



WRITING PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION

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'Flexible' Learning, Disciplinarity, and First-Year Writing: Critically Engaging Competency-Based Education

Redesigning Writing Outcomes

WPAs Reading SETs: Toward an Ethical and Effective Use of Teaching Evaluations

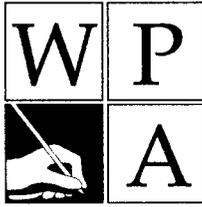
(Re)Identifying the gWPA Experience

Preparing Graduate Students to Teach Online: Theoretical and Pedagogical Practices

Locations of Administration; or, WPAs in Space

Racism in Writing Programs and the CWPA

Creating a Culture of Access in Writing Program Administration



Writing Program Administration

Journal of the
Council of Writing Program Administrators

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- interdisciplinary work that informs WPA practices

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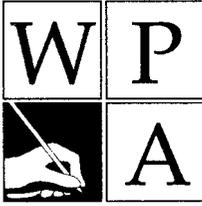
Relevant announcements and calls for papers and/or conference participation will be published as space permits. Announcements should not exceed 500 words, and calls for proposals/participation should not exceed 1,000 words. Please include contact information and links for further information. Submission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

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Writing Program Administration

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Letter from the Editors

Dear Readers,

We welcome you to the journal's Fall 2016 issue. We are pleased to present you with a wonderful variety of articles and books reviews, as well as the plenary talks from the WPA conference in Raleigh in July 2016.

We begin our issue with Kristen Seas, Holly Hassel, Jennifer Heinert, and Cassandra Phillips as they offer "'Flexible' Learning, Disciplinarity, and First-Year Writing: Critically Engaging Competency-Based Education." The authors discuss the tricky demands of negotiating state-requested competency based credit programs with their desires to remain true to their writing program goals and outcomes. Their experiences offer several lessons to WPAs about creating a competency-based program for students—and politicians—who want a way to offer college credit for past experiences.

Next, Carrie Leverenz's "Redesigning Writing Outcomes" helps us envision/re-envision WPA Outcomes Statement 3.0 and the ways in which it might/could speak to our work with multimodal composing. Leverenz offers us ways of thinking about multimodal composing and the preparation of our students for their future work lives; she also discusses the ways in which the changes to the WPA Outcomes Statement acknowledges the need for writing and writing instruction to be adapted and adaptable to an increasingly technological world and workspace.

In the spirit of expanding our understanding of what we do and how we do it, Courtney Adams Wooten, Brian Ray, and Jacob Babb discuss the ways that WPAs read Student Evaluations of Teaching (SETs) in "WPAs Reading SETs: Toward and Ethical and Effective Use of Teaching Evaluations." Based on survey results, Wooten, Ray and Babb explore the ways that WPAs (and other university officials) use SETs and offer recommendations for ways that WPAs might design and use them in more productive ways.

Next, Talinn Phillips, Paul Shovlin, and Megan Titus use "(Re)identifying the gWPA experience" to further their previous discussions of graduate and liminal WPAs. Phillips, Shovlin, and Titus explore the ways that gWPAs see their positions are more closely aligned with jWPAs than graduate students, and their positions should be understood as complicated and potentially ambiguous.

Tiffany Bourelle's "Preparing Graduate Students to Teach Online: Theoretical and Pedagogical Practices" offers methods and suggestions for training graduate students to teach online writing courses. Bourelle notes the importance of training graduate students, using such methods as technology workshops and team-teaching, for the particular demands of preparing teachers to teach online. Bourelle's piece offers WPAs models for training faculty in the pedagogies of online teaching.

As always, we also offer you the three plenary talks from the July 2016 WPA conference in Raleigh. As always, they are lightly edited by each author to help them move from a spoken piece to a written piece. As a result, they might not adhere to the style guide used by the journal. Rita Malencyzk offers a thoughtful discussion of space and how academics both think about and use space in "Locations of Administration; or WPAs in Space." In addition, Malencyzk discusses the ways that we represent ourselves in those spaces, and how this may affect how others see us.

Asao Inoue further challenges us to think about the limits of our institutions in his plenary "Racism in Writing Programs and the CWPA." Inoue points out the need to examine and challenge the institutional racism that prevents students from even entering the academy, as well as influencing their experience while they are there. In addition, he challenges us as individuals to examine our own deeply held beliefs, as well as those of the CWPA organization.

Lastly, Melanie Yergeau's "Creating a Culture of Access in Writing Program Administration" argues that composition needs to rethink the field in order to design a better culture of access. Yergeau examines the culture of disability in writing studies, urging WPAs to push against conceptions of ability and disability to create better accessibility for all.

The book review section closes the journal. As always, Norbert Elliott and Jacob Babb have selected books for review that will inform and enhance the work of WPAs. We hope you enjoy them. At any time, feel free to contact Norbert and Jacob at bookreviews@wpacouncil.org.

One final note. We are pleased to announce that, as a result of Cedric Burrows's article "The Yardstick of Whiteness in Composition Textbooks" in the Special Symposium on Whiteness (Spring 2016), the headnotes about "My First Conk" in MacMillian's *Patterns for College Writing* will read very differently. MacMillian contacted Dr. Burrows after the publication of his article and asked him for feedback; he was then asked to rewrite portions of both the headnote and the instructors' manual. We congratulate Dr. Burrows.

Much unseen labor goes into the production of the journal, and copy-editing is perhaps one of the most important but least recognized. Sarah Ricard has stepped down to move on to other work. She has assisted us at

every stage of production, tracking down questions on obscure style and copyediting-related topics, cleaning up works cited pages, and being an all-around sane voice. We will miss her keen eyes and her generous spirit. Alora D. Crooms provided fresh eyes at the final stages. We also extend our gratitude to our ads manager, Kelsie Walker. Lastly, thank Sherry Rankins-Robertson, who has officially stepped down this year and who served as editor for the past two years, doing the yeoman's work to help shepherd the journal into its current state. We would also like to thank our reviewers, without whom we could not do what we do.

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As always, please don't hesitate to contact us with ideas or concerns. Our email is journal@wpacouncil.org. Happy reading!

—Barb and Lisa

'Flexible' Learning, Disciplinarity, and First-Year Writing: Critically Engaging Competency-Based Education

Kristen Seas Trader, Jennifer Heinert, Cassandra Phillips, and Holly Hassel

ABSTRACT

In this article, the authors describe both the disciplinary challenges and program benefits of designing curriculum for a competency-based first-year writing program. Through a review of current scholarship on competency-based education (CBE) and a description of the curricular design process, the authors demonstrate how they used disciplinary standards to address the challenges that come with designating competencies in a learning environment that is disconnected from a community of learners as well as from direct instruction. The authors ultimately argue that writing programs need to actively engage external demands for CBE in order to drive curricular development and maintain disciplinary standards.

In June 2012, Governor Scott Walker and University of Wisconsin System President Ray Cross announced the launch of the Flexible Degree Option—a program run by the University of Wisconsin Extension to meet goals for college completion set by the White House, the state, and foundations such as Lumina Foundation and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. Publicity materials described the Flexible Option as a “unique, self-paced, competency-based model” that would allow students to earn college credit towards certain degrees for what they “learned in school, on the job, or on their own, as soon as they can prove that they know it” (“Governor Walker”). Built on models provided by existing online classes, prior learning assessment, independent study, and the competency-based approach of Western Governor’s University, the Flexible Option was touted as an affordable and less time-restrictive means of earning college credit that politicians

and administrators hoped would allow more people to complete a degree. Our own institution, the University of Wisconsin Colleges, agreed to offer an entirely competency-based Associates in Arts and Sciences degree.¹ Our first-year writing program, including the composition course required for the degree, was central in executing this new approach to credentialing. Yet our central question was “Would we be able to design a competency-based curriculum for the Flexible Option while still upholding disciplinary standards and practices?”

Nationally, other writing programs are encountering similar external pressures to seek “innovative” ways of offering “credit by evaluation” as their institutions pursue flexible credentialing models in the interest of decoupling college credit from seat time, the credit hour, or even traditional courses (Schneider). A 2016 collaborative report from national organizations Eduventures and the American Council of Education found that a quarter of institutions surveyed have competency-based programs while over a third use competency-based courses (Garrett and Lurie). Historically, most WPAs have encountered alternative credentialing through models like Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, CLEP (College-Level Examination Program), or Prior Learning Assessment. All of these models involve colleges (sometimes through their faculty, sometimes through other measures) reviewing, developing, and authorizing a course-level model for awarding equivalent credit. For the purposes of writing studies, this is almost always a first- or second-semester writing class. However, for the Flexible Degree Option, we were asked to develop writing curriculum that differs from these models in some key ways.

The Flexible Option is offered by the college through a self-paced, modular, instructor-less, and entirely online format. (See Figures 1-4.) Each credit-bearing competency set—which is packaged as the equivalent of a campus-based course—is broken down into a variable number of competencies reflecting specific skills and knowledge students must demonstrate. Students must work through each competency set within a certain time frame by completing assessments accessed through an online course management system.² In lieu of instruction, students are invited to work through curated content incorporated into the CMS, either on their own or in consultation with their Academic Success Coach who provides mentoring and support but not instruction. The assessments the student produces are then evaluated by a course assessor with expertise in the field and who does not provide instruction. Thus, the ideal aim of the Flexible Option is to enroll self-directed learners ready to demonstrate learning they developed elsewhere for credit towards equivalent course requirements.³

 <p>Fig. 1: Flex Option Splash Page (http://bit.ly/2gmQ19x)</p>	 <p>Fig. 2 Eng 102 Welcome and Overview (http://bit.ly/2fZW7HQ)</p>
 <p>Fig. 3 Assessments Grading Feedback Rubric (http://bit.ly/2f4HQZG)</p>	 <p>Fig. 4 Assessment 1 Self Assessment Essay (http://bit.ly/2g2AyrL)</p>

Our focus here is on how this competency model presented programmatic challenges as well as valuable insights as we fought tirelessly to hold an external political initiative to our disciplinary standards for curriculum development. After all, we did not want to abandon our field's recognition that "the best assessment practice is undertaken in response to local goals, not external pressures" (CCCC Committee on Assessment). Even though CBE initiatives often come from such pressures, we insisted that the resulting curriculum for our program adhere to local needs and disciplinary standards. In doing so, we were actually able to strengthen our writing program by confronting this curricular challenge and ensuring that the Flexible Option would assess the same learning outcomes as the rest of our program.

In what follows, we first situate our program development in the context of current scholarship on competency-based education and parallel tensions in writing studies. Second, we share how, through the process of deriving assessable competencies from our program learning outcomes, we discovered that such work is not so different from the curriculum development writing programs already do and even suggest that CBE programs provide an opportunity to make program curricula more explicit not only for our students but for ourselves. We then describe the critical challenges of accounting for first-year writing competencies that depend on engagement with others, which in turn underscore the ongoing questions about

how to design writing competencies for students disconnected from a community of learners. Similarly, we address the vital distinction that must be made between assessment and instruction in CBE writing courses so that we do not devalue the important role instructors play in traditional forms of writing instruction. Finally, we emphasize that writing programs can and should actively engage external demands for CBE by drawing on the implicit competency-based thinking in the discipline and insisting on replicating best practices for learning to ensure that the disciplinary standards, rather than the political imperatives of outside stakeholders, drive the curriculum development.

COMPETENCY-BASED EDUCATION AND THE ROLE OF WRITING STUDIES

Competency-based education is primarily touted as a convenient form of credentialing for students today who “are more likely to be older, working, attending part time, and learning outside of traditional credit-bearing classrooms than students in the past” (Laitenen). Moreover, by providing credentialing that focuses on what a student can do, rather than where or how they learned it, proponents claim that CBE encourages working adults to return to college by recognizing “knowledge and experiences that are worthy of academic recognition that’s unavailable through traditional programs” (Schejbal).⁴ Yet advocates’ most pointed argument for CBE is that this model of credentialing more accurately assesses student learning rather than merely “measuring time spent trying” (Reed). Indeed, much of the conversation around CBE now cites Arum and Roksa’s controversial *Academically Adrift* study asserting that undergraduates are earning degrees without actually learning. According to Paul LeBlanc, President of Southern New Hampshire University, which piloted College for America’s CBE program, “CBE offers a fundamental change at the core of our higher education ‘system’: making learning non-negotiable and the claims for learning clear *while making time variable*” (emphasis original). The bolder contention is that CBE is better at measuring true learning than the traditional credit-hour, instructor-led course.

Unsurprisingly, such arguments are met with backlash, particularly from detractors who see CBE as fundamentally incompatible with traditional liberal education principles. Johan Neem, in his 2013 essay for AAC&U’s *Liberal Education*, argues that CBE cannot replicate the core of a liberal education, which he defines as “putting students into contexts in which they are exposed to new ideas, asked to chew on them, and to talk or write about them.” The narrative around CBE, and the rhetoric shaping the Flexible Option, is that “postsecondary education will fulfill its mis-

sion in service of the public good when academic study is understood as something that is intended to equip students with the competencies necessary to be individually competitive economic actors” (Adler-Kassner 448). Thus, competency-based programs ignore larger democratic missions like shaping well-informed, ethical citizenship by reducing higher education to a particular vision of job training, one that emphasizes the performance and assessment of measurable tasks. Indeed, most criticism focuses on what is perceived to be CBE’s focus on discrete, measurable skills that are not usually associated with the more holistic and dispositional achievements a liberal education purports to develop.

For writing programs, the concerns around CBE are reflected in a broader tension that Kristine Johnson has highlighted between the ideal habits of mind that our discipline promotes as vital to a successful college education and the technocratic climate of current educational policy. As articulated in *The Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing*, students are more likely to be successful if they enter college with dispositions toward learning like curiosity, responsibility, and engagement. Yet, as Johnson notes, these dispositions are not easily assessed in direct relation to standards that resonate with outside stakeholders nor do they intuitively map onto the more granular assessment of competency-based programs like the Flexible Option. Such programs tend to emphasize artifacts that invoke isolated performances rather than complex dispositions developed over time. But as first-year writing programs—especially at open access institutions like ours—more often work to ensure students demonstrate such habits by the end of our courses rather than before they enroll, we are caught between holistic goals and assessable outcomes. As Johnson explains,

The convergence of habits of mind and assessment seems to offer two unsatisfying options for fostering habits of mind: 1) position them as assessable outcomes to assure their significance, or 2) position them as unmeasurable and fundamentally antithetical to large-scale assessment. (534)

If we hold to the first position, we potentially undermine the goals and values of our writing programs. If we hold to the second position, we jeopardize those programs in a landscape of budget reductions and interventions like CBE.

When we were approached about the Flexible Degree Option, we shared these larger concerns about whether or not a competency-based approach could work for the curriculum offered by our institution and particularly our writing program. We were specifically concerned about how this approach could be used to capture the disciplinary wisdom and pedagogical

complexity of a first-year writing sequence. After all, as Linda Adler-Kassner notes, competency models tend to offer “a ‘discipline-vacant’ approach to writing” that seeks to “erase disciplinarity in the name of an economically motivated public good” (446, 447). For instance, the vocational model from Western Governor’s University that we were given positioned assessments as generally isolated from one another and keyed to separate competencies. There wasn’t a strong sense of how a deliberate, scaffolded, interconnected curriculum like ours could be translated into the structure of the Flexible Option. Thus, we did not have a blueprint for bridging this apparent incompatibility in either our design of measurable competencies or corresponding methods of assessment.

Nonetheless, we also acknowledged how the CBE model might productively serve our high-skilled students, many of whom are returning adults with substantial demands on their time as well as extensive (usually work-related) experience writing for a variety of purposes and audiences, which in turn had helped them develop competencies we sought to assess in our writing program. Moreover, as instructors at a two-year, non-residential, open-admission institution, we cannot readily embrace Neem’s assumption about the necessity of the traditional college experience in order to develop well-rounded students, since many of our current students do not—and never will—replicate this ideal. Therefore, we saw this as an opportunity to continue making progress on streamlining, expanding, and improving our first-year writing program by taking advantage of the resources afforded to Flex Option development while ensuring that we didn’t sacrifice our programmatic goals in the process.

THE FAMILIAR WORK OF DEVELOPING A COMPETENCY-BASED WRITING CURRICULUM

At the time we were asked to develop CBE curriculum for the Flex Option, our first-year writing program was already in the midst of a series of curricular revisions dating back to 2009. During that time, we experienced a significant increase in academically under-prepared students and in contingent instructional staff. To preserve the changes we had already made, we foregrounded the need to align the Flexible Option with the rest of our program revisions instead of focusing on merely adapting our program to the newest platform. This required articulating learning outcomes that would apply across the three different modes of learning now being offered (classroom, online, and CBE) as well as deriving competencies for each learning outcome that would also be assessable regardless of delivery method. Working through this process, we discovered the parallels between curric-

ular design for CBE and the implicit competency-based thinking already employed in many aspects of writing program development.

Our first step was to revise the learning outcomes of the three sequenced courses: a single, non-degree basic writing class (English 098) followed by a two-semester, degree-credit writing course sequence (English 101 and English 102). We wanted to preserve agreed-upon elements of rhetorical skill and content, such as those outlined in the WPA Outcomes Statement and *The Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing*. We also relied heavily on research into the learning needs of our own student population to ensure that we were delineating goals appropriate for our institution. We then worked backwards through the course sequence to identify benchmarks of progress that students had to meet, thereby scaling WPA Outcomes Statement recommendations to suit the level of proficiency reflected in each of our courses and using *The Framework for Success* to inspire some of the language and sensibility within those outcomes.

Our second step was to translate these outcomes into assessable competencies that would serve as benchmarks for the Flexible Option competency sets and guide the creation of appropriate assessments for all three writing courses regardless of credentialing format. As a result, there is no difference between the competencies that students are expected to demonstrate in our face-to-face courses, instructor-led online courses, and the Flexible Option because the same competencies are needed to achieve the program's shared learning outcomes. Preserving this curricular consistency across learning modes ensured that the CBE assessments would uphold our goals as a program and students in the Flex program would be required to demonstrate the same learning as our other students as they earn the same credit. For example, under the category of Critical Writing in English 102, we identified the following three learning outcomes:

- Write cohesive academic essays for a variety of rhetorical purposes supported by scholarly research,
- Distinguish an author's position and the writer's own position using evidence from a scholarly text, and
- Accurately paraphrase and summarize scholarly source material to use as support in a research-based text.

We then had to articulate competencies as tangible actions the students must demonstrate to achieve these learning outcomes. For Critical Writing, we articulated two competencies with multiple components required in order to address how these three learning outcomes were connected to one another in the development of student writing (see table 1). In doing so, we were able to highlight the complexity of developing critical writing compe-

tency at the end of our FYW program as well as suggest to our campus and online instructors the range of assessable learning activities that could be used to fully reflect the achievement of these outcomes. By drafting similar relationships between outcomes and competencies for each of the three composition courses, we could also scale the competencies to abilities we would expect from student writers at each level.

Table 1
Learning Outcomes and Competencies for Critical Writing in English 102

Learning Outcomes	Competencies
Write cohesive academic essays for a variety of rhetorical purposes supported by scholarly research	<p>The writer produces texts that use scholarly research articles that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Organize content around a central claim so that each section of the text advances a key point in support of that claim ● Incorporate summary, paraphrasing, and quoting from sources to achieve the writer's rhetorical purpose ● Use effective signal phrases to contextualize source material ● Provide explanation about the relevance of evidence to the main point(s) and subpoints of the text
Distinguish an author's position and the writer's own position using evidence from a scholarly text	
Accurately paraphrase and summarize scholarly source material to use as support in a research-based text	<p>The writer produces a research-based argument that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Situates the writer's position within the context of a scholarly conversation about a narrowly-focused issue ● Addresses multiple valid positions ● Articulates the differences and similarities between an author's position and the writer's own position

A challenge arose, however, when we had to map our work for the Flexible Option administrators who were following the Western Governor's model, which assumed a one-to-one correspondence among competencies, assessments, and grades.⁵ When we presented our assessments to the Flexible Option program coordinator, we were asked how individual assessments were weighted and what the minimum level of proficiency was for each assessment versus the whole set of assessments. Such an expectation reinforced the often-criticized contention that CBE is necessarily granular because learning is characterized by the achievement of isolated competencies rather than an integrated, complex assessment. To counter this assumption, we asserted that writing competencies are necessarily interrelated and reflected in complex assessments. We were able to reference disciplinary standards for such complexity, particularly relying on the CCCC position statement on writing assessment that recommends assigning multiple pieces of writing "in more than one genre, on different occasions, for different audiences" as part of effective writing assessment (CCCC Committee on Assessment). Doing this let us address the tension identified by Johnson and retain the consistency of our writing program and the rigor of Writing Studies.

What emerged from the process of mapping our assessments to the competencies was a curriculum in which several competencies were reinforced across multiple assessments. For instance, we identified four common academic artifacts that would demonstrate the two competencies in Critical Writing and would reinforce these competencies across different rhetorical situations (see table 1). But for the first competency—to write texts that use scholarly research articles—we recognized that any number of texts could demonstrate this competency, particularly within a course like our English 102 that is focused on research-based writing. We also wanted students to demonstrate their competence in rhetorical adaptability within the contexts of the curriculum for that course. Although we could have designed a narrow exercise that only addressed competency in, for example, summarizing a scholarly article, doing so would not have reinforced our program goals of having students develop rhetorical adaptability in sustaining various arguments with textual evidence. Thus, we keyed this competency to several assessments that would make up the student's work for the Flexible Option English 102 competency set (see table 2).

Table 2
Corresponding Competencies and Assessments for Critical Writing Outcomes

Learning Outcomes	Competencies	Assessments
<p>Write cohesive academic essays for a variety of rhetorical purposes supported by scholarly research</p>	<p>1. The writer produces texts that use scholarly research articles and that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organize content around a central claim so that each section of the text advances key point in support of that claim • Incorporate summary, paraphrasing, and quoting from sources to achieve the writer's rhetorical purpose • Use effective signal phrases to contextualize source material • Provide explanation about the relevance of evidence to the main point(s) and subpoints of the text 	<p>1. Self-Assessment Essay, Rhetorical Analysis, Research Review (Synthesis), Researched Argument Paper</p>
<p>Distinguish an author's position and the writer's own position using evidence from a scholarly text</p> <p>Accurately paraphrase and summarize scholarly source material to use as support in a research-based text</p>	<p>2. The writer produces a research-based argument that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Situates the writer's position within the context of a scholarly conversation about a narrowly-focused issue • Addresses multiple valid positions • Articulate the differences and similarities between an author's position and the writer's own position 	<p>2. Researched Argument Paper</p>

To push back against the expectation that a single grade could be applied to each assessment or weighted separately as isolated abilities, we returned to the language of our program learning outcomes and the competencies themselves to articulate the rubrics used to assess student performance. By remaining focused on program and course goals, these outcomes-based rubrics shifted attention from isolated activities to a breadth of ability that more closely reveals the growth of the student as a writer, growth that is measured by multiple pieces of writing across a variety of rhetorical situations and employing different procedural and reflective strategies. For the Flexible Option of English 102, we tailored the outcomes-based rubric to individual written texts submitted by students while still ensuring that each rubric addressed multiple, overlapping competencies and reflected program outcomes. For instance, for the competencies identified in table 1 and 2, we added a criterion to rubrics for all of the English 102 assessments to evaluate ability in critical, research-based writing (see table 3). We found that such language allowed for the breadth of rhetorical situations and generic conventions represented in each assessment while also including reflective writing that made it possible to assess both student performance and rhetorical knowledge of how writing works. Doing so allowed us to view each student's competency holistically, moving us closer to dispositional assessment while still evaluating measurable actions.

In the end, the competencies proved to be the necessary bridge between our program goals for each course and the kinds of measurable assessments outside stakeholders were seeking for the launch of the Flexible Option. Despite our initial skepticism, we embraced competency development as an effective method of backward design to guide the creation of an assessment sequence that would best embody the outcomes for each course.⁶ After all, when instructors ask students to perform specific tasks or produce specific products and then assess these as artifacts of learning, the instructors are often using implicit competencies as the basis for assessment. Competency-based curriculum development forces writing programs to make these assumptions explicit and articulate them not only for students but also for instructors and administrators. One of the ways we see CBE as compatible with disciplinary standards, then, is because it requires a more explicit breakdown of what learning looks like as part of a student's rhetorical education, and it forces us to describe and measure such learning in ways that are meaningful to students, instructors, and administrators within a rigorous framework.

Table 3
Rubric for Assessing Competencies in Critical Writing

Advanced	Proficient	Competent	Developing
<p>The writer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consistently produces insightful academic essays for a variety of rhetorical purposes supported by scholarly research Effectively contextualizes the writer's position within multiple valid and scholarly positions about a narrowly-focused issue 	<p>The writer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consistently produces cohesive academic essays for a variety of rhetorical purposes supported by scholarly research Accurately contextualizes the writer's position within multiple valid and scholarly positions about a narrowly-focused issue 	<p>The writer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Produces cohesive academic essays for a variety of rhetorical purposes supported by scholarly research Situates the writer's position within multiple valid and scholarly positions about a narrowly-focused issue 	<p>The writer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shows an emerging ability to produce academic essays for a variety of rhetorical purposes supported by research Does not provide a context for the writer's position within multiple and positions about a focused issue

PRESERVING DIALOGIC COMPETENCIES WITHOUT
A COMMUNITY OF LEARNERS

Although we achieved compatibility between our local goals and a competency-based writing curriculum, we encountered significant challenges in designing assessments for those competencies which required students to engage with others. For instance, the category of Critical Reading in English 102 includes a learning outcome that focuses on discussing texts with other readers. Competency is demonstrated by a student who

- Accurately and specifically discusses the text,
- Accurately summarizes peers' responses,
- Synthesizes different viewpoints, and
- Responds through concession, rebuttal, or qualification with the use of specific evidence from the text.

Another set of competencies in English 102 focuses on writing processes and asks students to “Demonstrate proficiency in working collaboratively to use appropriate resources for feedback, critically use reader feedback to shape revision, and provide effective feedback as a reader to other writers.” In short, students need to engage with readers and peer writers to demonstrate competence in the writing process outcomes within our program.

Such competencies are traditionally demonstrated in environments where students engage directly with other readers and writers, which is essential to what we know about the social dimension of writing communities. For instance, as Kathleen Blake Yancey asserts in her *CCC* editorial, “Tracing Intersections,” “peer review is at the heart of epistemological and scholarly practice” (554). Even though Yancey is specifically addressing the peer review process used by Writing Studies scholars, this claim speaks to the importance of writer-reader engagement to inspire invention, inform drafting, and refine revision to meet the needs of an audience and rhetorical purpose as part of an effective writing practice (see Heinert for a further discussion of how peer critique functions as a signature pedagogy of writing studies). Thus, while learning might be assessed individually, ability and understanding (what we assess when we assess competence) are frequently developed collaboratively, both in and out of the classroom. Yet one of the recurring concerns with CBE is the individualist assumption about how learning occurs and is subsequently assessed. Within the Flexible Option, we wondered how students could submit work that demonstrated their competence in areas that required engagement when they only had access to an asynchronous online environment without an instructor or classmates to serve as readers and fellow writers. Specifically, CBE students run the risk of diminishing the role of the reader as an addressed interlocutor in

the writing process, a concern addressed by Ede and Lunsford when they describe writing tasks that lack a reader (165). When we presented this concern to Flexible Option instructional designers, however, they were unable to help us develop a solution and even encouraged us to drop these competencies entirely.

Again, to preserve the integrity of our writing program and enforce disciplinary standards, we were not prepared to concede that these dialogic competencies could not be demonstrated by Flex Option students nor, more importantly, could not function as further development in their academic writing. We had to resolve the key experiential shortcomings of CBE that Neem and others ultimately rest their objections on: the lack of interaction among students or with an instructor and what this absence would communicate to Flexible Option students about writing as a social practice. To that end, we developed methods of assessment that would mirror as closely as possible the conditions experienced by students in our face-to-face and instructor-led online courses who have the opportunity to practice course objectives on an addressed audience.

