Defining and Developing Expertise in a Writing and Rhetoric Department

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Abstract

Along with other exigencies, the growing number of upper-division writing and rhetoric programs has created new challenges and opportunities for involving non-tenure-track faculty (NTTF) in all aspects of program delivery including teaching, curriculum planning, advising, and coordination. Such activities depend on various types of expertise, and therefore writing programs must consider how to responsibly, strategically, and ethically define, recognize, develop, and evaluate needed expertise. Because many of our NTTF do not have academic credentials in the field, our programs could benefit from providing them with opportunities to develop what Collins and Evans call "interactional expertise," which involves domain knowledge but also engagement with other disciplinary specialists (30–31). We discuss what we have learned from two such professional development efforts, one of which focused on a first-year writing program and the other of which focused on upper-division programs.

The most recent MLA Issue Brief on the academic workforce reports that in 2011, 50 percent of faculty in US colleges and universities were non-tenure-track faculty (NTTF), with nearly 20 percent of these in full-time, non-tenure track positions. As the brief points out, this latter group is not contingent, with many "teaching in their current positions longer than six years" (1). Reliance on part-time faculty is especially prevalent in the humanities and social sciences; according to a National Education Association report, the percentage of part-time faculty in the humanities grew 13.2 percent to 46.2 percent between 1987 and 2003 (NEA in Council 5). The growth of both full- and part-time NTTF seems likely to continue, as

a rising percentage of new hires fall into these categories due to enrollment, budgetary, and other institutional pressures (Council 4; Kezar and Gehrke).

Although most NTTF in writing programs teach first-year composition, the growing number of undergraduate Writing and Rhetoric majors and tracks—from forty-five to seventy-two programs between 2006 and 2009—has increased reliance on such faculty for teaching upper-division courses as well (McLeod 287). In a 2012 survey of academic deans across the nation, most respondents noted that NTTF were best suited to teach introductory courses but also "professionally oriented, and highly specialized courses that match their expertise" (Kezar and Gehrke).

In order for writing programs—and freestanding writing and rhetoric departments—to flourish, faculty must do more than teach. The 2014 *MLA Issue Brief: The Academic Workforce* rightly argues that both full- and part-time NTTF should be included in "curriculum planning, student advising, and other aspects of college life fundamental to sustaining good learning environments and positive departmental cultures" (1) so that "learning flourishes and student retention and completion rates increase" (2). Yet many NTTF, and especially part-time faculty, do not have such opportunities for involvement. As the Council for Higher Education Accreditation argues, the working conditions of NTTF often include "exclusion from curriculum design and decision-making" and a "lack of access to orientation, mentoring, and professional development opportunities, including on-campus programming and funding to attend conferences and seminars off-campus" (6). The Coalition on the Academic Workforce's 2010 survey of part-time faculty members similarly found that "professional support for part-time faculty members' work outside the classroom and inclusion in academic decision making was minimal" (2).

One potential constraint to further involving NTTF in departmental planning and curricular decision-making is that many of these faculty do not have graduate training or advanced degrees in Rhetoric and Composition. Most fields would see graduate training in the field as a necessary qualification for teaching the field's scholarship in upper-division and first-year writing courses; Rhetoric and Composition is unlike most other fields, however. As Ann Penrose points out, "[t]he CCCC's 2008 survey of programs indicates that roughly two-thirds of writing instructors hold degrees other than the PhD (Gere), and these degrees are typically in fields other than rhetoric and composition" (109). Even while many NTTF in writing and rhetoric departments have made what Penrose calls "long-term commitments to the teaching of writing," their colleagues and others may not view them as members of the discipline of Rhetoric and Composition (109), at least as disciplinary membership is traditionally understood.

Although we believe integrating both full-time and part-time NTTF into the life of writing programs and departments is valuable and ethical, our discussion in this article will focus on the role of full-time NTTF. How can writing programs and departments with strong contingents of long-time, full-time NTTF further involve these faculty, teaching and other-wise, in the programs they make possible? How can such faculty be under-stood to have professional, contributory, disciplinary identities when, as Penrose succinctly puts it, they have, for the most part, "neither the signify-ing position nor the signifying credential of the profession?" (110). These are questions whose answers have serious material consequences for both teach-ers and students. In a five-year study, Langer found that the highest levels of student achievement were found in schools where teachers "belonged to strong and varied professional networks that supported their professional knowledge and interests, provided feedback from varied perspectives, and instilled a sense of community" (Penrose 110). Conversely, when teachers were not involved in professional communities and did not share ideas and compare their own practices to others', the students performed poorly.

Professionals, according to Penrose, have "a specialized and dynamic knowledge base or body of expertise . . . a distinctive array of rights and privileges accorded to members, and . . . an internal social structure based on shared goals and values" (112). In other words, the professional faculty who participate in curriculum design, program creation, advising, and so on, should have shared expertise as well as shared goals and values. While NTTF faculty who teach first-year composition are certainly committed to that teaching and may have expertise in other areas (creative writing or literature, for example), they often do not have traditionally demonstrable qualifications as scholars of Rhetoric and Composition.

