Achievement Plan, which will make it possible for thousands of Starbucks employees to complete college degrees. When I watch the emotional testimony from Starbucks' employees in the video announcing the College Achievement Plan, I am reminded of the many conversations that I have had with non-traditional students who struggle to complete a college degree while simultaneously working at full-time jobs and rearing children.

Other academics have been celebrities among peers in their fields, even though they may not have attained celebrity status among the general public. Many academics with this kind of profile work in the field of rhetoric and composition. However, none of us need celebrity status to make a difference in the world, and that is the most important reason for serving as a public intellectual.

#### SCHOLARSHIP REDEFINED

As Ernest Boyer notes in his 1990 book *Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate*, academics in general do a wide range of scholarly work in four areas: the scholarship of discovery, the scholarship of integration, the scholarship of application, and the scholarship of teaching and learning. The scholarship of discovery is research—discovering new informa-

tion. The scholarship of integration is the act of “making connections across the disciplines, placing the specialties in larger context, illuminating data in a revealing way, often educating non-specialists, too” (18). The scholarship of application is the act of applying what we have learned through the scholarship of discovery to solve problems that are important to people and institutions. When Boyer describes the scholarship of teaching, he argues that “[t]he work of the professor becomes consequential only as it is understood by others” (23).

Although Boyer’s 1990 book describes the value of a wide range of work in the academy, in 1996 Boyer expanded the definition of scholarship even further in his article “The Scholarship of Engagement,” which was published in the *Bulletin of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences*. (The article is a verbatim version of a speech that he gave in October 1995, just two months before his death.) In the article, he notes that “America’s colleges and universities are now suffering from a decline in public confidence and a nagging feeling that they are no longer at the vital center of the nation’s work” (18). Boyer notes that at the beginning of the twentieth century, Stanford University’s president, David Starr Jordan, used the words *reality* and *practicality* to describe the work of universities. At about the same time, Harvard’s president, Charles Eliot, used the word *serviceableness*. Just a few years earlier—in 1896—Woodrow Wilson, a professor at Princeton at the time, argued that “We dare not keep aloof and closet ourselves while the nation comes to its maturity” (qtd in Boyer 19). Boyer makes a convincing case that we must engage with the public and policy makers to solve problems that matter to them and to us.

Reflecting on Boyer’s argument, I believe that all of us who call ourselves academics have opportunities and responsibilities to serve as publicly engaged intellectuals. In particular, each of us can share with the public the work that we do as teachers, researchers, and administrators. As Linda Adler-Kassner and Duane Roen note, we can accomplish this simply by providing service. We can also explain to the public the missions of our institutions and our professional organizations—CWPA, TYCA, NCTE, CCCC, IWCA, and others. We can do this in such a way that it is mutually beneficial to the public and to us.

## TED TALKS

I am a fan of the *TED Radio Hour* on National Public Radio, as well as TED.com. A TED talk is an ideal venue for academics to speak to the general public about ideas that are important to them and to us. Although we should aspire to reach the public via this venue, we don’t need to reach the masses

to make a difference. However, we can learn from TED talks—for example, Julian Treasure’s TED Talk “How to Speak So That People Want to Listen.”

### MY PUBLIC SERVICE

Although I engage with the public in multiple ways, some of my most consistent engagement occurs when I conduct evening and weekend workshops on writing about family history, which I do an average of three times per month. I offer these workshops at the invitation of public libraries, family history societies, family history centers, genealogy clubs, and even the Daughters of the American Revolution. These workshops can draw as many as 170 participants or as few as three. Before getting down to the business of writing in these sessions, I talk about important initiatives at my university. I also emphasize that faculty at my institution regularly engage in public service and that I feel fortunate to engage in service focused on my passion for family history and family history writing. During these workshops, I also talk about how we teach writing in American high schools, colleges, and universities. The responses are *always* positive. Participants acknowledge that our teaching methods make sense—especially when I engage participants in some of those methods. I thoroughly enjoy these workshops because I get to talk about our work with the general public, because I get to teach outside of my place of employment, and because I get to hear lots of fascinating stories about the family members, places, and events that are meaningful to the people who participate.

I also have the great fortune of regularly engaging the public as I perform my administrative duties at Arizona State University. For example, about once a week from March until August, I welcome incoming students and their families at the many orientations that we offer. At each session, I talk about two lists. First, I talk about the eight design aspirations of my university I described previously, explaining how those features enrich the undergraduate experience.

Second, I talk about the eight habits of mind in the *Framework for Success in Postsecondary Education*. In my role as dean of University College, I work with students who can benefit from a little extra support, and I am convinced that the eight habits of mind in the *Framework for Success in Postsecondary Education* are important tools for success not only in first-year composition but also in other courses, in jobs, and even in personal relationships. Because I value the eight habits so much, I discuss them at every orientation, telling students and their families that the eight habits—curiosity, creativity, openness, engagement, responsibility, persistence, flexibility, and metacognition—are keys to success in college and in life. To illus-

trate the power of persistence, for example, I ask students and their families if writing 15,000 pages of journal entries seems like a doable task. When they shake their heads no, I note that my life partner, Maureen, and I have written more than 15,000 pages about family by investing a mere fifteen or twenty minutes a day—every day since October 1978. I also illustrate the utility of flexibility: I note that I’ve been married for more than thirty-six years, thanks, in part to flexibility. I add that I have been happily married for thirty-six years. I’m not certain how long Maureen has been happily married, but I’d estimate that it’s something in the range of eighteen or nineteen years, although perhaps I’m too optimistic.

When I talk about the eight habits of mind, the incoming students seem attentive, but the parents continuously nod their heads in agreement. They recognize the wisdom of the NCTE/NWP/CWPA task force that crafted the *Framework*. We owe this taskforce thanks for providing us with a document that resonates so well with a wide variety of audiences.

#### CUMULATIVE EFFECT

I often wonder what the cumulative effect would be if each of us regularly engaged with the general public to talk about our institutions, our work, and the work of our field. For every ten articles or chapters that each of us writes for peers in the field, what if we wrote one article or editorial for the general public to let them know about the usefulness of our scholarship of discovery, application, integration, teaching and learning, and engagement? For every conference presentation that each of us does at CCCC, TYCA, CWPA, NCTE, MLA, RSA, Computers and Composition, IWAC, or International Writing Centers Association, what if we did one presentation for the general public? What if our colleagues in other fields did the same?

Perhaps, at this moment, some of you are thinking of me as the twin brother of Pangloss, the ever-optimistic character in *Candide*. Perhaps you are perceiving me as some sort of naïve devotee of German philosopher Gottfried Leibnitz, who wrote in *Essays on the Goodness of God, the Freedom of Man and the Origin of Evil*, published in 1710, that we live in “the best of all possible worlds.” Well, even though my ancestors came from Norway, I generally have a positive, optimistic outlook. However, I follow the news on National Public Radio and in *The New York Times*, so I am aware that this is not the best of all possible worlds. I realize that we face difficult challenges: less respect than academics enjoy in some other countries, less public financial investment than colleges and universities had in the past, legislators who don’t share our view that a well-educated electorate is crucial to the health of our democracy.

I am not saying that we should think that everything is wonderful, but I am arguing that we should engage with the general public. We have insights and cross-perspectives that can illuminate the conversations of the day. Will such engagement solve all the problems that we face as educators—the issues that make our professional lives uncomfortable, frustrating, and even miserable at times? Probably not. However, engaging with the public—if we all do it—can make a positive difference. I have seen cases where such engagement has turned fence-sitters, skeptics, and even harsh critics into supporters, allies, and partners. Loyal supporters can become advocates who will sometimes refute our hostile critics.

As Linda Adler-Kassner observes in *The Activist WPA: Changing Stories about Writing and Writers*, when we engage with the public, we have agency in shaping perceptions of our field and those who work in it. For example, Les Perlman, who has made it his mission to inform the public that machine grading of writing is lacking in many ways, is often cited in the popular press (Winerip). In the title of a recent opinion piece, Joanna Weiss, a writer for *The Boston Globe*, refers to Les Perelman as “The man who killed the SAT essay.” Doug Hesse has also helped to make that case to the public in a piece in *The Washington Post*. When we do not choose to seize such agency, as Linda Adler-Kassner reminds us, there is no shortage of journalists, pundits, and other public figures outside the academic who are more than happy to fill the void and write and speak about us and our work.

As Nicholas Behm, Sherry Rankins-Robertson, and I have noted in a piece that appeared in *Academe*, academics—including everyone reading this article—have much to share with the general public, and “we should revel in and capitalize on the generative opportunities” that we have. We should be eager to tell the general public about our curricula, our teaching methods, and our assessment practices. We should relish opportunities to explain to them the rationale for and practical applications of documents such as the WPA Outcomes Statement and the *Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing*, as well as some other position statements offered by CWPA, CCCC, NCTE, and MLA. For example, I have had many engaged and productive conversations with parents when I have shared with them NCTE’s “How to Help Your Child Become a Better Writer.”

For those seeking tools to support their work as public intellectuals, I point to the online journal *Reflections: A Journal of Public Rhetoric, Civic Writing, and Service Learning*. This much-needed journal publishes a mix of work for both academics and community members—individuals and groups. Another form of support for academics in the field who wish to

engage with the general public, the press, and policy-makers is NCTE's Spokespersons' Network, which provides resources and training.

We should show the general public how our work helps students develop skills and knowledge that will serve them well not only in the academic arena of life but also in the professional, civic, and personal arenas. We should show them how our work contributes to the success of democracy, which is especially important now because our democracy seems to be functioning at less-than-peak levels these days. Our work matters to us and to our students, and we need to take every opportunity to demonstrate that it matters to the general public. As Nicholas Behm and Duane Roen note, while engaging with the general public "benefits the community, it can also strengthen public trust in and support for higher education" (129).