To measure students' ability to "discuss a scholarly text in dialogue with other readers," we initially considered and rejected alternatives to the synchronous conversation of a learning community, such as requiring that students post to a public forum and document their interactions with other writers. But certain logistical limitations arose in trying to create a simulated dialogic environment. For example, it was difficult to find a forum for *scholarly* discussion; most of the lay online forums focus on news items, and the conversation that takes place in these spaces, while rich and complex in its own right, does not reflect a level of engagement with scholarly material that we would equate with college-level competence. Our solution, then, was to draw on our experience with asynchronous discussion from our instructor-led online courses by designing a two-part discussion activity in which the student was required to 1) post a public (in-course) reaction to an assigned scholarly article and 2) respond to a peer who had already posted to that same forum on that same reading.

To replicate the conditions of working with peer learners and to provide some context for these activities, we used discussion posts from students in our instructor-led online classes as example voices with which Flexible Option students would engage. (We obtained informed consent from the students before doing so.) While we anonymized the borrowed posts, we left them unedited so students would be working with responses and posts that represent the likely contribution of peers as if they were in a class together. In this way, the assessments would in many ways resemble the asynchronous exchange that happens for our online students with one

notable exception: the Flexible Option students would not receive replies to their own posts. Consequently, students' engagement with readers is altered significantly. After all, although we can assess what students are doing with their writing, we are not able to assess an actual discussion with an addressed audience who can respond. Such fluid interaction is probably best replicated in a synchronous learning environment or at least in an environment with asynchronous access to fellow learners, neither of which has been integrated into CBE models precisely because of their emphasis on independent learning.

Similarly, we wanted to preserve writer-reader feedback loops as part of the writing process to avoid the potential pitfall of dismissing the social nature of writing.⁷ Fortunately, for the other dialogic competencies (using resources for feedback, using reader feedback for revision, and providing feedback to other writers), our solution was a bit more successful in meeting our program goals. Once again, we worked to eliminate the constraints of time and direct interaction by separating peer review into two distinct activities. In the first activity, students provide critical reader feedback on sample student essays which were also obtained from actual students in the instructor-led online versions of the equivalent courses. (Again, informed consent was obtained prior to using any student materials.) In the second activity, students submit their own formal essays for feedback from a professional tutoring service such as the UW Colleges Online Writing Lab or another campus-based writing center. Then, after considering that feedback on their writing, students are required to reflect on why and how they did or did not employ that feedback within the self-assessment portion of each assessment.⁸ In doing so, students are expected to demonstrate that they are aware of readers as influential in their own decision making as writers.

Notably, requiring students to engage in reflection not only allowed us to gauge student competency in effective writing processes but also served to address another potential impasse between CBE and the goals of Writing Studies. Just as the discipline increasingly emphasizes the content of writing studies as much as the skills of writing,⁹ CBE appears to be moving towards breaking down writing into discrete skills. Yet across our program, including within the Flexible Option curriculum, self-reflection and critical reading/writing about scholarly articles in writing studies serve as points of contact between these two areas, so ability is not severed from understanding.¹⁰ For instance, we reinforced one area of our program learning outcomes (Rhetorical Knowledge: Writing) with a competency that explicitly stated: "The writer produces a text that accurately assesses the writer's own rhetorical choices and the effect of those choices for readers." While we require this across the different credentialing methods, the integration of such criti-

cal self-reflection within the competency-based curriculum serves to trace students' thinking about their writing while also capturing how accurately they can articulate some of the key concepts effective writers need to be successful—such as audience awareness or the value of revision in achieving a rhetorical purpose.¹¹ Ultimately, even though there is a lack of immediate dialogue with a peer, students are still able to demonstrate their ability to be critical readers for others as well as receive formative feedback from a real reader to show how they can both apply strategies and articulate their understanding of such strategies within the language of Writing Studies.

DEFINING BOUNDARIES BETWEEN ASSESSMENT AND INSTRUCTION IN CBE

The most significant disciplinary challenge of developing competency-based courses for writing studies—and the thorniest logistical and intellectual problem we encountered in implementing our Flexible Option curriculum—is the role of feedback in learning. CBE models are predicated on the assumption that assessments are divorced from instruction, which is why such programs are touted as instructor-less even though students receive evaluations from expert assessors. In part, this is due to the influence of other disciplines where assessments are always summative and isolated from the learning process. Not surprisingly, the administrators and instructional designers of the Flexible Option failed to recognize how feedback serves a formative and instructional role in student writing development, providing a one-to-one dialogue between an instructor and student about how to improve the student's writing. We had to distinguish feedback from assessment in Writing Studies, specifically invoking the unique epistemological nature of process knowledge in writing development that is reflected in our field's foundational threshold concepts (see Adler Kassner and Wardle, 2015).¹²

More pragmatically, the co-authors had a vigorous discussion about how to handle the lack of instruction in the Flexible Option format and the corresponding distinction between instructor-led and instructor-less versions of our first-year writing courses. Specifically, because Flexible Option assessors are not compensated for the amount of time formative feedback takes, designing a course with traditional formative feedback on student writing was not a possibility.¹³ Indeed, the premise behind many CBE models, in addition to offering convenience through flexible scheduling, is that CBE credits are more affordable to attain precisely because the program does not have to pay for the time and labor of an instructor. In traditionally-delivered writing courses, time and labor is largely devoted to providing

feedback on student writing. Therefore, our team conversation centered on the question: “If we are assessing competence, what kind of feedback is necessary?”

Ultimately we decided that summative feedback reflecting the proficiency of student learning demonstrated in an assessment was the only appropriate (and possible) feedback that balances the disciplinary value of offering feedback while protecting the labor demands on assessors.¹⁴ Moreover, summative feedback aligns with a fundamental feature of CBE: that students are demonstrating and developing competence independently. In other words, students only receive feedback about the level of competence their work does (or does not) demonstrate through a rubric based on the competencies for that particular assessment. It is up to the students to use any summative evaluation to guide their work when either re-attempting the same assessment or moving on to other assessments within the competency set.¹⁵

Yet many students familiar with traditional writing courses still expect more guidance from instructors—even though the students have enrolled in a program deliberately devoid of instruction.¹⁶ As a result, one consequence of developing a competency-based writing curriculum is the potential tendency of instructors to extend themselves within programs explicitly designed to sidestep instruction. As Gallagher argues,

In light of the ensuing erosion of the tenure system and the concomitant rise of the use of contingent workers, we should be concerned about the ways in which CBE has contributed to, and today is accelerating, the casualization of academic labor (20).

It is a concern we share. A firm stance on the role and type of feedback offered through CBE protects the discipline, the instructors who are increasingly working off the tenure track, and students alike. Students who need instruction in a classroom setting to demonstrate the skills they have already mastered, or who do not have enough knowledge to complete the assessments through self-directed and self-paced learning, should not be enrolled in a CBE program. But the burden may be on writing programs and their administrators to make this assertion clear to those who eagerly embrace the CBE model without considering how a complex subject, such as writing, depends heavily on the relationship between students and instructors.

WHAT CBE AND WRITING STUDIES CAN OFFER EACH OTHER

Despite our struggles with developing assessments that address the full, nuanced breadth of competencies and disciplinary content knowledge that

we expect in our classrooms, as well as the ongoing challenges of negotiating the instructional role of feedback for students who opt out of receiving instruction, we ultimately found the intellectual work of designing our Flexible Option courses valuable to us as writing program developers. In particular, working through the CBE model helped us to recognize the competencies we assumed within our existing curriculum and the need to articulate and explicate them for both students and instructors. In doing so, we were able to create the kind of assessments that would best reflect the learning suited to our disciplinary, programmatic, and institutional missions as educators. Even as we gained a stronger understanding of what we are trying accomplish for ourselves, we could also declare to other stakeholders—including those administering the Flexible Degree Option—where our disciplinary investments were and which of these were non-negotiable.

The latter insight led us to a much more far-reaching conclusion: those with expertise in writing studies absolutely must be part of the development of competency-based versions of their own curricula. For us—and perhaps for other programs confronted with the call to develop CBE equivalents—the first critical hurdle is challenging our own initial assumptions that CBE models of credentialing cannot achieve the same learning outcomes and assessment standards that we use for instructor-led writing courses. We need to honestly yet critically explore how competency models might be able to accomplish what Neem describes as the purpose of liberal education: “to transform a person by offering him or her serious and diverse intellectual experiences.” As CBE models gain traction among higher education decision-makers across various types of institutions, those in Writing Studies need to be part of the conversation about what CBE can and should do for student writers. Without local disciplinary experts involved, the ideals and goals that define our discipline and specific writing programs would be disregarded to fit the efficiencies of CBE rather than having disciplinary experts demand that CBE take up innovative ways to reflect and promote the complex learning our programs strive to instill. For faculty at the many institutions that adopt CBE programs, this opportunity might not be a given and instead must be fought for. As a field, we can—and must—shape the way that competency-based writing programs are discussed, designed, and implemented.

Here we have shared how we negotiated this perceived incompatibility by refocusing on the goals of our own program, mapping competencies across platforms and assessments, and striving to retain elements of writer-reader engagement within the constraints presented to us at our own institution. To spur further insights in the field, however, we offer the following

key questions based on our own experiences at the front lines of this new movement in higher education:

- How do we guide developers in designing a CBE writing curriculum that will not be taught?
- How can our disciplinary organizations best respond to these external imperatives to develop CBE programs?
- How do we protect instructors in programs that serve both traditional and CBE student populations?
- How can CBE be made to reflect the rapidly developing foundation of knowledge about how writing works and how students learn to write? and
- How can competency models like the Flexible Option create landscapes that become, in Neem's words, "contexts in which [students] are exposed to new ideas, asked to chew on them, and to talk or write about them"?

The only way to discover effective answers to such questions is for those of us in Writing Studies to critically engage with competency based education and advocate for the rhetorical and liberal education offered by our programs rather than allowing our disciplinary objectives to be co-opted by external, politicized mandates and agendas.

NOTES

1. Unlike many community colleges covering technical or vocational education, our two-year institution provides the first two years of transfer-parallel credits aligned with the liberal arts general education curriculum of the state university system of which we are a part. Thus, students pursuing the Associates in Arts and Sciences (AAS) Degree through the Flexible Option might complete assessments across a range of disciplines, from history to women's studies to geology to first-year writing, during their prescribed periods.

2. At the time of this publication, Flexible Option students pay a flat rate to enroll in three-month subscription periods that can begin at the start of any calendar month and may be renewed once if needed to allow students more time to complete assessments.

3. Such a format has been challenging to students who fail to grasp their own responsibilities as independent learners who cannot rely on an instructor for direction. We speculate this is due to larger issues in how CBE is marketed to them as well as the ineffectiveness in assessing the alignment between prospective students' needs and how the program is structured. On the heels of increased scrutiny by the Department of Education, including a report from the Inspector General critical of competency-based programs, our administration reported on conversations

with the Higher Learning Commission, the accrediting body of our institution. Our provost tried to reassure shared governance bodies that

the UW Colleges is in good standing with the Commission and is within federal rules and regulations regarding the U.S. Department of Education's expectations for "regular and substantive interaction" initiated by instructors between instructors and students in the UW Colleges UW Flexible Option program,

which does not dovetail with our experience as developers and assessors for Flexible Option (Lampe). The numbers also do not bear this out, though they have improved over the last two years. As of December 2015, 100 students had enrolled in our core-equivalent English 102 competency set but only 26 achieved a level of competence or above. In 2016, of the 108 students who had subscribed to English 101 or 102, 51 (or 48%) had mastered the competencies in the course. The fact remains that, despite the governor's and administrative insistence on the demand for this program, at this time, only a small subset of students are able to complete it independently without traditionally defined instruction.

4. The individual defining their own path to college credit based on what he or she already knows is a fundamental component of the Flexible Option marketing campaign, with slogans such as "Earn a University Wisconsin degree at your pace, on your schedule, using knowledge you already have" (University of Wisconsin System, "UW Flexible Option").

5. As defined by the Flexible Option program, assessments are "the tests, projects, and other activities used to measure . . . knowledge" (University of Wisconsin System, "FAQ").

6. See Wiggins and McTighe 1999 for more on backwards design.

7. See Roozen, in Adler-Kassner and Wardle, 2015. See also O'Neill et al. for an overview of key sources on feedback and its role in writing assessment.

8. Under the outcome category of Writing Processes for English 102, we articulated a competency that stated "The writer will produce multiple self-assessments that analyze and evaluate the student's writing processes and products with specific evidence from the student's own writing." So for each paper written, students must critically reflect and document their process.

9. See the Downs and Wardle "Writing about Writing" approach and the threshold concept model introduced by Meyer and Land in 2003 and recently developed more fully by Adler-Kassner and Wardle in *Naming What We Know: Threshold Concepts in Writing Studies*.

10. For example, the *Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing*, Deborah Brandt's article "Sponsors of Literacy" and Sommers and Saltz's "The Novice as Expert" all serve as foundational texts Flex students read as part of completing assessments.

11. See Rose; Duffy and Downs, in Adler-Kassner and Wardle, 2015.

12. For example, threshold concepts such as “Writing Is an Activity and a Subject of Study” as well as “Learning to Write Effectively Requires Different Kinds of Practice, Time, and Effort” and “Writing Addresses, Invokes, and/or Creates Audiences,” “Revision is Central to Developing Writing” and “Failure Can Be an Important Part of Writing Development” (Adler-Kassner and Wardle, v-vii).

13. Disciplinary experts who serve as assessors are not compensated the equivalent pay or status as an instructor of a semester-long campus or online course. Serving as a Flex Option instructor of record is not calculated into an instructor’s course load but is instead an additional compensation over and above their current load based on enrollment. The rate for FYW since the Flexible Option’s inception has been \$300 per month for each instructor of record.

14. As stated earlier, any other guidance comes from reading through the curated content of the competency set, which includes the suggested readings and resources for students to examine on their own.

15. Flexible Option developers and administrators decided to allow students two attempts at proving competency on a particular assessment before the students would be encouraged to pursue instructor-led options instead. In English 101 and English 102, there are several assessments, each of which can be repeated once before completing the final portfolio assessment.

16. Assessors have also needed to be mentored away from traditional instructional practices to understand what competency-based education is and is not and adjust their assessment processes to those positions.

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Redesigning Writing Outcomes

Carrie S. Leverenz

ABSTRACT

This article responds to the July 2014 revision of the WPA Outcomes Statement for First-Year Composition by arguing that the inclusion of multimodal composing offers an opportunity to shift our focus from teaching the standards of academic writing to preparing students for a future of writing characterized by multiplicity and change. Through a close reading of the revised Outcomes Statement, I demonstrate the ways in which the WPA OS recognizes that digital tools have expanded the text forms, writing processes, and conventions students will engage with in composition classes. I then argue that this attention to different modes of writing can encourage students to value difference more broadly.

When Sid Dobrin posted to the WPA-L in December of 2011 asking whether “the WPA Outcomes Statement for First-Year Composition [should] include some acknowledgment of the role of the visual in writing,” the speed with which Dobrin’s question was taken up suggested the time was right for reconsidering what we believe students should learn in composition courses—within days, then-CWPA president Duane Roen formed a WPA Outcomes Statement Revision Task Force. The WPA Outcomes Statement 3.0, approved by the Executive Board of the CWPA in July 2014, is the first major revision of the Outcomes Statement since its original adoption in 2000.¹ Significantly, the revised WPA OS makes clear that the term *composing* refers broadly to “complex writing processes that are increasingly reliant on the use of digital technologies” and that those activities may involve “elements of design, incorporating images and graphical elements into texts intended for screens as well as printed pages” (144). The revision also acknowledges that “digital technologies are changing writers’ relationships to their texts and audiences in evolving ways” (144). By foregrounding the powerful effects of digital affordances on writing, the revised WPA Outcomes Statement constitutes a turn away from

the original, which focused unapologetically on traditional academic writing and relegated digital technology to a brief addendum, “Composing in Electronic Environments,” added in 2008. Arguably, this recent revision of the WPA Outcomes Statement has the potential to change both what students learn in writing classes and how we as a profession define our work for years to come.

Although much about the original WPA Outcomes Statement has been revised, the purpose, as explained in the Introduction, remains the same: to both “represent” and “regularize writing programs’ priorities for first-year composition” (144). To be representative, the revised WPA OS must reflect a broad consensus of what WPA members believe about the purpose of first-year writing based on “what composition teachers nationwide have learned from practice, research, and theory” (144). Achieving such consensus is no small matter. The Revision Task Force spent almost three years conducting surveys, holding discussions at CCCC and CWPA conferences, drafting, seeking feedback, and revising (Dryer et al. 131–34). It should not be surprising, then, that the revision, like the original, is necessarily a compromise, both more and less revolutionary than some might hope. While a compromise statement may, in fact, be the best representation of how WPA members are collectively responding to the challenges posed by the rapid expansion of multimodal composing, such a statement does not go as far as it might in recommending what those changes should be—and why. I want to suggest that the decision to embrace new forms of writing that originate and flourish outside of school offers us an opportunity to rethink the assumption that composition courses serve primarily to prepare students for writing in school. Instead, I want to consider how college composition courses might prepare students for a future of writing, one that will be characterized by multiplicity and change.

The inclusion of multimodal composing in the revised WPA Outcomes Statement is a welcome first step, one many in composition have long advocated for on the grounds that writing instruction should be more relevant to the composing practices students already participate in (Yancey, “Made Not Only in Words”) and that teachers should ensure all students have access to the skills necessary for such participation (Selfe, “Perils”). Equally important, and my focus here, is that multimodal composing provides students with opportunities to negotiate difference as a central characteristic of language use. Opening the writing classroom to textual difference by including composing in multiple modes gives us the chance to foster openness to other differences as well.

Almost three decades ago, the New London Group responded to the radical cultural changes they saw taking place—increased local diversity

and globalization along with “the burgeoning variety of text forms associated with information and multimedia technologies” (61)—by proposing a pedagogy of multiliteracies. Specifically, they argued that preparing all students to participate fully in an increasingly global, multi-mediated culture where difference was the norm meant literacy teaching could no longer focus exclusively on “formalized, monolingual, monoculture, and rule-governed forms of language” but must involve “negotiating a multiplicity of discourses” (61). The ultimate goal, the New London Group believed, should be the “utopian possibility” of “productive diversity, the idea that what seems to be a problem—the multiplicity of cultures, experiences, ways of making meaning, and ways of thinking—can be harnessed as an asset” (67). The recent revision of the WPA Outcomes Statement moves us in the direction of fulfilling this goal. Given the ever-expanding array of discourse forms made possible by digital communication and the myriad cultural and linguistic differences present in classrooms, workplaces, and communities, it should be clear that there can be no single standard.

Writing programs have long been challenged to attend meaningfully to student differences, and that challenge is perhaps even greater today when significant demographic changes in the US (Colby and Ortman) are leading to stiff competition among universities to attract and retain their share of an increasingly diverse student body (Krogstad, Manuel, and Fry; Pratt; Western Interstate Commission). A school culture that attends to and affirms difference not only makes students’ academic success more likely but can also help prepare them for a culturally diverse workplace (Frey; Hays-Thomas, Bowen, and Boudreaux; Wentling). At the same time, as Jacqueline Rhodes and Jonathan Alexander insist, we must be wary of efforts to co-opt attention to difference as primarily a boon to employability. In their words, “[W]e must nurture a view of social change that works toward justice by thinking beyond simple job readiness and career preparation” (“Reimagining” 485). Those who believe writing instruction can contribute skills needed to work toward justice have a special responsibility to teach in ways that encourage *full* participation in democratic culture and to highlight the value of difference within the context of such participation.

Multimodal composing promotes acceptance of textual difference in a number of ways. As Anne Wysocki argues, multimodal composing invites us to question fixed notions of text or image as we consider “not only what is expected by a particular audience in a particular context but also what they might not expect, what they might not be prepared to see” (59). Similarly, Rhodes and Alexander emphasize that multimodal texts are not just a different kind of writing but have their own histories and rhetorics that deserve attention (*On Multimodality* 3–5). As Cynthia Selfe notes in her

argument for including the mode of sound in writing classes, highlighting the ways other modes of composing differ from rather than resemble writing may appeal to students' different learning and composing preferences ("Movement" 644). Bringing multimodal composing into our classes can also multiply the kinds of writers, audiences, and publication sites students see as legitimate participants in rhetorical action. David M. Sheridan, Jim Ridolfo, and Anthony J. Michel contend, "ordinary rhetors should appropriate the rhetorical tools of graphic designers, illustrators, photographers, and videographers in order to assume responsibility for the production of culture" (xii). Of course, multimodal composing does not automatically produce "productive diversity" (New London Group 67). The very multiplicity that results from welcoming diverse participation also includes anonymous hate speech, cyberbullying, sexting, and other problematic expression. Equally important, continued unequal access to digital tools and experiences means not everyone automatically benefits when we expand the forms of composing we ask of students (Poe). Those very students marginalized by academe's adherence to a single standard will continue to be marginalized if we simply transpose that single standard onto multimodal texts. Instead, we need to consciously focus our writing objectives on "multi" as well as "modal," to not only accept differences but encourage them.

Doing so will require that we examine our often unconscious complicity with academic standards that reify "formalized, monolingual, monocultural, and rule-governed forms of language" (New London Group 61) and the limiting concept of the student writer those standards propagate. Unfortunately, as Donna Strickland and Jeanne Gunner suggest, within WPA circles, critique of our normative practices does not come easily (xi). Consider, for example, Paul Matsuda and Ryan Skinnell's calling out as "problematic," the "lack of systematic and sustained conversation about the implications of the WPA OS for second language writers . . . at a time when their presence is increasingly felt" (231). More pointedly, Jeff Rice laments that "the influence of liberatory pedagogy, cultural studies, media studies, and poststructuralism on writing instruction over the last forty years seems to have had minimal effect in shaking conservatism in writing program administration" (2), defining conservatism as a response to "the implied threat of multiplicity, divergent ideas, and difference" through the expression of a "preference for the already known . . . *the familiar*" (4; emphasis original). Of course, such conservatism may result in part from the institutional constraints experienced by many writing programs: a largely contingent teaching force with varying levels of experience, too-few resources for teacher development, and competing demands that can curb programmatic vision. Writing programs may also skew conservative in cases where WPAs,

especially those without tenure, have limited power to resist institutional expectations regarding what composition courses should teach.

It should not be surprising, then, that a consensus document like the original WPA Outcomes Statement can seem overly conservative, even at the very moment it is accepted. Commenting as a drafter of the original WPA Outcomes Statement, Keith Rhodes observed that, “for me what started with a band of outrage is ending with a shrug of acceptance” (65). Rhodes ultimately concluded, “This is not, then, a great moment in the history of composition. It is an ordinary moment” (66). Similarly, Kathleen Blake Yancey, President of the CWPA when the Statement was first adopted, described it as “hardly revolutionary,” noting that the Statement talks about “the more non-controversial of our practices in first-year composition” (67). Although such comments may have been intended, in part, to calm anxious WPAs who feared that the WPA Outcomes Statement 1.0 could somehow be used against them, they also reaffirm the inclination (or necessity) of writing programs to take a moderate stance. Not all WPAs were happy to accept such moderation. For example, Clyde Monyhan declared that “I . . . wish that the document had more to say about teaching writing to heighten social and political awareness among students, about writing as a civic act,” even as he also acknowledged that “as a compilation and synthesis of opinion in our field, the document (like all such documents) is necessarily and inevitably conservative” (63). Mark Wiley also warned that as “a negotiated document, one of compromise” the “middle-of-the-roadness” of the WPA Outcomes Statement 1.0 could lead it to become “one more of those proclamations issued by professional organizations that sound, well, ‘official’ but lack any pragmatic value because no significant consequences follow its adoption” (67). When the WPA Outcomes Statement 1.0 was later published in *College English*, Derek Soles offered a particularly strong critique, remarking that “Radical writing teachers . . . will likely be offended by and scoff at the list of outcomes the committee mandates” (377). In direct response to Soles’ criticism, Kathi Yancey defended the Statement as enabling “radical possibility” by providing for “a composition curriculum that permits all students to write themselves into it.” She also argued that it is “flexible” enough to allow for a wide range of pedagogical approaches (380). Both *The Outcomes Book* and *The WPA Outcomes Statement: A Decade Later* provide evidence of the many ways the various versions of the WPA OS has been used to benefit a variety of writing programs. However, if one goal of the WPA OS overall is to regularize what is taught in writing courses, there is necessarily a limit in how much pedagogical variation it can support.

The challenge of both representing and regularizing the role of technology in writing programs also led to a compromise that might be said to have erred on the side of middle-of-the-road-ness. Although recommendations to include outcomes related to digital composing were made at several points during the process of drafting the original Statement, the version officially adopted by CWPA in 2000 did not mention technology. Soon after, Cynthia Selfe and Patricia Ericsson made their disappointment public, arguing that a narrow focus on print literacies not only threatens writing programs with potential obsolescence but has “dangerous” consequences for students, especially poor students and students of color, by cheating them out of the chance to acquire literacy skills necessary for participating in electronic composing environments that are “essential” as “sites of political activism and power” (34). Although the Statement was amended in 2008 to include what came to be known as the “technology plank,” digital literacy was conceptualized there primarily as an enabler of traditional academic literacy. As Michael Callaway observed, “the 2008 revision of the WPA OS . . . does not move much beyond the 1999 version in terms of its focus on technology as a tool” (275). Echoing Selfe and Ericsson, Callaway proposes that students

need instruction on how to critically engage technology. Students should also receive instruction in how they shape and are shaped by digital mediums, and how their identities and literate practices are constructed and promulgated by digital mediums and within digital environments. (272)

In Callaway’s complaint, we hear an echo of the one voiced by Clyde Monyehun and Derek Soles that the WPA Outcomes Statement fails to advocate for a critical approach in which students learn to recognize how power and difference affect writing. For some, the absence of a critical stance toward technology in the 2008 addendum, and for that matter, toward writing and language more generally, prevents the original WPA Outcomes Statement from achieving the “radical possibility” that Yancey claimed it could.

The question now is to what extent radical possibility is enabled by the WPA Outcomes Statement 3.0. If, as Kathi Yancey asserts, “the Statement is a living text and thus will change” (“Response” 68) and if, as Susanmarie Harrington assures us, the WPA Outcomes Statement is a floor not a ceiling for composition programs (xvii), we can and should find ways to use the revised WPA Outcomes Statement not just to sanction multimodal composing but to work toward the utopian possibility of “productive diversity” (New London Group 67) by using such composing to highlight the presence and value of difference in all human expression.

THE WPA OUTCOMES STATEMENT AS AVAILABLE DESIGN

One change in the revised WPA Outcomes Statement that can help support productive diversity is the foregrounding of design in writing. By recognizing that FYC students will design web pages and posters as well as apply principles of design to more traditional forms of writing, the revised Statement sends a clear message about valuing different textual modes. But treating writing as design and students as designers can and should have larger implications.² The New London Group, who uses the term *design* to refer to students' capacity to act as innovators and as change agents, was again prescient. In their words, "literacy educators and students must see themselves as active participants in social change, as learners and students who can be active designers—makers of social futures" (64). Through the process of Designing, each of us uses Available Designs—existing conventions, grammars, genres and so on—to create new meanings, the Redesigned. Inhabiting the role of designer changes how we engage with the world. As the New London Group describes it, "Through their co-engagement in Designing, people transform their relations with each other, and so transform themselves" (76). To become a designer requires access to Available Designs—those already existing grammars, conventions, and discourses, which communities share—as well as support for creating something new. Importantly, the New London Group reminds us, "Designing will more or less normatively reproduce, or more or less radically transform, given knowledges, social relations, and identities, depending upon the social conditions under which Designing occurs" (75). What is created by the act of Designing subsequently becomes the Available Designs others use as their starting point. This is how knowledge is created and change happens—or not.