Steve Lamos has recently argued that one solution is to "develop a national apparatus for 'credentialing' college writing teachers" (46). In making this argument, he focuses on defining "a national set of knowledge and skills essential to professional college writing instruction" credentials that could "improve material and professional conditions for college writ-ing teachers" (46). Of course, as Penrose states, "It is not simply accumu-lation of knowledge or even production of scholarship that marks one as a professional but participation in the community's knowledge building and self-definition" (118). So, as Lamos notes, any sort of "credentialing" or pro-fessional development must be ongoing and participatory, not simply a one-shot attempt to gain acontextual skills or knowledge—a difficult challenge for many humanities faculty with already demanding teaching loads (51, 55, 60). Both Penrose and Lamos are thinking primarily of first-year com-position teachers in their arguments for gaining expertise and professional

status. However, the situation becomes more complicated when we factor in specialized upper-level undergraduate courses; advising, assessment, and other essential activities; and the administration of undergraduate degree programs and other writing-related programs.

In this article we take up the question of expertise for full-time NTTF in a freestanding department of writing and rhetoric, where faculty at all levels are involved not only in first-year composition but also in several undergraduate degree programs, the writing center, and the writing across the curriculum program. The examples from our departmental experience that we will describe and analyze here ask us to consider how, as a field, we can recognize, value, develop, and evaluate expertise in writing and rhetoric programs and departments.

Our Context and Challenges

Both of us teach and administer programs in a department of writing and rhetoric that was created in July 2010 at a public university that enrolls over 60,000 students. The story of why and how our department was created is too long to tell here (and only tangentially related to the topic of this article), but one of us has provided a version of it elsewhere (Wardle). In the first four years after its formation, our department has enhanced or created all the programs or structures it was tasked with: first-year composition; upper-level writing courses that serve the larger university; an undergraduate writing major, minor, and certificate; an MA and graduate certificate; a university writing center; and a writing across the curriculum program.

The department currently relies on twenty-nine full-time, non-tenure track instructors; thirteen tenure-line faculty members; fourteen graduate teaching assistants; and six adjuncts to staff its courses and programs. This significant proportion of full-time NTTF—which makes us an exception to some of the national trends—represents a major shift from our previous labor status when we were part of English. At that time, we relied on thirty-three adjuncts to staff composition. But when we became a department, we were given funding to replace most of those positions with permanent ones. Of the many instructors we have hired since 2009, three have earned or are close to earning doctorates in the field, three have degrees from our own Rhetoric and Composition MA program, and a few others have some graduate training in Rhetoric and Composition. The majority have degrees in literature and creative writing.

The teaching assignments and other roles of our full-time NTTF are varied and have shifted in response to changing departmental needs. Most of our instructors teach primarily first-year composition, and they have

been central to the program's transition to writing studies—writing about writing—content. The new department's first six full-time non-tenure-track instructor hires were explicitly enlisted to work as a team to innovate the new curriculum and participate in the assessment of it. Corresponding with a slight enrollment decrease in our still large first-year composition courses (from higher rates of test, dual enrollment, and transfer credit) and a growing demand for our upper-division courses and programs, several new instructor lines were designated as split between first-year writing and upper-division. At the same time, some NTTF hired to teach first-year composition expressed interest in teaching other courses as well. As we expanded the upper-division curriculum, some instructors have taken leadership roles in developing and implementing our writing and rhetoric minor and major. For example, several instructors were key participants on the new department's Curriculum Committee, charged with designing new upper-division courses (including student learning outcomes, syllabi, and assignments) and programs, with developing course development resources (e.g., Dropbox folders, faculty working groups), and with marketing the programs.

The non-tenure-track instructors hired to teach our upper-division courses brought related teaching experience and some type of related and demonstrable expertise, academic and otherwise. For example, one Rhetoric and Composition ABD with a specialty in the rhetorics of science and medicine co-developed and taught our program's Writing about Health and Medicine course. Another, with an MA in literature and extensive experience working for and with non-profit organizations, designed and taught Writing for Social Change. One of our instructors has drawn on his creative writing MFA, active publication record, and longstanding ties to the university and local arts community to redesign and teach our Writing for Publication course.

As our upper-division and other writing programs grew, non-tenure-track instructors also began to take on other new service, governance, and administrative roles for the department. They served on and more actively participated in faculty searches, became the majority of members on the department Council, and assumed program coordinator and advisor roles for the writing center, WAC, and upper-division degree programs. Indeed, some of these coordinators began redefining their roles to not only draw on but also engage in research.

As we have worked to create a community of tenure and non-tenure track faculty that values shared leadership, ongoing learning, and the cross-pollination of ideas, questions about professional expertise have repeatedly presented themselves. Most specifically, as Penrose asks, what "specialized

and dynamic knowledge base or body of expertise" should our non-tenure-track instructors possess to teach in and lead our courses and programs, including the new major? (108). What types of relevant expertise do they already have, and how can this be leveraged? How can we create mechanisms for helping NTTF gain training and credentials for teaching new upper-division courses, participate in new curriculum development efforts, and take on coordinating and other new roles? The answers to those questions hinge on notions of expertise: What is it and how does one develop it? How can we responsibly, strategically, and ethically value, develop, evaluate, and make personnel decisions based on expertise? Who should constitute the *we* making such determinations? In the next section, we turn to a multi-layered theory of expertise to help us think through these questions before discussing them in the contexts of our programs, department, and the field.