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*Travelogue*

## Imperative as a River: Interview with Heidi Estrem

Shirley K Rose

Shirley Rose (SR): Thank you, Heidi, for talking with me about the first-year writing program at Boise State University. This interview is the fifth in a series *WPA: Writing Program Administration* has devoted to conversations about the writing programs at the home institutions of the WPAs who serve as local hosts for the summer conference of the Council of Writing Program Administrators. The conference will be in Boise this July, and I'm eager to hear about ways you think the writing program there reflects its institutional and geographical location. Let's start with some demographic information about your writing programs at Boise State. What are they? How are they organized? Who leads them? How does the organization of the writing programs reflect the larger institution in which they are located?

Heidi Estrem (HE): I think of our first-year writing program's relationship to the university as similar to a Venn diagram. We have an intellectual and budgetary home in the English department and strong curricular connections to our new Foundational Studies Program. This new approach to general education has shifted both the visibility of first-year writing on campus and the attention to writing across an undergraduate experience. This has been a really big conceptual shift for us and an important one. Prior to about three years ago, we had a general education curriculum that was a very old, smorgasbord model, and it had areas that weren't even named. So, in Area 1, you took an Area 1 course, but that wasn't even designated humanities or sciences. It was just an area.

The general education revision was undertaken at the administration's request, but it really was a faculty-driven process. First-year writing wasn't even listed on the old core. It was just this extra university graduation requirement. It is now very clearly and explicitly identified under Learning Outcome 1, which is Written Communication. Embedded in that Learning Outcome 1 are first-year writing

courses; second-year, university-wide courses that use writing (University Foundations 200); communication in the disciplines courses (200 to 400-level courses in the major); and capstone courses (also in the major).

SR: That seems like a really important change in terms of the visibility of the program: to become so clearly aligned with something that has been identified as a curricular goal or outcome versus an item on a “well, everybody has to take this” list that is not even rationalized in any way.

HE: Right. It was a huge change. I always used to say, “We’re literally not on the map. We’re not in the catalog.” First-year writing was just this appendage.

SR: That was huge. Could you talk a little bit about the history of basic writing at Boise State? I know that Karen Uehling, who has been there a long time, maybe thirty years or more, has had a very high profile in the Conference on Basic Writing, and I know from my visit to your campus that she has been a big influence. Could you talk a little bit about that?

HE: One critical piece of her legacy is that basic writing was always taken really seriously here. People who taught it volunteered for additional training and mentoring, and they also often completed an entire extra course after their masters program with Karen on the pedagogy of basic writing. At the same time that Karen has been such a critical part of national conversations about basic writing, she’s also experienced another kind of institutional shift on our campus. Not that long ago, our university was a junior college. Then, Boise State became a four-year institution, but it kept the community college mission. In the past five years or so, because of the development of a local community college, Boise State’s mission has shifted to that of a metropolitan research university. Karen has lived through these changes. The teaching load has changed, the research expectations have increased substantially, and the student body has grown relatively quickly. That is sort of a microcosm example of how the entire tenor and *ethos* of Boise State in some ways has shifted pretty dramatically during Karen’s tenure here.

SR: That’s very interesting.

HE: Karen really made the teaching of basic writing something purposeful and something that people did and felt a real professional commitment to. Now, perhaps ironically, we no longer have basic writing courses. We have English 101 Plus, so we have a model where students place directly into English 101 with an additional one credit, one hour

per week studio course. I feel like our transition into that class's success was only possible because Karen had done so much groundwork and set an expectation that, of course, you would engage in professional development, and of course, we would have meetings and workshops to prepare for this new model. She was able to provide leadership and support for that model even though it was a really radical departure. I love her for many reasons.

SR: Me too. I've known her since 1980.

HE: We have been able to keep our commitment to serving less confident or experienced writers but in a different course format. People—and Karen, particularly—were willing to re-see how our curriculum might support those students. She's really an amazing example to me.

SR: That attitude toward the teaching of basic writing—the understanding that it requires more preparation, not less; that you need to know more to do that, not less; and that the students themselves need a bigger share of the attention—that insight about the need for basic writing teachers to have credentials is a really, really important part of her legacy for the profession.

HE: I agree.

SR: I want to know more about place in your writing program, so could you speak from your perspective about how your writing program teachers and students reflect the local and regional culture and economy of Idaho and of the Northwest more generally? Does your curriculum reflect the institution's location in the state capital? That may be two different questions, really. One is about the government and politics side, and the other may be more cultural. Let's talk about the location.

HE: It is a really great question. When I first moved here, it was so clear that I was back in the West. Boise is an interesting location because we are the largest metropolitan area in the state, and we are the largest city between Portland and Salt Lake City. Our students come from fascinating backgrounds. A growing number are from neighboring western states. Many Idaho students are either from nearby suburbs or are from very tiny towns—extremely rural towns in Idaho. Sometimes they come to Boise and are shocked by the diversity or by the tall buildings or by stop lights. Really. They often have had to—even if they look like traditional students on the surface—they often already have worked very hard on ranches or doing manual labor in ways that more urban or suburban kids might not have done. Many of our students, even if they are only a few years past eighteen, have families or are already married. They have really full lives. Most of them

have jobs. Many of them care for family members. They are not afraid of hard work, and they're also very mindful that what they're doing in college needs to count for something. They are very focused. They're willing to engage in doing difficult work, but they want to know why. They want to know why because it matters to them financially, and it matters to their families and their communities. We still have a high percentage—too high of a percentage—of students who are the first in their family to come to college. Idaho as a whole has an undereducated population in comparison to other states, so our students bring a wide range of life experiences and a wide range of expectations about the role of college in their lives. And I would say, some of them even struggle with it. There is both a message in Idaho that college is important and everybody should go to college, and there's a message that the learning that takes place at college isn't always that important: that college is both necessary and kind of undercut sometimes.

SR: You make a really interesting point there. I'm not sure how much that is a western attitude and how much is a rural attitude. *Western* and *rural* may be hard to pull apart. Maybe I'm making *rural* mean the same as *western* partly because it's primarily the West now that is rural. The small towns are—rurality is—disappearing or have disappeared across the rest of the country as well.

HE: People who come into Boise from elsewhere for the conference this summer will only experience Boise as this charming little medium-sized city. But if you drive twenty minutes out of town, you lose cell service, and you're out in nowhere. You won't see a person for hours. It is so different once you leave this area specifically. There is a clear, rural-urban shift and dynamic in our state.

SR: Does that ever make it feel like Boise is like an island? I'm not putting words in your mouth, I promise. But when you're talking about losing cell service and just shortly outside Boise being confronted again with the sparse populations, lots of wilderness and mountains as well . . .

HE: It does, and I think it creates interesting dynamics. This isn't totally unique to Idaho, but I think it is just maybe attenuated in Idaho. For example, in the legislature and many state-level discussions, there is this perception that the Boise area overshadows everything else because we have such a large percentage of the state's population concentrated here and in a couple of other nearby cities. The rural legislators feel a tension there between rural and urban.

SR: Heidi, you said something about being “back in the West” earlier. Did you grow up in the West?

HE: I did. I grew up in Oregon.

- SR: I don't confuse Oregon with Idaho, but you've returned to something very familiar.
- HE: In many ways. There are many ways in which Idaho is almost the polar opposite of Oregon, actually, particularly culturally and politically. But in other ways, that's the other part of your questions that I'm trying to think through. There is a real commitment in the West to having a full life, to doing things beyond or in addition to or that complement your profession, your job. I don't know if you experience this in Arizona, but perhaps you do. I remember that, even in graduate school in Nevada, people kayaked on the weekends or went hiking or skiing. I was such a book nerd at the time that I thought, "Why? How could you take the time to do that?" That happens here, too. While there's a real ethic of hard work for faculty as well here on campus, there is also an expectation that people engage in meaningful activities beyond their job.
- SR: I wonder to what extent that interest in the non-academic or extracurricular is due in part to the attractions of the extracurricular and the access to outdoors recreation in much of the West. It is a great part of the country to live in terms of access to recreation. Speaking of recreation, you told me that you and Susan Miller-Cochran, the CWPA Incoming President who is planning the conference this summer, very intentionally and strategically chose the conference theme of sustainability in writing program administration and that you're making a connection between recreation—or—re-creation—and sustainability. I want you to talk some about your thinking there, and what things about your program would you like all of us to be thinking about as we gather for the conference.
- HE: The beam in my own eye—to use a Biblical phrase—the beam that I have to look through every time I look at writing programs anywhere else across the country is labor, and that's only even more attenuated by your own experience at Arizona State as we're speaking right now. One question for us as WPAs is, how do we sustain something that is built on a really challenging and even unethical labor model at many, if not most, of our institutions? How do we do this in ways that seem more ethical? This has been the ongoing challenge for me as a first-year writing program administrator, and I think it is *the* challenge of our field. It's also the one that has not diminished in the last fifty plus years of scholarship. Labor is one huge challenge to the sustainability question for us as professionals. This particular challenge resonates really deeply for me. I want everybody to continue to put the best parts of themselves towards solving it because I see so many smart

people, like you and others in our field, wrestling with this in daily practice. Sustainability with labor in writing programs, I think, is the first facet of that theme that Susan and I talked through. But we also want to explore questions about how to sustain a life as a WPA, which is a challenging role that asks you to be really flexible and adaptive. How does one sustain that, especially now that the role of WPAs is shifting in that more and more of us choose WPA work as the kind of the identity we might want for the longer term?

SR: Yes, I see that happening.

HE: It's not that I'm just going to rotate in for three years and then rotate out. If that's so, then how do we create positions—WPA positions—that are sustainable? We also really wrestled with this idea of how to make the conference itself sustainable. Conferences are good things for local economies. Our downtown businesses are delighted that we're coming. But at the same time, of course, it will create waste. People fly all the way across the country. Should we be thinking about other technologies to bring people in? We really circled around that theme of sustainability in multiple ways, and we don't have it solved, but we want to think through it together with smart people, and that's what the conference can provide.