As a nod to this concept of Designing, I want to approach the revised WPA Outcomes Statement as itself an Available Design—a depiction of the accepted present state of writing instruction that we can use to imagine a transformed future. Even a casual reading of the Statement makes clear that writing teachers should engage students in reading and composing a diversity of text forms, especially ones made possible by the use of digital tools. For example, in the Introduction, readers are told that the term *composing* refers to "complex writing processes that are increasingly reliant on the use of digital technologies" in which writers "attend to elements of design, incorporating images and graphical elements into texts intended for screens as well as printed pages" (144). Use of the term *composing* instead of *writing* and the plural *processes* instead of the singular *process* signals an expansion in both the kinds of texts students may produce and their means of produc-

ing them, as does references to “elements of design” such as “images and graphical elements” and the explicit identification of the “screen” as a publication medium. This view that writing will take multiple forms due to our reliance on computers is repeated throughout the revised WPA Outcomes Statement. For example, in paragraph three of the Introduction, the original reference to “learning to write” has been replaced by “learning to write in any medium” (144), and the section of outcomes titled “Critical Thinking, Reading, and Writing” has become “Critical Thinking, Reading, and Composing” (145). Indeed, we are told explicitly that “digital technologies are changing writers’ relationships to their texts and audiences in evolving ways” (144), reminding us that writing will continue to change and that writing instruction must be open to change as well.

One thing that remains the same in the original and revised WPA OS is the assertion that “Rhetorical knowledge is the basis of composing” (145). However, the Rhetorical Knowledge section of the WPA Outcomes Statement has been revised to emphasize that students gain rhetorical knowledge from working with multiple kinds of texts. As elsewhere in the revision, the term *composing* is preferred to *writing*, an implied broadening of the forms writing can take. The revision of this section also highlights the importance of students’ learning to write for different audiences and situations. In the revision, the addition of “civic” to the original references to “disciplinary” and “professional” (145) as sites for writing expands both the kinds and purposes of writing beyond academic writing and creates an opening for students to design texts that engage in social action. In another move away from a single standard and toward multiplicity, the revised Statement eliminates the frequent reference to appropriateness that appeared in this section in the original, where students had been admonished to “Respond appropriately to different kinds of rhetorical situations,” “Use conventions of format and structure appropriate to the rhetorical situation,” and “Adopt appropriate voice, tone, and level of formality.”³ In contrast, the revision emphasizes that “Writers develop rhetorical knowledge by negotiating purpose, audience, context and conventions as they compose a variety of texts for different situations” (145). Indeed, the revision makes explicit that students gain rhetorical insight through negotiating multiplicity: Students “Develop facility in responding to a variety of situations and contexts calling for purposeful shifts in voice, tone, level of formality, design, medium, and/or structure” (145). All of these changes bode well for acknowledging and valuing differences in writing.

Other sections of the revised WPA Outcomes Statement also support the idea that composition courses should allow students opportunities to negotiate a variety of text forms. For example, in the section “Critical

Thinking, Reading, and Composing,” which focuses primarily on how students work with others’ texts, the list of source material includes not just “written texts,” but also “photographs, data sets, videos, or other materials” (145). Likewise, this section expands the kinds of texts students might create in response to these varied sources, including strategies such as considering “the interplay between verbal and nonverbal elements” and learning “how these features function for different audiences and situations” (146). Similarly, the strategies students use to engage with other texts now include “design/redesign” as well as traditional strategies such as response and synthesis (146). As in the original, outcomes related to Processes continue to emphasize the importance of learning flexible composing strategies that are recursive. In keeping with the broadened definition of writing throughout the revision, writing processes here are now called *composing processes*, and the work students produce now falls under the umbrella term *projects*. The original list of writing processes—“generating, revising, editing, and proofreading”—has been revised to further emphasize recursiveness—“reading, drafting, reviewing, collaborating, revising, rewriting, rereading, and editing” (146). Also interesting to note, Proof-reading has been eliminated from the list of composing processes, perhaps to signal a reduced emphasis on a single standard of correctness (“appropriateness”) or to delete the reference to “proof” as in page-proof, usually associated with print. The change may also be intended to acknowledge that editing and proofreading have become one process, typically conducted on the screen. Again readers are reminded that digital technologies contribute to the multiplicity of composing processes as students “adapt composing processes for a variety of technologies and modalities” (147).

One other way the revised WPA Outcomes Statement supports negotiating a multiplicity of discourses is in the expanded version of the final section, Knowledge of Conventions, where we are informed that conventions “arise from a history of use” and vary by genre, discipline, and occasion (147). This assertion makes clear that expectations for writing are situated in social contexts and are thus subject to change: “Successful writers understand, analyze, and negotiate conventions for purpose, audience, and genre, understanding that genres evolve in response to change in material conditions and composing technologies and attending carefully to emergent conventions” (147). Again, changes in conventions are attributed at least in part to “composing technologies,” suggesting that as technologies change, conventions will also change. In contrast with the original WPA Outcomes Statement, where students were expected to learn to control “such surface features as syntax, grammar, punctuation, and spelling,” in the revision, no such control is presumed. Instead, we now want students to “develop

knowledge of linguistic structures . . . through practice in composing and revising” (147). Similarly, instead of developing “knowledge of genre conventions ranging from structure and paragraphing to tone and mechanics,” we want students to “gain experience negotiating variations in genre conventions” as well as “learn common formats and/or design features for different kinds of texts” (148). The changes in this section thus emphasize what students learn from working with different text forms and reflecting on differing conventions, including different ways of acknowledging the use of others’ work. In a change from the original WPA Outcomes Statement, which asked students to “Practice appropriate means of documenting their work,” the revised version encourages students to “Explore the concepts of intellectual property (such as fair use and copyright) that motivate documentation conventions” as well as applying those conventions (148). The notion of exploring further highlights that documentation conventions are both multiple and evolving. This open-ended stance toward the inevitability of change is one of the most important revisions in the WPA Outcomes Statement 3.0.

TOWARD A REDESIGN OF WRITING OUTCOMES

In the revised WPA Outcomes Statement, there is much to admire in the efforts to move writing programs toward the radical possibility of achieving productive diversity. The revised Statement sends a clear message that writing is multiple, that purposes for writing are diverse, and that writing is changing and will continue to change. However, while the inclusion of multimodal composing in the revised WPA Outcomes Statement supports teaching students to negotiate a variety of text forms, it does not explicitly mention other differences that students should negotiate and value. Surely as schools and communities become increasingly multilingual, as ethnic and racial minorities become majorities, as gender differences become more visible and less stigmatized, and as differing religious identities are publicly expressed, expression in all modes will be affected. Although the revised WPA Outcomes Statement does not prevent individual teachers from treating a broader range of difference as assets, given that literacy education has historically sought to erase such differences and the very real difficulty of attending to difference in our age of standardization, we must do more in our classes to support difference, more than simply practice different modes.

There is also more for us to do in seeing students as designers engaged in significant acts that go beyond the arrangement of graphics in a brochure or video. While the revised WPA Outcomes Statement clearly signals the

importance of increased attention to design in writing classes—the term is used six times and in every section except for the section on Processes—as a field, we have not yet embraced the full meaning of design as a human-centered, strategic, generative approach to problem-solving.³ When the revised Statement tells us that “Writers also attend to elements of design, incorporating images and graphical elements into texts intended for screens” (144), the meaning of design is limited. Similarly, when the WPA OS asserts that students should “Develop facility in responding to a variety of situations and contexts calling for purposeful shifts in voice, tone, level of formality, design, medium, and/or structure” (145), design appears as merely one feature of a text. The revised WPA Outcomes Statement does begin to capture a fuller meaning of design in the Critical Thinking, Reading, and Composing section when it suggests that students should be able to “Use strategies—such as interpretation, synthesis, response, critique, and design/redesign—to compose texts that integrate the writer’s ideas with those from appropriate sources” (146). Here, grouped with other meaning-making acts such as interpretation and critique, design/redesign achieves roughly parallel status with traditional academic writing and, in suggesting that writers integrate their own ideas with the ideas expressed by sources, emphasizes how new ideas are produced. This use of the term *design* resonates with the New London Group’s idea that all meaning-making acts are acts of design, which “always involves making new use of old materials” (76). Such an approach to design helps prepare students to become “designers of social futures” (65) and make their worlds anew.

Writing programs have long had to negotiate between valuing students’ differences and teaching the standards associated with academic writing. We have only to count the times the word *appropriate* was used in the original WPA Outcomes Statement to be reminded of the degree to which we have internalized our role as gatekeepers, and hints of that role remain even in the revision. For example, appropriateness continues to be emphasized in the “Critical Thinking, Reading, and Composing” section. There, we’re told that the purpose of critical thinking is to enable students to “compose appropriately qualified and developed claims and generalizations,” practices which are “foundational for advanced academic writing” (146). Of the three instances in which the term *appropriate* appears in the revised WPA Outcomes Statement (compared to five in the original), two of them appear in this section. For example, students are still admonished to compose texts using “appropriate sources” (146), a reminder that students’ claims are limited by the legitimacy of others’ work. The revised WPA Outcomes Statement does expand the kinds of texts students can refer to, suggesting that students might compose and read “a diverse range of texts,” and that work

with multimodal texts might call for analyzing the “interplay between verbal and nonverbal elements.” However, students are still reminded to apply the familiar school standards for what constitutes an appropriate academic source. Similarly, even though the list of possible “primary and secondary research materials” now includes “informal electronic network and internet sources,” those new options come at the end of a long list that begins with “journal articles and essays, books, scholarly and professionally established and maintained databases or archives.” Such a list broadens the kinds of materials students might work with but fails to complicate assumptions about why “scholarly” and “professionally established” (146) sources are preferred and how such preferences may limit the views that contribute to knowledge-making. Likewise, while students might respond to texts by using design/redesign in addition to more traditional academic strategies of interpretation, synthesis, response, and critique, the potential for student agency implied by the term *design/redesign* is denuded by the explanation that these strategies are to be used to “compose texts that integrate the writer’s ideas with those from appropriate sources” (146), putting equal emphasis on the source text.

This question of judgment, of who decides what counts as an effective or valuable text in the marketplace of increasingly diverse ideas expressed in increasingly diverse forms is, unfortunately, not addressed in the recent revision of the Outcomes Statement. If multimodal composing is to afford students the opportunity to negotiate difference, to explore why teachers may value documented research papers over remixed videos or to consider whether anonymous apps like Yik Yak foster free speech or hate speech (or both), we need to make explicit that difference does matter: Not all writing has equal power, and the power of texts can shift when contexts shift. A significant change in the revised Outcomes Statement, then, is the deletion of the only original outcome that dealt with power: Students should “understand the relationships among language, knowledge and power” (62) and teachers in all disciplines should address “the relationships among language, knowledge, and power in their fields” (62). In contrast, the revised Statement omits references to power altogether.³ Given that a chief purpose of revising the Outcomes Statement was to include multimodal composing, and given the ways in which such composing challenges academic standards, this omission is a limitation. Students need to understand not just that there are diverse text forms to choose from (something they already know well) but what difference their choices make to whom and why. The persuasive value of different kinds of texts, including the *ethos* their composers convey as a result of their choices, is not simply the result of objective differences in modal affordances but is also affected by the power of

cultural and institutional systems eager to control meaning and representation. Furthermore, the Outcome Statement's increased recognition of the influence of digital technologies on composing necessitates vigilant attention to the role that power plays in determining access to these technologies. If we include multimodal composing in our courses but exclude discussions of language and power, we fail to fully prepare students to negotiate among the diverse contexts for writing where differences in power are obviously at play.

Some may say that working toward this kind of productive diversity in writing courses is more than the Outcomes Statement can be expected to achieve. It is, after all, a description of desired outcomes for what is often a single course. As a consensus document, the Outcomes Statement for First-Year Composition necessarily expresses a moderate—even, modest—position, describing present values rather than arguing for a vision of the future. As a document used to shape curriculum, teacher training, and assessment, the Outcomes Statement must remain eminently practical, with outcomes that are achievable under current conditions. Additionally, while most of us are not yet in a position of having to teach to a test, the specter of assessment may limit our enthusiasm for messy or complex writing outcomes, especially those that challenge accepted standards.

Nevertheless, by including multimodal composing, the revised Outcomes Statement has opened the door to a conception of writing instruction as preparation for just such a messy and complex future of writing, one which will call on all of us to be designers capable of transforming the past into something new. Toward that end, let me describe a few ways I have redesigned my writing courses in an attempt to use multimodal composing to support difference. In a redesign of my former approach to teaching documentation that focused on MLA only, I now ask students to document sources in different ways—using MLA style for an annotated bibliography (appropriate for an academic assignment), a magazine citation style (naming the author and source so they can be fact-checked) in a personal advocacy essay, adding URLs to presentation slides, and hyperlinking sources in texts published in their digital portfolios. To further highlight diverse ways to document sources, students discuss various positions on copyright, fair use, and re-mix and compose their own philosophy of source use. Though teaching citation style in this way is more complicated than teaching MLA rules, it also better reflects the choices open to writers as conventions continue to evolve.

Literacy pedagogies that acknowledge students as designers invite them to envision a future based on a transformed present. We encourage such transformation by asking and expecting students to use existing language

resources in ways that draw on their different perspectives, experiences, and means of expression; instead of emphasizing what students ought to do in response to a composition assignment, we ask students to imagine how they might apply their vision to respond to a rhetorical task. For example, I redesigned what once was a collaborative proposal assignment that included pre-determined deliverables into a design thinking assignment⁴ in which teams of students who share an interest in a problem use their different skills and perspectives to create an advocacy campaign that includes whatever discourse forms they think will be effective for their audience. Fostering difference in this way does not call out racial, ethnic, gender, or language differences for special attention but creates an environment in which students' composing of different kinds of texts provides a starting point for negotiating difference as key to effective composing in which all kinds of differences—their own, their design team's, their audience's—matter. At the end of a recent five-week summer composition class, I asked what one thing from the course students expected would stay with them after the class was over; several mentioned how much they had learned from listening to each others' perspectives on the subjects they chose to advocate for, ranging from hunting as a means of helping animals to legalizing euthanasia. What will stick with me especially is our discussion the day after the murders of nine parishioners at the historically black Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, South Carolina, when I asked students what difference rhetoric could make in such a situation. Not surprisingly, their responses varied. The returning veteran who had spent 15 years working in government intelligence responded that the government would just turn the murders into another anti-gun ploy; others insisted that words cannot stop someone bent on such destruction. We did agree, however, that words could make a difference in the aftermath of the violence, both in how we talk about what happened and how we listen to those who see things differently than we do. To work towards productive diversity in our classes, we must give students the freedom and the tools to choose for themselves how to create texts that can affect the problems they care about. We need to teach them the importance of listening to difference, to realize that when it comes to responding to complex problems, difference in perspective is not only expected but necessary and productive.

As an Available Design, the revised Outcomes Statement invites each of us to make of it what we will. I hope that in response, many of us will redesign our writing courses to help students see that composing will always involve a multiplicity of discourses, the result not just of new technologies but of the varied perspectives and experiences such technologies make visible. I, for one, will continue to welcome multimodal composing as a dis-

ruption in business-as-usual, a reminder of the inevitability of difference in the production of meaning, and of the need to be redesigning writing outcomes and myself as a writing teacher in the process.

NOTES

1. The newly revised version of the Outcomes Statement is available as a pdf at <http://wpacouncil.org/positions/outcomes.html>. Parenthetical citations refer to the version of the WPA Outcomes Statement published in the Fall 2014 issue of *WPA: Writing Program Administration*, 38.1. For the original WPA Outcomes Statement, see “WPA Outcomes Statement for First-Year Composition” *WPA: Writing Program Administration* vol. 23, no. 1 or *College English* vol. 63, no. 3.

2. I discuss this more robust concept of design, often referred to as “design thinking,” and its relevance to writing instruction in, “Design Thinking and the Wicked Problem of Teaching Writing,” *Computers and Composition* . vol. 33, 2014, pp 1-12.

3. In their discussion of the chief changes in the recent revision of the WPA Outcomes Statement, the revision task force offered this explanation for the deletion of references to language and power: “[M]ost researchers had conceded that neither they nor students were likely ever to fully ‘understand the collaborative and social aspects of writing processes’ or entirely ‘understand the relationships among language, knowledge, and power’” (Dryer 137).

4. Difference in experience and perspective is key to design thinking. In my classes, I rely on the design thinking guidelines popularized by Tim Brown and the design firm IDEO. IDEO has adapted design thinking for educators and offers a toolkit here: <http://www.ideo.com/work/toolkit-for-educators>.

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WPAs Reading SETs: Toward an Ethical and Effective Use of Teaching Evaluations

Courtney Adams Wooten, Brian Ray, and Jacob Babb

ABSTRACT

This article seeks to open a conversation about student evaluations of teaching (SET). Student evaluations have recently fueled much public discussion, given their role in advancement—as well as the risks they pose for contingent faculty. While SETs have historically been of interest to Rhetoric and Composition researchers, few articles in our field have engaged with their implications for writing instruction and administration. Our article uses a survey method approach to restart this conversation, reporting the results of a national survey of WPAs and identifying trends in how they perceive and use SETs at their institutions. We conclude with recommendations about the design and implementation of SETs in writing programs.

There is perhaps no topic in writing program administration more important and less studied than student evaluations of teaching (SETs). Debated fervently in professional publications such as *The Chronicle of Higher Education* and *Inside Higher Ed*, complained about after department meetings, and even lampooned in *The Onion*, student evaluations of teaching play a major role in personnel decisions made by WPAs, chairs, and deans. One of the most common methods for assessing instructors (Basow; Stark-Wroblewski et al.), SETs often carry greater weight in personnel decisions than observations or teaching portfolios. Meanwhile, writing teachers and WPAs seem to take institutionalized SET questions as unavoidable and unchangeable, or they have developed their own localized SET questions and procedures without engaging in a wider disciplinary conversation with colleagues about the design and structure of more effective evaluations. If they have, these discussions are not reflected in our discipline's publications. This article seeks to open a wider disciplinary conversation about SETs by reporting

on a national survey regarding the implementation of SETs by WPAs and concluding with recommendations about their design and implementation in writing programs.

While much research exists on SETs in higher education journals, our discipline has produced little scholarship on them since the 1960s. One major exception is Amy Dayton's collection *Assessing the Teaching of Writing*, in which WPAs address theories, histories, and best practices in a range of teaching evaluation instruments. Dayton overviews some current scholarship on SETs and concludes with recommendations that WPAs use them for formative rather than summative purposes, avoid norm referencing, and include them as one measure alongside teaching portfolios, reflective letters, and observations (41). Given the absence of research on SETs in our discipline, we designed a study drawing from survey results to determine the following: What kinds of SETs do WPAs use in their programs? How do they use them? Are they satisfied with the current systems? Do they envision the potential for change? Ultimately, our survey results have indicated WPAs do the best they can—unhappy with the design of their institutional SET forms, reluctant to propose their own, and yet attempting to use insights from them, as well as from observations and portfolios, to engage their faculty in mentorship, training, and professional development.

METHODOLOGY

We designed our survey using Qualtrics during the spring of 2014, consulting prior survey studies by Jill Gladstein; E. Shelley Reid and Heidi Estrem; and Chris Thaiss and Tara Porter. We reviewed early versions of the survey with senior WPAs at three different institutions, who helped us refine our survey before we posted the final version on the WPA-Listserv that summer. We then generated a list of several hundred institutions from sources such as the *U.S. News and World Report's* ranking of colleges and universities, state government websites, and online searches for accredited institutions in every U.S. state. From this master list, we then gathered contact information for the WPA or chair of the appropriate department at each institution. Our search for contact information resulted in a final list of 274 WPAs or department chairs to whom we emailed a detailed recruitment narrative outlining our intentions. We attempted to construct a representative sample of institutions from each state that included two-year colleges; private institutions (both secular and religious); minority-serving colleges and universities; and public universities, including regional, comprehensive, and flagship institutions. Our goal was to solicit responses from institutions

that reflect the numerous missions and varied populations of American higher education.

Our survey (see Appendix A) consisted of 28 questions in four general categories:

1. questions seeking demographic data and basic information about the design of institutional SETs (1–10),
2. focused but objective questions on how SETs are used at participants' institutions (11–16),
3. Likert scale and multiple-choice questions asking WPAs' perceptions and use of SETs in their programs (17–24), and
4. short answer questions inviting participants to elaborate on their perceptions (18–20, 24).

Our first set of questions sought data on fundamental issues regarding SETs such as how long they had been in use at a given institution, whether they were mandatory, if evaluations were completed online or on paper, and whether a program used separate forms for first-year writing courses. The second set of questions focused on key personnel who read SETs and use them to evaluate teacher performance—and specifically what role WPAs have in this process. The third and fourth sets of questions invited WPAs to assess and reflect on the effectiveness of SETs in measuring and improving instruction, as well as their impact on teachers in different ranks and positions.

We received 62 responses to the survey from June to September, yielding a response rate of 23 percent when calculated against our pool of 272 institutions (given the overlap of our direct email list with members of WPA-L, it is difficult to report a more exact response rate). Despite the admittedly small sample, we found value in the responses we received. Of those respondents, 89 percent identified as current WPAs, although some respondents clarified later that department chairs served as WPAs at their institutions. Our results represent an overwhelming response from four-year institutions (90%), 42 of which offer some level of graduate education, and a smaller response (10%) from faculty at two-year colleges. The skew toward four-year institutions may be due to a number of factors: some institutions lack a clear administrator in charge of first-year writing courses; some WPAs may have too little time to respond to every survey request they receive; others may not identify strongly enough with the role of WPA or organizations like CWPA to see our project as relevant to their immediate concerns. Certainly, determining the WPA or equivalent contact at institutions other than four-year colleges and universities was challenging because

websites frequently only listed a department chair. It is possible that these institutions simply did not have an official WPA or someone who identifies as a WPA.

We found a number of trends that we summarize here and then explain more fully with supporting data in the next several sections. First, WPAs must negotiate authority over personnel decisions based on SETs. Often, they must share responsibility with other faculty or defer to department heads and committees. Second, WPAs often find themselves primarily fulfilling the role of mentor or coach for instructors determined by others (i.e., deans, chairs) to have received poor teaching evaluations. Third, WPAs are keenly aware of the limitations of SETs, although they report that acontextual data focused on raw scores compared against department averages is the norm. Fourth, almost half of the WPAs surveyed do not have direct access to students' narrative comments on SETs—a source of data seen as crucial for interpreting numerical scores. Finally, WPAs express a need to counter the largely punitive and biased instrument with other measures of teaching effectiveness.

NEGOTIATING AUTHORITY BETWEEN WPAs AND OTHER FACULTY IN SET USE

Agency and authority over SETs figured as a prominent theme in survey responses, especially when WPAs described themselves as having minimal or incomplete control over personnel decisions, including mentoring and hiring or firing. In some cases, WPAs only made suggestions to department chairs or committees on hiring and renewal. Generally, however, WPAs have access to SET data, even if personnel decisions are the purview of other administrators. Survey results showed that 76% are able to read SET responses, but 78% stated that department chairs also read the SETs. The 78% figure seems to be a clear indication that many WPAs lack clear autonomy over personnel decisions that may derive from course evaluations. We became especially interested in expressions of tension in responses to one survey question that asked WPAs to “elaborate on decisions or actions the WPA at your institution takes to address what are seen as negative/concerning course evaluations for an instructor.” Of the 41 responses, 10 explicitly referenced department chairs while another 4 described WPAs having limited authority. One response stated that the writing program is housed in a first-year experience program and that the director of the FYE program—not the WPA—handles potential problems that arise in SETs. So, on the one hand, WPAs are accountable for student success in first-year writing courses. They are the ones directly charged with training and communi-

cating with the instructors who teach these courses. When programs fall short of expectations, WPAs bear the most responsibility. However, when it comes to the most important decisions about who works for them, it appears that WPAs often have a disproportionately small level of oversight.

Respondents explained varying levels of authority concerning SET results. One respondent simply states, “Lecturers and tenure-line faculty course evaluations are mostly dealt with at the department committee level” in contrast to adjuncts, whose evaluations are read by first-year composition coordinators. Another outlines the limits of their authority: “We do have TT faculty who teach first-year writing, but I (the WPA) have no control over their curriculum, no access to their evaluations, and no authority to change anything about their course assignments.” These comments are consistent with the WPA role at many institutions—limited or no authority over other tenure-track faculty.

The second theme, regarding power differentials between department chairs and WPAs, splits along two lines: mentoring abilities and hiring/firing abilities. Several WPAs identify their central mode of intervention as mentoring in contrast with hiring/firing, a power often possessed solely by the chair, regardless of rank or position. One respondent states, “At our institution the head rather than the WPA makes decisions regarding appointments and course assignments. The writing coordinator is in a coaching position.” Another responds, “The WPA role is one of mentorship and support. The assessments are formative in nature, not evaluative. Evaluation is at the discretion of the head with input and advice from the WPA.” A third responded, “The WPA may provide professional development for writing instruction, but the WPA has absolutely no authority over who teaches writing intensive courses or how they are taught.” In these responses, mentoring is coded as *coaching*, *mentorship and support*, and *professional development*.

Even when WPAs are in charge of mentoring, they sometimes do not decide who to mentor or why. In response to “How does your institution distinguish between good, average, and concerning course evaluations?” one respondent answered, “scores in the low 3’s or worse will cause the Dean to ask the Chair to ask the WPA to contact you for mentoring.” The dean determines who is mentored even though it is ultimately the WPA who carries out this process. Taking such decisions out of WPAs’ hands tends to enforce the idea of SETs as inevitable measures of teaching effectiveness that cannot be contested. In such a scenario, the tacit assumption is that the WPA is not capable of interpreting SET data, only carrying out the will of the university. Sometimes, the WPA has more authority to enact sanctions on NTT faculty than on TT faculty, although lines of authority

can be muddled. One respondent stated, “With TAs, direct action; with others, chair’s responsibility.” Another distinguishes between GTAs, whom the WPA can choose to mentor and potentially dismiss from employment, and TT faculty, over whom the WPA has no control. Finally, one respondent answers,

Adjunct, FT/NTT, or TA faculty who earn low scores will prompt the chair to email the WPA to suggest further mentoring. Hiring/firing are the purview of salary committee and adjunct committee, for whom course evaluations are one of multiple factors.

In such cases, the WPA must defer to multiple stakeholders when deciding how to act on SET data and can take, at best, an indirect stance on such information—even when they are perhaps interacting the most with the target instructors.

A few responses indicated more collaborative relationships between these figures. As one respondent indicated, the “WPA collaborates with chair to adjust teaching load, assignments, and mentoring.” Another echoed the positive relationship between WPA and chair: “In conjunction with the chair of dept and chair of the dept personnel committee, the WPA identifies instructors who seem to be struggling and creates a plan for support and ‘intervention.’” A third replied, “The WPA works closely with the chair to identify concerns among our composition faculty and to establish systems for both formative/constructive feedback/mentoring and increased oversight/clear benchmarks for improvement and follow-through for contract renewal.” In summary, a recurring situation is that WPAs usually negotiate or share interpretation and decision-making processes with a department chair or committee regarding SETs for all faculty who teach first-year courses. One of the survey respondents directly addressed this issue in his or her closing comment:

I would also like to see all faculty, regardless of employment status have to administer evaluations [sic] every semester. Full-time faculty teach about 50% of our classes. Without the input of students in their courses, we have an incomplete picture of our students’ experiences in FYW classes on our campus.

Clearly, struggles over departmental governance and authority affect not just our individual work lives but our writing programs. In order to be effective, WPAs must have decision-making power. They are the most qualified to make programmatic decisions. However, our survey results show that, at least when it comes to SETs, WPAs often have less autonomy than they desire. We find this trend concerning because course evaluation forms are an important tool for assessing a program’s strengths and weak-

nesses, and the data they yield has an undeniable impact by determining who teaches what and how.