Theorizing Expertise and Its Development

Types of Specialist Expertise

In *Rethinking Expertise*, Harry Collins and Robert Evans offer a comprehensive discussion of expertise as varied and multilayered. In exploring the question of how people "know what they are talking about" (112), they explain expertise as developed through a process that involves immersion in a knowledge domain and its language, largely though interaction with others, some of whom already have expertise in the domain.

Collins and Evans outline four levels of what they term *specialist expertise*: 1) popular understanding, 2) primary source knowledge, 3) interactional expertise, and 4) contributory expertise. These are levels rather than linear stages, as one does not necessarily lead to the next. For example, gaining a working understanding of primary source knowledge is best learned through engaging and interacting with others in the field, a function of interactional expertise.

Collins and Evans distinguish first between popular understanding and primary source knowledge, the former not requiring any specialized training. Most people have some popular understanding of writing since nearly everyone writes. But such popular understandings are often based in personal experience and/or fail to recognize detail or nuance; they can, therefore, be faulty, as with the belief that good writers are those for whom writing is easy. Popular conceptions can get in the way of a deeper understanding of a given phenomenon, as Myer and Land point out in their discussion of a field's threshold concepts. For example, if a person holds the popular understanding that good writers are those for whom writing is easy,

they may be unwilling to invest time in learning how to improve as a writer. Or, if a person holds the popular conception that writing is only an activity and not also a subject of study, she may be unwilling or even unable to see writing as something one can learn more about.

In our own department, popular and practice-informed understandings of writing and argument gave way to primary source knowledge, or knowledge gleaned from reading the primary literature of a domain, as first-year composition instructors not trained in Rhetoric and Composition learned and discussed research and theory that informed the writing-about-writing curriculum in the professional development training program discussed later, and in some cases additional writing and rhetorical research as well.[2] Involvement in department workshops, conferences, and other events led by scholars in the field augmented this development, moving participants closer to what Collins and Evans identify as field-based specialist expertise.

Although encountering primary source knowledge is an important starting point for developing specialist expertise, Collins and Evans explain that such knowledge is not, in and of itself, sufficient. Individuals who read the literature without social contact with disciplinary experts may not know "what to read and what not to read" (22). They still cannot make judgments about or otherwise apply knowledge in the domain of expertise—largely because they aren't engaging in the social life of the discipline. When someone reads the literature but is not socially engaged with the community of researchers who produce the literature, she can gain "false impressions" about both the content under discussion and the level of certainty researchers have about this topic (22). Collins and Evans equate this level of understanding with that of a chess novice who knows what a bishop can do without having a nuanced understanding of how to use that knowledge to play a game of chess (23).

In order to develop expertise that goes beyond knowing about some subject matter, Collins and Evans argue for the necessity of social connection to and interaction with groups conversing about the knowledge domain, including some people who actively contribute to that domain. In fact, they argue that "the location of expertise is the social group" (78). Only through social interaction can someone move from what they term *ubiquitous tacit knowledge*—including popular understanding and primary source knowledge—to one of two forms of specialist tacit knowledge: interactional expertise and contributive expertise. This idea has also been embraced by scholars in writing studies. In her study of academic literacy, Cheryl Geisler argues that expertise is acquired not just through encounters with "textual artifacts" but also "in the daily practices by which people like ourselves read, write, and know" (94). In her study of how students learn to

write in a discipline, Anne Beaufort reaches a similar conclusion, arguing that developing disciplinary writing expertise requires "becoming engaged in a particular community of writers [or, in our case, writing teachers and scholars] who dialogue across texts, argue, and build on each other's work" (139). Penrose similarly notes, "Understanding professionalism as collaborative provides useful perspective on the question of expertise, for it shifts attention from knowledge as static to knowledge as responsive and evolving" (120).

Drawing from Geisler, Beaufort, and Penrose, we might understand Collins and Evans's distinction between primary source knowledge and specialist expertise in terms of rhetorical competence. Although rhetorical competence is not necessarily part of what Collins and Evans define as primary source knowledge, it is required to develop their notion of specialist expertise. Both Geisler and Beaufort discuss disciplinary expertise, a type of specialist expertise, as involving subject matter knowledge but also the rhetorical ability to select, assess, use, and adapt this knowledge across the contexts of the domain. Geisler critiques the way expertise has been imagined primarily in terms of credentials around subject matter knowledge, positing that training and experience in adapting specialized knowledge to specific contexts is a crucial latter step. Beaufort goes further, concluding that people learn to be disciplinary experts by developing subject matter knowledge and strategic, rhetorical knowledge simultaneously (172). Involving the critical thinking and rhetorical skills to deploy subject matter knowledge, she explains, strategic knowledge is the "'how' of problem-solving in the domain" (138). In her book *The Rhetoric of Expertise*, E. Johanna Hartelius makes a similar connection in arguing that expertise is relational in that it is rhetorically established between an expert and audience.