SR: I like everything that you're talking about for the conference. Obviously, the ongoing conversation about labor is so critical for everyone and your mention of how it seems that more people are choosing WPA work, preparing for it in an intentional way, and choosing WPA work as a career-identity focus. Jonikka Charlton and I have taken pains in our surveys to allow people to talk about being WPAs or WPA-identified without insisting that they have the official job. That's been really interesting for us because it's enabled us to hear from several kinds of people who have interest in WPA issues, who maybe move in and out of the official role but maintain a commitment to scholarship on those issues. We see in our research results what you're saying both about people seeing this as a career identity but also seeing it as a scholarship and research identity. It is very interesting. It brings with it questions like, "How do I keep doing this? If I can't look forward to when my turn is up, then what habits do I need to develop to cope with this if it is going to be ongoing?" I love what you're saying about this sort of physical strain of being sustainable in our conference practices. I think the group that comes will really be excited to think about being more conscious about that. All that sounds really good.

HE: Related to this question of how to build a sustainable, rich life as a WPA, one new feature of the conference in Boise will be a Recess Ses-

sion—most likely on Saturday morning. There won't be conference sessions going on, and we will have a lot of different activities that people can choose to sign up for. For example, it could be anything from walking to the Saturday Market, which will be right outside the conference door, to taking a yoga class, or going on a bike ride, or playing disc golf, and so on. We're going to come up with a whole range of activities, back to that idea of sustaining ourselves as whole people. We wanted to echo that in literally what we did during the conference. I'm pretty excited about that.

SR: That sounds really, really great.

HE: Who doesn't like recess?

SR: It sounds like a lot of fun and also a good way to make that point, making that part of the conference, not something extracurricular. My next question was also about the conference. When we're there in July, you've just mentioned some activities that are going to be part of Recess with going to the market and so on. What else, if I have a couple hours free time while I'm there, what should I see on the Boise State campus or near the Boise State campus that would help me understand the university there and the writing program there?

HE: If you were going to walk the campus, what it is defined by and what it has grown up against is the river. The campus stretches along the Boise River. The easternmost part of campus is anchored by the football stadium with its famous blue field and the athletic complex. Then, there are engineering and health sciences areas, each of which have programs with national reputations. Then, as you continue to walk up the river, you come through the heart of campus, with the student union and multiple classroom buildings, including the building where the first-year writing program and the English department are housed. We do not have cutting-edge facilities for our writing classes, but what we do have is a small class experience for our first-time students, which is critical for them. Then, you would keep walking, and you would see our Center for Teaching and Learning, which is amazing and is a beautiful new building. This is where the pre-conference CWPA Workshop will be held. We have an incredibly dynamic and active Center for Teaching and Learning that is, I think in some ways, emblematic of Boise State. You have athletics, you have rigorous research in all aspects of campus, and you have also a steady commitment to undergraduate teaching.

SR: I appreciate so much the way you laid out a path there as you were talking about the relationship to the river. I'm really struck when you talk about the small classes being important for those students who are

coming from rural Idaho, perhaps from high schools in which twenty-five was their entire graduating class, or maybe their entire graduating high school senior class was less than twenty or twenty-five, so coming from that experience and so needing the small class just as a place where somebody knows them. But then also the students who are coming from more urban, urbanized—not that all of California is urban, but a lot of it is—*that* California population needing the small class for other reasons, but still really as an orientation to college expectations. So that’s really an interesting point.

Can we talk about the work you and Dawn Shepherd have been doing with your counterparts and colleagues around the state on making the most of the opportunity to work on some statewide educational issues? The article you and Dawn co-authored with Lloyd Duncan and published in the fall 2014 issue of *WPA: Writing Program Administration* described a very successful joint effort, and I’m wondering what you learned about fostering sustainable collaborations.

HE: I think one issue related to sustainability and sustaining collaborations across very different kinds of institutions has been our growing willingness to accept that material conditions also matter. I can’t expect, for example, my community college colleagues to not rely on test scores when their teaching loads are so high, and they don’t have the flexibility that someone like me does to explore other options or to build new placement programs. That’s actually been a growing realization for me.

SR: That sometimes it is just not practicable. . . .

HE: Right, and so, I can’t make it the hill I’m going to die on. I can’t say that using tests for placement is horrible and none of us should be doing it because, of course, we know it’s not best practice. They know it isn’t either, but they’re also finding ways to make it work. They’re adding in advising, or they’re differently flexible in other ways.

SR: One of my last questions is this: give us a metaphor for your program. My metaphor for the program I direct at Arizona State is the ocotillo. I was very struck by the beauty of this plant when I came here to Arizona. I’m now in my sixth year here.

HE: Has it really been that long already?

SR: It has. One of my neighbors has an ocotillo, and when it is really dry and that plant is not getting any water, it still survives. It looks really kind of scary, but it survives. But when it does get water, it has millions, literally millions, of little leaves that come out so that its branches look green from these little leaves. Then, the flower itself is a gorgeous red flower. I think about how the writing program that I

lead is like that. We can survive without the resources we need, without the water we need. We'll live, but we'll be scary looking and dangerous. Whereas, when we get the water, the resources that we need, we're stunning and beautiful. Yes, that's my favorite metaphor for the program.

HE: I love your metaphor. I feel like it's emblematic of many writing programs. We can do so much with just a little bit more. In many ways, the Boise River is emblematic of our first-year writing program: constant and yet constantly changing. We're restless: Our instructors are consistently excellent, and they want to get better. We teach writing in ways that are rooted in our field—and we also work to unsettle our curriculum. Our FYWP influences nearly every undergraduate student—just as our river runs along our campus.

SR: A river is a great metaphor for a writing program for all those reasons. Think also about the way it sustains the life of the university—maybe flipping your ideas about sustainability and writing programs to consider also who, what, and how the writing program sustains as well as how it is sustained. A river is also a natural boundary or border, which helps me think about the ways your first-year writing program, as you talked about earlier, is the means by which your students make their transition to university life. When you and I first started corresponding about creating this travelogue, you described the Boise River as “imperative.” Would you explain what you meant?

HE: According to legend, a US Army officer crested a nearby hill and exclaimed, “Les Bois”—or “the wooded area.” We are located in a semi-arid region. From the air, it's clear how vital the river is: It provides water for much of the area, and trees grow readily along it but much more sparsely as you move away from it. The Boise River is also a source of civic pride, of recreation, of peace and relaxation—and it's what separates (although with lots of bridges in between) Boise State's campus from the rest of downtown.

SR: I do want to jump back to my question about your proximity to the capitol building because I'm remembering it so clearly from my visit to Boise. I think I've been to Boise three times now, and especially during my last visit, I realized you literally can walk to there. It's a pleasant walk from the campus to the state capital building. Could you talk about what difference it makes to have the state legislature physically that accessible?

HE: Yes, and for us, even more than access to our state legislature would be access to our State Board of Education next door to the capitol building. I can call up our chief academic officer, the main advocate

for higher education in Idaho, and can meet with him regularly. That we can have regular access to him is pretty amazing. It is certainly not something . . . I don't know if this is about me growing up as a WPA or about this state . . . I don't know that I would have thought to do that in other places I've lived where the infrastructure and the layers of administration are just so much more complex. Being able to be here and to meet regularly in person has been critical for fostering what we were talking about [in our *WPA: Writing Program Administration* article]: trust and a sense that we really are all on the same page, or we're close to the same page rather than having an antagonistic relationship. That is critical, and it's critical to Boise State as a whole.

SR: Was this work part of what you were recognized for when you recently won the Boise State University College of Arts and Sciences Distinguished Service Award? Congratulations, by the way.

HE: Thank you. This was much of the work that led to that award, yes. But the work only happened because I have such amazing colleagues across Idaho at each public institution. I have colleagues here at Boise State who are willing to dive into trying new things. This work was highly collaborative—and that's what makes it so enjoyable.

SR: I'm glad the conference is coming to Boise this summer so we can see some of this first hand. Thank you so much, Heidi.

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*Review*

## Looking at Language to Learn about Race and Racism

Asao B. Inoue

Eddy, Robert, and Victor Villanueva, eds. *A Language and Power Reader: Representations of Race in a "Post-Racist" Era*. Logan: Utah State UP, 2014. Print. 288 pages.

Because my colleagues and I are developing a new university writing program, it is *kairotic* that I have the opportunity to review Robert Eddy and Victor Villanueva's *A Language and Power Reader: Representations of Race in a "Post-Racist" Era*. We are thinking about program goals, our philosophy of language, and curriculum for the first-year writing experience, among other things. One of our core philosophical assumptions is that literacy is a social, cultural, and political process, and that to be a critical reader and writer in such processes, one must problematize one's existential language situations. This means that students must find ways to pose problems that their language practices may create when they are set next to the dominant academic discourse or when others read and judge their writing. This is most important at our school where we enroll many students of color, ESL, and multilingual students, but it's equally important for other sites and classrooms that consider the manifestations of class, gender, and sexual orientation in language practices.

*Language and Power* as a whole mostly attempts to address issues of racism and power in the US through a close and careful look at language. It's pitched to first-year college students, and the editors make a tacit argument that its readings offer opportunities to assess (i.e., read in order to make judgments) language and language practices as cultural and racialization processes. The explicit framing they offer centers on reading as a historically and culturally informed practice. Throughout the book, the editors prompt readers to read the texts as sites where race, culture, and power are (re)created and contested.