WPAs' ATTITUDES TOWARD SETs

Our survey revealed a widespread dissatisfaction among WPAs toward SETs. Despite such frustration, though, they feel constrained by their institutions in several ways that we explore in this section. For instance, our study found that 49% of WPAs “do not have plans to offer a separate [writing program] form,” and an additional 25% “do not have a separate evaluation form, but would like to in the future,” while only 13% said they have a separate form for their first-year writing courses. Finally, 13% said they use a separate form “in addition to the department and/or university’s form.” The 74% of respondents who only have access to results on generic SETs seem at a disadvantage. While the generic forms may ensure reliability across programs and departments, they do so at the expensive of validity. The types of general questions asked by generic forms address vague notions of teaching effectiveness, irrespective of what many WPAs are likely to identify as disciplinary best practices—use of peer review, introduction to research strategies and library resources, emphasis on higher-order concerns in papers. Therefore, the generic forms do not provide the most accurate information about a teacher’s ability to help students learn to write.

As respondents reported, the most common questions on university SET forms instead address “Clarity of expectations/assignments” (80%), “Preparedness” (74%), “Instructor’s level of knowledge” (69%), “Clear presentation of material” (63%), and “Quality and/or relevance of course materials” (61%). All of these questions relate to students’ perceptions of their instructors and their instructors’ handling of course materials. However, these questions are at best indirect measures of teacher effectiveness. At worst, they allow students to deflect responsibility for their learning onto their instructors. Questions directed at writing-specific instructional practices typically appear in writing program specific SETs rather than these general SETs. Most WPAs encounter information from generalized SETs that does not provide a clear view of how instructors teach writing. In some cases, student responses to such forms may obfuscate or misrepresent teacher effectiveness, given that students may not immediately appreciate the value of our best practices or desire instructional methods we train teachers to avoid—lecture-based teaching, feedback emphasizing grammar and mechanics, tests on knowledge acquisition rather than writing to learn, etc.

Administering SETs electronically, a trend that corresponds with an increase in online education, also determines to some extent how WPAs regard their current SETs. Among respondents, 45% stated they use online forms, 31% print, and 27% both online and print. Comments regarding whether WPAs are satisfied with “the current course evaluation process” and what they would change indicate mixed feelings about this trend. Several respondents indicated that they were moving their SETs online by choice. One was in a period “to test the online system and begin collecting data on the evaluation questions themselves.” Another had “just put in an online [sic] procedure” to start in Fall 2015, while another hoped “to go online for our mid-semester evals” since their end-of-semester SETs were already online. Part of the motivation to go online may, for some WPAs, be the ease with which data can be captured and analyzed. However, other respondents indicated that low response rates diminished their ability to rely on this data. The clearest statement of this problem was from one respondent who answered, “Moving it [the SET form] online has produced a decrease in participation. We need strategies to increase student participation.” Several other respondents also spoke to this issue, stating “response rates are too low to get any kind of reliable data,” “the return rate is usually so low that the results are invalid,” and “moving to an online system has greatly decreased participation in students.” A couple of WPAs expressed distress over low response rates and emphasized the need for strategies to encourage response so SETs could provide meaningful data.

Most surprisingly, according to the survey, WPAs do not have as much access to narrative comments on SETs as one might expect. Although 76% of survey respondents indicated that they can (and do) read the statistical summaries, only 58% reported that they have access to comments. Those WPAs who do not have access to comments find themselves significantly hamstrung in their ability to read and interpret numerical data. In fact, numerical scores without such narrative commentary are acontextual at best. Two respondents expressed a clear sense of frustration at this situation: “I do not have access to non-numeric data (including comments) for all faculty, which I find richer” and “Access to written comments [is a desired change]. The only information released to WPA are the statistical figures for each instructor.” WPAs recognize the disconnect between available information and desired reading practices. The survey asked WPAs to rate the “relative importance of comments to numerical scores or statistical summaries” on a Likert scale of 1–10 (least to most important). The average value was a 7.16, with a majority of responses falling into the upper half of the scale.

WPAs also expressed ambivalence regarding established practices for determining what counts as good SET results, aside from numerically high scores. A question about the accuracy of evaluations produced an average score of 5.60 on a Likert scale of 1–10. On a subsequent question, “How does your institution distinguish between good, average, and concerning course evaluations?”, 8 of the 43 responses (19%) indicated uncertainty about this process or failure on the institution’s part to make such distinctions. Comments on what made the difference between good and bad course evaluations ranged from “I’m not sure” to “Uncertain.” Meanwhile, comments on how institutions helped included “Not very well,” “Not very systematically,” and “Depends. There’s no specific formula.” Such responses illustrate a need for more discussion on how to use SETs effectively and ethically. If the only clear value of SETs lies in their quantitative data and WPAs are unable to articulate what this data means in terms of teaching effectiveness, then it is not reasonable to rely on them very heavily for personnel decisions.

One of the only commonalities in SET use is the calculation of averages, with 23 out of the 43 respondents (53%) relying on such raw quantitative data to distinguish between good, average, and concerning SETs. Some WPAs indicated that numerical data compared to averages was the only way institutions distinguished between SETs: “against the department average,” “Statistically,” and “Comparison to average” were typical comments. Others described in more detail how these numbers were interpreted: “Statistical averages per course: higher than average is excellent, within a couple decimal tenths is fine, lower is concerning.” Another stated that “It varies from department to department, school to school. I believe our department sees a 3.0 (5-pt scale) as acceptable, 4.0 as good,” and another replied that

Comparison to university means based on final two questions: rating of teaching and rating of this course. Means are high (4-point-something out of 5); scores of very high 4’s may earn you a commendation letter for excellence in general education teaching from the vice provost; scores in the low 3’s or worse will cause the Dean to ask the Chair to ask the WPA to contact you for mentoring.

These comments illustrate a major weakness with institutional readings of SETs and WPA involvement in this process: when SETs are read against an average, the number itself begins to assume meaning without appropriate context and attention to external factors such as the instructor’s age, gender, level of course, and/or if course is required or elective. Focusing on SET averages alone is difficult to justify, unless those numbers are somehow cor-

related to other measures of teaching effectiveness and interpreted in light of narrative comments.

Another unsettling trend in survey responses was WPAs' understanding of how external factors can affect SETs. In response to one question which asked WPAs to rate the influence of such factors on a scale of 1 to 10, WPAs readily admitted that expected grade (average response of 7) and course difficulty (average response of 7.06) might influence a teacher's SET scores. However, WPAs are less likely to admit that SETs are influenced by intrinsic factors: gender (average response of 5.58), ethnicity (average response of 6), and appearance (average response of 5.69). In fact, research has shown these do affect SET responses, often significantly (Basow; Basow, Phelan, and Capotosto; Basow, Codos, and Martin; Bavishi, Hebl, and Madera; Reid; Sprague and Massoni). Reluctance to acknowledge the importance of these instructor-related variables could affect how WPAs evaluate SET data. Therefore, we strongly encourage WPAs to consider how gender, age, ethnicity, and other such factors may have influenced an instructor's course evaluations when making personnel decisions. A WPA may need additional information about the class demographics, as well as the instructor's reflections on the semester, in order to determine the most appropriate course of action.

A more positive commonality lies in the practice of reading narrative comments for patterns. Among WPAs who report access to comments, 13 of the 43 respondents (30%) relied on pattern recognition, either alone or in conjunction with numerical scores. For those WPAs who use both comments and numbers, the quantitative and qualitative information provides different windows into an instructor's teaching. As one respondent stated, "High averages plus strong comments are good; moderate averages plus moderate comments are average; a pattern of student concern and low averages demonstrate cause for concern." Another described a process of "comparing comments and numerical scores." A third stated, "Instructor experience relative to numerical scores; patterns in student comments." In these cases, WPAs were able to read SETs more contextually. Other respondents wrote that "[t]he WPA and administrative team read all student evaluations; the questionnaire includes only qualitative questions - no numeric scales," while another described a process in which the "[d]epartment chair (same as WPA here) looks at trends, primarily in written comments." These WPAs see the combined use of numerical scores and narrative comments as essential to the appropriate, contextualized use of SETs. Several reasons may explain an instructor's high or low numerical scores, and it is incumbent on WPAs to discover those reasons rather than risk false assumptions about someone's effectiveness based on numbers alone.

NTT faculty are perhaps the most vulnerable to the merely summative use of SETs, which focuses only on statistical summaries and department averages. Survey respondents ranked the importance of SETs for different types of faculty, saying SETs were most important for adjunct faculty, GTAs, tenure-track faculty, and lecturers. SETs are least important for tenured faculty. Such institutional hierarchies are reflected in survey responses about how likely instructors are to “modify materials or pedagogy based on course evaluations.” WPAs tended to rate adjunct, non-tenure track, and untenured faculty as the most likely to modify their materials in response to SETs. By contrast, they ranked tenured faculty as the least likely to change their materials. Although these are WPAs’ perceptions and do not directly reflect reality, they speak to the differences WPAs notice in the ways SETs are used or not by different faculty ranks in their departments. The job security offered by tenure lends the perception, if nothing else, of senior faculty as immune to SETs. By contrast, NTT faculty have no such security; the perception of their positions as replaceable or even disposable means they must always demonstrate their worth through the means authorized by the university—in this case, SETs.

Although SETs appear to serve a punitive function at many universities, they play a surprisingly minor role in the promotion of teaching effectiveness. Here, we wish to distinguish between teaching effectiveness and teaching excellence. Teaching effectiveness refers to a basic level of competency required for continued employment. By contrast, excellence connotes a higher standard held up for other teachers as an ever elusive goal. Poor SETs often signal ineffectiveness at teaching to administrators and therefore can result in disciplinary action. Meanwhile, our survey found that excellent SETs contribute little to any notion of a teacher’s excellence. Other than securing continued employment, they do little for a teacher’s career advancement compared to other measures, such as classroom observations and teaching portfolios. We asked survey respondents, “How do course evaluations figure into non-promotional decisions such as teaching awards and other recognition?” In this context, 19 out of 45 respondents (42%) indicated that SETs figured very little or not at all into such awards. Only 7 respondents indicated that SETs figured centrally into these awards, and the remaining 19 respondents indicated that they were used in conjunction with other factors such as course observations or that they were uncertain about how SETs were used in such decisions. Clearly, SETs, which are supposed to indicate teaching effectiveness broadly, are often not used to point to how well a teacher instructs students but, instead, to how badly a teacher instructs students. If SETs are not valued as part of the criteria for giving

teaching awards, WPAs may want to openly question why they would be used to sanction some instructors and not used to commend others.

Our survey results emphasize how much SETs are interwoven into the larger discussions in our field about unethical labor practices and the evaluation of instructors. These responses illustrate the punitive aspects of SETs when they are used inappropriately to pinpoint, sanction, and sometimes dismiss faculty. Summative use of SETs alone can have severe, lasting consequences for individuals teaching in our programs, especially those non-tenure track faculty who are often the most vulnerable to administrative decisions. These survey results, therefore, serve as a collective call to action to re-evaluate how we gather and interpret SET information and how we choose to use this information with different groups of faculty. In the conclusion, we offer a set of best practices based, in large part, on our survey results, to help the field recognize changes that need to be made so that SETs are used appropriately and fairly.

REFRAMING EXPECTATIONS: TOWARD BEST PRACTICES IN DESIGNING AND READING SETs

No WPA responding to our survey supported the strictly summative use of SETs. Rather, WPAs wanted greater agency in implementing formative use meant to professionalize teachers and inform their practices. This position also reflects prevailing scholarship on SETs in higher education research. As Ramsden puts it, “No one is going to be frightened into becoming a better teacher by the threat of student-ratings” (232). A culture of fear and anxiety about SETs is more likely to produce lenient grading and lowered standards, primarily because of the belief that they may raise an instructor’s evaluation scores. Furthermore, research also affirms WPAs’ reluctance to use acontextual statistics on SETs based merely on department averages, which are not statistically reliable or valid (Stark and Freishtat). Instead, WPAs should look at distributions of responses where clusters of scores occur and at students’ response rates.

Based on the survey results and secondary research, then, we wish to offer a set of best practices regarding the use of SETs to assess teacher effectiveness:

1. Writing programs should implement SETs that reflect their own pedagogical values and local conditions. These evaluations may be administered in addition to, if not in place of, their institution’s mandated forms.

2. Those who make personnel decisions using SETs should collect as much context as possible and resist the temptation and institutional pressure to only use statistical summaries. WPAs should always be given access to narrative comments, and they should consider external factors such as gender, ethnicity, and appearance as possible influences on students' evaluations of their instructors.
3. WPAs should ensure high response rates to course evaluations by having them completed in class (in a computer lab or on smartphones, tablets, or laptops) or by offering incentives (extra credit to everyone if a certain percentage complete them, a replaced quiz grade, etc.). Otherwise, response rates are too low for results to be usable.
4. WPAs should clarify with other faculty (department chairs, committees) who has the right to read composition instructors' SETs and why. If other faculty have access to these SETs, then they should inform, not countermand, WPAs' decisions about personnel.
5. Programs and departments should develop consistent criteria across faculty ranks regarding the impact of SETs on personnel decisions as well as the promotion of excellence in the form of raises and awards. WPAs should be given the authority to mentor tenured faculty who receive negative feedback on composition courses. At the least, tenured faculty who consistently have problems teaching composition courses should be assigned elsewhere.
6. WPAs and other supervisors should collaborate to ensure that faculty at all ranks are incorporating feedback from SETs into their course materials—such as syllabi, lesson plans, teaching strategies and assignments. The annual review process for all faculty can be adapted to provide accountability for making such pedagogical changes.
7. Programs and departments should strive for transparency in how they use SETs. They can achieve this by composing specific policy language on what qualifies as excellent, good, fair, and poor SET results. Written policies would also describe standard procedures for addressing lower SETs. This language could be used in a separate document or integrated into existing documentation on ten-

ure, promotion, and expectations of graduate and other non-tenure track faculty.

We hope these best practices will help to foster more disciplinary discussion among WPAs about the appropriate design and use of SETs. They may be especially helpful for newer, less experienced WPAs as well as those who have less control over the evaluation process.

Our aim in this article is not to answer all of our questions about SETs but to orient WPA discourse toward them in hopes of articulating a set of coherent positions on how to design and implement SETs that can serve various stakeholders. By learning how WPAs approach SETs, we can begin to formulate a cohesive set of principles rooted in our own tested values and theories about writing instruction. Ideally, we envision a movement toward the creation of locally-appropriate evaluation forms and procedures that balance the needs of all stakeholders—students, teachers, and administrators. This move would better represent the teaching that occurs in writing programs and practices that take a broader view of teaching effectiveness than simply SET results. Such revision, however, must take place within the context of discussions in the field and at individual institutions about best practices regarding the formative and equitable use of SETs. Finally, we conclude by noting that a vast majority of research on SETs gathered for this article appears in publications from other fields such as psychology, business, accounting, and foreign language instruction. Such scholarship, though not specific to composition, can help orient our own investigations into SETs, but we want to assert the importance of studies about SETs specific to writing instruction. Teachers and WPAs can benefit from richer study and discussion of SETs in the context of our own pedagogies and values.

APPENDIX A: SURVEY QUESTIONS

1. What is your administrative role at your institution?
2. Please identify your type of institution
3. Please indicate the region of your university:
4. Please describe the size of your institution;
5. Please indicate how many of the following you have teaching first-year writing courses (adjunct faculty, lecturers, graduate teaching assistants (GTAs), tenure-track faculty, tenured faculty);
6. How long can you say with certainty that your institution and/or program has conducted course evaluations?
7. Are course evaluations mandatory at your institution?

8. Does your institution and/or program use print or online processes for course evaluations?
9. Does your institution have separate course evaluation forms for first-year writing courses?
10. Please indicate the nature and type of questions your course evaluation form asks. Check all that apply:
11. Does your institution produce statistical summaries of individual instructors' course evaluations on a semesterly or yearly basis?
12. Does the WPA at your institution read these statistical summaries?
13. Who else reads these summaries? (Please check all that apply.)
14. Does the WPA and/or institution generate statistical averages for evaluations by course or department?
15. Does the WPA see or read students' evaluative comments that have been excerpted by faculty in cover letters and/or teaching philosophies?
16. Does the WPA see or read students' comments on the evaluation forms themselves?
17. What do you see as the relative importance of comments to numerical scores or statistical summaries? (1 = much less important, 5=equal, 10 = much more important)
18. How does your institution distinguish between good, average, and concerning course evaluations?
19. What assessment of course evaluations is the WPA most likely to perform for the following: (adjunct faculty, lecturers, GTAs, tenure-track faculty, tenured faculty)
20. What decisions is the WPA most likely to make based on course evaluations for the following: (adjunct faculty, lecturers, graduate teaching assistants (GTAs), tenure-track faculty, tenured faculty)
21. Please elaborate on decisions or actions the WPA at your institution takes to address what are seen as negative/concerning course evaluations for an instructor:
22. How do course evaluations figure into non-promotional decisions such as teaching awards or other recognition?
23. How important would you say course evaluations are for the following: (adjunct faculty, lecturers, graduate teaching assistants (GTAs), tenure-track faculty, tenured faculty)
24. How likely do you think an instructor would be to modify materials or pedagogy based on course evaluations?
25. How accurately do you think course evaluations reflect teacher effectiveness? (10 = very accurately, 1 = not accurately at all)

26. How likely do you think course evaluations are influenced by external factors (grades, personality, appearance, gender, sexuality, ethnicity)?
27. Are you satisfied with the current course evaluation process for first-year writing courses at your institution? What would you change?
28. Please enter any final comments you have about the survey here:

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(Re)Identifying the gWPA Experience

Talinn Phillips, Paul Shovlin, and Megan L. Titus

ABSTRACT

Building on the authors' recent scholarship theorizing the concept of the liminal WPA, this article presents findings of an empirical study on graduate student administrators' workloads. The term liminal WPA describes a divergence between duties, institutional status, compensation, and authority that is not evident in the field's traditional taxonomy of gfj/sWPAs. Since existing scholarship suggests some gWPAs may be operating as liminals, this study investigates graduate administrators' workloads empirically through a survey and follow-up interviews. The findings reveal that graduate students engage in the full range of WPA work, including directing programs. They also show that half of respondents reported working more hours than in their contracts and that nearly one-third believed their workloads were more like those of j- or sWPAs than that of graduate students. Based on these and other findings, the authors argue that most respondents had positive experiences, but a small, significant number had far more complicated and ambiguous experiences and are better described as liminal WPAs. The authors also argue that accurate understandings of the work of graduate students and liminal WPAs are vital for supporting them successfully and offer a heuristic to ameliorate liminality if institutions are forced to develop liminal WPA positions.

In *GenAdmin*, Charlton et al. describe a new generation of graduate students who have trained for WPA work during graduate school and make it a primary professional goal, even actively pursuing WPA positions before tenure. Asking the questions, "What difference does it make when we choose WPA work?" and "[W]hat happens when more and more of us begin to choose writing program administration as the focus of our scholarly identity?" (xii; emphasis original), *GenAdmin* suggests that we are in the midst of an important shift in the who and why of WPA work.

What, then, does the reality of *GenAdmin* imply for the way the field has traditionally understood WPA work and workers? WPA workers are often described in terms of their institutional status/relationship to the tenure track: senior WPA (sWPA), junior WPA (jWPA), and graduate WPA (gWPA). This taxonomy—s-, j-, and gWPA—presumes an idealized trajectory from graduate student to tenured professor, privileging sWPAs as the goal and making assumptions about the work one does based on that worker’s institutional status. Tenured WPAs, or sWPAs, are typically responsible for the full range of WPA work because of the institutional agency they hold, resources they can access, and their permanence as tenured professors. Untenured but often in a tenure-track position, jWPAs may be assistants to sWPAs or have already taken on director positions. Finally, gWPAs are often seen as office assistants who manage the less skilled aspects of the job, work with TAs as mentors, or plan TA events. Such gWPAs’ positions ostensibly exist to provide graduate students with mentored exposure to the field and its work and to provide some preparation for future work as an sWPA.

Yet as we described in our 2014 article, “Thinking Liminally,” our personal experiences suggested that the field’s generic gWPA job description is far less tidy than it appears and the actual work of gWPAs is not always low stakes. There, we argued that many WPAs might be better served by instead viewing themselves as liminal WPAs. We conceived of the term liminal WPA to describe WPAs who operate outside of the g/j/sWPA taxonomy—a taxonomy that also orients much of the field’s research. Those identifying as liminal WPAs may be graduate students, NTT faculty or administrators, or interim directors. Sometimes, the distinction between TT and NTT may even become muddled for a liminal, as a path to tenure may be designed for a lower institutional status, such as that of lecturer or instructor. A liminal may have an sWPA’s job description but lack authority because she does not have the requisite degree or has a degree from the wrong field or is in an interim position while institutions search for long-term WPAs. The overarching traits are that liminal WPAs have the high-stakes, politically charged workloads of sWPAs but lack the institutional permanence, status, and/or resources that support sWPAs’ work. Though liminals have much in common with jWPAs, jWPAs do typically benefit from having the protection of the degree, of being on the tenure track, and of having a clearly defined professional path. Liminals are likely to be at-will employees with short-term or no contracts whereas jWPAs typically have some status protections as tenure-track faculty, even though they have not yet earned tenure. At a minimum, jWPAs benefit from the departmental investment that accompanies a tenure-track search. Put simply, liminal-

als are in more precarious situations than jWPAs but often have far greater responsibilities than gWPAs.

In articulating what it means to be a liminal WPA, it became clear that the field needs to know more about the experiences of other liminals, yet liminals are not easily identifiable because they hold a range of positions and statuses. We suspect many liminals remain hidden, as they work in job titles that do not accurately reflect their workloads and they may avoid participating in ongoing dialogues about that work because they do not feel they belong in those conversations. The nature of those that the term *liminal WPA* seeks to uncover means that it may be many years before the numbers of liminals in the field can be accurately described. It is likely that many liminals aren't connected to resources such as this journal, the Council of Writing Program Administrators, or the WPA-L, which could provide them with support and track their demographics.

The scholarship written by graduate students (see, e.g., Inman; Helmbrecht and Kendall; Mattison; Jukuri and Williamson) suggests that a number of them may actually be working in liminal WPA positions. Thus as an alternative and starting point to studying liminals as a whole, we surveyed graduate WPAs and conducted follow-up interviews to gain a data-driven understanding of their workloads and to begin identifying how many graduate student administrators might be better described as liminals.¹ We use these graduate students' experiences as liminals in order to shed light on liminals more broadly. Based on our findings, we argue that while most graduate students in our study had positive experiences, a small but significant number had far more complicated and ambiguous experiences and are better described as liminal WPAs. We use the concept of liminal writing program administration to tease out those complications and to further argue that articulating graduate students' work accurately is vital to valuing their contributions to the field and to supporting their success.

THE NATURE OF GRADUATE STUDENT WPAs

Most WPA literature provides pictures of gWPAs engaged in low stakes administrative assistant work, although gWPAs may also shape curriculum and monitor the work of fellow TAs (and possibly adjunct faculty) (see, e.g., Ebest; Latterell). In contrast, graduate students' own accounts of their work are much more fraught and depict workloads that are more complicated, more politically charged, and more comparable to those of sWPAs. Brown's "The Peer Who Isn't a Peer: Authority and the Graduate Student Administrator" highlights the liminality of a gWPA who doesn't fit into neat taxonomies. From the outset, Brown's experience is confined and obscured by the

language gWPA. She “supervised TAs and lecturers, visited classes, talked to students, and held mandatory staff meetings,” also noting that she led the final week-long assessment for the program. She writes, “But I was not a WPA, and I felt as though I had no real power or authority” (121). Without knowing that she was a student, others would likely identify Brown as a WPA, not a gWPA, given the authority and responsibilities expected of her. The term *WPA* carries its own baggage, though, since it typically refers to tenured or tenure-track faculty. In either case, research on gWPAs or sWPAs excludes those like Brown because her status and duties don’t line up with how our discipline traditionally conceives of gWPAs.

Joyce Olewski Inman, a graduate student in the same department where she became interim director of composition, highlights challenges—both for herself and for the writing program—of being a liminal WPA. She accepted the position believing she could be successful because of her long history at the institution and her positive relationships with both faculty and staff, but writes:

Teaching a six-hour graduate practicum as a graduate student is difficult to say the least. Comments from colleagues who feel I am under-qualified are always disconcerting. [M]ost challenging, however, is attempting to serve—with no real voice in departmental decisions—as one of the few advocates for our undergraduate student population. (149–50)

A disconnect between identities as graduate students and workload of the job is clear in the narratives of graduate students (see also Helmbrecht and Kendall; Mattison), but there has been little movement to integrate the implications of such narratives into mainstream WPA knowledge. Thus the realities of gWPA work remain (merely) as narratives or scary stories, rather than used to inform the field’s strategies or best practices.

There is also little research into graduate students’ actual workloads and their feelings about them. Edgington and Taylor open their 2007 study by noting this lack and attempt to begin addressing it. Their survey revealed that graduate student administrators felt they were gaining valuable work experience, but the survey also revealed that many students didn’t seem to realize that their positions made them likely to be exploited:

[T]here was virtually no mention of themselves as a form of cheap labor. While many did remark that they felt overworked and misused at times, most also appeared to believe that they were filling these positions because of their ability to do so or because the department was interested in offering them a chance for ‘professional develop-

ment.’ It did not seem to occur to them that a major reason for their inclusion was to save money nor was there any real discussion of their time being used to complete less valued tasks . . . (160).

Edgington and Taylor’s research was quite important to us as it is the only empirical research that really examines gWPAs’ workloads. However, the survey is quite brief and the short answer format prevents readers from understanding the relationships between responses. Respondents were asked about job duties, but readers don’t know anything about the level of responsibility participants were expected to enact in those duties or about the mentorship available. We felt it particularly important to collect data that compared gWPAs’ contracted hours with actual hours worked, especially since Elder et al.’s survey demonstrates that the number of graduate students pursuing WPA positions is on the rise.

METHODOLOGY

We conducted an electronic survey about graduate WPAs’ work, recruiting participants via listservs and personal invitations (see Appendix A online at <http://bit.ly/2g0hVUS> or follow the QR code). The survey received IRB approval and all participants gave consent.² We received 131 responses. Of those, 73 responded from the perspective of jWPAs or sWPAs reporting on their program’s treatment of graduate students and 58 responded based on their graduate school experiences. We focus here on those 58 responses. The method of participant recruitment makes it impossible to compute a response rate; however, as a point of comparison, at the time of writing there were 149 graduate student members of the CWPA. Our sample size is also comparable to Edgington and Taylor’s of 63 (153).



All 58 graduate student respondents were from institutions in the continental US with the vast majority (92.5%) responding from the perspective of a public four-year institution that awards advanced degrees. The next largest group of respondents (3.8%) was from private four-year institutions awarding advanced degrees. Most respondents were at large institutions of 20,000 students or more (70.4%) with 24.1% of respondents coming from institutions with 10,000–20,000 students. The number of respondents from smaller schools was much lower (1.9% at 5,001–10,000 students; 0% at 2,001–5,000 students; 3.7% at fewer than 2,000 students). We attempted to recruit participants from within the TYCA community, but with little success.

The responses were analyzed by cross-tabulating responses through SurveyMonkey. Once trends and patterns were observed in the data, specific questions were further filtered for responses from our 58 graduate student respondents.