In an observation that supports Collins and Evans's assertion that their levels of expertise are not stages, Beaufort concludes that subject matter knowledge and strategic knowledge can develop simultaneously (172). Our own graduate training provides an illustration of how this might work. Although we took courses in which we read the literature and learned about the subject matter of the field, we also experimented with applying this knowledge to our teaching, conducting small research projects in which we applied what we were learning and engaging with others in the field via workshops, listservs, conferences, and other disciplinary forums.

Returning to Collins and Evans's four levels of specialist expertise mentioned earlier, *contributory expertise*, or the ability to perform a specialized activity with competence, has traditionally been conceived as the highest form of expertise (14). The expert who embodies this form of expertise has the ability to perform fluidly the specialized practices of a domain, to "con-

tribute to the domain to which the expertise pertains" (24). Because Rhetoric and Composition is an academic discipline that values the sharing of knowledge, contributory expertise in our domain would entail building on the field's knowledge through publications, conference presentations, and other forms of research.

Collins and Evans argue for an additional form of expertise, *interactional expertise*, which holds particular interest for our department's situation. A person who possesses this form of expertise has mastered the language and gained an informed understanding of the specialty without necessarily having contributed to its body of knowledge through research. Gaining this kind of expertise seems to require some form of "enculturation into a linguistic community" but does not require the "full-blown immersion in a form of life" required for contributory expertise (30). In the case of a disciplinary domain, a person can become an interactional expert without having to become an active, publishing researcher in the domain. Instead, they can gain this form of expertise as Collins and Evans put it, "in the space between the skilled group and the books" (30): "The transition to interactional expertise is accomplished, crucially, by engaging in conversation with the experts. Interactional expertise is slowly gained with more and more discussion of the [domain knowledge]." How do we know that a person is gaining interactional expertise? "[W]here interactional expertise is being acquired," Collins and Evans expand, "there will be a progression from 'interview' to 'discussion' to 'conversation'. . . . There is no sudden 'aha moment' that marks the switch to mastery of interactional expertise, but its steady acquisition can nevertheless be recognized" (32–33).

In further discussing the process of developing interactional expertise, Collins and Evans argue that in some cases, this expertise can't be achieved due to a person's abilities or circumstances (32). (We, for example, are highly unlikely to have the necessary background and ability to gain interactional expertise with organic chemistry.) In addition, some people might not have the desire or curiosity to gain interactional expertise in a particular domain (we also lack the curiosity about organic chemistry to do what is necessary to read about it or engage in discussions about it with experts).

We want to pause here to complicate the distinction made by Collins and Evans between contributory and interactional expertise. For them, interactional expertise is grounded in learning the language of a field (or discourse community), so as to be able to "talk the talk" of a specialist. In some places, they distinguish this type of learning from learning to "walk the walk" or contribute to the doing or making of the field. As language specialists, we know that language use is embodied social action that contributes to knowledge making, and so we might question the move from

competent language use to other types of skilled, competent action as being the primary distinction between the two types of expertise.

Despite our critiques of the distinctions between several of Collins and Evans's levels of expertise, we believe that their primary claim still holds: Although learning "facts or fact-like relationships" through reading and observation is an important component of expertise, developing the more specialized expertise needed by teachers of a given subject requires "immersion" in the language and other social practices of domain and its communities (14). This is not a quick or easy process, and it often involves a good amount of time and struggle in learning about and attempting to participate in the forums, conversations, and practices of the field. Any training must allow for—and even encourage—the opportunity to engage in this socialization and the time to engage in struggles with ideas and debates.

Expertise across Communities and Levels of Practice

Thus far we have been describing expertise as if it is developed and relevant only within one particular domain of knowledge or, to use Wenger's term, *a community of practice*. However, we know that expertise also works across domains of knowledge and across levels of a particular community of practice. This movement of expertise between and among domains and levels is, we think, particularly relevant for departments offering both horizontal and vertical training in writing, since writing (unlike organic chemistry) is relevant across all domains of knowledge and types of communicative practice, whether specialized or popular.

Collins and Evans address the matter of expertise across domains using the phrase *referred expertise*, or "expertise taken from one field and indirectly applied in another" (64). For example, in our department, an instructor with a graduate degree in library science and a consulting business with law libraries has been able to use her knowledge about libraries and legal research to inform her teaching of writing. She has used this knowledge to train colleagues in teaching argument and conducting research through library databases. Such referred expertise is particularly important given the varied nature of the work faculty do in our department.

Some jobs within our department require more than the transfer of expertise from one domain into another domain but entail simultaneous or at least recent expertise and participation in multiple domains. Some of our upper-division courses—such as Writing about Health and Medicine—draw on both writing studies research and practice-based knowledge from other disciplines and professions, so instructors of such courses would need at least interactive expertise from working and writing in those other

domains. Students in our Writing for Publication course, for example, benefit from the instructor having some degree of expertise in the trade practices of the publishing industry. Because they typically involve service-learning assignments or other types of writing partnerships, courses such as Professional Writing and Writing for Social Change require the instructor to supplement field-specific expertise with connections to and experience collaborating with local business or community stakeholders.