Their introduction, which in my estimation should be the first reading from the book that any first-year writing student does, sets up an approach

to thinking about language (from poetry to fiction to essays to newspaper articles) as a kind of racial project, in the way Michael Omi and Howard Winant define the term. While the editors mention Omi and Winant, they do not discuss the concept of racial projects. In Omi and Winant's terms, "racial projects do both the ideological and the practical 'work'" (125) of making connections between the structures and signification that constitute racial formation processes in society. In other words, racial projects are the structural and linguistic/symbolic methods individuals, institutions, and society use to (re)create race and racial formations in society; thus, they often are the machines of racism and unequal power relations. Omi and Winant define the term: "A racial project is simultaneously an interpretation, representation, or explanation of racial identities and meanings, and an effort to organize and distribute resources (economic, political, cultural) along particularly racial lines" (125). While they do not explicitly use the concept of racial formation, Eddy and Villanueva suggest it through a statement of their purpose: "This collection is less concerned with proving or disproving race than it is with having us explore the uses of language that separate us and the uses of language that might bring us all closer together" (7). I read their purpose as a way to think of all instances of language and texts, like those collected in the book, as racial projects that are then occasions for dialogue among people with differences.

Differences are key to understanding the usefulness of this collection for writing teachers and classrooms. It is in the dialogue around differences in interpretations, in assumptions about language, and in the ways each text represents various identities and cultures that makes the collection worth considering as a reader in a writing classroom. With such differences, there is always conflict and disagreement which the editors anticipate and address. The editors show their own disagreement over the collection in their introduction and use it as a way to validate multiple responses that may be heated and passionate, showing how important it is that folks of goodwill, who see things very differently, can argue and disagree but must keep dialoguing if change or progress is to be made. This point comes from a chapter by Carmen Kynard and Robert Eddy, "Toward a New Critical Framework," in which they argue for "hostage negotiation" work among students and teachers, that is, a pedagogy that requires students and teachers to continually negotiate, even argue, over the ideologies and scripts that make meaningful their worlds in order to remake the world into a more equitable and safer place for everyone (277). This dialoguing and reworking is continual work.

To accomplish their purpose, the book has twenty-seven chapters that are mostly non-fiction by various poets, writers, students, and essayists and

is organized in four sections, which I discuss below. The editors offer a short introduction to each section that provides key terms, problems, and questions for readers to consider when reading the selections in that section. These key terms and questions offer ways to see why these texts might be read together under the theme of, say, “Defining Language and Culture.”

In the first section of the same name, for instance, Eddy and Villanueva begin by ruminating on the etymology of the word *race* as one that once referred to a measurement of things such as spices and roots. (The editors offer the example of “a race of ginger.”) They then move to thinking of more contemporary uses of the term that come from the eighteenth century and Johann Friedrich Blumenbach’s anthropological work that formulated the racial categories we most often think of today. From there, they discuss the word *ethnic* and its Greek origins in the concept of the heathen, then its association over time to Jews. The section’s introductory discussion pushes readers to read with this kind of attention to language and ends by posing directly a way to engage with the readings. They explain:

So the task in this section is in non-Aristotelian, non-dictionary defining: in looking at how the authors regard themselves and their roots, their cultures, their language ways without reducing them to essences, yet arriving at some general principles. What do they *tend* to have in common? How are they different, not only in their descriptions but in their ways of describing? What does all this say about language and culture? (26–27)

Each section has a similar kind of introducing piece that is well informed and gently leads readers by offering similar kinds of interpretive material, often around race, cultural discussions, or racism. After each selection, the editors provide brief commentary on the piece and writing activities that move through “Prewriting,” “Writing,” and “Revision” that help students think about issues of racial and cultural difference found in the selection. This means that the collection works best if classrooms consider the editors’ introductions and follow-up discussions after each reading just as carefully as they might the reading itself since the editors’ discussions help students read and think through the readings as racial projects (language projects with cultural, racial, and power implications).

While there are two standout chapters in each of the four sections, the second and third sections, “Complicating Identities” and “Crossing Cultures,” are the most potentially provocative for writing teachers who might adopt this reader for a first-year writing classroom. The standouts give some indication of the flavor of this collection. In the “Defining Language and Culture” section, Leanne Howe’s story “Blood Sacrifice” and Darrell H.

Y. Lum's story "Beer Can Hat" are powerful and provocative. Howe uses Choctaw language, a recursive and looping storyline that drifts back and forth through generations of women, and narrations of ceremony and ritual to explore a Native American woman's sacrifice, while Lum's story uses Hawai'ian pidgin exclusively to narrate a story about a boy and his friend, Bobo, who is "lolo in da head" that explores contradictions in stereotypes, particularly the intellectually disabled.

In the second section, "Complicating Identities," the standouts bookend the section. Janet Campbell Hale's "The Only Good Indian" is an essay that explores the complicated persona of John McLoughlin, founder of Oregon City who was also known as the "King of the Columbia," "Emperor of the Northwest," and the "Father of Oregon" and who was the author's distant relative who married a Native American (97). Jon A. Yasin's "Keepin' It Real: Hip Hop and El Barrio" is an encomium of rap and hip hop music, arguing for its use in schools and classrooms as a way to teach language and academic writing that might be useful set next to something like CCCC's 1974 statement on Students' Right to Their Own Language, which was reaffirmed in 2006.

The third section, "Crossing Cultures," offers several chapters that discuss many kinds of crossings. Peter Lamborn Wilson's essay, "Against Multiculturalism," is a well-reasoned opinion essay that argues against the theory of multiculturalism that informs curricula and decisions made in various institutions in society, instead favoring "cross-culturalism," a "non-hierarchical, de-centered web of cultures, each one singular, but not alienated from other cultures," a concept that he takes from poet Nathaniel Mackay (227). Min-Zhan Lu's "Representing and Negotiating Differences in the Contact Zone" argues for negotiating cultural and racial differences together and avoiding what she calls "cultural tourism," a practice that keeps others at arm's distance and maintains power relations by dictating who gets to talk and who must listen (233).

The last section, "Balancing Color Blindness and Identity," is perhaps the weakest of the sections, not because of the selections in it, but because the theme read too broad for me, particularly when I thought about how I'd explain its more disparate texts to students or use them in a classroom. Nevertheless, two selections stand out: The chapter that included four newspaper articles on cultural mascots (for example, using Native American names, slurs, and images as school mascots) offers an interesting array of news coverage, all of which point to language as popular cultural racial projects in an accessible and clear way. Victor Villanueva's "*Memoria* Is a Friend of Ours: On the Discourse of Color" is an argument and demon-

stration of the crossings that memory and biology offer us next to academic discourse, if we allow them to enter into the texts that we create.

Ultimately, this collection is a solid and unique one. While there are others out there that offer students readings on race, racism, class, and gender, such as Margaret Andersen and Patricia Hill Collins's *Race, Class, and Gender* (7<sup>th</sup> edition in 2009), most do not focus students' attention on language as consistently as this one. Andersen and Collins's book is a more comprehensive collection but focuses on topics that such intersections complicate or construct in society, not on the way language might be *the* racial project. This collection is clearly pitched to writing courses, and it treats race as a multidimensional (more than black and white), complex, and historically dynamic set of formations that can be read in language. It treats racism as a phenomenon that is systemic and often embodied in our discourses.

While at times I felt more instruction was needed in the writing prompts after each chapter, the framing that Eddy and Villanueva do in each section and after each selection is always very helpful and thoughtful. Their glossing is needed, as they have no chapters that directly address racism in or through language use, with Villanueva's own chapter being the closest one. Additionally, there are no chapters on the judging of language as racialized or racist nor on the ways dominant white middle-class languages are valued in US culture hierarchically. Furthermore, I wish the collection had more consciously code-meshed readings, chapters that meshed more than one kind of discourse self-consciously (again, Villanueva's being the only one to do this), or at least discussed a few chapters as potentially code-meshed. Discussing this practice would acknowledge what most who have discussed it tell us (Canagarajah, 2006; Young, 2007, 2011; Young and Martinez, 2011). Because we all code-mesh to some degree, a chapter in each section that explores these kinds of language and judging-of-language questions would have gone a long way toward deepening the discussions that the collection invokes. For example, Vershawn Young's "Nah, We Straight: An Argument Against Code Switching" would have been a good code-meshed example of a chapter whose topic was language and racism. A single chapter on whiteness that was self-conscious of its own use of Standard Edited English as a white discourse could have been a good code-meshed chapter as well. Then again, perhaps this latter wish is a hard one to fulfill, as I'm not sure what would be appropriate to include. An excerpt from something like Catherine Prendergast's *Literacy and Racial Justice* or James Ray Watkins's *A Taste for Language: Literacy, Class, and English Studies?* It is difficult to say. Despite these gaps, there is more to like than criticize in this collection, and it is encouraging to see that the collection tries very hard to honor

multiple ways that students may respond to the texts in it and to their peers' responses of those texts.

The collection is well worth using in a first-year writing course, if for no other reason than its editors' attention to language and what it produces among diverse readers. Would it fulfill my own program's need to teach racially and linguistically diverse students to problematize their language situations? Yes, but with careful instruction, with ground rules. Kynard and Eddy's chapter, along with the introduction, are good places to begin thinking explicitly about classroom ground rules, as is Helen Fox's "*When Race Breaks Out*" which would be a good partner to this collection.

This collection is important and significant. It does two things that most in the field of composition studies say are important for writing classrooms to engage with. First, the collection makes the argument that language is a racial project that not only constructs our notions of who we are racially and in other ways but also helps us interrogate racism and unequal power dynamics by looking closely at language. This is more than simply a connection between language and personal identity. It is an argument about language and socialized identities, larger constructs in society, connections between the personal and the social. This goal is vital in a racially divisive world where we see represented in media—and some of us experience first-hand—racialized tragedies in society, such as those around Eric Garner, Michael Brown, Tamir Rice, and Trayvon Martin (to name just a few recent and known cases). Second, the collection promotes a version of the writing about writing (WAW) pedagogy that has gained much influence in recent years (Downs and Wardle), arguing that writing classrooms can be designed around texts and questions from the field of writing studies (see Wardle and Downs for a reader that does this). Eddy and Villanueva's version of WAW focuses students' attention on race, racism, and power dynamics in such discussions. The collection will not engage students in complex discussions of racism in the way the field of composition studies discusses language or conceives the teaching of it, but it can engage students in discussions about such dimensions in language practices more generally, helping students see all texts as a part of larger, societal, racial projects. Ultimately, Eddy and Villanueva's collection shows what we can do about understanding race and racism in language practices in the writing classroom while still holding our commitments to the study of rhetoric and writing.