Megan then conducted semi-structured follow-up interviews with nine graduate student respondents using questions we drafted jointly based on our initial analysis of the survey (see Appendix B online: <http://bit.ly/2g1lxsf>). The interview aspect of our study also received IRB approval and all interviewees gave their consent. The interview questions asked about material conditions of interviewees' work, their workload, about their relationships with others (graduate students, supervisors, faculty), about satisfaction with their positions, and sought recommendations for the field's treatment of graduate students. Based on Geisler's method for analyzing spoken data, Talinn segmented the interviews into topical chains that derive from t-units but focus on one particular topic. They are typically identified by referentials or oral discourse markers (Geisler 35). We then developed a nested coding scheme for the segmented interviews. In a nested coding scheme, data are first coded for one characteristic or dimension and then re-coded according to a different characteristic or dimension. Our segmented transcripts were first coded according to Dimension One, *gWPA Life*, which included five categories: mentoring in the position, resources available to help complete the work, impact on academic/professional life, workload, and null/not applicable. We refined the coding scheme and Paul served as a second coder. We achieved a simple reliability of 94% on Dimension One and a Cohen's Kappa of .907. This strength of agreement is considered to be very good (Geisler 81). Talinn then coded the remainder of the interviews along Dimension One.



Next, the topical chains were re-coded along a second dimension, *Affect*. Coders re-read the topical chains to assess participants' affect regarding that chain. We used three categories: negative affect, positive affect, and null/not applicable. We achieved a simple reliability of 88% and a Cohen's Kappa of .866 for Dimension Two. Again, the strength of agreement is considered very good. Talinn then coded the remainder of the interviews along Dimension Two.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of our survey indicated five key findings that we discuss alongside reflections from our interview participants. We then consider what those findings might mean for the field at large, particularly for those engaged in the difficult work of being a liminal WPA or of creating and staffing liminal WPA positions. The survey itself and interview questions are available in Appendices A and B, respectively. These findings are based on participants' self-reports that, in this case, cannot be verified and may not be reliable; however, self-reports do serve as a valuable starting point for future research. More important, the students' perceptions are still vital for understanding their workload, agency, and available power, regardless of whether those perceptions are strictly accurate.

1. Respondents reported that graduate students hold a range of administrative positions and may even be asked to direct writing programs on an interim basis.

In addition to the positions traditionally associated with graduate students—Assistants to Directors of Composition and of Writing Centers, etc.—respondents revealed that graduate students may hold a range of administrative positions, including directing WAC programs, assisting with National Writing Project sites, directing or assisting with technology labs, and directing or assisting with faculty development. When asked who typically holds an administrative position, a very small number of respondents (1%) did note that more senior administrative positions were held by graduate students, and almost 23% of respondents indicated that graduate students could become interim directors, either officially or unofficially, during job vacancies, extended illnesses, etc.⁴ This was one of the most surprising (and disturbing) findings of the survey as such graduate students are clearly functioning as liminal WPAs with complex, high-stakes workloads.

For example, two interview participants, Christine and Emma, served as interim directors. During her first summer as a gWPA, Christine learned that she would be the acting director of composition while the sWPA was on leave. While Christine had the protection of the title of acting director, she still was required to do a great deal of work beyond the role of gWPA. Emma also possessed much more responsibility than perhaps a gWPA should, but she did not have the title of acting or even interim director. When her sWPA left suddenly, Emma and her gWPA colleague became the ones with the most knowledge about their university's writing program. While a tenured faculty member was appointed interim WPA, he had less experience with the program than Emma and her co-gWPA. Thus, these

graduate students became de facto sWPAs, advising the tenured faculty member and continuing to maintain the day-to-day operations while the new sWPA adjusted to his role. Emma's de facto position caused a host of problems for both Emma and her co-gWPA as they were frequently disparaged by other graduate students, and they perceived that their role in the program was neither appreciated nor acknowledged by the rest of the department.

Although it may be tempting to ask graduate students to run writing programs, even on an interim basis, our research suggests that these students quickly move into liminal spaces that may be problematic. Emma, by nature of being a graduate student, was always already materially and emotionally ill-equipped to hold such power over her peers or over her supervisor (who could have also been her professor, her dissertation director, and/or her recommendation writer). Many liminal positions lack institutional permanence—it is their very temporariness that makes the positions liminal. Without some degree of institutional permanence, liminals lack the authority to discipline and sometimes even teach others, regardless of their actual knowledge, skills, or job descriptions. Liminals also often lack access to the financial and administrative resources available to sWPAs. Thus liminals are constrained in a variety of ways while trying to accomplish the same tasks as sWPAs.

2. Graduate WPA respondents report often working more hours than they are contracted for. A number of them also believe that their work is more like that of an sWPA than a gWPA.

There were several trends when we compared gWPAs' contracted and reported workloads. When asked, "How many hours are graduate students contracted to work for in their WPA capacities?," the most popular answers were 6–10 hours/week (36.8%) and 16–20 hours/week (31.6%), followed by 11–15 hours/week (13.2%) and 0–5 hours/week (7.9%). Some respondents commented that it was difficult to gauge, as they were granted course releases instead of being contracted for a specific number of hours. While some respondents were specific—"We were given one course release (we teach two courses a semester), so that equals 10 hours a week"—others were more ambiguous: "It is a 1/1 course release. Not sure what the hourly equivalency is." This may lead to the difficulty some respondents had answering the follow-up question "How many hours do graduate students actually work in their WPA capacities?"

While the clear majority of respondents stated that gWPAs were contracted to work an average of 6–10 hours/week, the responses regarding

reported hours worked were much more varied. The most popular responses were divided among three categories (20.5% each): 6–10 hours/week, 11–15 hours/week, and 16–20 hours/week, with 17.9% saying 21–40 hours/week, and 10.3% answering 0–5 hours/week. After comparing individual responses to these two questions, we found that our respondents typically reported working more hours than contracted. Of the 14 graduate WPAs who answered that their contracts were for 6–10 hours a week, only 5 actually reported working that number of hours. Five more reported that they actually worked 11–15 hours/week, and 2 reported that they worked 16–20 hours/week. One respondent observed that students in that program most likely “work more hours than they are required, even though the program encourages/cautions them not to do so.” The participant who stated that graduate students receive a course release and was unsure of the equivalency estimated working 6–10 hours/week but stated that this is “an estimate” and that “the work varies greatly from week to week.”

For the 12 respondents who replied that graduate WPAs are contracted for 16–20 hours/week, the trend of working more hours than allotted continued. While 5 of 12 respondents stated that they did work the 16–20 hours/week in their contracts, 6 stated they actually worked 21–40 hours/week. One respondent who commented that students work 21–40 hours a week noted that “It certainly depends on the week and the needs of the program at any one time, as well as the graduate student’s ability to refuse an overload of work.”

Overall, 25 respondents, or 50% of respondents for that question, reported that they worked more hours than contractually obligated. Even though the sample size for any one response is small and respondents might be over-reporting their hours, this disparity between reported and contracted hours is still very troubling. While some graduate students may need their supervisors to help them manage time effectively or somehow enforce the contracted number of hours, a more likely source of this discrepancy is that students don’t feel that they can say no, even when they have clearly exceeded the workload they agreed to.

For other respondents, the inflated hours reflect their liminality. Many in the academy work more hours than contracted, but the compensation and job security of full professors is rather different from that of graduate students. For liminals, the mismatch between contracted and actual hours is often inherent in the structure of the job. The supervisors of liminals may be trying to rationalize an unreasonable workload by minimizing it with a description of “5–10 hours a week.” Liminals may also be asked to manage time-sensitive tasks that have material consequences for others (e.g. grade disputes, scheduling of classes, transfer credit). When these kinds of tasks

are paired with a general overload of work, a lack of job support, and/or a lack of knowledge of institutional bureaucracies, liminals are likely to trade their own time and wellbeing to meet what they view as ethical obligations to others, even when the existence of those obligations is inherently unethical. Finally, the lack of institutional permanence inherent in many liminal positions makes liminals especially concerned about job security or securing good references, which encourages them to work more than required.

Multiple interview participants concurred with the survey findings. For instance, Christine noted that she should have been working just “5 hours” a week but that “it’s easily – easily twice that . . . Maybe more than that.” Pat stated that while he couldn’t quite remember the actual number of hours in his contract, his schedule was “unpredictable” and he often ended up working more than 16–20 hours/week. Micah shared that his administrative internship was designed to be five hours a week across the year but “It often became much more than that [laughing].”

Also of concern was the high number of respondents—32%—who reported that their work more closely matched that of a j- or sWPA than that of a graduate student. While it is possible that some respondents have a poor understanding of the work of tenured/tenure-track WPAs, it is highly unlikely that all of them do. Substantial numbers of respondents felt that their workloads were somehow out of balance, either in the volume of that work or in its appropriateness for graduate students. Is this because students recognize that they consistently work more hours than they should? Because they see peers earning the same compensation for easier work? Because sWPAs have shifted undesirable or difficult tasks onto those who lack the power to say “no?” Some combination of the above?

Once again, this finding suggests that many of our respondents may be better understood as liminals who are negotiating the high-stakes, complex tasks of sWPAs without job security or the authority of faculty or of holding the doctorate. When graduate students report that their workloads—even if in limited ways—are comparable to those of tenured faculty, the field does those workers a great disservice by instead equating their work with that of office assistants because their job titles are gWPA. To be sure, sWPAs and other departmental leaders need to regularly review graduate students’ workloads and give students an opportunity to voice concerns about what they’ve been asked to do. More broadly though, the field needs to consider how to advise liminals to, for instance, enforce the writing curriculum among adjunct instructors or engage in other complicated, political tasks with the power they actually have. In many cases, the literature and advice that (mostly senior) WPAs have curated over the years can’t be usefully applied to those in the tenuous positions of liminality.

3. Some gWPA respondents provide significant input for activities normally identified with sWPAs and also lead some activities with little/no mentorship.

Respondents to both the survey and interviews were asked to identify elements of their gWPA work portfolios, including the level of participation they were expected to enact in that work. Available responses included:

1. participate with limited input,
2. participate with significant input,
3. co-lead the activity,
4. lead, but with supervision and mentorship, and
5. lead with little/no supervision or mentorship.

Unsurprisingly, graduate students were most likely to participate with only limited input in activities traditionally identified with sWPAs. We defined these sWPA activities as 1) assessing other faculty, 2) budgeting for the writing program, 3) writing grants to support the writing program's work, 4) assessing other TAs, and 5) composing reports on the status of the writing program. We aligned these activities with the work of sWPAs because they often require a level of experience, job security, and authority that graduate students do not have. Most graduate students, for example, would not be required to assess part-time or full-time faculty nor would they be expected to assess their peers, as these activities would put them in a position that might negatively impact their relationships with their peers or their superiors. An sWPA, on the other hand, would have the protection of tenure and the authority (and experience) to offer constructive observations of all these groups. Further, when such tasks are covered in our field's scholarship, such articles are generally aimed at a more seasoned audience than graduate students.

Graduate students were most likely to provide significant input when participating in meetings and committees (42%); assessing writing programs (31%); and assessing student writing (30%). They were most likely to co-lead assessing writing programs (16%); designing curriculum for faculty development experiences (16.2%); and mentoring graduate students (15%). They were most likely to lead (with supervision) mentoring of TAs (30%), assessing other TAs (21%), and assessing student writing (22%). Where little or no supervision or mentorship was provided, students were most likely to be mentoring TAs (10%), assessing student writing (10%), and completing other administrative tasks (8%). In 8 of the 14 task areas we identified, a small but significant number (>5%) of respondents reported that graduate

students were engaging in the work with little or no supervision or mentorship, as described in Table 1.

Table 1
gWPAs Lead Activities with Little or No Supervision

Activities Led with Little or No Supervision	Portion of responses (n = 47)
Mentor other graduate students	10%
Assess student writing	10%
Complete other administrative tasks	9%
Represent the writing program	9%
Compose reports on the status of the writing program	7%
Participate in meetings/committees	6%
Lead/facilitate faculty development	6%
Assess other TAs	6%

While overall the survey clearly supports a picture of graduate student administrators handling smaller-stakes tasks and having sheltered exposure to WPA work, these eight areas where students received little or no supervision or mentorship raise questions. In some cases (“complete other administrative tasks,” “participate in meetings/committees”), this lack of supervision may indicate that the student was capable and excelled at his or her duties. Other tasks, such as “assess other TAs,” “lead/facilitate faculty development,” “represent the writing program,” and “compose reports on the status of the writing program,” are much more complex and politically charged. Again, additional research is certainly needed before wide-scale conclusions are drawn, but it does seem potentially problematic for graduate students to engage in these tasks with little or no supervision. These responses suggest that these gWPAs may be in exploitative and/or liminal situations.

Several of our interview participants affirmed that they were given a great deal of authority in tasks that would typically be assigned to an

sWPA. Laurie worked on a large team of WPAs, headed by an sWPA, but had several duties for which she was greatly, if not solely, responsible. For instance, Laurie recalled that she helped to plan “the week-long orientation for [the] new TAs,” but stated: “I’m basically the person in charge during that.” She also administered the year-long TA mentoring program, which involved meeting with new TAs to discuss readings and teaching concerns, and planning professional development workshops during the spring semester. She also facilitated the portfolio assessment at the end of each semester.

Others had similar experiences. As a graduate assistant director, Lily’s duties included “reviewing textbooks, observing TAs’ classes, making recommendations on the program, [and] helping write program policies,” and she described her duties as “sWPA-like.” Likewise, as the writing center assistant director, Sam provided consultations and workshops for faculty, promoted the writing center’s services, developed new systems, and integrated technology to improve one-on-one tutoring sessions.

Laurie, Lily, and Sam all were gWPAs by job title, but the work for which they were often solely responsible mirrored that of tenured faculty; thus, they are more accurately (and productively) understood as liminal WPAs who are negotiating the complex tasks of sWPAs without an sWPA’s status or support. Their true work was likely hidden from public view because it was labeled as gWPA work. Liminals exist in a variety of contexts and in order for Laurie, Lily, and Sam to feel supported, the field (and their programs) need to acknowledge and support them in the work they are actually doing instead of pretending that they are doing gWPA work.

4. Most respondents reported that their work was rewarding, that they felt supported in that work, and that the workload was manageable. However, a small but significant number responded negatively to questions about the manageability and appropriateness of their workloads.

Respondents were next asked about their feelings towards their work. Most reported that their work was rewarding, that they felt supported in that work, and that the workload was manageable. (See Table 2). In response to “My work is rewarding,” 22 respondents strongly agreed with the statement, 14 agreed, while 4 were neutral. (No one disagreed.) Thirteen respondents strongly agreed with the statement “I feel supported in my work,” while 14 agreed, 7 were neutral, and 6 disagreed. Nineteen respondents strongly agreed with “I feel capable of the work I’m asked to do,” 20 agreed, and just 1 was neutral with no respondents disagreeing. Finally, 21 respondents strongly agreed with “If I have questions, I have safe people to ask,” while 14 agreed, 4 were neutral, and only 2 disagreed.

Table 2
Feelings Towards gWPA Work and Future Plans

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
My work is rewarding.	22	14	4	0	0
I feel supported in my work.	13	14	7	6	0
I feel capable of the work I'm asked to do.	19	20	1	0	0
If I have questions, I have safe people to ask.	21	14	4	1	0
I feel exploited in my current position.	2	4	11	7	16
This position makes me feel discouraged and disempowered.	1	2	5	15	16
I am more likely to be successful in future administrative positions.	25	14	1	0	0
I am more likely to seek out or accept future administrative positions because of my work in this writing program.	20	15	3	2	0

However, when focusing only on respondents who answered “My workload is manageable” with *Neutral*, *Disagree*, or *Strongly Disagree* (n=14), we found that 50% of those respondents also disagreed with the statement “If my workload becomes unmanageable, I feel safe in asking my supervisor to reassign tasks or to give me more time.” A majority of those respondents (64%) also disagreed with or were neutral towards “The work I’m asked to do is appropriate for a graduate student.” Fifty percent of respondents who found their workloads unmanageable also disagreed when asked whether the amount of responsibility they carried was appropriate for graduate students.

Furthermore, out of all the respondents, 23% disagreed or strongly disagreed with “The amount of responsibility I carry is appropriate for a graduate student,” and 40% disagreed or strongly disagreed with “I believe I’ve been sheltered from the more unpleasant and difficult aspects of this writing program.” When asked to respond to “My work more closely matches

that of a tenured/tenure-track WPA than of a graduate student administrator,” 32% gave positive responses. Forty-three percent of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed and the remaining 25% were neutral.

As with our other findings, the overall picture regarding workload appropriateness and manageability was a positive one. However, the approximately 20% of students whose experiences were negative suggests that, at a minimum, those who supervise graduate students may need to do more to give them regular, safe spaces to express concerns about their workloads. A re-evaluation of job duties may also be appropriate.

These numbers also point to the existence of graduate student liminals. These responses suggest workloads that may be inappropriate for graduate students and more consistent with the field’s understanding of sWPA work. If they are to continue in this work, these liminals will benefit from targeted support from mentors and from the field in order to help them do that work as liminals—with liminals’ power and affordances—instead of wishing such positions didn’t exist or asking liminals to adapt the literature written by and for sWPAs.

The survey concluded by asking about students’ future plans. Respondents overwhelmingly stated they were more likely to seek out future administrative positions and be successful in them. Eighty-seven percent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they were more likely to seek out or accept future administrative positions because of their gWPA work and 97% of respondents reported that they were more likely to be successful as a result. If graduate WPAs approach their work with this long-term view, they are probably less likely to risk complaining about the number of hours they work and/or inappropriate job duties that some participants reported.

5. Respondents declined to describe themselves in strongly negative terms, such as exploited or disempowered.

Finally, we gave respondents the opportunity to express negative views about their work by framing two questions in strongly negative terms: “I feel exploited in my current position” and “This position makes me feel discouraged and disempowered.” Most respondents rejected this loaded, negative language; 57.5% disagreed or strongly disagreed with the use of the term *exploited* to describe their gWPA work, and 80% rejected the notion that their positions made them feel disempowered. However, as Table 2 shows, the positive responses were not unanimous.

Despite respondents’ disagreement with statements about the appropriateness of their workloads, they roundly refused to describe themselves as exploited, disempowered, or discouraged when given the opportunity. This

finding was also supported by the interviews. Even though some interviewees described situations that were, to us, quite exploitative, they did not embrace language of exploitation and disempowerment. For example, Christine commented that she “did not realize” she would be interim composition director as soon as she assumed the role of gWPA, and had a long list of responsibilities that took more than the five hours a week in her job description. However, Christine maintained close contact with the sWPA, felt “extremely supported,” and was clearly dedicated to her work.

Respondents may have also felt some need to protect their programs in their responses. Another possible explanation is that, even in objectively exploitative situations, graduate students felt they had agency in them and therefore rejected this language of victimhood.

gWPAs OR LIMINALS? WHAT IS AT STAKE?

The impetus for this research was, first, to gather concrete data about the work that graduate WPAs actually do and, second, to use that data on graduate students to take steps towards identifying the number of liminal WPAs in the field, a group that includes graduate students as well as non-tenure-track faculty and administrators. Overall, the survey clearly reveals a picture of graduate students who enjoy their work and are deeply invested in it, believing that it is preparing them for a professional future. This is the part of the story that makes the field feel good; this is the part of the story that is referenced when considering what a gWPA does and who a gWPA is.

The survey findings also revealed that gWPAs work in all areas of administration and that they complete all kinds of WPA tasks. While the majority of the gWPAs in our survey have responsibilities and workloads commensurate with the field’s conception of gWPA, almost half report working more hours than they are being compensated for. Further, between 5%–32% of the responses to most questions were problematic and suggested that the gWPAs who gave them were actually liminals. These figures are high enough that they deserve the field’s attention, concern, and further research. Ultimately, given the tasks they are expected to complete, the level of responsibility they assume for those tasks, and their own comparisons of their work to that of jWPAs and sWPAs, we estimate that somewhere between 20–30% of our graduate student respondents are more accurately described as liminal WPAs. What, then, is the field’s responsibility to these and other liminals?

First, we don’t see liminal WPAs as problems to be fixed and forgotten or cautionary tales of programs that have made mistakes. These initial findings suggest there is much more below the surface. We have argued else-

where that liminal WPAs are not inherently exploited and that, regardless, institutions will continue to create liminal positions and that those outside of the tenure track will continue to staff them.

Certainly, there are a range of circumstances that may make a graduate student the best choice for the job. Graduate students have day-to-day knowledge of the program's workings that outside faculty probably lack. They also may need to take the position for economic reasons and may legitimately have more time available than many faculty members. The experience of being an interim director is also valuable on the job market. We are thus less concerned that some graduate students are doing this work than that the term *WPA* masks the political realities of it, setting these students up for exploitation, unrealistic work expectations, and even failure. A very real tension exists between preparing graduate students for future WPA work and recognizing that some work needs to be done by those with more clout and protection.

The concept of the liminal WPA offers starting points for addressing our current concerns regarding graduate students in liminal WPA positions. First, it reveals the slippage between realities and ideals that occurred in the first place. It's likely that, for a variety of reasons, such disconnects will persist. The liminal WPA perspective offers a starting point for more clearly identifying potential conflicts between status, job duties, the ability to reasonably carry out those duties, and benefits associated with them (as opposed with those associated with the statuses of j- or sWPAs). It acknowledges those conflicts rather than creating an illusion of static identities.

Second, it offers a more inclusive schema for considering, acknowledging, and detailing the work that people do in administrative roles. Writing program administrators can more accurately describe their programs' positions to themselves and to others. This means admitting when the realities of the job don't match traditional constructs of graduate student writing program administration or those of NTT faculty.

There is also a power in naming and demystifying the context of one's work. Liminals gain agency by naming their work as such instead of having it minimized or obscured by terms such as gWPA. We also argue that liminals will be better able to navigate their experiences and adapt WPA research and literature to their needs if the lens of liminal WPA work is available to them—if they understand that a kind of power is still available to them, that they might tackle different kinds of projects than sWPAs, and that they can use their institutional impermanence to their advantage.³ Likewise, liminals are better served when faculty members or mentors also have that liminal lens. The imperative for those with more power is to operate from a new set of assumptions that includes liminal writing program

administration rather than assumptions derived from our existing terminology for WPAs.

During our interviews, we asked participants how they saw themselves represented in the literature. April, a graduate student liminal observed:

I don't think grad students are very well represented in literature at all. Why? Well, one, they're too busy to write because they're writing dissertations. And two, . . . if you want to feel like who is represented in the literature, it's the WPA with a capital W, right? It's the person who has tenure . . . I feel like it's a shortsightedness of our field, that we want to spend more time talking about theories and stories, and less time saying, "What is this work?"

April's commentary makes two points. First, graduate students do not necessarily see themselves effectively and accurately represented in WPA literature. Second, and more importantly, April points out that the field values theoretical approaches to WPA work, but who is served by a discipline that fails to account for the context of that work? Joyce Olewski Inman, in her article, "Reflections on Year One as an Almost-WPA," shares similar concerns more poignantly:

I am isolated from my field because when trying to garner advice from colleagues in composition at other institutions, I feel pressured to explain the situation and how it came to be—to apologize for accepting the position of WPA. . . . I am not suggesting that WPAs should not be properly trained and qualified for the positions they hold, but I am suggesting that they should not have to apologize when asking for guidance and that our own rhetoric is what leads to feelings of disenfranchisement among those of us whose experiences lead us to feel like "outsiders." (152)

Attention to theory and traditional hierarchies in the field and the research that serves them both maintains the status quo and privileges tenured or tenure-track WPAs. Such research assumes that all WPAs have access to similar *ethoi* defined by their PhDs, promotion, and tenure. WPA positions are understood, both anecdotally and in the literature, as tenured or tenure-track positions with long debates over whether an individual should take such a position without tenure. The advice for those who are not tenure-track or tenured is too often a simple "don't take the position." This puts liminal WPAs at the disadvantage Inman describes. They are effectively erased from the literature as a result of a different status that is incompatible with expected norms.

Far from the logic of accommodation, the perspective of the liminal WPA opens the way for transformation of composition research,

hierarchies, and the agency afforded others through a revision of reifying terminology. April encourages the field to “empower and protect our grad students.” We would add that the field needs to empower its liminal WPAs as well, allowing for the multiple identities that occur in the academic and administrative contexts of writing program administration.

Institutions that create such liminal positions, regardless of rationale, should have honest conversations with graduate students, untenured faculty, or staff about what is at stake for them, negotiate appropriate expectations and compensation, and develop a support system. When circumstances force institutions into offering liminal WPA positions, the liminal WPA concept offers a heuristic for limiting or mitigating that liminality by asking questions such as

1. How can the hiring process for a permanent replacement be sped up so that the liminal position is brief?
2. What are the most politically charged yet essential components of this job? Could a faculty member or someone with more clout handle them?
3. What are the essential elements of this job, and what can be placed on hold until a permanent replacement is found so as to minimize this liminal’s time commitment?
4. What aspects of this job will be most valuable for the liminal, and what aspects is she most excited about? What aspects is she most concerned about? How can we maximize the former and minimize the latter so that she has the most useful experience?
5. Is there a clear and realistic job description? Does it include clear boundaries so that the liminal can say “no” to requests from others for additional or inappropriate work?
6. Do departmental colleagues understand and respect the job description and the job’s limitations and boundaries?
7. What faculty and staff members have committed to provide support, mentorship, and protection for the liminal during this period? and
8. What is appropriate and fair market compensation for doing this work?

Creating liminal WPA positions is an inherently tricky and dangerous business, but forcing ourselves to answer questions like these minimizes the exploitative possibilities and maximizes the chances that liminals have positive and valuable experiences.

The field has an obligation to recognize the complexity of liminals' work and provide them with resources to help them be successful in these liminal contexts instead of operating from the tacit assumption that existing resources—primarily developed by and for j- and s-WPAs who have more power, more protection, and more resources—are sufficient.

CONCLUSION

Gaps exist between the stories told about graduate administrators and many of the realities they experience. The gap also exists in a disciplinary context in terms of the research conducted and written about writing program administration. This gap can affect the field's program design and graduate curriculum.

Our findings demonstrate that there are graduate WPAs whose status conflicts with their positions, workloads, etc., and that these liminal students need guidance and support as they negotiate the conflicts that accompany their jobs. It is heartening that the majority of our respondents found WPA work rewarding and were likely to seek it out after graduation, but we remain concerned about graduate students engaging in liminal work without adequate support. The liminal WPA identity can thus provide a space where the slipperiness of graduate students' identities can co-exist and provide them with a language to discuss their positions. We hope this research highlights the importance of recognizing that gWPA work takes many different forms, as well as the importance of lending a voice to all graduate WPAs, regardless of their work.

NOTES

1. A detailed discussion of our interview data is beyond the scope of this article. We draw lightly on our interview data here and present it more fully in "An Exercise in Cognitive Dissonance: Liminal WPA Transitions," to be published in *WPAs in Transition*, edited by Courtney Adams Wooten, Jacob Babb, and Brian Ray. It is forthcoming from Utah State University Press.

2. This study was approved by Rider University's IRB committee on January 24, 2012. All names are pseudonyms.

3. In the survey, we were primarily interested in individuals' experiences, and in order to protect respondents' anonymity, we did not ask them to identify their institutions. It is thus possible that this number is inflated by multiple responses from one or a few institutions where this practice occurs. Even if this is the case, we would remind readers that our participants are likely from established programs with larger faculties. This practice is more likely to occur at institutions with fewer faculty members (which are less well represented in our data).

4. We discuss these possibilities in “Thinking Liminality: Exploring the (com) Promising Positions of the Liminal WPA” (Phillips, Shovlin, and Titus), published in the Fall 2014 issue of *WPA: Writing Program Administration*.

APPENDIX A: SURVEY



APPENDIX B: REPRESENTATIVE TOPIC LIST FOR INTERVIEWS



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Preparing Graduate Students to Teach Online: Theoretical and Pedagogical Practices

Tiffany Bourelle

ABSTRACT

This article argues for online teacher professional development for graduate teaching assistants (GTAs) and offers specific training practices. Through a discussion of eComp, a fully online writing program at the University of New Mexico, I highlight training practices such as a graduate seminar, one-on-one and group mentoring, team-teaching opportunities, and technology workshops. As illustrated in this article, the eComp program establishes professional development opportunities for GTAs while simultaneously offering a pedagogically sound curriculum for distance-education composition students. The article provides a roadmap for administrators when creating professional development opportunities for first-year writing teachers, offering WPAs various ways to prepare GTAs to help them succeed as writing teachers in twenty-first century academe.