Different types of administrative jobs also entail more than expertise in a given academic specialty. The two composition coordinators are both non-tenure track instructors who assist the tenured composition director in organizing schedules and workshops, managing personnel issues, and training and mentoring other teachers. Much of this work requires not only organizational abilities but also knowledge of institutional policies and processes and more local knowledge of instructor and student attributes and concerns. These qualifications do not involve disciplinary expertise but rather expertise in varied professional communities of practice as well as enactment of particular dispositions and skills. The above examples of expertise in multiple domains bring to mind Wenger's notion of boundary brokers: individuals with membership in multiple communities of practice who "introduce elements of one practice into another" (105).

Other jobs within our department require multiple domains of expertise that are less qualitatively different but different in terms of level, scale, and/or scope. Although Collins and Evans mostly discuss academic domains on the larger, or what we'll call the macro level of scholarly disciplines, we should not overlook the meso level, which can encompass universities, departments, and programs within departments, as well as the micro level of even more localized practice within classrooms. In some cases, specialized expertise on the lower two levels is most effectively accomplished by individuals with local connections, experience, and knowledge rather than by individuals focused on macro-level, disciplinary knowledge (although the two types of knowledge are not, of course, mutually exclusive)—thus the familiar adage that the best researchers are not always the best teachers.

If we think of the scholarly discipline of Rhetoric and Composition as the macro level, shaped by national/international organizations, journals, conferences, and other forums, then (according to Collins and Evans) the contributory experts in our department are mostly tenured or tenure-earning faculty who have research assignments and publish regularly, garnering national recognition in the field as experts in one or more of its research areas. But some of our instructors are also publishing journal articles and book chapters, presenting at conferences, and making other contributions in the field's scholarly forums, a fact that leaves us with questions about this

level of expertise. Are instructors contributory experts when they present at national or regional conferences, write an instructor's guide for a textbook, review a recently published book, or contribute to a scholarly conversation on a national listerv? Is there a distinction, as Collins and Evans suggest, between "making a contribution" to a scholarly field and "being a contributory expert" of that field (70)? Or are there, perhaps, different levels of contribution, a distinction that Lave and Wenger's notion of "legitimate peripheral participation" might help us make? For us, these remain open questions.

To make matters even more complicated, we might also conceive of our disciplinary domain as simultaneously enacted on the meso level, defined in part by university and department structures, policies, and activities. Thus, faculty members might be contributory agents on the meso level, whether they are contributing on the macro level or not. Here we follow James Porter and colleagues who call us to attend to institutions as "nodal points in the rhetorical relationships between general social (if not sociological) processes and local practices" (621). Examples of this work could include evaluating portfolios for program assessment and co-developing course resource sites with other faculty. Instructors in leadership positions in our department make important contributions to our university and program practices. For example, one of our current composition coordinators, although not active in national-level scholarly forums, nonetheless reads, applies, and conducts writing research in his program assessment efforts. Our previous writing center coordinator conducted research about and then designed a directed self-assessment mechanism for incoming freshman, an effort that helped change how some at our university think about writing assessment. Our WAC coordinators present at conferences, occasionally publish in the field, and co-write grant proposals for the design and assessment of discipline-specific writing and consulting. Such activities draw on relationship building, knowledge of other institutional programs and units, and other forms of expertise outside of the scholarly domain as understood in its most traditional sense. It seems fairly clear that instructors who make contributions on this level are acting as interactional and contributory experts, though in perhaps different, overlapping, or smaller sub-domains of the macro-level Rhetoric and Composition disciplinary domain.

The micro-level domain of classroom practice is perhaps one that needs less discussion here, since there is a long tradition in our field of valuing disciplinary work enacted on the micro level of the classroom and other specific sites. In addition to developing new courses, teaching, advising, and consulting with other teachers, examples of micro-level disciplinary work can include formative classroom assessment and teacher action research.

Thus, we argue that some of this micro work also entails contributory expertise (as Collins and Evans would define it), when it is shared with others. Like meso-level work, effective micro-level work requires more than disciplinary expertise but also other types of competencies and knowledge, including interpersonal communication skills and in-depth knowledge of local student attributes and concerns.

Fostering Expertise in Ongoing and New Forums

Helping faculty at all levels achieve ongoing interactional and ideally contributory expertise has become a primary goal and focus of attention for us. Here we briefly outline two different efforts to cultivate expertise in our departmental programs and consider their implications and challenges not only for us but also for the field at large.

Example 1: Writing Studies Training Groups in FYC

Beginning in spring 2009, the composition program began officially piloting a writing-about-writing curriculum for its courses. This meant that the existing focus on teaching particular forms (memoir, commentary, etc.) and types of argument were to be replaced with a curriculum with content more squarely grounded in the field's scholarship. The piloted curriculum was built on the assumption that writing studies is a field with research- and theory-based knowledge about writing and that some of this knowledge should form the basis for the first-year writing course.