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*Review*

## Stone Walls Do Not a Prison Make

Irvin Peckham

Malenczyk, Rita, ed. *A Rhetoric for Writing Program Administrators*. Anderson: Parlor P, 2013. Print. 462 pages.

I have been a writing program administrator at three different kinds of universities: a mid-western university; a comprehensive university; a southern, liberal arts research university; and an eastern, technology, and professional-oriented private university. I have survived.

But more than survive, I have enjoyed and learned from each experience, so much in fact that I have often wondered about the angst I have heard expressed in conferences or read about in rhetoric and composition journals about the difficulties of WPAing. I have had my bad moments, but the overall experience has been rewarding, a source of deep friendships at both the local and national levels, and a gold mine of information for research, scholarship, and publication.

So it almost seems as if I know what I am doing and would have little to learn from a book aimed at novice WPAs. But after reading *A Rhetoric for Writing Program Administrators (RWPA)*, I have realized, perhaps a bit late in the game, how much I had/have yet to learn. Developed in response to a novice WPA's query on the WPA listserv, *RWPA* may have been conceptualized as a rhetoric for early career WPAs, but the collection of chapters from practiced WPAs is also a source of information and advice for mid- and late-career WPAs, even those like me, who thought they knew it all.

I have been reading this book for several weeks now, frequently while on the train traveling to and from my current position at Drexel University. More often than not, I have looked up from my reading to see I once again missed my stop. The travel time has disappeared while I have been reading, underlining, and writing back in the book to the various authors, most of whom I have long known as friends. The book is now filled with notes that I will, over the next several days, type into one of my favorite note-taking programs for later retrieval, knowing that the time will come—and proba-

bly soon—when I’ll want to get quickly at what Irwin Weiser told me about budgets or Charles Paine, Robert M. Gonyea, Chris M. Anson, and Paul V. Anderson told me about the various uses of the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) or Mary R. Boland’s concise history and implications of the academic freedom conversation.

*RWPA* should be required reading in any PhD Rhetoric and Composition program, regardless of whether the program has a course in writing program administration or not, given the likelihood that rhetoric and composition specialists will, at some time in their careers, find themselves directing required writing programs, writing centers, or WAC/WID programs.<sup>1</sup> The collection of articles covers the range of situations WPAs will unavoidably confront, beginning with who is required to take the first and/or second semester courses (Dan Royer and Roger Gilles’s “What Is Placement?”) and ending with how *not* to let their work become their lives (Doug Hesse’s “What Is a Personal Life?”).

The collection is aptly named because, as most of the authors make clear, directing writing programs is a rhetorical act requiring an acute perception of how WPAs’ situations are framed by a web of relationships, competing positions, and “structuring structures” as Bourdieu (168–70) calls them, those invisible structures that program our minds and are, in varying degrees, restructured by actors such as Eli Goldblatt (“What Is Community Literacy?”) who have imagined different ways of seeing.

While resisting the uniform titling of each chapter (I hate themes), I appreciated the organization that first aligns with the situations WPAs will face when they first sit in their WPA chair and then moves toward the increasingly complex. The first section, “Initial Questions,” covers what students we serve and the generally accepted conceptions of basic writing, required writing courses, ESL, WAC, and WID. The second section, “Complicating Questions,” addresses links with general education, institutional missions, and the more complicated questions about who is required to take these courses—including knotty questions about transfer and articulation agreements—and the fundamentals of assessment, or what are our ways of determining the degree to which we are teaching what we claim to teach.

The third section, “Personal Questions,” moves from the group to the individual: the status of our teachers, how they are trained, who might speak for them (unions), and the frequently ignored link between writing programs and writing centers. The fourth section, “Helpful Questions,” lives up to its name, offering in-depth information on researching a program’s history (without which the present may seem like a dark comedy),

relationships with administrators and their *raison d'être*: the budgets, the functions of NSSE, the National Writing Project, and community literacy.

The following section, “Vexed Questions,” is indeed about vexed and often oversimplified questions: about class size, institutional politics, academic freedom, educational standards, and policy. The final section, “Eternal Questions,” moves outside the day-to-day work of the WPA, taking up concerns of survival—how the WPA can turn what may have seemed like a sideshow into an opportunity for research, publication, and professional advancement. This section and the book ends with Doug Hesse’s personal essay on how to get a life.

With few exceptions, the chapters provide readers with important information and resources. Several of the chapters were noticeably partial, coloring information to promote a position with which the writers were strongly identified, but even these historicized the questions and offered insights into their complications. I have in mind, for example, one of the initial chapters, “What Is Placement?” by Dan Royer and Roger Gilles. I doubt that anyone would argue that Royer and Gilles’s conception of directed self placement wasn’t a significant development in placement practices, complementing Sharon Crowley’s denunciation of the freshman English requirement. Royer and Gilles’s placement strategy restored student authenticity to a system that for dubious purposes limits students’ choices.<sup>2</sup> They begin, however, from what they take to be an unquestioned assumption—that “faculty benefit from teaching to a student group that is reasonably homogeneous in its background and abilities” (23). Given that assumption, the question of assessing student writing abilities is paramount, but that assumption is predicated on a delivery mode of instruction, the necessity of standards, and well-defined criteria for grading student writing. One might imagine—as Chris W. Gallagher does in “What Is Policy?”—an alternative educational structure in which diversity is an asset, in which

we [move] away from our policy of teaching and accepting from students only “standard” edited American English and toward a policy of helping student writers achieve their goals in the dialects and forms that best suit the rhetorical situations they wish to enter. (347)

Gallagher’s alternative structure is a refreshing break, an echo of the 1996 Oakland, California school board’s resolution recognizing the legitimacy of Ebonics (“Original”) and the 1974 CCCC’s Students’ Right to Their Own Language (see Peckham “Acting Justly”; Parks).

From within their unexamined assumption, Royer and Gilles historicize and outline the problems associated with generalizing about student writing ability from limited writing samples and underrepresented writing

constructs (see White, Elliot, and Peckham). Their chapter will be a useful guide to any WPA who has to evaluate an in-place assessment procedure and develop a more ethical practice that carefully aligns the construct of the writing being assessed with the construct of the assessment.

Royer and Gilles usefully deconstruct notions of “correct” placement. The question has to be termed differently, they argue, localized in pedagogical and structural imperatives; it’s “more of a rhetorical than an empirical matter,” they say, pointing out that the consequences “are not limited to grades earned” (32). In short, the consequences of what students learn are shaped by the pedagogical and structural assumptions of the local institution of which the placement method is a part.

Writing programs rely on placement protocols to determine who has to be assigned to “basic writing,” but in the chapter following Royer and Gilles’s on placement, Hannah Ashley opens up the class- and race-based assumptions that arguably underwrite the history and practice of basic writing. These classes are common in public colleges and universities, so most WPAs will be greeted with the problem of how to structure the courses, how to oversee them, and who should teach them. Like the placement practice on which basic writing assignments depend, one can argue, as Ashley does, that class- and race-based assumptions may be driving their existence. After reviewing the class- and race-based issues that characterize the question of basic writing, Ashley notes that basic writers are, in significant ways, being “schooled to know less” (35; see also Clark; Shor). This is not to deny the strong ethical stances and practices of many who have devoted themselves to basic writing (see Greenberg), but WPAs who have to address these questions should at least know the terms of the debate and the history of deficit theory and basic writing practices that substitute templates for thinking (see Bloom; Trimbur).

In line with the coherent progression of *RWPA*, we move from basic writing (the students who didn’t make it) to Doug Downs’s answer to “What Is First-Year Composition?” Downs historicizes the game of first-year composition. I would have preferred in Downs’s chapter more attention to the kind of analysis done in Ashley’s chapter that is grounded in class, race, gender, and notions of a privileged discourse determined by the ruling classes. Nevertheless, WPAs should read Downs’s overview of the problematic history of required writing courses that may be doing as much damage as good. Downs proceeds, however, to a troubling assumption that our concerns (rhetoric/argument) should be our students’ concerns (59). Further, he employs the struggle theory of writing—“that writing is *supposed* to be difficult, and that to have difficulty is to be a *writer*” (59; emphasis in original). As a writer and teacher who has predicated his

practice and pedagogy on notions of writing as pleasure, I simply have to wonder how Downs and I can have such opposing attitudes toward writing—and how our attitudes affect how we teach and what our students learn about writing.

Although I enjoyed reading and writing against chapters like Royer and Gilles and Downs, I more fully appreciated the chapters that didn't seem to be promoting positions identified with the authors. I could go through the rest of the book noting those chapters that seemed particularly useful to me, but I will highlight only a few, using as my criterion things I wish I had known.

I am currently having to deal with WAC/WID issues at Drexel, discussions that have previously been on my peripheral vision, so I particularly appreciated Martha A. Townsend's overview of WAC/WID scholarship and her succinct distinction of the assumptions behind the two programs. Townsend's chapter gave me resources that I will immediately use in a report I am supposed to write for the University Committee on Writing at Drexel. Townsend, perhaps one of the more experienced WAC directors in the nation, gives readers a multitude of references and advice that will guide any new WAC director through the imagined quick fix of WAC to cure the myth of incompetent student writers.