On a broad scale, technology continues to impact changes within academia, with online education outpacing f2f enrollment. Although Paul Fain posits that online education has peaked with a 2.3 percent decline in spring 2014, Elaine Allen and Jeff Seaman report that more than 7.1 million students took at least one online course in 2014. According to Amber Smith et al., these numbers should increase, with the global recession prompting more nontraditional students to return to college to develop job-related skills (37). Furthermore, John Watson suggests that

in an age when information and communications technology skills are so critical, and so much collaboration, resource sharing, content development and learning are done digitally, asynchronously, and at

a distance, it is unlikely that student learning will continue to be based solely on print textbooks and face-to-face classes conducted in 50-minute increments. (4)

With the rise of online learning in all forms, academia must continue to change with societal demands and student needs. Nonetheless, for the most part, the composition field's approach to teacher training has not evolved to include the pedagogies of online education, particularly that of teaching writing—regardless of genre—online.

Rhetoric and Composition needs to train GTAs to teach such composing—indeed, all writing—in online settings, including blended, hybrid, and fully online. Without such grounding, GTAs will not be well prepared for the exigencies of twenty-first century teaching. Hewett and Warnock posit that good OWI practices should move the entire field of composition forward; therefore, training teachers to understand the complexities of online teaching should help not only those instructors teaching in the online environment, but also those who are teaching f2f using various technologies for instruction (560). However, many instructors may remain hesitant about the online environment as a space for teaching and learning. Scholarship in online education posits that, specifically, it is the lack of training opportunities that leaves many instructors feeling uneasy about current online teaching and learning practices (Breuch 355; Baran and Correia 97; Hewett et al. 7; Hewett and DePew 12; Rice 395). As the OWI survey results discussed in “The State of the Art of OWI” quantitatively identify, training for the online environment at institutions across the country is relatively low; Hewett et al. note in this report that few online writing instructors are required to attend training sessions before teaching. Of 158 respondents who were teaching fully online courses, only “48% indicated that they had some kind of mandatory training and 58% indicated that the training was optional” (12). According to the OWI survey, instructors expressed dissatisfaction with the levels of support they receive regarding technology, training, and professional development support relative to OWI (7). The survey notes that “such dissatisfaction can lead to poor teaching, low expectations for students and for an online course, and insufficient retention of experienced instructors at a time when OWI continues to grow” (12). In terms of poor teaching and its effect, research suggests that students are more successful when teachers have prepared a well-designed course and are actively involved in the course, working to form a community of peers (Bowers and Kumar 27). It is clear that both teachers and students can benefit from online teacher training.

Hewett and Warnock claim that “the OWI principles can be applied broadly to the motivations and the exigencies for composition writ large”

(547); based on their argument, administrators and practica instructors should add online writing pedagogy to their current training, as this type of training can be beneficial for all modes of teaching. In *A Position Statement of Principles and Example Effective Practices for Online Writing Instruction*, the rationale for OWI Principle 7 stresses that OWI teachers need to be able to 1) teach writing, 2) “teach writing specifically in a digital environment,” 3) and “teach writing in a course in which text is the primary communicative mode” (18), each of which is a distinct yet connected skill set (also see Hewett and Warnock 550–51). To learn these skill sets, focused professional development training and longitudinal opportunities to gain specific pedagogical experience are necessary (see Hewett *The Online Writing Conference* and *Reading to Learn*). Yet, as Hewett and Ehmann note, a pedagogical approach alone is insufficient. Instructors need to learn to teach their pedagogy using the specific technology in which they will teach (Hewett and Ehmann xiii; also see OWI Principle 7, *A Position Statement*); to migrate and adapt appropriate theory and practice from the traditional classroom to the online environment (OWI Principle 4); and to participate in active learning exercises and mentoring experiences where they can learn from trainees (Schneckenberg 110; Starr, Stacey, and Grace 96). In addition to restructuring practicum courses or when it is not possible to add online training to existing practicum classes, administrators should search for additional ways to prepare GTAs to teach online. They can do this work within the structure of graduate seminars, one-on-one and group mentoring, team-teaching opportunities, and technology workshops; these training practices can be implemented systematically using the five educational principles of investigation, immersion, individualization, association, and reflection (Hewett and Ehmann). This article provides a case example of how to structure and conduct such online writing-focused GTA training.

BACKGROUND/CONTEXT OF eCOMP

At the University of New Mexico, Dr. Andrew Bourelle and I developed and oversee eComp, an online first-year writing program. The eComp program works in conjunction with the university’s Core Writing Program, using the same course outcomes, the UNM Outcomes for First-Year Writing (see Appendix A), and textbook, *Writing Today* (Johnson-Sheehan and Paine), for all of our first-year online courses. Like most programs across the country, the Core Writing Program focuses on training GTAs in effective practices for teaching in a traditional f2f environment, offering a typical teaching assistant practicum. The eComp program is an arm of the Core Writing Program that addresses the online first-year writing courses.

Before teaching in eComp, a GTA must have passed the teaching assistant practicum and taught successfully for at least one semester in the f2f classroom, in accordance with OWI Principle 7. This f2f classroom experience is important because we want the GTAs to become familiar with the complexities of teaching while simultaneously discovering and developing their teaching philosophies and practices before teaching in the online realm. The practical experience also helps to ensure GTAs gain confidence in their teaching abilities before entering the eComp program, which in turn, helps maintain a quality online program. The GTAs are required to take the online pedagogy course offered through eComp. They can take this class concurrently with the traditional practicum course, and a GTA can start teaching in eComp within her second semester. Our GTAs are both MA and PhD students, so the number of classes they teach while enrolled in graduate school varies.

The courses that fall under the eComp umbrella are ENGL 110 and ENGL 120, the first-year writing sequence at the University of New Mexico, and all undergraduate students must take this sequence unless they test out with high enough ACT scores. Students in these courses produce three major writing assignments and an eportfolio. Assignments in the courses often prompt students to develop texts that exceed the alphabetic and can include sound, images, text, animation, and video (Takayoshi and Selfe 1). The instructor provides students with a rhetorical situation for writing, and the students choose their medium according to their intended audience and purpose for communicating, writing reflections about their choices per Jody Shipka (113) and Claire Lauer's (173) advice regarding multimodal projects.¹ Following Ed White's suggestions for reflections (583), students also reflect on their work throughout the semester, writing in-depth persuasive pieces that indicate what they learned within each course outcome area (i.e., students respond to the University of New Mexico's outcomes for first-year writing). They must use evidence to support their learning, pulling quotes from their process work, discussion board interactions with peers, and other course activities.

The program also heavily emphasizes process, with students producing three drafts for each project. During each project's writing cycle, students participate in three rounds of review: peer review, instructional assistant review, and instructor review. Online instructional assistants (IAs)—embedded tutors—are undergraduate English majors who work online with eComp students and are provided by the university's writing center, the Center for Academic Program Support (CAPS). Specifically, the embedded tutors provide feedback to students during their writing processes (Bourelle et al. "Assessing"; Corbett 48; DeLoach et al. 9; Pagnac et al. 40; Parmiter

and Morgan 66). eComp administrators work closely with CAPS personnel to train the online IAs, offering orientations at the beginning of the semester to familiarize them with the online course structure and the typical assignments often found in our first-year classes. These orientation sessions also allow them to meet with the instructor of record with whom they will be working. In sum, our eComp classes are intended to help distance students acquire multimodal literacies through a curriculum that will help them enter the twenty-first century as effective communicators.

TRAINING GTAs FOR TEACHING WITHIN ECOMP

We strive to train GTAs to develop their online personas and pedagogies through extensive training practices and professional development opportunities. These training elements align with Hewett and Ehmann's five educational principles and the OWI Principles (see table 1).

In the following sections, I discuss the training elements offered by eComp, and I highlight how each aligns with Hewett and Ehmann's five educational principles. I also include reflections from the GTAs to support including each principle in the training process.²

Table 1
Hewett and Ehmann's Principles of OWI Training

Principles for Online Training	Corresponding Training Practices	OWI Principles
Investigation	Conducting ongoing research on programmatic praxis	4 and 15
Immersion	Training in the online teaching environment	7 and 14
Individualization	Addressing each GTA's needs discretely	5
Association	Creating opportunities for satisfying interaction among trainees	7
Reflection	Encouraging metacognitive practice	15

Promoting the Training Course

Adhering to Hewett and Ehmann's first principle of Investigation and OWI Principles 4 and 15, which encourage ongoing research, I visited graduate student pre-semester orientations to gauge interest in online teaching, as

well as to promote eComp and the program's practices. I followed up the orientation by using the Core Writing Program's listserv to request that interested teaching assistants meet to talk about eComp; I also held group meetings to explain eComp's approaches and practices. The purpose for the group and one-on-one meetings was to gauge the GTAs' levels of experience in online teaching, and many indicated they had little to no experience with teaching in the online environment. Following Hewett and Ehmann's second principle of Immersion and OWI Principles 7 and 14, which note the need for ongoing training, I designed and implemented a graduate seminar that would immerse the students within the theories and effective practices of online teaching. This class was taught as a blended class with students meeting face-to-face and participating in discussions and peer review online.

In the online pedagogy seminar, GTAs learn theories grounding OWI, which they apply through the creation and development of assignments they can use in their own online courses. In the most recent iteration of the course, students read Scott Warnock's *Teaching Writing Online: How and Why* to give them insight into the daily practices of online teaching. They also read the new *Foundational Practices for Online Writing Instruction*, co-edited by Beth L. Hewett and Kevin Eric DePew, which offers both theory and practical application behind creating online classes for a variety of students, including multilingual, disabled, and nontraditional. After reading the chapters and books, the GTAs apply what they have learned to low-stakes and major writing assignments. Reading Susan Miller-Cochran's chapter "Multilingual Students and OWI," an important essay for our Hispanic-Serving Institution, helped the GTAs learn to offer spaces in which students can converse with one another using the language in which they feel most comfortable (e.g., certain discussion boards or live chats). Reading Kristine Blair's "Teaching Multimodal Assignments in OWI Contexts" showed the GTAs how to set up peer-to-peer assessment of such multimodal texts, prompting thoughtful, critical review from the students. These are just a few examples of exercises GTAs generate based on the readings in the course (see Appendix B for the course syllabus).

All of the GTAs in the pedagogy course complete course assignments, including composing a scholarly digital article like those found in *Kairos: A Journal of Rhetoric, Technology, and Pedagogy*, based on an online pedagogical issue or practice of their choosing. This assignment encourages them to not only develop a multimodal text for a specific audience, much like they ask of their first-year students, but also to enter the conversation of online teaching and learn that they have ideas to contribute that may aid other instructors when designing online courses. Other assignments in the course

include a teaching portfolio that houses assignments they develop for their online courses and a teaching philosophy specific to online education; an online course shell that is complete with all elements of the course (discussion boards, syllabus, calendar, major and low-stakes assignments); and a project that asks them to complete one of their peers' first-year assignments. In the latter assignment, the GTAs complete one of the eComp projects designed by their classmates, and offer suggestions to improve the assignment based on issues they faced as they worked on the assignment. This task is in line with Hewett's suggestion that online teachers experience "the OWI course from the student seat in order to learn the LMS, how long an assignment takes to complete, and the temptations of multitasking from the student view" (*Foundational Practices* 68). By completing the assignment, GTAs see how long it will take students to complete a draft, participate in peer review, and make changes accordingly (see also Hewett's *Reading to Learn*). During peer review, GTAs are required to give peer feedback using screencapture software, which is intended to encourage them to create helpful, time-saving responses to their future writing students' projects (*Foundational Practices* 68).

In addition to these major assignments, the GTAs must participate in and moderate online weekly discussions. The GTA who is the moderator develops questions based on the readings (established by the professor in the syllabus) to prompt critical thinking. During the week, the moderator facilitates the discussion and offers feedback regarding peers' responses. The moderator leads the discussion, keeps the conversation rolling, and asks follow-up questions to her peers' responses. The weekly discussions are helpful because the GTAs are not required to have taken online classes before teaching in eComp; this exercise approximates the online learning environment their first-year writing students will experience. Additionally, Hewett and Ehmann suggest that the training for online teaching be done in an online environment where instructors can experience firsthand what it is like to be an online student. Asking students to moderate and participate in online discussions approximates this type of training by asking them to be the teacher and the student of an asynchronous environment.

The GTAs also have the opportunity to reflect on their learning, which engages Hewett and Ehmann's fifth educational principle, Reflection, as well as OWI Principle 15, which stresses the need for ongoing research. Such metacognitive reflection should occur not only at the end of training but throughout the lifespan of GTAs' online teaching practices. I also reflect on what the GTAs have learned and adjust the curricula in response to their reflections according to their stated needs. I encourage reflection through surveys and end-of-the semester memos that ask GTAs to con-

sider how the assignments have prepared them to teach online. During the semester in which the instructors are teaching, I send out a questionnaire asking them to think about their practices, to consider what they are doing well, and to articulate what they could improve upon the next time they teach online. In the reflection memos, GTAs respond to questions that ask them to think critically about how they have met the course goals. I then work to incorporate their feedback into course changes.

When asked what the administrators can do to make the pedagogy course more effective, many of the instructors have suggested they wanted to start creating and designing their online course shells much earlier in the semester. One instructor claimed,

What would help make this course more effective is to have a shell (any generic shell) open from Week 1, and utilizing some class time each week for setting up basic elements, learning navigation, learning the tools and apps, and, most importantly, aligning hands-on experience in the shell with the readings and studies on theory. There should also be, and would be with work early on in the shells, and [sic] emphasis on creating the course so that at the end of the semester [. . .] the course is essentially complete (from rubrics to lesson plans to prompts).

On the last day of the seminar, the GTAs and I talk about their concerns with moving forward and teaching an online course: this discussion often helps to alleviate their fears with teaching in the online environment. Many of them talk about their lack of confidence moving forward and teaching online for the first time; even though they have read much of the theory that informs online teaching, they are often nervous about shifting to the actual practice. They use this final discussion to ask for advice, and some GTAs want to know the biggest challenges instructors face in online classes and how to approach them successfully. Other GTAs come up with hypothetical situations, and a discussion ensues where everyone suggests how he or she would approach the issue. It is important to remind new online GTAs that they will learn by doing—much of their stress will be alleviated when they actually enter the online course and work through the semester. Lastly, I remind them that the eComp program offers one-on-one mentoring opportunities in case they feel lost or have questions while teaching.

One-on-One and Group Mentorship

Our mentoring practices are often in the form of Hewett and Ehmann's "investigation in practice" and include one-on-one meetings based on the

GTAs needs and/or their performance as teachers in their first-year classes (6). As the administrator of eComp, I have access to all online courses, and I can see whether an instructor is struggling with the demands of the online curriculum. Indeed, in the past, I have learned that some GTAs were overwhelmed with the online learning environment, and I use this knowledge when I meet with them for one-on-one support. Struggling GTAs have suggested that part of the reason for their difficulties was that they did not understand the day-to-day requirements for online instructors, and I have added more literature to the seminar, another aspect of Investigation, to help them learn the daily interactions before they experience them firsthand. This type of research-based mentoring is in keeping with the OWI Principle 7, which indicates that an administrator of an online program should be trained in the theory of online teaching (17). In addition, Hewett and Ehmann suggest that for the principle of Individualization, administrators should look for ways to tailor the training to each trainee, which typically involves some level of one-on-one mentoring such as the aforementioned. For example, Warnock's approach to teaching writing online suggests that an instructor should expect to spend as much time participating in discussion boards as she would in a f2f class. If a f2f class is worth three credits, the instructor and students meet three hours a week; Warnock indicates that online classes should function similarly regarding credits per hour ("Committee for Effective Practices"). Therefore, if a GTA is struggling with the amount of time to put into a course, Warnock's research can be recommended as a useful source.

Other mentoring practices include the opportunity to meet with different members of the eComp team, including other GTAs and the IAs (or embedded tutors). This practice is in line with Hewett and Ehmann's principle of Association and OWI Principle 7, which indicates that novice teachers should be assigned experienced mentors. The principle of Association is crucial to OWI because online teaching can be a lonely endeavor, making it imperative that online instructors know they can turn to other peers and their administrator (Baran and Correia 99). To start a collaborative mentoring process, we offer orientations at the beginning of the semester where instructors meet the instructional assistants they will be working with. The GTAs are then required to have norming sessions throughout the semester to offer feedback to the IAs regarding their own online feedback to students' projects. The administrator often attends these norming sessions, not to check up on the instructors but to facilitate forming a mentoring relationship with each IA and instructor. Of course, issues can sometimes arise in these meetings that the administrator can resolve, but the main purpose of including her is to support the instructors and the IAs. One

instructor commented on the mentoring aspect of these sessions, saying, “the support from the eComp team, as we test our understanding and progress with our practicum, created and [sic] extended learning opportunity.” Another noted the benefits of such mentoring, stating that the eComp administrators offered “moral support [and help with] answering the bulk of low-level questions and technical problems. [The meetings] helped me in the sense that I had someone to look to [help] find out what was expected.”

To form stronger and more useful associations among instructors and administrators, we also made changes to our mentoring practices based on the instructors’ reflection of the training experience. For instance, one graduate student commented,

[A] cohort-like set-up would be fun; we had a great community in the pedagogy course, and I think it would have been nice to have a few meetings throughout the semester as an entire group to do things like troubleshoot, etc.

Based on this suggestion, the eComp team implemented informal meetings throughout the semester where instructors can talk about what is and is not working in their courses, allowing them to receive advice and support from the cohort. Upon conclusion of the meeting, the group typically migrates to a restaurant to continue connecting with each other. These meetings foster collaborative learning and help combat the potential loneliness of online teaching.

Team-Teaching Opportunities

Regardless of whether a GTA has experience teaching online, she must take the graduate seminar in online theories and pedagogies. However, if she has online teaching experience outside the eComp program, she has the added opportunity to teach in eComp within in a predesigned course as a secondary instructor, which quickly immerses the GTA into the university’s online teaching program. In this training opportunity, a secondary instructor is paired with a veteran eComp instructor who will lead her through the process, mentoring and answering questions. The veteran, or lead instructor, takes the lead in designing the course curriculum, seeking input from the secondary instructor on assignments and discussion prompts. The lead instructor helps the secondary instructor facilitate the course by responding to undergraduate student questions she cannot answer, and the lead and secondary teachers meet during the semester to discuss student issues that may arise. In this training practice, an eComp course is team-taught by two instructors who work to develop curriculum before the course begins and then teach the class together, with the veteran taking the lead in answer-

ing student questions and mentoring the novice instructor throughout the semester. This team-teaching practice helps the immersed secondary teacher in many ways. One instructor claimed,

The chance to work under a lead teacher was the most helpful part of my experience. I'd mostly advise continuing with that whenever possible. For trainees who don't have the opportunity to work under a lead teacher, perhaps observing another instructor's online class and doing write-ups on it would be the second best option. I've always found a focus on observation of this sort to be exponentially more helpful than a focus on reading about it.

The secondary teaching experience this GTA describes connects the educational principle of Immersion with that of Individualization; the practice of observing combined with immersive teaching allows the novice eComp teacher to become familiar with the program while also receiving peer support beyond the eComp administrators. This is a practice that Hewett notes is preferable to "putting novice teachers in OWCs [online writing classes] and expecting a strong outcome for the teachers or the students" ("Grounding" 67). The co-teaching experience informs the novice eComp instructor of effective OWI practices firsthand, which can aid developing her own course shell within the rigors of the graduate seminar.

Technology Workshops

Throughout the seminar and in subsequent semesters, the administrator of eComp holds technology workshops that lead the GTAs through the creation of multimodal instructional tools such as videos, graphics, podcasts, and other media used to engage students in the learning process (Rankins-Robertson et al. "Multimodal Instruction") and address issues of access for students with varied learning styles, per OWI Principle 1, Effective Practice 1.10 (*A Position Statement* 10). In the seminar, the GTAs read Richard Mayer and Roxanna Moreno's cognitive theory of multimodal learning in the article "Nine Ways to Reduce Cognitive Load in Multimedia Learning," which indicates how students learn from the combination of different modes (e.g., text, graphics), as well as how long an average video should be to discourage cognitive overload (43), and GTAs apply these theories to the development of their courses, creating videos based on these principles. They learn to integrate these tools into the course, incorporating them into scaffolding exercises for each assignment. For instance, they are encouraged to offer a supplemental video for each assignment that walks the first-year students through the process of choosing a topic, writing a first draft, and choosing their medium for communication. These multimodal instruc-

tional tools also can be used in discussion boards, and many instructors ask students to listen to a podcast or video they created before answering questions and discussing the media's content with their peers. The use of multimodal tools serves to immerse GTAs in the multimodal composing process, a goal of our particular eComp program. In turn, this skill set is transferable to understanding how to teach students to do such composing of their own. Creating multimodal tools that will be used in the online setting is yet another layer of immersion key to teaching students through online media to use, read, and write such media.

We offer ongoing technology workshops throughout the semester because instructors often need more individualized assistance using technology to create these tools, adhering to Hewett and Ehmann's principle of Individualization. The authors note the importance of giving technological workshops in context, allowing trainees to spend time working on their materials relevant to their own courses; therefore, we provide technology workshops before the semester begins, offering guidance on using the LMS and screencapture software to give GTAs a supervised opportunity to develop course videos. We also meet with instructors one-on-one throughout the semester to help guide them in using technology. This individualization extends the mentoring that co-teachers receive and ensures that all instructors understand they have someone they can ask for help in developing course tools. Throughout the semester, the administrator leads several hands-on technology workshops, including how to use such software as Jing for video feedback and Camtasia for creating supplemental course videos. One GTA suggested even more hands-on workshops, stating, "[I would like] more mini-lessons on software (Audacity, Soundcloud, etc.) and the chance to really practice more."

During these workshops, we stress that the instructors should use technology to advance their pedagogies. As Kevin Eric DePew posits in "Preparing for the Rhetoricity of OWI," it is important that instructors consider when to use digital tools, choosing the "best available means of persuasion (to draw upon the Aristotelian definition)," learning "how to use their affordances" (439; parentheses original). One GTA incorporates what she calls "technology labs." She stated,

The labs independently warm-up their technology skills in low-stakes assignments. The labs each focus on one kind of software or medium (like Exposure, Jing, photo journal, Podcast). The lessons consist in watching How-To videos on YouTube or on the site they are investigating, exploring these sites with very brief guided questions, and most importantly, *test-driving the technology*. For example,

once students have watched a 5–6 minute video on making a Prezi presentation, they are prompted to make one with 3–4 slides on a topic of their choosing. (emphasis original)

At the end of the weekly labs in this GTA's particular course, the students write reflections of their learning, commenting on the rhetorical considerations behind creating the low-stakes assignment, including reflecting on the intended audience and purpose for the text they have developed. They also critically consider the technology they used and how the software impacted the production and meaning of the overall text. In our own technology training sessions, we strongly encourage GTAs to require such reflections of students' rhetorical considerations to keep the focus on the rhetoricity of the project, not the bells and whistles of the design. Using technology labs such as the one this GTA describes also helps keep the focus on the rhetoricity of design, not the use of technology. In addition, these labs remove the focus from "teaching technology," as stressed in OWI Principle 2, which states that the focus of an online course should be on writing and not on asking students to learn new software.

CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNED

Just like the GTAs, I also reflect on my practices as an administrator. Based on the GTA's responses and my own metacognitive musings, I recognized the need for more mini-lessons on using various software, including Audacity, iMovie, and Screencast-O-Matic, within the pedagogy course. I also plan to ask New Media and Extended Learning, our university's distance learning resource, to visit the class more frequently to offer assistance with the LMS, assisting with any design issues students may have. Other ideas include planning more specific discussions of day-to-day activities, teaching how to evaluate multimodal projects in the online classroom, and adding more scholarship regarding the day-to-day practices of online teaching—all decisions made from mentoring former GTAs. For example, one GTA said, "I felt like I needed more explicit instruction about what I should actually be doing as an online instructor—how to manage time and grading, how to create relationships and community in an online environment." While seminar students read theory about these concepts, the GTAs' feedback made it clear that practice grading and norming sessions, similar to those asked of the IAs, would be beneficial.

Finally, as the body of scholarship surrounding online education continues to grow, the instructor of the practicum can introduce newer articles into the required reading list no matter what pedagogies their online program encourages. For instance, there has been much written about using

screencapture to give feedback on student texts in the online classroom (Brick and Holmes; Vincelette 107), and there has been more scholarship regarding multimodal assessment (Ball 393; Barton and Hieman 46; Blair 482; Murray et al.). Such articles can be interwoven into the practicum curriculum and then combined with mini-lessons and discussions regarding using screencapture software and assessing sample student projects.

My colleagues and I also made changes to our training practices. We initially thought that the secondary teaching experiences were too difficult to keep as an approach to teacher training. To start, the lead teacher must be a veteran in our program, and he or she must be willing to mentor and coach a secondary teacher. This mentorship can be time-consuming. In addition, the secondary teacher can be lost when asked to first teach in a course that has been designed by another teacher. However, because of the responses to the secondary teaching endeavors on the part of novice online instructors, we have decided to keep this element, making changes to our approach. For example, one secondary instructor commented on her experience, saying, “The lead instructor I worked under designed a highly effective class, which minimizes instructional redundancies by making class expectations clear from the outset. This model has served as a foundation for the online courses I’ve designed since then.” The eComp program has grown over the past three years, and we now have more veteran teachers who have previously served as successful secondary teachers; many of these former secondary instructors have noted that they would be willing to serve in the lead teacher role to continue this valuable experience. To make it easier on the lead teachers, we are implementing meetings where the novice and lead teachers can first collaborate on curriculum, then divide the workload for designing the course. This should take some of the burden off the lead teachers and make the secondary teachers feel more invested in and comfortable with the curriculum they will be teaching.

Another improvement includes asking veteran online teachers to attend eComp orientations to offer suggestions for effective practices based on what they have learned through teaching online. More recently, in keeping with OWI Principle 10, veterans were able to meet with novice teachers during the seminar class to help them structure new ideas (i.e., using social media), and these workshops have helped make the eComp courses more interactive beyond the traditional linear format of the Blackboard discussion board format. Throughout the semester, we hold focus groups and workshops where instructors can meet with their IA to talk about tutoring best practices in the online environment. Regardless of the format or the focus of these workshops, we have found it beneficial to our practices

to ask veteran instructors and instructional assistants to lead workshops or orientation presentations and talk through best practices with the novices.

CONCLUSION

Hewett and Ehmann's educational principles, as they pertain to the OWI Principles regarding training practices, were written to guide administrators in training online educators, and this training is important for graduate students, as they often teach the bulk of first-year writing courses. The professional development offered through eComp ensures that instructors are adequately prepared to teach in various teaching environments, as they learn by reading theory, implementing pedagogy, and participating in active learning exercises similar to the ones they will incorporate within their online writing courses. In fact, many of the graduate students have reflected on what they have learned through the eComp training program and how it will help and has helped them in future teaching endeavors. For instance, a graduate student who continued on to a PhD elsewhere reflected on her eComp training:

Learning to use asynchronous discussion effectively in an online class has helped me use the Blackboard discussion boards in a way that fosters the creation of a community in my f2f classes [. . .] Online pedagogy instruction has also helped me think more critically about the assignments I create. (Bouelle et al., "Reflections" para. 11)

A student also in a doctoral program at another institution reflected,

As I develop my doctoral research around the question of how writing knowledge transfers between extracurricular and academic learning environments, my expertise in online pedagogy has added an entirely new dimension to my research questions that I would not have encountered in my new institution, where there are no online composition courses. (Bouelle et al., "Reflections" para. 13)

As these types of reflections show, the training opportunities extend beyond the walls of eComp and the University of New Mexico and continue to inform the work of our former graduate students (for more information on graduate student benefits and their reflections, see Bouelle et al. "Reflections"). The online practices these graduate students developed based on their professional development also helped them improve their existing f2f practices, just as Hewett and Warnock suggested of good OWI teaching (560).