As a result of a presidential initiative to lower class size and improve undergraduate instruction, we were provided with funding to hire six new instructors in the 2009–2010 and 2010–2011 years. In our hiring, we valued enthusiasm and willingness to learn and try new things, since there was not a substantial pool of applicants with demonstrated expertise in the field of Rhetoric and Composition. In order to help these instructors become acquainted with some of the knowledge of the field that they could then teach in the first-year courses, we designed a series of training courses; these were subsequently revised as the participants provided feedback on their experiences. Using a reading list provided by the composition director, the first six instructors hired read and acquired primary source knowledge. The next year, after teaching the new curriculum, the group assisted the composition director in leading semester-long training workshops for other faculty (who participated voluntarily, but received small stipends for doing so). Small groups of faculty met with one of the experienced instructors to read research from the field and to begin planning their own writing-about-writing syllabi. The following year, having received funding from a national

grant funded by EDUCAUSE, the composition director and coordinator designed an online training course that was available to both our own first-year writing instructors and those at other institutions, and the non-tenure-track instructors who had not yet taught the new curriculum participated in that eight-week training along with faculty from a number of schools across the country.

Along with the initial training sessions and online materials made possible by the national grant, we focused on creating a culture in the composition program that was oriented toward ongoing learning and professional development. Within three to four years, the shift to the new curriculum and to a staff roster almost entirely comprised of full-time non-tenure-track positions was complete. During those years of programmatic change, expertise was created and recreated in a variety of ways. The program sponsored six to eight workshops or reading groups each semester, increasingly led by non-tenure-track instructors and graduate students, rather than the composition director and coordinator. Portfolio assessment had become an expected bi-annual activity and attracted ten to twelve volunteers at a time, many of whom said they saw portfolio assessment as a way to get good ideas from other teachers, rather than as an onerous rating task (although all participants also received small stipends for their work). A growing number of instructors attended and actively participated in the department's new reading groups, which focused on readings about subject areas (e.g., sociocultural approaches to writing and writing research) recommended by non-tenure-track instructors and tenure-line faculty alike. More instructors began to attend and present at national conferences. One instructor founded the in-house, peer-reviewed journal of first-year writing, *Stylus* (http://writingandrhetoric.cah.ucf.edu/stylus/).

The faculty who were hired to infuse composition courses with writing-related content have been doing so, increasing their disciplinary knowledge expertise and professional standing in the process. They now read research, pilot new approaches, and propose workshops and reading groups about such areas as peer review, portfolio assessment, learning transfer, ethnographic research methods, and writing process theory. This learning has borne fruit in their teaching. Some instructors have innovated beyond what we imagined when we first proposed the writing-about-writing course. They have designed curricula around discourse communities in order to teach genre theory, social writing process theory, and rhetorical theory. They have taken up theories of multimodality and genre in order to push the program to expand its historical focus on traditional academic, alphabetic texts. Some instructors have adapted knowledge they brought from other scholarly domains to the teaching of first-year writing. For example,

one instructor who learned theories of intertextuality from his graduate education in literary studies adapted and helped others adapt these theories for first-year writing courses.

While generally successful, the first-year writing efforts we've been describing have also included tensions and occasional failures. Some long-time, part-time composition teachers resisted the claim that what they had been teaching might be in conflict with disciplinary knowledge about writing and teaching writing or were not amenable to the expectation that they would read and think about research in collaboration with others (an understandable discomfort given the limited material resources available for those who engaged in this work). Some of these part-time faculty members found teaching positions elsewhere, cycling out as we replaced our thirty-three part-time teachers with full-time non-tenure-track faculty. Other NTTF members have actively engaged but sometimes have struggled—for example, to understand how theories and principles taught in the first composition course (ENC 1101) can inform and infuse the research and inquiry taught in the second course (ENC 1102). Some teachers have seen the ideas of the two courses as disconnected or believe that goals for ENC 1102—which include helping students understand how research is grounded in communities and conversations and in specific rhetorical situations—require an explicit re-teaching of rather than building on the ideas in ENC 1101.

In examining the patterns of faculty responses to the new curriculum and training around it, we observe that degreed expertise alone does not account for teachers' ability to acquire, apply, and adapt primary domain knowledge. While some non-tenure-track instructors with degrees from other fields have sometimes struggled to connect and apply concepts and observations from Rhetoric and Composition research, a number of others have not, and this has left us with questions about why. Exploring answers to these questions seems central to considering viable paths toward fostering expertise within Writing and Rhetoric programs.

Example 2: Pathways to Expertise in Upper-Division Programs

Over the last few years, the department's Curriculum Committee, led by the director of degree programs, launched a set of efforts aimed at better defining, creating resource sites for, and preparing faculty—tenure track and non-tenure track alike—to teach upper-division courses, advise students, and otherwise participate in curriculum development. These efforts have included small faculty working groups around clusters of related courses; some of these groups participated in faculty development confer-

ences and, more recently, have begun to sponsor small salon meetings for discussing and exchanging ideas around teaching strategies for an upper-level course. Curriculum and professional development efforts have also included the creation of online course and program resource sites. Because some NTTF expressed an interest in learning about and training to teach in new areas of the field, we also launched an ongoing experiment with a new instructor development program we call Pathways to Expertise.