Moving from WAC and WID to general education, Lauren Fitzgerald frames our required writing programs within the history of general education. I love this chapter. I have focused in my career on required writing courses with a vague awareness of their link to general education requirements and the historical link to post-World War II trauma. Fitzgerald's chapter gave me a greater appreciation of the broader role of required writing programs and how professors in other disciplines might view our program from within a theory of general education. Of particular importance for WPAs is the history of the misuse of adjuncts. Understanding the history, as always, helps us understand one of the fundamental ethical problems with required writing programs.

I can't possibly review all the highlights of what I learned from the chapters in *RWPA*—even from those chapters that I felt were skewing information to privilege their answers to vexed questions in our field. Chapters like Kristine Hansen's on pre-college credit, David E. Schwalm's on transfer articulation, Shirley K Rose's on writing program history, Irwin Weiser's on the administration and the budget, Charles Paine et al.'s on NSSE, Gregory R. Glau's on class size, and Mary R. Boland's on academic freedom lie in my mind toward the informative end of a persuasive/informative continuum.

Hansen's chapter on pre-college credit should be particularly informative to WPAs. Somewhere in the beginning stages of the WPA's careers, they will run like a Mack truck into the problem of pre-college and transfer credit. I caught whiffs of this issue in my first position, but at Louisiana State University, I landed in the middle of an overhaul of pre-existing pre-college and transfer credit policies. I was overwhelmed by the number of meetings and the intensity of arguments this overhaul generated. I could have saved untold hours and avoided heated exchanges if I had read Hansen's and Schwalm's chapters. Embedded within controversies of give-away credits are claims about the relative value of the granting institution's courses—and equally powerful arguments about money and recruitment. Needless to say, the granting institution tends to imagine its course as the ideal against which few others measure up. Hansen's and Schwalm's chapters help to situate these issues, disabusing us, for example, of the naïve notion that what's at stake is *only* what students know as a consequence of elsewhere instruction.

Of particular importance in Schwalm's chapter is a theme echoed in this book's title—the rhetorical situation of WPAs. WPAs might assume they have the inside track on the preferred role of writing instruction within their university. Schwalm, Weiser, Rose, and Glau remind us that we exist within an activity system, a web of positions—thirteen ways, if you will, of looking at writing instruction (Stevens). What if, for example, you occupied a position that conditioned you to see required writing courses as a cash cow? Or perhaps, more generously, what if, as Glau describes it, you were a dean who wants to know “What is the largest number of students we can put in a writing class and still have it be effective?” (307)—with *effective* meaning something different to the dean than it does to you? Or what if you are a chancellor and what you really care about is raising your university's National Research Council ranking within five years so that you might be able to move to a more prestigious university, and you see required writing courses as only a pawn in the game? Weiser and Schwalm—who have been WPAs, chairs, and deans—are able to give us three different perspectives, but we know there are more. To work rhetorically, the WPA should imagine these different positions.

Before ending this review, I want to highlight the chapters by Joseph Janangelo (“What Is the Intellectual Work of Writing?”) and Christiane Donahue (“What Is WPA Research?”). My remarks might ameliorate what could be interpreted as a negative perspective on the work of writing program administration. Janangelo and Donahue interpret our work as a site for research. Rhetoric and composition scholars who imagine themselves as WPAs on the side may have a difficult time negotiating the time demands

of running a program, teaching, and engaging in research disconnected from WPA activity. But directing writing programs takes up time that one can turn to one's professional advantage by making these very activities the subject of research. Janangelo and Donahue point toward this kind of engagement. One can find a multitude of interesting subjects within our work as writing program administrators. I have moved from studies in stratification theory to assessment to the use of personal writing in academic settings, all of which have been bound up in how and what we teach in required writing courses. My point here is the unsurprising claim that one's way of seeing shapes what one sees. Janangelo and Donahue help us see diamonds in what we do.

I began this review by challenging chapters written by contributors whose positions are different from mine. I then skimmed the surface of chapters written by contributors who seemed to be writing without any particular axe to grind. I want to end by referring to chapters written by contributors whose axes seem like mine.

Most of the chapters in this book seem to be operating within a naturalized frame that Gallagher ("What Is Policy?") and Goldblatt ("What Is Community Literacy?") challenge: the imperative of well-articulated standards of writing ability linked to the necessity of ranking students on the quality of what they write. Perhaps we have uncritically conceded to ranking when we should have been primarily concerned with student learning. I am suggesting that the structuring structures have conditioned us to naturalize counter-productive pedagogies that may in fact function primarily to reproduce the social structures into which we have been born.<sup>3</sup> If one reviews the craze of the five-paragraph essay and the current postsecondary obsession with articulating, mapping, and testing, my suggestion might not seem far-fetched. We can perhaps fantasize that within our rhetoric and composition community, we have risen above mis-educating students (Dewey), but it is quite possible that we have not seen how much damage we are doing by conceding to equally problematic assumptions about stratifying students on the basis of dominant social class linguistic standards.

Gallagher stands out because, in an extraordinarily rhetorical act, he has somehow convinced his institution to question the assumption of a monolithic notion of acceptable English (the myth of college-level writing). If you question the validity (by which I mean the consequences of use) of standards, you might follow Gallagher's guidelines for collaboratively developing counter-intuitive policies within a program (351-52). At Drexel, for example, it seems counter-intuitive to value the linguistic idiosyncrasies and cultural perspectives of international students (after all, our job is to teach them how to perform "college-level" writing). But Gallagher's perspective

seems like gold to me. His program's "Philosophy and Aims" statement alone is worth the price of this book (347).

Similarly, Goldblatt describes his strategy of teaching writing by taking writing out of the classroom, pleasantly reminding me of the sixties and *The Foxfire Book* (Wigginton). Like Gallagher's, Goldblatt's strategy is counter-intuitive. Writing teachers have been conditioned to give students writing tasks with hypothesized rhetorical situations, show them samples of exemplary writing in the imagined genre, provide criteria, structure peer-evaluation sessions, encourage several drafts, and require final revisions to be turned in for the instructor to grade (Glau 303). Goldblatt suggests we've got it all wrong.

One of my students wrote in her final portfolio this quarter about being imprisoned by history—hardly a new thought for postmodern Marxists, but it was for this lovely young writer. We may not feel or see the bars, but we might sense them whenever we put off grading our students' essays (I call it reader's block) or when we hire adjuncts for nickels.

The writers in this book have written on the walls. Freire has told us that the first step toward freedom lies in touching those walls and daring to risk the life that lies beyond the bars.

## NOTES

1. I will refer to first-year writing programs as required writing programs because an increasing number of these programs delay the second semester course to the second year or later. I appreciate that readers may question a naming strategy that turns what we think should be an opportunity into a requirement; I think, however, that we might want to name these programs as the students see them.

2. For a discussion of authenticity, see Freire (30). In short, he defines *authentic* as being wholly one's self. For our purposes, we might imagine *unauthentic* as writing oneself into a template; authentic as creatively writing ourselves.

3. For a summary of the hidden curriculum thesis, see my first chapter in *Going North, Thinking West: The Intersections of Social Class, Critical Thinking, and Politicized Writing Instruction*.

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*Review*

## Twelve Teachers Teaching

Jessica Nastal-Dema

Coxwell-Teague, Deborah, and Ronald F. Lunsford, eds. *First-Year Composition: From Theory to Practice*. Anderson: Parlor P, 2014. Print. 422 pages.

*Scene*: Madrid, Spain. 2006. A second-semester MA in Literature student enters the TOEFL prep classroom she has been suddenly assigned. This is a woman whose teaching experience has more to do with tutoring peers in math than in writing, who will soon enroll in a writing pedagogy class, who barely knows enough Spanish to ask for directions in her new city, and who isn't sure a degree in literature is right for her. This is a woman who hasn't yet discovered the field of rhetoric and composition.

*First-Year Composition: From Theory to Practice* is the book I searched for as a new writing instructor and graduate student contemplating the leap from literature to rhetoric and composition studies. Deborah Coxwell-Teague and Ronald F. Lunsford bring together twelve teacher-scholars to illustrate how key moments, theories, and pedagogies materialize in the first-year composition classroom, in public and private institutions, in PhD granting institutions and community colleges, in historically black colleges and universities, and in multilingual and multimodal classrooms. Readers will be impressed with the range of ideas, theoretical dispositions, pedagogies, policies, activities, and assignments contained in the volume.

This is an essential text for new composition instructors. The contributors—Chris M. Anson, Suresh Canagarajah, Doug Hesse, Asao B. Inoue, Paula Mathieu, Teresa Redd, Alexander Reid, Jody Shipka, Howard Tinberg, Victor Villanueva, Elizabeth Wardle, Doug Downs, and Kathleen Blake Yancey—expand on the theoretical positions their FYC classes embody. Furthermore, they share their syllabi to offer insight into their classrooms; the texts they require; schedules; in-class work and activities;

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policies; methods of self-, peer-, and instructor-evaluation; and composition assignments.

Reflecting back to 2006, I can easily imagine how my teaching would have benefitted if I had this collection on my desk. I had beliefs about writing but was unprepared to translate those into beliefs about writing instruction. What I did know came from my own experience in composition where I never fully understood what *revision* meant, even after fifteen weeks. In creating my first syllabus, I dug up the guidelines and texts from my favorite undergraduate literature courses and most challenging political science courses. My justification was something along the lines of “This is what worked and what didn’t for me.” My saving grace during this period was what Villanueva describes as a love of language in chapter ten.