Consciously using Hewett and Ehmann's five educational principles to establish a separate pedagogy seminar or expand the curriculum within

existing practica can be a productive way to lead GTAs through the clarification of online theory and the development of pedagogically sound online courses, thus easing the transition to online teaching. Such a principle-centered pedagogy course also can open opportunities to establish mentoring relationships with the GTAs. As the administrator of eComp, I also teach the pedagogy course, and this duality helps me get to know instructors on a personal level, allowing them to feel comfortable coming to me for advice and help. Although I advocate that administrators of online programs consider teaching their own graduate practica regarding online teaching, I recognize that some institutions may not have the resources or room to expand course offerings. In the case where a seminar cannot be taught, I encourage writing program administrators to offer pedagogy workshops on the departmental level. The OWI survey outlined in *The State of the Art of OWI* suggests that online instructors need help structuring writing assignments that attend to audience, purpose, and occasion, as well as designing a course that encourages students to develop their writing process (Hewett et al. 9). Helping GTAs to develop such assignments during graduate-student orientation and subsequent workshops can move GTAs toward structuring their assignments and exercises for blended classes that use an LMS to support f2f instruction. These types of exercises can prepare GTAs to begin thinking about online teaching and teaching with technology in ways that further their pedagogy. Finally, to take some of the burden off the administrator, veteran instructors can facilitate workshops regarding such concerns as assignment design, how to effectively promote successful peer review in the online environment, and the uses of new technologies that can enhance the teaching and learning experience.

Regardless of what types of training an administrator offers, the educational community must actively seek ways to encourage GTAs to successfully use technologies and existing pedagogies to enhance their online classes (Hewett and Ehmann 161). The GTA training practices I have described can provide administrators with various ways to prepare graduate students to help them succeed as writing teachers in twenty-first century academe. Incorporating the training practices outlined herein may generate departmental conversations regarding effective practices in professional development for online teaching. The eComp program, insofar as it attends to Hewett and Ehmann's principles for online teacher training, serves as a model for administrators who wish to continue to support and enhance student learning regardless of the environment, medium, or format in which that learning occurs.

NOTES

1. Although many contemporary writing courses do not engage multimodal projects as yet, the ones described in this article do so as part and parcel of the University of New Mexico's first-year writing course. Naturally, such inclusion changes the specifics of OWI-focused GTA training, but it does not change the need for training or benefits of using a principle-centered approach.

2. All reflections were obtained within the University of New Mexico's IRB requirements for human-subject approval.

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APPENDIX A

The University of New Mexico's Outcomes for First-Year Writing

Rhetorical Situation and Genre

- A. analyze, compose, and reflect on arguments in a variety of genres, considering the strategies, claims, evidence, and various mediums and technologies that are appropriate to the rhetorical situation

Writing as a Social Act

- B. describe the social nature of composing, particularly the role of discourse communities at the local, national, and international level

Writing as a Process

- C. use multiple approaches for planning, researching, prewriting, composing, assessing, revising, editing, proofreading, collaborating, and incorporating feedback in order to make your compositions stronger in various mediums and using multiple technologies

Grammar and Usage

- D. improve your fluency in the dialect of Standardized Written American English at the level of the sentence, paragraph, and document
- E. analyze and describe the value of incorporating various languages, dialects, and registers in your own and others' texts

Reflection

- F. evaluate your development as a writer over the course of the semester and describe how composing in multiple genres and mediums using various technologies can be applied in other contexts to advance your goals

Research

- G. use writing and research as a means of discovery to examine your personal beliefs in the context of multiple perspectives and to explore focused research questions through various mediums and technologies

- H. integrate others' positions and perspectives into your writing ethically, appropriately, and effectively in various mediums and technologies
- I. compose a research-based academic argument in one of various mediums and technologies by identifying, analyzing, evaluating, and synthesizing sources, which must include secondary sources
- J. analyze and describe the writing and research conventions of an academic field in order to understand the different ways of creating and communicating knowledge

APPENDIX B: SYLLABUS FOR ONLINE PEDAGOGY COURSE

Dr. Tiffany Bourelle

Email: tbourell@unm.edu

Office Hours: Tuesday 2-4 or by appointment, Humanities 265

ENGL 540: Topics in Online Pedagogies

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Beth L. Hewett and Christa Ehmann (2004) indicate that teachers are often concerned about teaching online for the first time; however, they suggest that this worry is caused by a lack of proper training. This course will prepare you to teach your online course, helping you understand the best practices of designing a course, facilitating course discussions, holding online conferences, and providing feedback. In addition, the class will also be practical, as you will develop your own course shell to teach in the subsequent semester. The class you'll teach will be part of our online program, eComp, which is based on a multimodal pedagogy, where students are asked to choose their medium in response to the needs of their audience and the purpose of the document. As such, this class will teach you the theory and practice of online teaching and learning, helping you create materials such as assignments and multimodal instructional tools that mimic the texts your students develop.

GOALS OF THE COURSE

- To learn the theories that inform online teaching
- To learn to create multimodal and text-based assignments for the online classroom
- To develop an online course shell that utilizes multimodal instruction
- To craft a teaching portfolio for the job market
- To write a digital scholarly text for publication

REQUIRED TEXTS

- Hewett, B, and DePew, K. (2015). *Foundational Practices of Online Writing Instruction*. Anderson, SC: Parlor Press. FREE DOWNLOAD: <http://wac.colostate.edu/books/owi/>
- Selfe, C. (Ed.). (2007). *Multimodal Composition: Resources for Teachers*. Creskill: Hampton Press.
- Warnock, S. (2009). *Teaching Writing Online: How and Why*. Urbana: National Council of Teachers of English.

*I've placed all other readings on Blackboard

ASSIGNMENTS

The major assignments within this course include the following:

1. **Creating a Peer's Assignment.** I'm a believer that we should be creating the same types of documents that our students create to see where they might stumble and how we might improve the topic or context. You and a partner will swap one project, complete it, then create a short Jing video, giving feedback to your partner and making suggestions for improvement.
2. **Teaching Portfolio.** You will create a teaching portfolio that consists of three online assignments (multimodal and text-based), an electronic portfolio assignment, and the corresponding rubrics for each. You must also have a teaching philosophy, which up can develop from your digital literacy narrative, as well as an updated CV that highlights your online teaching experience.
3. **Digital Scholarship.** You will draft a digital response to an article in the Praxis section of *Kairos* regarding some type of pedagogical issue that you could see adapting to an online course. You will create an argument for using this pedagogy in an online class, submitting the final draft to the Disputatio section of the journal.
4. **Online Course Shell Development.** The latter part of the class will be devoted to teaching you how to develop your own course in Blackboard, using such software as Camtasia and Jing to develop multimodal instructional tools.

OTHER RESPONSIBILITIES

Student-led Discussions. At some point during the semester, you and a partner will choose a reading and present it to the class. On this day, you will lead a productive discussion for your peers. You must also have a visual (I'd like you to think beyond the traditional PowerPoint presentation).

Online Discussions. Each week, one of you will post a question for your peers to respond to via Blackboard. This activity will help you learn how to phrase questions for an online forum and how to keep the ball rolling with active responses.

Participation. We will spend much of our class time in discussions and workshops. Regardless of the class format, you are expected to be prepared for class, to listen, to contribute, and to participate in an appropriate fashion (**this means you must participate in the discussion by talking and presenting challenging ideas**).

POINTS BREAKDOWN

Digital Narrative	150
Multimodal Assignment	150
Teaching Portfolio	200
Online Shell Development	300
Student-led Discussion	100
Online Discussion Forum and Participation	100
Total	1000 points

GRADE SCALE

Letter grade value ranges are as follows:

A+ 97-100+%	B+ 87-89.9%	C+ 77-79.9%	D+ 67-69.9%	F 0-59.9%
A 93-96.9%	B 84-86.9%	C 74-76.9%	D 64.66.9%	
A- 90-92.9%	B- 80-83.9%	C- 70-73.9%	D- 60-63.9%	

POLICIES

Cell Phones and Other Technology. Turn your cell phones off or to vibrate if you need to have access for emergencies. When it comes to bringing your laptop, it goes without saying that I want you to be focused on what we are doing in class.

Attendance. Please don't be late for class. If you are late more than three times, I may deduct points from your final grade. You are allowed only two absences in this class; after that, you may fail the class.

Late Work. I will not accept late work unless you arrange an alternate due date BEFORE the stated due date. This policy means that if you turn in a paper late, I may give you an F on the assignment. If I deem that there were extenuating circumstances, I will deduct points for lateness as I see fit.

Plagiarism. Plagiarism is a form of theft. It is grounds for failing the course. Plagiarism occurs when a writer uses someone else's phrasing, sentences, or distinctive insights without giving proper credit. Be sure to acknowledge your sources! In this age of downloadable papers, remember that turning in work that, in whole or in part, is not your own is also plagiarism. When in doubt about quotation, citation, or acknowledgment of sources, see me for help.

Students with Disabilities. If you have a disability and will be requiring assistance, please contact me as soon as possible to arrange for accommodations.

Tiffany Bourelle is an Assistant Professor of English at the University of New Mexico, a four-year research-intensive university. She currently directs eComp and teaches technical communication and first-year writing in both face-to-face and online environments. Her research focuses on the pedagogical practices behind teaching multimodal composition in the online classroom. She has published in Computers and Composition, Kairos, and Technical Communication Quarterly.

Opening Plenary Address: Locations of Administration; or, WPAs in Space

Rita Malenczyk

The title of my talk obviously references work Kathleen Blake Yancey and others have done regarding locations of writing: I'm thinking of the two *CCC* issues in 2014 that address that topic as well as work by Nedra Reynolds on geographies of writing and a lot of previous work by Marilyn Cooper, Sid Dobrin, Christian Weisser, and others.¹ Cooper's and Dobrin's work has also inspired more recent research on ecologies of WPA work as it relates to the situatedness of programs (see, for instance, Reiff et al.) and to other issues such as assessment—I'm thinking here particularly of Asao Inoue's book on race and writing assessment. I'd like to think with you tonight, though, in a somewhat different way about location and space and talk about representations of space, which is something of a timely topic, here in North Carolina—though one I won't address, not being really qualified to do that.² Instead, I'm going to talk about representations of academic space. Insofar as all representations of space can affect how people live and work, they're instructive to delve into and think about, and I'm hoping that maybe the next half hour or so will help us begin to ask ourselves certain questions in keeping with the theme of the conference, "Multiple Perspectives on Writing Program Administration." What I'm going to do over the next 35 minutes, then, is prime the pump for us to think about ourselves throughout this conference not only as WPAs at our individual institutions, but as members of the Council of Writing Program Administrators, which has been in existence for almost 40 years now as an organization that's open to all who administer writing programs yet has in the course of time evolved in certain ways we might want to pay attention to (and I say this as Immediate Past President and someone who considers CWPA my much-loved professional home). Evolving, changing is a natural thing that happens in the course of organizational life; in fact, organizational theorists are now starting to use the word *organizing* as something organizations continually do, rather than do just at their inception (see, for

instance, Hernes and Maitlis). In any case, what I want to do is crack open a door to the idea of thinking about multiple perspectives with a talk that I hope will lead us to consider how we as WPAs live in and represent our own academic space, in contrast to how it might traditionally be represented.

So to approach that door, I open with a video from that satirical news outlet, *The Onion*. When I posted this video to my Facebook page a while

back (a year or so ago, I think), one of my friends, the former-WPA-and-dean Dave Schwalm, commented that it was hard to know what, exactly, the target of its satire was. I found this an intriguing (and perceptive) comment because many people would say, well, obviously, the target is the *U.S. News and World Report* annual ranking of the nation's best colleges and universities. What's



being satirized about that? Certainly its predictability: a reader of those rankings generally knows that every year one of the Ivy League schools will be ranked Number 1 in the Best National University category—this year the top three were, in descending order, Princeton, Harvard, and Yale. This ranking would no doubt be in the back of the mind of anyone watching this video and seeing the title “Nation’s Parents Release Annual Ranking of Top 50 ‘Perfectly Good’ State Schools.” Hand-in-hand with the issue of always knowing who will be first goes the perceived arbitrariness of the *U.S. News* list. What, exactly, is it that made Princeton better than Harvard this year? Informing *The Onion*’s satire, then, is the fact that anybody with a will and a website can create a set of college rankings; the criteria used to do so will differ depending on who’s doing the creating; and the criteria aren’t always known. Depending on who you are and the reputation of the creator, you might not care, either: if you’re an upper-echelon administrator at a school like mine, for instance, you know about the publicity that surrounds the release of the *U.S. News* rankings—publicity that gave exigence to *The Onion*’s satire—and you’ll be more than happy to crow about your ranking on your school’s website should it be appropriate to do so.

I’ll say more about administrators and my own institution’s promotional strategies—which, I’m guessing, are not unique—in a bit. But back to criteria: as we know, *U.S. News* does in fact have a set of criteria for their rankings, and they publish it. Here’s what their website says the criteria were for 2016:

The indicators we use to capture academic quality fall into a number of categories: assessment by administrators at peer institutions, retention of students, faculty resources, student selectivity, finan-

cial resources, alumni giving, graduation rate performance and, for National Universities and National Liberal Arts Colleges only, high school counselor ratings of colleges. (Morse et al.)

The attentive rhetorician will note how much this list depends on what I'm going to call here self-reinforcing criteria: specifically, the existing reputations of schools that have shaped, and been shaped in turn by, student selectivity and assessment by administrators at peer institutions. Even criteria like retention are self-reinforcing, as work by researchers like Alexander Astin shows: excellent academic performance in high school is a predictor of success in college, and prestigious schools attract high school students who perform well, and on and on in a continuous loop (qtd. in Estrem et al. 208). If there's a high school counselor anywhere who's going to tell a kid that Yale or Cornell aren't good schools, I'll eat my non-existent hat.

There might be those counselors, however, who would delicately bring up the question of affordability, not to mention that justifiably vexed term, *fit*. *The Onion's* humor in any situation comes from its takedown of ideals implicit in mainstream media representation. A faithful *Onion* reader might remember, for example, the headline that appeared on its website the week of the 2008 Presidential election. On November 4, the media were understandably thrilled to cover the election of Barack Obama and to do so with, in the case of newspapers, large and expressive headlines. One of Obama's hometown papers, the *Chicago Tribune*, rose to the occasion by quoting the candidate: "Before a huge Grant Park crowd, President-Elect Obama declares, 'Change has come to America.'" The *Washington Post*, unable to convincingly imagine a community of Chicagoans, nonetheless managed to invoke a collective reality with "Obama Makes History: US Decisively Elects First Black President" (Barnes and Shear). *The New York Times*, willing to go slightly farther, opined, "Obama Elected President as Racial Barrier Falls" (Nagourney). It was that last one that may have goaded *The Onion* into coming back with the ballsy-even-for-them headline, "Black Man Given Nation's Worst Job." (As a white woman, I personally find it comforting that they're doing something similar now with mainstream media narratives of gender progress: on June 8, shortly after Hillary Clinton's final primary victories, *The Onion* came out with "Elderly Voter Never Thought She'd Get to See Female Presidential Nominee Called Heartless Ice Bitch During Her Lifetime.") Where *The Onion* derives its humor, then, is from the alternate and, quite possibly, better-known and, in many peoples' minds, truer narratives of social situations that the mainstream media isn't taking into account.

But back to the *U.S. News* college rankings and, more specifically, how the media announces their release, makes them, as one might say, a thing.

What those rankings and their publicity machine don't take into account, *The Onion* satire suggests, is the reality of who in any given family actually makes the decision about which college a student will attend, and furthermore, what criteria are really used in that process. Certainly the son of one of "the nation's cold businessman fathers," depicted on the cover of their magazine with "You WILL Go to Yale" in the last frame of the video, isn't picking out his own school, a fact that's both his privilege and, as his expression on the cover of the magazine suggests, his curse. More prominently featured, though, are the children of what I'll simply call the non-elite. With two kids in college and another headed that way, I've been around a lot of high school parents in my middle-class town and its environs, and with the exception of those whose children are extremely academically focused or those who have money to burn (and there are a few), I've heard a version of any given one of the quotes that follow. None is beyond the pale, and a couple of them (specifically the ones about money and betrayal) could have come from my own lower-middle/working-class parents.

There's the wheedling, the discouraging, the manipulation:

- "Do they have professors? . . . What's wrong with these professors? They look pretty good to me."
- "Does any one school have a copyright on ivy?"
- "Do you think your mother and I are millionaires?" and
- "After all we've done for you, you're going to abandon us?"

And the consequent presentation of alternative criteria:

- "Schools Your Older Sister Went to and Had a Great Time At."
- "Schools That If You Really Hate You Can Transfer Out Of." and
- "Schools That Have Your Dad's Frat."

And my favorite because I did my PhD there, "NYU: You Probably Can't Get In." There are also others, not listed. Lots of kids in my town just go to the places that accepted them despite their spotty academic records or to the places that are warmer than where they live—and if you're from New England, that can be a draw. Some go to places where they've been recruited for athletics. Some go because the school has their dad's frat, because their sister loved it, and so on. (Some go for the parties.)

The ultimate question *The Onion* video raises is, of course, what's so special about elite schools anyway? Good teachers really are good teachers no matter what their context, and historic buildings are old buildings no matter where they are. This business about the buildings, though, is where the satire makes me, at least, a little uncomfortable. Because what *The Onion* also seems to be satirizing—and what I think may have prompted Dave

Schwalm's comment about the actual target—is lack of knowledge on the part of some working- and middle-class families about what landscape signifies in terms of academic space and just how effective and influential that signification can be when a kid develops a jones for a certain kind of college experience. The significance of signification, as it were, is why certain institutions market themselves in certain ways.

My own university is a case in point.

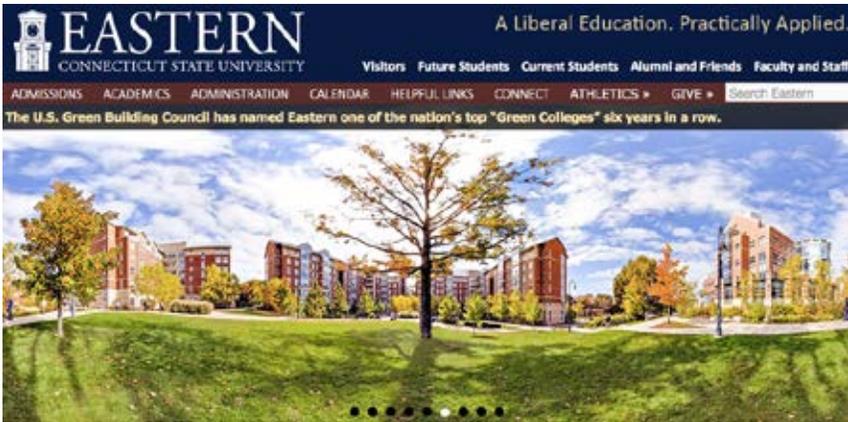


Fig. 1. Eastern's splash page.

I'm sure I'm not the only person in this room who's analyzed their school's website or viewbook (or had their students do it, too). Eastern Connecticut State University's, however, comes with a particular and relevant history. We're located in Willimantic, Connecticut, an old mill town of the kind you see all over semi-rural New England. Our former president, David Carter, who held office from 1988 to 2006, arrived at the campus of what was first a normal school and, then, primarily a commuter school with no real identity except for "the place you went if you lived in the area and didn't get into UCONN." Carter worked hard to transform Eastern into a primarily residential college with a liberal arts mission that would, he hoped, be desirable to potential students for reasons other than less competitive admissions standards and proximity to home. He built that mission on Eastern's existing strengths—relatively small size, a balance of science and humanities programs with neither really outweighing the other, the faculty's commitment to teaching, and the willingness of that faculty to embrace a liberal arts mission—and, helped by the academic job market, strengthened the faculty in terms of credentials. (Until about 25 or 30 years ago, it wasn't unusual for the faculty in our system not to have terminal degrees, and now most of them do: or, in other words, we have professors).

He also, I might add, greatly diversified the faculty and staff through a very strong office of Equity and Diversity—Carter was African American and grew up poor in Dayton, Ohio before embarking on his career in education, so it's not as if he was looking deliberately, through a contrived liberal arts mantra, to go back to a more racially and economically exclusive time.

What he did want, though, was to fulfill his liberal arts vision in both reality and imagination. Carter knew stuff about marketing and prestige and was a savvy rhetorician where the state's politicians were concerned, so it's no accident that he was able to get a lot of state funds appropriated for new buildings—he was great at getting on the agenda of the bonding commission—and in so doing, he essentially rebuilt the campus. I came to Eastern in 1994, and since then, I've seen the campus pretty much completely transformed. We now have new, and prominently-located, Administrative and Admissions Buildings; an Early Childhood Education Center and preschool; a new Student Center that contains, among other things, a nice fitness room; a very new Fine Arts building with a sweeping glass front;



Fig. 2. Eastern's new Administration and Fine Arts buildings.

and, last but not least, dorms whose tetradic structure forms quads, with one of those quads being anchored on one end by a new Science building, which also helped create a larger, central quad on which students throw Frisbees to bandanna-wearing dogs when the weather gets warm.



Fig. 3. Eastern's main quad.

All of this happened in the last 20 years, and the entire current government of the State of Connecticut—which is in a severe budget crisis—probably stays up late at night thinking about how much money for buildings our former president was able to convince them to fork over so Eastern could improve its reputation.

By now you might have guessed, though, that by at least one of *The Onion's* criteria for prestige, Eastern doesn't fit the definition of a desirable-for-some-students institution. We have new buildings, not old ones. But even though we don't have old buildings, we have other desirable things: we're located in New England, and if you want someplace that says college, well, you can't do better than New England because we have fall foliage which appears in just about every edition of Eastern's viewbook. Also, as I've said, our president was a savvy rhetorician, and there are things besides buildings that can confer an aura of prestige on a campus.



Fig. 4. Fall foliage.

Around 1998—when Eastern received its official designation from the legislature as the state’s liberal arts institution—work was being done by our PR folks to create the trappings of history and tradition. For example, around that time, a ceremony—or, as the PR office called it, “a new tradition”—was introduced at commencement whereby the procession of graduating seniors passed a fountain brought to campus and threw pennies in to “Make a Wish” for the future. In addition, a crest was designed that I haven’t really seen used anywhere prominently on campus (it’s on the gates at the front but nobody sees it because the gates are dark, gray-on-gray), which may not be a bad thing because, at least according to my department’s medievalist, checkeredness in heraldry—depending on how it’s used—can signify illegitimacy.



Fig. 5. Eastern's crest.

A more frequently-used symbol, however, was one of the structures built in 1998 with some of that legislative money—in fact, one of the earliest ones: a clock tower that stands at the main entrance to the university and really serves no utilitarian function except to sound every hour to remind us what time it is. It’s an imposing and unique structure, however, and shortly after it was built, the clock tower started showing up as the official logo of the university on our letterhead and on all of our business cards and on the website and in other places.



Fig. 6. The clock tower.

This appearance of the clock tower everywhere surprised a lot of the older faculty who had been around much, much longer than the clock tower or the president, for that matter, and were used to having input into a range of university affairs in what is nostalgically referred to as shared governance. Those faculty thought there should've been a larger conversation about what was apparently becoming Eastern's emblem. So at some point, a campus-wide email went out from some faculty to the administration inquiring about who had decided the clock tower would be our logo and on what basis, and while I don't remember the names of the faculty who sent the email or what the exact content of that email was, I clearly remember the response that came back from the Academic Vice President's office: "The clock tower symbolizes Eastern." Shortly thereafter, the faculty gave up the battle—we do, after all, have a 4/4 teaching load or, in my case, the equivalent—and the clock tower is on everything, and probably it really does, now, symbolize Eastern.

What something symbolizes, of course, depends on who's looking at it. In an essay called "What I Learned from the Campus Plumber," George Bergman, an English professor at Pacific Lutheran in Washington State, describes being asked to chair his campus sustainability committee. Bergman learns through his service on the committee that the very ivy figured prominently in *The Onion* satire ("Does any one institution have a copy-right on ivy?") is a problem on their campus because it kills the native Douglas fir and western hemlock (70). The ivy on their campus, he notes, is English ivy, "The same type of ivy that defines the campuses of higher education in England and Europe, as well as on the East Coast of the United States" (70). Yet, because it's an invasive species, Bergman says, "One of our projects to restore the campus is to rip out the ivy" (70).

Bergman acknowledges the metaphoric aspect of what's being done by getting rid of the ivy:

As we rip out the ivy, we are also deconstructing the traditional idea of a campus landscape. Ivy is part of the iconography of . . . the academic pastoral. Ivy has been one of the principal plants through which a campus speaks. What ivy says is that the campus is a privileged location in the 'landscape of the mind.' (70)

The pastoral, Bergman says,

is a shaping figure in our conception of the college campus and of academic life. As an inheritor of the medieval church's monastic ideal, the scholastic life invites us to see the campus as a place set apart from the real world, a refuge and a retreat into contemplation. As a principal locus in the contemplative life, the university campus

is traditionally imagined as an idyllic retreat, sequestered and cloistered. Under sheltering trees and within its ivied walls, the academic world is a retreat that parallels a pastoral retreat. Both offer a contemplative retreat into a nature whose topography is defined by its place in the mind. (70)

However, none of this applies if you're the campus plumber—or even, I'd submit, a teacher. Bergman notes that for Francis Bacon, in the Renaissance, "The culture of the mind is a kind of magical process, like the tilling and husbandry of soil, producing its crop of virtue in the actual life of the student" (71). Yet anybody who's ever taught a course and spent time preparing syllabi, grading exams, responding to writing, and meeting with students knows that, unless you're teaching at Hogwarts, there isn't anything magical about culturing the mind; likewise, anyone who takes care of landscaping, mowing or digging, planting or plowing, also knows that there isn't anything magical about how the pastoral landscape is created.

The latter group will also note their own absence from that landscape, which may have been what bothered the hypothetical parents in *The Onion* satire who didn't understand what's so important about ivy; something similar may also have been what bothered at least some of my colleagues about Eastern's clock-tower logo. Certainly, a building such as a clock tower, not something contemporary folks usually build, confers an aura of the ancient, the monastic. But it's also important to understand what the monastic ideal leaves out. What didn't find its way into the emblem-related emails to our administration in 1998 were the jokes that a lot of senior female faculty had started cracking about the clock tower. A building at the main entrance to campus—and Eastern is a small campus—where there hadn't been one before kind of gets your attention, and because our all-male administration had the reputation of being patriarchal figures not brooking much, if any, dissent, you can probably figure out how feminist women faculty who had made their bones during the second wave would respond to an enormous phallic structure not only located at the entrance to campus but also used as the emblem for the institution.

I didn't have tenure at the time, though I did cheer my colleagues on in my heart. Yet brouhaha over the clock tower notwithstanding, *ancient* and *monastic* certainly aren't words one can justify applying to Eastern if one looks more closely at its history, specifically the history buried, under "History"—the place hardly anyone ever looks—on our website. There, you can find a booklet that gives you a quick run-through of Eastern's history. Like many such institutions, including our three sister universities in the system, Eastern, as I've said, was originally a normal school founded in the late nineteenth century and then was a teacher's college; while it wasn't

officially designated a women's college, the student body in those early years looked like this:



Fig. 7. Eastern's student body.

And this (Figure 8) was the only basketball team on campus in 1898. But by the 1940s, for a range of reasons, more men had begun attending, and male attendance coincides, in this history viewbook, with depiction of men's sports teams: the baseball team; the basketball team. One of the women's teams still gets a sign (Figure 9). Yet photographic—or iconographic—depiction of female students and female athletes recedes into the background as the text moves closer to the current moment and Eastern's current iteration—toward which, I might add, the narrative seems to inevitably proceed.