With the participation of three deeply engaged instructors (with backgrounds in literary studies, creative writing, and Rhetoric and Composition), we completed the first beta testing of this more thorough and structured training. The first pathway centered on a core course for the major, minor, and certificate—Rhetoric and Civic Engagement—while also providing training in the scholarly area of rhetorical studies more broadly. The program involved an extended regimen of reading, interacting around, and applying relevant scholarship. Guided by our working knowledge of how expertise can be developed, this first pass included the following components:

- Leadership from a faculty coordinator and contributory expert (one of us) who actively publishes and teaches in the domain. With the help of other faculty with relevant expertise, this coordinator selected reading materials, created or gathered pedagogical resources files, facilitated discussions with the three participants and other faculty, and provided participants with feedback about their work.
- Reading key scholarship. In the fall term, guided by the coordinator, participants read and engaged in a number of face-to-face and online, wiki-based discussions about key scholarship from the area, which were slightly adjusted based on participant interest. At times, discussions of readings also included other faculty members with related expertise.
- Auditing sessions of a relevant graduate course. Also in the fall term, participants read and discussed materials from, and sat in on select sessions of, the core MA course, Rhetorical Traditions, taught by another tenure-line faculty member who is recognized by the field as a scholar of rhetoric.
- Teaching observations and discussions of pedagogical materials. In the spring term, participants observed select sections of the undergraduate Rhetoric and Civic Engagement course, analyzed the syllabi and teaching materials from other faculty members (including faculty at other institutions), and discussed materials with and received feedback from five more experienced faculty members who served as

informal teaching mentors. Two of these experienced faculty members were non-tenure-track faculty.

- Extensive feedback. Also in the spring term, participants created and received feedback on their own teaching plans and materials for the Rhetoric and Civic Engagement course they were preparing to teach.
- Professional development support. Participants joined and began to follow rhetoric listservs and blogs and learned more about some of the field's scholarly organizations, journals, and conferences that specialize in rhetoric (especially Rhetoric Society of America). In addition, all three participants and two of their informal non-tenure track teaching mentors were offered funding to attend the 2014 RSA conference in May without having to present; two of these instructors attended the conference, with another electing to attend a scholarly conference about civic engagement instead.

In addition to the opportunity to attend a scholarly conference with full funding, the participants were given additional credit in their annual evaluation for their work, and we have pledged to assist them in leveraging this training in applications for future awards, including the new NTT instructor promotion process and our university's Teaching Incentive Program Award, which comes with a $5,000 raise to base salary. Further, two of the three participants (one has since left the institution to pursue a law degree) have been scheduled to teach Rhetoric and Civic Engagement or related courses within two years of completing the pathway.

When we asked the Pathway participants for evaluative feedback about their experience, all three noted how much they had learned and how the field of rhetorical studies had "opened up" for them, concluding that they were glad to have been part of the program's beta group. As sponsors and co-participants, we, too, benefited from participating in the program; indeed, one of us has implemented a new assignment idea generated from the participants' creative course development work. However, participants also emphasized the difficulty of engaging the substantial set of readings, attending the graduate course, and completing other activities given their existing assignments and workloads. These participants also noted the inadequacy or inaccessibility of incentives; two were not able to attend RSA due to other obligations, and all three expressed disappointment in not being scheduled to teach the rhetoric course sooner.

This first Pathway beta experience raised a number of pressing issues. First, it alerted us to the difficulty of balancing the added activities needed to develop expertise—interaction, reflection, struggle, and experimentation over time—with the heavy 4/4 workloads of our instructors, who do

not have time, for example, to audit a graduate course or observe another instructor over an entire term. In future Pathways, we plan to hold open reading groups about the topic the year leading up to the Pathway (which could be a way to create and gauge faculty interest) and possibly assign some Pathway-specific reading and discussion in the summer term. We will also decrease the number of initial readings to create more room to explore expertise in other, related domains (e.g., professional workplaces for writers) and to adapt ideas to our more specific institutional and teaching environments.

Second, our initial experiment made us better aware of the range of interest and commitment across faculty participants; even in the small group of three, one wanted to learn enough to teach the course and stay abreast of the scholarly area in a general way while the other two plan to seek a deeper engagement with rhetorical studies that includes regular inter-action with other rhetoricians (at conferences, for example) and possibly teaching additional rhetoric courses (e.g., The Rhetoric of Comics). This range of interest has prompted us to explore a wider range of ways to pro-mote interactional expertise in future Pathways.