For those as new to the profession as I was then, *First-Year Composition* can become a foundational text to help novice instructors go beyond instinct and personal experience. Coxwell-Teague and Lunsford “encourage readers to read the following chapters while imagining their own first-year composition classrooms, and to think about how to borrow from and adapt the ideas presented here to use with students at their respective schools” (viii–ix). Readers are explicitly invited to interact with the theories and practices within the text. Those practices offer important guidance to new instructors who do not have years of experience to draw on as they attempt to craft a syllabus for a flipped classroom, as Chris Anson does in chapter one, where out-of-class work includes video tutorials and where in-class work ranges from the familiar—large-group discussions, peer brainstorming, and revision sessions—to the more advanced—poster creation, gallery walks, and case studies (10). In chapter three, Doug Hesse offers further explication on what student-centered class activities might entail:

*Open Studio Time.* Students work on a project that they are either continuing or starting. I circulate the room for short conferences. Students ask questions of me or of one another, but if they have none, I pull up a chair for quick conversation, asking, “What are you up to, and how is it going?” (61)

Victor Villanueva suggests a sequence that respects the realities of the end-of-semester dash for students and instructors alike:

The end of a semester is a time when students are cramming and writing like crazy. Accordingly, my most important assignment is next to last, when students can dedicate more of the time and energy I would wish them to spend. The last is decidedly informal, yet still relies on all that has come prior, during the semester. (264)

Its dedication to writing instruction as a daily practice, as lived experience that takes place both within and outside the classroom, is only part of what makes *First-Year Composition* valuable.

*Scene:* Milwaukee, Wisconsin. 2012–13. A PhD candidate serves as basic writing coordinator. She is informed by years of teaching international students in an intensive English program and multi- and mono-lingual students in a FYC program for an open-access university. She is inspired and challenged by her advisor's argument that theory and practice are inseparable, and she tries to make that connection apparent in her curriculum. Her advisor is well aware of the origin of his field and its insistence on connections.

What PhD student would not benefit by the clear and elegant introduction by Coxwell-Teague and Lunsford? They expertly situate the book within several major moments composition studies witnessed in the late twentieth century: the founding of the Conference on College Composition and Communication, the 1966 Dartmouth Conference, the Students' Right to Their Own Language position statement, the Summer Rhetoric Seminars and NEH Composition/Rhetoric Seminars, and the New London Group. Coxwell-Teague and Lunsford write,

Our view of this history is that, from the beginning, it represents something of a tug of war between those who would reduce writing to form and formulas—e.g., those who instituted the first “writing” courses at Harvard—and those who see writing instruction as something more—e.g., those who founded CCC. (xxvi)

As Elizabeth Wardle and Doug Downs describe in chapter eleven, “college writing instruction is [traditionally viewed as] an inoculation: a one-shot, ‘fix it all now,’ get-it-out-of-the-way attempt to treat writing as a basic, fundamental, universal skill that can be permanently mastered” (278–79). If, however,

composition is understood as an entry point rather than as an inoculation, it can focus on accomplishing an obtainable goal that lays groundwork for the remainder of the students' writing education; that is, *teaching students flexible and transferable declarative and procedural knowledge about writing*. (279; emphasis in original)

The brief accounts of each historical moment in rhetoric and composition offer insight into how the field has responded to public discussions of writing and suggest the twelve praxis chapters that follow are a result of these key moments. It's an effective strategy, “a way of whetting the appetite of our readers for the main course of this study: our contributors' syl-

labi and their discussions of the theories that give rise to them” (xiii). For the novice compositionist, the moments offer a framework to begin understanding the current state of the field, background to understand why Asao Inoue in chapter four, for instance, might “calculate course grades by labor completed and dispense almost completely with judgments of quality when producing course grades” in an effort “to cultivate a more critical, democratic community” (70). For the seasoned reader, the moments offer a new way to consider how teacher-scholars, such as Howard Tinberg, write and teach in the shadow of these foundational moments, how they have influenced his claim in chapter nine that

first-year composition must be true not only to the conventions, scholarship, and best practices of Rhetoric and Composition as a discipline, but it must also be true to a whole galaxy of other concerns, including the nature of the institution and the diverse needs of its students. (236)

Along with its dedication to writing instruction as a daily practice, the collection is, therefore, also important in establishing the place of first-year writing in our field and the broader implications of the curriculum in post-secondary education.

*Scene:* South Georgia. 2014. A first-year assistant professor enters a new department, eager to contribute based on her research in writing pedagogy and assessment and wonders about the connotation of expert knowledge. The curriculum is open; the outcomes are familiar, based on the work in this field (the WPA Outcomes Statement, the *Framework for Success in Post-secondary Writing*). She knows enough to understand that what worked for students in Madrid and in Milwaukee might not work here because writing instruction, like writing itself, is locally situated—a perpetual point well made by Teresa Redd in chapter seven.

At the outset, Coxwell-Teague and Lunsford describe how the project emerged after being inspired, as many of us are, at a composition conference and by other foundational texts in the field. Indeed, the collection is an ideal companion volume to *12 Readers Reading: Responding to College Student Writing*, the 1995 classic by Richard Straub and Lunsford. They created a dream list of contributors to show “what leaders in our field actually do in their classrooms” (viii). What is it that these scholars do in the classroom? They emphasize writing to learn about process, community, multiple modalities, about creating knowledge, about power. The authors talk back to documents such as the WPA Outcomes Statement and the High-Impact Educational Practices statement sponsored by the Association of American Colleges and Universities, both of which underscore the

importance of rhetorical knowledge and enhancing awareness of writing as situated practice. Jody Shipka's point of view in chapter eight sums up the expansive approach of the volume best:

To ensure that our courses do not become irrelevant—or, depending on one's perspective, to ensure that they do not become *increasingly irrelevant*—we must ask students to examine the design of words on a page as well as the relationships among words, images, codes, textures, sounds, colors, and potentials for movement. We need, in short, to embrace composition. (211; emphasis in original)

As a novice instructor, I would have been energized by Shipka's argument and course design. Now, with almost a decade of teaching experience, I admit I am a little daunted by considering radical changes to my pedagogical approaches! In the classroom and in our discipline, we often discuss taking risks with writing students. *First-Year Composition* similarly invites readers to take risks with their pedagogy and offers the careful guidance and support we would expect from an empathetic teacher. I emerge from this text with ideas about writing pedagogy, yes, in addition to strategies to put those ideas in practice in my own classroom. Compelled by contact-zone and ESL pedagogy? Let Suresh Canagarajah in chapter two serve as your guide. Interested in online and hybrid approaches to teaching writing? Turn to Alex Reid in chapter seven. Daunted by the implications of multimodal? Well, Jessica, get back to Jody Shipka's chapter and take a risk.

I started to write, "After reading *First-Year Composition: From Theory to Practice*," but *reading* is an inadequate verb. I've read, re-read, annotated, dog-eared, talked about, tested out, and even adopted this text (for a pedagogy course), so perhaps *grappling* is a better word. After grappling with *First-Year Composition: From Theory to Practice*, I am convinced it is a book destined for bright-eyed graduate students, pedagogy courses, and the shelves of mid-career and senior scholars. It challenges us to re-view our own pedagogies, philosophies, and practices and prods readers to consider how we might more clearly align our own theories with our writing classrooms. The volume helps us to envision how we might view our work more mindfully, how we might consider the ways, as Paula Mathieu describes them in chapter five, in which "a writing course—or a writing program—should be responsive to the environment in which it resides" (112).

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Review

## Reconsidering Content in First-Year Composition: A Study of “Teaching for Transfer”

Mary Jo Reiff

Yancey, Kathleen Blake, Liane Robertson, and Kara Taczak. *Writing across Contexts: Transfer, Composition, and Sites of Writing*. Logan: Utah State UP, 2014. Print. 191 pages.

In a 2007 *WPA: Writing Program Administration* article, Elizabeth Wardle challenged the field to undertake further research on the issue of transfer in first-year composition—that is, on how writing knowledge and abilities learned in first-year composition are abstracted and applied within new writing contexts. Given the institutional positioning of composition as a required course and its accountability to various stakeholders (students, administrators, policy makers), Wardle argued that it “would be irresponsible not to engage the issue of transfer” (66). Over the past eight years, WPAs and writing researchers have stepped up to the challenge, producing a rich body of research on transfer.

One of the most recent contributions to this body of research on transfer is *Writing across Contexts: Transfer, Composition, and Sites of Writing* by Kathleen Blake Yancey, Liane Robertson, and Kara Taczak. Winner of the 2015 CCCC Research Impact Award, *Writing across Contexts* is a hybrid project that comprises both a comprehensive synthesis of transfer research and an innovative study of teaching for transfer. As they participate in the field of inquiry on transfer, the authors identify various sources that motivated their inquiry, including an interest in students’ reflective practice in the classroom and an interest in what should constitute the content of first-year composition courses, which leads to their central claim: “that a very specific composition course we designed to foster transfer in writing, what we call a Teaching for Transfer (TFT) course, assists students in transferring writing knowledge and practice in ways other kinds of composition courses do not” (4–5). While several studies on transfer conclude with pedagogical implications or applications to teaching—such as assignment

sequences designed to facilitate transfer (Beaufort); approaches based on metacognitive reflection or meta-awareness (Reiff and Bawarshi; Wardle); and ideas for re-envisioning first-year composition as an interdisciplinary learning community (Nowacek)—there are few, if any, studies that systematically study curricular design or test the effectiveness of pedagogies that teach for transfer. Yancey, Robertson, and Taczak’s study remedies this and fills a much-needed void in transfer research.

To situate their study, the authors provide a comprehensive overview of transfer theory and research. Chapter one is a valuable resource for WPAs, teachers, and researchers who want to learn more about the issue of transfer, from its survey of early research in the fields of psychology and education—including the work of David N. Perkins and Gavriel Salomon, aptly labeled by the authors as the godfathers of transfer—to various conceptualizations of transfer that explore the role of the task, the effect of individual dispositions, and the influence of sociocultural context on transfer. Following this synthesis of transfer scholarship is a thorough review of empirical research on transfer. After establishing the territory of transfer research, the authors carve out a niche for their own study, noting two dimensions of transfer that have not been as well researched: the role of content knowledge and the role of reflection in fostering transfer.

To further contextualize their study, chapter two provides an overview of transfer-based curricula. Yancey, Robertson, and Taczak begin by bringing research on transfer within the field of rhetoric and composition into conversation with the field of educational psychology. In particular, they focus on the “little referenced but rich source of research on transfer,” the National Research Council-sponsored *How People Learn: Brain, Mind, Experience, and School (HPL)*, which explores the kinds of learning experiences that lead to transfer, including the role of expertise (104; Bransford et al.). They then provide overviews of pedagogical models that facilitate transfer, including Writing about Writing (Downs and Wardle) and Writing about Language (Dew)—courses that make rhetoric and language the content of the writing course—and the “agents of integration approach” (Nowacek), which is based on linked classes that promote concurrent transfer.

Moving next to their own curricular model and the focus for the study—the TFT approach—the authors identify three main components of the course: 1) a focus on key terms and writing concepts, 2) the integration of reflective practice, and 3) students’ development of a theory of writing. The course design includes a sequence of four units and assignments, each of which incorporates key terms, such as *genre*, *rhetorical situation*, *existence*, and *discourse community*. Through focus on these concepts, combined

with reflective practices, students work toward developing their own theory of writing, which “helps [them] create a framework of writing knowledge and practice they’ll take with them when the course is over” (57). While their study compares the TFT course to other types of first-year composition courses, it would be interesting to compare the TFT approach to other various curricular approaches to transfer surveyed in this chapter and with a focus on the ways that the TFT course extends other curricular models—through integration of key terms and a focus on reflective practice.

In order to test their curriculum and the role of content in facilitating transfer, the authors carried out a comparative study of their course and two other courses with varying content, one of which is a course based on an expressivist approach (focused on how cultural identity shapes the writer’s perspective) and the other a course based on media and culture (focused on how media shapes culture and writing). As described in chapter three, all of the courses took place at Florida State University and fulfilled the second required first-year composition course, which is focused on research-based writing. The research participants included seven students, with representation across the three types of courses, and data was gathered through student and instructor interviews, analysis of student writing, and analysis of course materials.

While the findings are much richer than can be fully reflected here, the researchers found, overall, that “content in first-year composition does matter, contributing in very specific ways to students’ intentional transfer of knowledge and practice in writing” (61). In addition, the key terms of the TFT course played a central role in this transfer. A major finding is that when students are given the language and vocabulary to talk about and conceptualize writing, they are better able to abstract and apply this knowledge in other contexts. The findings, overall, seem to support a “writing about writing” approach in first-year composition where the focus is on both the subject of writing and the act of writing. As the authors explain, in the TFT course, “The subject matter is thus composition itself, which, when combined with practice and reflection facilitates transfer” (138). Because the researchers so usefully distinguish between students “adopting writing strategies” and “developing conceptual knowledge” about writing, it might have been interesting to learn more about how the TFT course develops conceptual knowledge of key terms such as genre, discourse community, and audience (94). The syllabus included in the appendix notes the integration of a few theoretical texts on writing (Bitzer’s “The Rhetorical Situation”; Yancey’s “On Reflection” and “Made Not Only in Words: Composition in a New Key”; two chapters from *HPL*) combined with other readings (essays, speeches, TED talks, blogs, interviews, and photo essays).

This raises the question of the extent to which it is necessary to integrate theoretical perspectives that could enrich students' conceptualization and reflection on these key terms. These theoretical readings seem especially crucial to facilitating connections between key terms—for example, with Bitzer's article clarifying the connection between the concept of *rhetorical situation* and the concept of *audience* as a constituent of situation. Could Rick, for example—who understood discourse community but not audience and was able to conceptualize genre but not rhetorical situation—have benefitted from perspectives that explore the interdependence of audience and discourse community (Porter) or genre and situation (Miller)? Given that the student's development of a theory of writing is “a signature of the course” (57), it would have been interesting to hear more about the theoretical readings that developed students' understanding of the conceptual anchors of the course.

Following chapter three's report on findings, which includes detailed and engaging portraits of student writers and integration of students' voices, chapter four reports on unexpected or “surprising” findings regarding the role of prior knowledge in transfer. The authors create an intriguing typology of how students use prior knowledge through 1) *assemblage* or “grafting isolated bits of new knowledge onto a continuing schema of prior knowledge,” 2) *remix* or “integrating the new knowledge into the schema of the old,” and 3) *critical incident* or “a failure to meet a new task successfully,” which prompts rethinking (112). While remix captures high road transfer, the focus on failure or a critical incident that prompts a conceptual breakthrough (leading to high road transfer) is especially interesting and relevant, particularly within the context of how the role of novice vs. expert affects transfer. Also intriguing is the suggestion that it might be useful to integrate within the TFT classroom case studies of these “critical incidents.”

In their final chapter, the authors highlight issues and questions for further exploration, such as the role of failure in transfer or the role that transfer metaphors (such as assemblage or remix) might play in a TFT course. Future research, they suggest, might explore the linking of a TFT course to another disciplinary course or the adaptation to another institutional context or student population. Finally, the authors question how we might engage teachers and the field in general in teaching for transfer.

As a member of the field who is fully engaged with this issue, I found that Yancey, Robertson, and Taczak's study prompted much useful reflection, particularly regarding the content of first-year composition and the role of reflective assignments—such as the innovative final assignment to develop a theory of writing—in fostering transfer. One distinction, though,

that gets slightly blurred is the distinction between course *content* and *subject matter*. While the authors sometimes align content with Beaufort's domain of subject matter knowledge, they also acknowledge that the TFT curriculum incorporates all five domains of knowledge (*discourse community, genre, subject matter, writing process, and rhetorical knowledge*) and that course content encompasses both writing *knowledge* and *practice*, encouraging students to simultaneously articulate and practice a theory of writing. This is an approach supported by a recent National Research Council study of transfer (Pellegrino and Hilton) that examined how "deeper learning" (the process of building and applying knowledge to new contexts) relies on "both knowledge in a domain and knowledge of how, why, and when to apply this knowledge"—a blending of content knowledge and related skills that leads to what the researchers call "twenty-first century competencies" (70).

Prompting further reflection on the interactive relationship between conceptual and procedural knowledge, Yancey, Robertson, and Taczak pose the question in their conclusion of how it might be possible to reconcile a theme-based or instructor-centered course with a TFT approach. Just as the TFT course folds together theoretical readings in the field and various other types of texts/genres, might it be possible for courses with specific themes to incorporate theoretical texts, key terms and concepts, and reflective assignments and practices that build toward a theory of writing? In terms of building conceptual knowledge, an expressivist course, for instance, could potentially include theoretical readings on expressivism (like those by Donald Murray and/or Peter Elbow) while the media and culture course could integrate perspectives on multimedia rhetoric (such as Yancey's "Writing in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century"). In terms of developing procedural knowledge, the media and culture course included sets of key terms (*analysis, audience, message, medium*) that had the potential to be used reiteratively and reflectively, aligning the course with more of a TFT approach. In addition, the expressivist course included assignments that asked students to repurpose previous projects and remix genres, creating opportunities for integration of key concepts and reflection on how to negotiate different genres and situations that could have been shaped toward a final theory of writing. Reconsidering the content of first-year composition, then, might mean rethinking the (inter)relationship between the domains of knowledge and performance, with reflection serving as a bridging mechanism. Overall, just as reflection is the centerpiece of their study and of the TFT curriculum, Yancey, Robertson, and Taczak's final chapter, "Upon Reflection," prompts us as a field to further reflect and speculate on the role transfer will play in future first-year composition curricula and on how first-year compo-

sition content—through intertwined knowledge and skills—can promote “twenty-first century competencies.”

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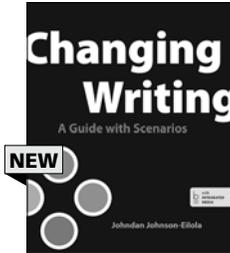
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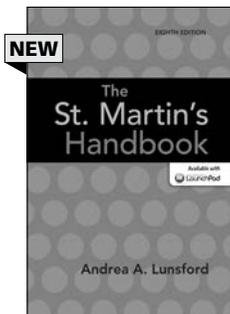
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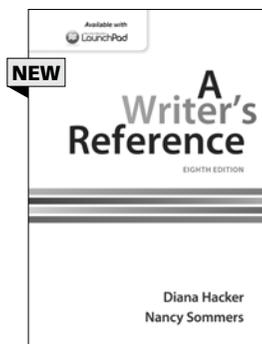
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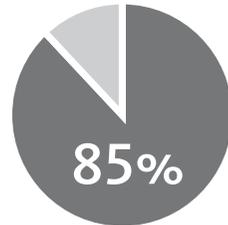
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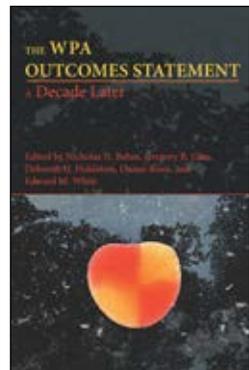
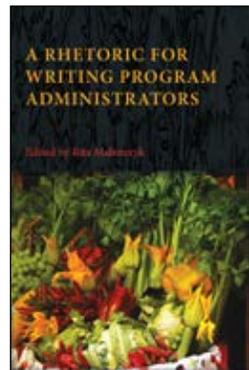
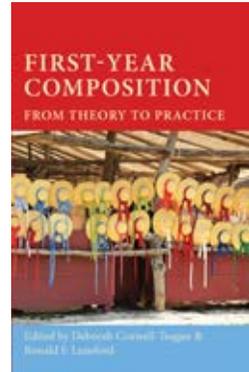
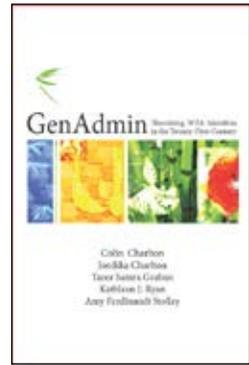
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