Third, our experience further alerted us to ongoing challenges around incentives and rewards, challenges that also apply not only to the NTTF enrolled in the pathway, but also to faculty who assist as coordinators, facilitators, and teaching mentors in such efforts. The tenure-track faculty member whose graduate course the participants sometimes attended was frustrated by the disruption of her course and the additional time spent engaging the participants. Other tenure-line faculty have been wary of taking on roles as Pathway facilitators, not only because of the time commit-ment but also because of the complications of what they perceive as training and evaluating their colleagues. Others have implied that they worry that training non-tenure track instructors in this way could result in tenure-line faculty being edged out of teaching the specialized courses they were trained for in their PhD programs. In retrospect, it seems clear that partici-pants need more tangible and immediate incentives and rewards; upon the advice of the beta group, we are exploring the possibilities of stipends and a more official certification, perhaps through our university's Continuing Education program. We will also ensure the completion of Pathways leads fairly quickly to teaching the related course.

Because we view the Pathways training as more of an in-depth orienta-tion rather than a final destination, we must also develop mechanisms for continued professional development and scholarly training. If, for exam-ple, instructors who visit a conference become interested in presenting there, how can we provide the mentorship, resources, and other support to

make this possible? For the past two years, we have scheduled department research colloquia that feature tenure-line faculty paired with graduate students and instructors presenting their research projects; we hope that this more local exposure to the field, too, will spur continued self-directed learning. Recently, an instructor started a research and writing group for NTT faculty and made arrangements to count participation in this group as a service credit in the annual evaluation.

Continuing Challenges and Opportunities

The ongoing emergence of our field, including the growth of stand-alone departments and new undergraduate programs, has led to a number of unique challenges. First-year composition courses existed before the discipline of Rhetoric and Composition was formed, and the institutional structures created around them have continued to shape our practices, including those around staffing, training, and credentialing. Over most of our field's history, first-year composition and graduate programs have been the primary sites of knowledge making, with an array of somewhat hybrid undergraduate programs filling out the middle. Many writing programs and departments have a number of faculty members teaching in them without the academic credentials typically required of faculty members in other fields. This scenario presents a challenge, one that has prompted us to consider and act on the issues raised in this article. This challenge can also entail opportunities, however. Tenure-track and non-tenure-track faculty from varied backgrounds bring with them a variety of expertise and experience that can enrich all of our work. Although Rhetoric and Composition is a discipline, rhetorical studies and other areas of the field have also functioned as interdisciplines; in addition, effective rhetorical practice is not only something that specialists know about and perform but also something that others do every day. Part of our challenge as Writing and Rhetoric programs and departments is to consider all of the ways that people can enact expertise both as writers/rhetors and in their knowledge about the discipline. Moreover, we must consider where various types of expertise—including expertise gained through professional or civic experience—are relevant and necessary in the variety of undergraduate courses departments such as ours are offering.

At the same time, there are consequences to claiming to be a discipline. If courses in our departments are intended (at least partly) to teach our disciplinary knowledge, then faculty members teaching those courses must become interactional experts around that knowledge. Facilitating these efforts requires diligence, responsiveness, generosity, and creativity. Tell-

ing NTTF to get a PhD in Rhetoric and Composition cannot be the only, all-or-nothing option, and it is hardly a viable one given staffing needs and hiring patterns. The development of interactional expertise should be based not only on valuing the kinds of expertise NTTF have already developed but also on recognizing that engaging our field's dynamic and multi-faceted body of knowledge should inform much of the work we do.

From Collins and Evans as well as other socio-culturally focused researchers, we know that inviting people to the disciplinary table will require providing opportunities for social interaction and some guided expeditions through much of what our field has to offer; in other words, it will involve pointing people in useful directions after learning and perhaps piquing their interests and goals. Instructors must be given the opportunity to interact with contributive experts in the field locally and beyond (e.g., via listservs and blogs). We will continue to collaboratively transform our Pathways and other efforts. We know that other programs and departments like those at George Mason University, York College of Pennsylvania, and Loyola University Maryland have developed inventive ways to train faculty, and we look forward to learning more about these. We are working with faculty from other institutions to develop new field-level opportunities for faculty to gain additional expertise. A related possibility for enabling the ongoing development of interactional expertise is forming partnerships with other universities for scholarly discussions, symposia, certification programs, online courses, and other exchanges, as Lamos has suggested. On the macro level, NTTF need more opportunities to attend relevant conferences and institutes. Conference travel funds, in many universities historically and certainly at our own, have been reserved for tenure-line faculty with research expectations; these funds should be shared with or expanded to include instructors who don't have research assignments but who are ready to engage with and draw upon current research—and who might develop research projects if given the opportunity. Our field's professional organizations might take leading roles here in designating travel grants not just for NTTF who are presenting but also for those who are just beginning to work toward interactional expertise. Whatever opportunities for connection we can imagine and provide, they must be supported and sustained across time. People don't enculturate or remain enculturated without ongoing participation and communication.

We recognized that our field's unique history and *ethos* mean that we need alternative means for developing, recognizing, and even regulating expertise. A top-down model designed and led only by contributory scholars in the field is not tenable for our department and, we imagine, for a number of departments like ours. Leadership and decision-making are best

done in teams that represent expertise from a variety of domains relevant to our mission. We hope that creating such collaborative structures and processes will foster dispositions that encourage people to pursue new types of expertise and give them the ability to continue working toward the expertise, even when the domain knowledge is challenging.

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