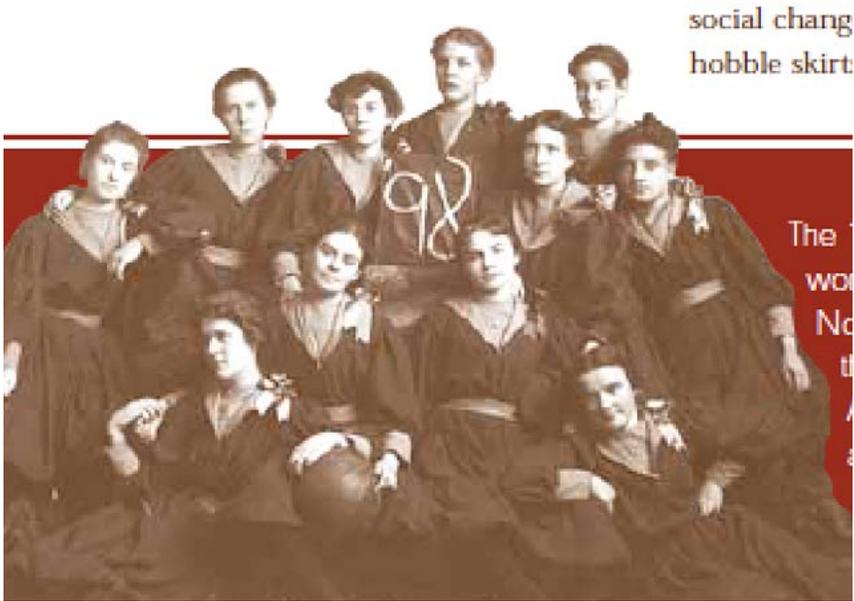


Fig. 8. Women's basketball team.

I was pulled up short in reading that narrative, however, by a somewhat offhand mention in the middle of it of a 1928 commencement tradition. You'll recall my description of a new commencement tradition our administration created around 15 years ago, a tradition in which graduates pass a fountain and throw coins into it. It's called "Make a Wish." However, if one happens to be reading that history book, one will see there was another tradition already in our background: it was called "Make a Daisy Chain." (Figure 10.)

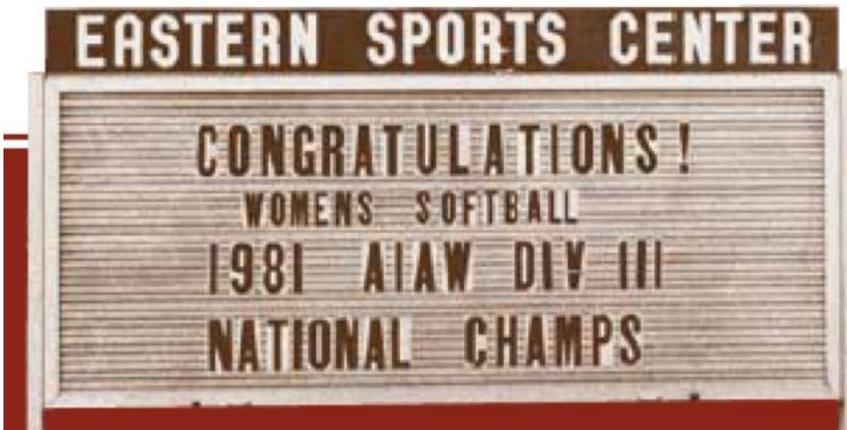


Fig. 9. Women's softball win sign.



Fig. 10. Making the daisy chain.

The text describing that tradition reads, in part, as follows:

The Daisy Chain tradition started in the 1920s and ended in the early 1940s. Being selected to work on the chain was an honor, with juniors being dispensed . . . to pick daisies the day before commencement so that the chain could be woven and used the next day. The chain became two chains, with seniors walking to Commencement through two rows of daisies held by juniors.

Though Eastern clearly knows its history—witness this history book—this daisy chain business is something that hasn't been prominently shown in our major forms or—recalling the clock tower, form—of representation. I don't mean to pick on my home institution; universities reinventing themselves—even re-gendering themselves—isn't unusual, as Kelly Ritter has illustrated in *To Know Her Own History*. Nor do I want to make too many stupidly obvious Freudian jokes. My point, rather, and here I hark back to *The Onion* satire with which I started, is that for some people, the traditional trappings of academic space signal success; for others, depending on who they are, those trappings can signify something quite different—and perhaps the most prominent something, if you really think about it, is erasure. There are ways other than putting in ivy to crowd out the plants that were already there.



Fig. 11. WPA logo.

This, of course, is our logo, the logo of the Council of Writing Program Administrators. I did some research on the early days of CWPA last year at Purdue, where the organization's archives are kept, as part of another project; and I didn't happen to find anything about how that came to be our logo (it's quite possible that this information does exist and I just didn't find it—I was looking for other things at the time). It first appeared, as far as I can tell, on the cover of the Fall-Winter 1984 issue of the WPA journal; the editor announced its appearance in his editor's note (see Smith) but didn't provide any other information about it—for example, who designed it, how it came to be. In my research at Purdue, I did happen to run across a couple of earlier designs that seem to have been tentatively used to symbolize the organization in various contexts: one a drawing of typewriter, another consisting simply of the initials WPA. But by 1990, the current logo seems to have been firmly established, in the journal, and on the organization's letterhead.

This logo isn't, of course, immutable. Modifications to it have occurred for a range of purposes. Perhaps the best-known modification is the one made by WPA-GO, our graduate organization, in which the word *GO* appeared in place of the hand:



Fig. 12. WPA-GO logo.

The Network for Media Action/also modified the logo thus:

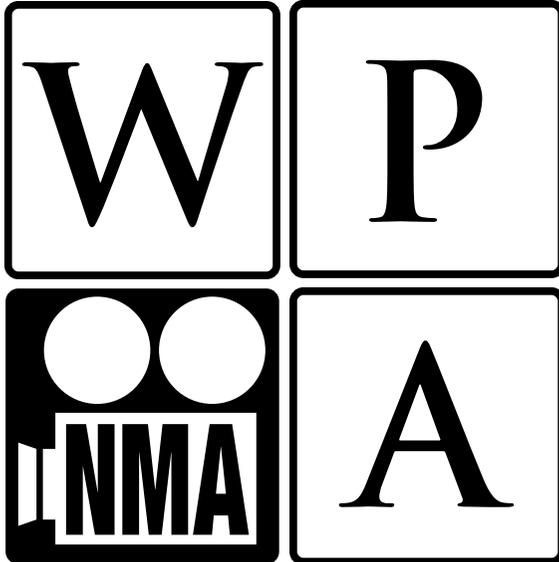


Fig. 13. WPA Network for Media Action logo.

And it's been modified, too, for some conference programs. Possibly the most memorable of those modifications—or memorable to me in any

case—was the one made for the 1997 conference program at Michigan Tech, the first CWPA conference I ever went to, where in response to an activist mood brought on by what seemed to be a trend of administrative retaliation against WPAs, the writing hand had dropped the pen and was closed into a fist. One of the plenary speakers at that conference, Chris Anson, suggested in his talk (though he may not remember doing so) that other hand gestures might have been even more appropriate for the logo at that particular time.

And, of course, there's one that was never used, but which Chuck Paine jokingly shared with me as an option for the 2012 Albuquerque conference—Albuquerque being a city full of brewpubs and local craft beer:

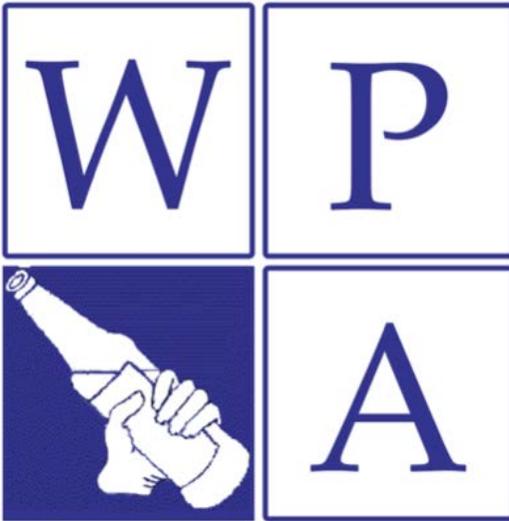


Fig. 14. WPA logo for Albuquerque conference (not used).

This might perhaps be the real narrative underlying all of our representations of ourselves. Satire, as I've suggested, brings that out.

But the one with the writing hand is our representation of ourselves. What's compelling to me about it is that as I think about space, particularly academic space, and how that space is represented, and obviously not knowing what was behind this design, and knowing that the way things mean is very complicated—still, I wonder how well this logo represents our work and our membership at this given time. Ken Bruffee, one of the founders of the organization and the first editor of the journal, thought WPAs were both teachers and, perhaps not coincidentally, workers: Doug Hesse talked in his 2014 plenary address about Bruffee's disappointment when Doug took over as journal editor and innocently changed the journal cover from red to yel-

low, because for Bruffee, red signified solidarity with workers (Hesse 134). In some senses—and I don't want to push this too far, as I am speaking figuratively—WPAs have more in common with George Bergman's campus plumber than they have with the owner of the hand depicted in this logo, writing with a perhaps outdated implement in an empty space that seems to connote solitude—or, at least as I read it, in a representation of traditional academic space. That's not really WPA space, and we might as well admit it. We, like the plumber, know how the machinery works, even if it's a different kind of machinery: We know how students are placed into classes; we know the histories of those placement methods; we know who develops standardized curricula and assessments, and often we know for what motives; we know how race, class, and gender affect students' literacy experiences; we know how local, regional, and national policies affect those experiences. In other words, we know how the spaces we teach and administer in are built. We have to know these things because we don't get to sequester ourselves in quiet, contemplative, traditional academic space if we want to do our jobs and serve our students well. Rather, we work (as any number of scholars has pointed out in any number of ways) in the spaces between and sometimes the spaces outside. It's the nature of our field.

To bring this talk to a close, here are two things I'm not saying. First, I'm not saying that the current CWPA logo is evil and must be stopped. (It does, after all, represent—however imperfectly—our concern, writing, as opposed to the concerns of other organizations; googling CWPA will bring you, among other places, to the Collegiate Water Polo Association.) I'm also not saying that we must decide once and for all whether we're faculty or administrators. (Where one exists on an organizational chart depends on local circumstances; there are many different kinds of WPA positions.) What I do want us to bear in mind, though, is the continually evolving nature of any organization, which I think is important to remember in a conference themed around multiple perspectives and more broadly around inclusion. As the organization moves forward, we should ask ourselves, I think, whose perspectives are currently left out of our self-representations and, more importantly, out of the organization itself. There is, for instance, the predominantly white membership of the organization, but the next plenary speaker will address that. From the National Census of Writing, we know that there are a lot of people out there doing WPA work who don't identify themselves as WPAs. I've encountered this too, when working the organization's booth at 4Cs: people come up to the booth, and I'll ask them if they know about CWPA. And they'll say, yeah, but I'm not a WPA. And I'll say, well, what do you do? And they say well, I coordinate placement, I do faculty development, I help develop curricula . . . What they're describ-

ing is, in fact, WPA work. These are the kind of people our organization should serve, and furthermore, they should know we serve them. As immediate past president I wonder, sometimes: if we could rewind our history, what would we do differently—or would we do anything differently?—to organize and represent ourselves so that a broader range of people sees themselves in us?

Thank you.

NOTES

1. In transcribing this talk to the printed page, I've tried to keep its original conversational feel, hence the casual construction of some sentences. I have made some minor edits here and there for flow and/or accuracy and have eliminated a number of the images that didn't seem to add much to the written text but added visual interest to the talk. *The Onion* video was obviously central to my argument, so with help from the *WPA: Writing Program Administration* editors, I've provided a couple of ways to access it. Images from Eastern Connecticut State University's website are included in this text; the use of such images for critical, scholarly, non-commercial purposes constitutes fair use, as provided in Title 17 U.S.C Section 107 of U.S. Copyright Law.

2. In July 2016, when this talk was given, North Carolina had passed H.B. 2, which among other things, required that people use whichever rest room corresponded with the gender assigned to them at birth.

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I'd like to thank Beth Boquet for listening and responding to a draft of this talk while feeding me Italian deli sandwiches, rice balls, and cannoli from Gaetano's, which gets its bread daily from Arthur Avenue in the Bronx (no small thing).

Rita Malenczyk is professor of English and director of the Writing Program and Writing Center at Eastern Connecticut State University and Immediate Past President of the Council of Writing Program Administrators. Her work has appeared in numerous journals and edited collections, including Kelly Ritter and Paul Kei Matsuda's Exploring Composition Studies (Utah State UP, 2012) and Heidi Estrem et al.'s Overcoming Writer's Block: Retention, Persistence and Writing Programs (forthcoming, Utah State UP). The second edition of her own edited collection, A Rhetoric for Writing Programs, appeared from Parlor Press in summer 2016.

Friday Plenary Address: Racism in Writing Programs and the CWPA

Asao B. Inoue

Thank you for coming, and I'm grateful to be able to offer you this talk today. I need to warn you though. I may say a few things that might seem disrespectful to some in the room and to the organization. That is not my intention. I have deep respect for those in this room and for those who have helped me in the organization over the years. I'm grateful for the CWPA, which has given me access to wonderful colleagues and opportunities. My intention, rather, is to help us examine the racism in the CWPA and in our writing programs. To do this hard work, it may require that we feel uncomfortable. It may require that we hear the hard truth from someone who is not white, but I urge you not to confuse your discomfort with disrespect on my part.

Let me start by making a bold call to action for all of us. We must do violence to our writing programs and even to the very organization that permits us the occasion to be here today, not just for our students' good, but especially for those who are NOT our students, who for larger historically and structurally racist reasons have yet to be eligible to be our students, and for those who for similar reasons have yet to be eligible to be here with us or run writing programs or teach writing classes. We must do violence to the CWPA and our own writing programs if we are to address racism.

What am I assuming is the case in this call? I'm assuming that racism is commonly occurring in the ways we judge language, even though we may be trying to be fair—in fact, I'll argue later that being fair often is a racist practice. It is the judgment of language, both inside our classrooms and in our writing program assessments, that affects the futures of our students in the field, that allows them to become graduate students in English or Composition and Rhetoric, that allows them to teach writing courses in college and secondary settings, that makes it possible to be published in the organization's journal and other journals, that helps them get promoted to writing

program administrators and elected as officers to the CWPA. While it isn't the entire problem, racism in writing programs and our organization begins and ends with racism in our writing assessments at all levels.

HOW WE JUDGE LANGUAGE IS RACIST

Many of you might be saying to yourselves, "yes, but not me. I'm fair. I'm not racist." Let me be clear. I ain't talkin' 'bout people *being* racist. I ain't talking 'bout intentions. We are all good people trying to do what's right. I'm talking about our programs and organization being racist. I'm talking about our dispositions toward language and its judgement being racist. But this is not completely true. I *am* talking about how in unconscious ways *all of us are racist*, but I'll get to that argument later. Right now, let me make the argument that how we judge language typically in writing classrooms and programs, and in all journals of the field, is racist because of the ways language and judgment work and because of the ways race is closely connected to language. To put the claim simply: Our primary jobs as teachers, scholars, and administrators, our jobs as judges of language, is inherently a racist practice. Why? Race and language are closely associated, and when we judge language in order to categorize and rank, the act of judgment becomes racist in our world. It's racism by consequence, not by intention.

Let me back up. Racial formations—material bodies that are racialized—are connected closely to language use and our attitudes toward language. Laura Greenfield makes this point in a number of ways. She argues that in US society and schools, most people, including writing teachers, tend to ignore or overlook the linguistic facts of life that linguist Rosina Lippi-Green identifies and that reveal the structural racism in society and language preference. These facts of life are long-established linguistic agreements in the field and say that all language varieties, from Hawaiian Creole English to African American Language to Spanglish, are legitimate, rule-governed, and communicative. Greenfield argues that standardized Englishes are dominant because white people speak them.

All spoken language changes over time.

All spoken languages are equal in linguistic terms.

Grammaticality and communicative effectiveness are distinct and interdependent issues.

Written language and spoken language are historically, structurally, and functionally fundamentally different creatures.

Variation is intrinsic to all spoken language at every level.

Fig. 1. Rosina Lippi-Green's "linguistic facts of life" (Lippi-Green, 1997, p. 10; quoted in Greenfield, 2011, p. 33)

So-called proper English or dominant discourses are historically connected to the white body. This makes sense intuitively. We speak with and through our bodies. We write with and through our bodies. So language will be closely associated with its source, its point of origin. As teachers and program administrators, when we read and evaluate our students' writing, we do so through and with our bodies, and we have in our minds a vision of our students as bodies, as much as we have their language in front of us. This fact affects who moves on in the academy, who becomes an English major or a Composition and Rhetoric grad student, whether we wish to acknowledge it or not. Which bodies historically have had the privilege to speak and write the most in civic life and in the academy? Whose words have been validated as history, truth, knowledge, story, the most through-out history? Who sits in the teacher's chair or holds positions as program administrators or officers of professional organizations that train and mentor current and future writing teachers and administrators? White people. It's only recently that the CWPA Executive Board has had anyone of color on it. That's me and Karen Keaton Jackson, and we both were elected at the same time because of important and good efforts by the organization's leadership to bring more WPAs of color into leadership positions.

Now, don't get me wrong. Ain't nothing wrong with bein' white. The problem is that with one's whiteness usually comes historically reproduced structures of language and dispositions toward language, toward judging language that are unconscious and harmful to racialized others. Yes, I said that. If you're white, you likely are harming your students of color because of something you can't control, your whiteness and your white language

privilege. This isn't a hopeless situation, but it takes acknowledging it, then concerted action.

In the seven years I helped run the first-year writing program at Fresno State, a historically Hispanic Serving Institution where white students are the numerical minority, there were, to my count, seven total teachers of color teaching in the program. Every year, we brought in around ten to twelve new teachers, sometimes more. We usually had around 25–30 working teachers at any given time. This meant that, on average, there was one teacher of color teaching first-year writing at any given time. The rest were, for the most part, white, middle-class, and female. Given my experiences at four other state universities and a two-year college, these conditions are the norm. At my current institution, I am the only faculty of color teaching first-year writing in the last two years, and most of our students are students of color. In the past when I raised this very issue, I have been chastised by administration and my white colleagues. At one institution, I said publicly that “the problem with our writing program is that all of its teachers are white women, and 60% of our students are of color and often multilingual.” Shortly thereafter, I received a certified letter informing me that I had created an “unsafe work environment,” and I might want to bring my lawyer to the meeting scheduled to discuss what I'd said and what we needed to do about it. I had not said anything untrue, simply stated the problem of racial and gendered representation in our faculty who teach in the writing program. I had simply said that we needed more faculty of color, that white female teachers, while very good, just wasn't a good enough replacement for true racial representation that matches the students we serve. My real crime in the eyes of the white institution and white administration was that I had suggested that white teachers were not always in the best position to make decisions about our writing classes or our students of color, were not in the best position to judge our students of color or their writing. That's not a message white people are accustomed to hearing. How do you feel about it?

What I was reporting is the national norm. A report by the Center for American Progress on “Increasing Teacher Diversity” in US public schools cites equally alarming statistics from the National Center for Education Statistics. Racial minority students make up over 40% of students in all schools in the US, but only 14.6% of all teachers are Black or Latinx, and in 40% of public schools there is no teacher of color, not one (Bireda and Chait 1). In my own public schooling, I was a PhD student, 31 years old, before I sat in a classroom with a teacher of color. That was Victor Villanueva (thank god it was Victor!)—eighteen years of schooling and no teacher of color, none, not one. Imagine it, because I think, many of you have to imagine it. An educational life where you never meet any teacher or author-

ity figure, never meet anyone who looks like you or comes from the same places that you come from or sounds like you? Imagine that these teachers are always your judge, always judging your words by their tape measure, a tape you never got a chance to fully see until it was stretched against you, and you were found short. Imagine that kind of education, then you'll know what I'm talking about, how important the racialized bodies are who judge you in school. You'll know—no, no—you'll FEEL how important race is to the judgment of language. So, in a way, my statement that got me into so much trouble was really asking: “can't our students of color have just one fucking teacher of color? Can't we make sure of that? Can't we make that a priority?”

Now, here's the larger argument, outside the weeds of my experience. If the dominant discourse of the academy is taught almost exclusively by white, middle-class teachers, then isn't it possible that such conditions will affect the discourse valued in writing assessments, in writing programs, in writing journals? Is it possible that those who achieve such positions, such credentials, might have achieved them because they can use and favor dominant, white, middle class discourses, that they embody the discourse the field comes to expect? If so, it is no wonder that dominant discourses in schools are closely associated with the white body and whiteness. It is the reason that you are here today, and not others, not the Other. It is the reason that that statement may feel uncomfortable, or that my saying it directly to you, calling you out, seems so uncomfortable, so impolite, because it's not part of the white dispositions embodied in most hegemonic academic discourses. It ain't terribly white and middle class to point at your audience and say, “you get to be here because others were systematically denied access. Your success is a product of racism.” I'm not supposed to be that direct. It could piss you off. I'm supposed to be calm, objective, neutral. But fuck that shit. I ain't neutral, and I can't be calm about the subject of racism. And I suggest you shouldn't be either. In terms of our writing programs, I'm also arguing that grading and evaluating student writing by a conventional standard is racist. I've made this argument with research and the literature in other places (Inoue “Failure”; *Antiracist Writing Assessment*), so I won't belabor it today. I think you all know my solution, it is to stop grading on so called “quality” and find other ways to produce institutionally-demanded grades for students, such as using labor-based grading contracts. I'm happy to talk about this solution afterwards, and Joyce Inman, Rebecca Powell, and I conducted an institute on this topic at this conference.

LANGUAGE IS RACIALIZED ALREADY

But I'm not simply saying that judging language is simultaneously judging bodies. I'm also saying that language carries with it—through our judging of it—imaginary bodies that are hierarchized in our social world. We do this unconsciously. We cannot help this associating of racialized bodies with language practices. Gender and race are the first two things people identify (or try to) about a person when they meet them. We look, often implicitly and unconsciously, for markers that tell us something about the person so that we can interact with them appropriately. Why would teachers or administrators be any different. Are we above the rules of language just because we're aware of bias in judgment, because we understand that there are historically reproduced racist structures in education and language practices? As they say, knowing is ONLY half the battle. So let me be clear: *The fact that all college writing programs demand that their students produce some historically produced dominant discourse, then judge them on their abilities to approximate it is racist since all dominant discourses are associated closely with white middle- and upper-class racial formations in the US.* This isn't just about bodies' associations to language practices. It's also about racialized dispositions that travel with the judgment of language. It's about whiteness and whiteness dispositions.

Some may argue that even if this is true, it doesn't change the fact that there is a dominant discourse that is the lingua franca of schools, the workplace, and civic society. It's our job to help students approximate the dominant discourse, as David Bartholomae has said, in order that they might have a share of future opportunities. We, in effect, negate the structural racism that may hold students of color back, keep power and privilege from their grasp, by giving them the linguistic keys to the kingdom. So, in good writing classrooms, goes the argument, one can honor and respect the languages that all students bring to the classroom, and then teach and promote a local Standardized English so that those students have a chance at future success. It's the preparation argument. We are obligated to prepare them for success, not set them up for failure. But this is a false binary. This kind of argument and pedagogy, says Greenfield, is based on two false assumptions. The first is that these other language varieties, say African American Language (AAL), are somehow less communicative and cannot do the job needed in the academy or civic life (Greenfield 49). We know this is false. If AAL isn't as effective in communicating in civic life, how is it that it is so popular, so mainstream in hip hop and rap music? How is it that it connects to so many different kinds of people? How is it that it can tell such compelling stories? Is it that we don't mind Black people entertaining us (a

white mainstream audience), but we don't want their language tainting the so-called important areas of our life—academics, knowledge making, civic life, law, politics, etc.? Are we fooling ourselves when we celebrate the relatively few academics of color in our midst, the few who made it, the exceptions, so that we can ignore the multitudes who aren't allowed?

The second false assumption that Greenfield says supports the idea that we have to teach a Standardized English because it's the keys to the kingdom is that “[p]eople believe falsely that by changing the way people of color speak . . . others’ racist preconceptions will disappear and the communicative act will be successful” (49). So teach Blacks or Latinxs to speak and write a dominant discourse, and they will have more power and opportunity. They’ll be more communicatively successful. The logic here says that today people aren’t racist toward people, but they may be toward the languages people use. We have language bias or language prejudice. This argument is only partly false. Yes, we have language biases. That’s what judging is—hell, that’s what reading any text is: the applying of one’s biases to language in order to make meaning. Part of these biases are their associations to people. Remember, we consider the body of the writer when judging the language coming from that body, or we imagine one, both when judging speech and writing. Our history in the US is one of race and racism. We, writing teachers and WPAs, cannot step outside of history and be above racial bias in the judgment of language.

Research in behavioral science confirms race’s associations to bias in the judgements of language. For instance, a 2006 study of implicit bias, or associating “stereotypes and attitudes toward categories of people without conscious awareness” (Godsil et al. 10), found that partners in law firms judged more negatively the same report when they thought it was written by a Black lawyer. The same report was given to 60 partners in various law firms. Half of the partners were told the writer was Black, the other half white. The findings show that it isn’t simply language bias that holds some of us back and lifts up whites. It’s implicit bias that feeds what behavioral scientists call confirmation bias, a version of what Joseph Williams found in his famous article, “The Phenomenology of Error,” that judges or readers see what they want to see. If we already see Blacks and Latinxs as “needing lots of work” and whites as always having “potential,” then whatever is in front of us will confirm that bias.

Average Errors Found in the Report When Attributed to a White Lawyer	Average Errors Found in the Report When Attributed to a Black Lawyer
2.9/7.0 spelling/grammar Average of 4.1/6.0 technical writing errors 3.2/5.0 errors in facts	5.8/7.0 spelling/grammar errors 4.9/6.0 technical writing errors 3.9/5.0 errors in facts
Comments made: “generally good writer but needs to work on . . .” “Has potential” “good analytical skills”	Comments made: “needs lots of work” “can’t believe he went to NYU” “average at best”

Fig. 2. Findings on Implicit Bias in Language from Godsil, Tropp, Goff, and Powell (36)

The point I’m making is one Greenfield has made in a different way, but she sums it up well:

Black people are not discriminated against because some speak a variety of Ebonics—rather, I argue, Ebonics is stigmatized because it is spoken primarily by Black people. It is its association with a particular people and history that has compelled people to stigmatize it. Our attitudes toward language, it appears, are often steeped in our assumptions about the bodies of the speakers. We assume an essential connection—language as inherently tied to the body. In other words, language varieties—like people—are subject to racialization. (Greenfield 50)

Language is racialized already, so when we use our dispositions to create standards, then judge students by those standards, we risk racist consequences. In fact, racism is almost inevitable. Let’s drill deeper. Greenfield uses the word *stigmatized* to characterize the way language practices are already racialized. The word’s root is *stigma*, which the OED defines as “a mark made upon the skin by burning with a hot iron (rarely, by cutting or pricking), as a token of infamy or subjection” (Stigmata). Does this remind you of anything in our history? Stigma is a mark on the body, a judgment, marking something already in subjection, something lesser. No matter what antiracist motives a teacher or WPA may have, including my own motives, we all work within conditions and systems that have branded some languages as less communicative, less articulate, subjective and in subjection

to the dominant white discourse. No matter who we are, we always struggle against racist systems in the academy. This is why arguments about ethical imperatives to teach dominant white discourses to all students because we allegedly know what is good for them are fashionable, hold currency. While this argument isn't completely false, it's not completely true either. Yes, those in power use dominant Englishes, but that's not all that it takes to be successful in our world. You can earn the keys to the kingdom, but if no one gives you access to the lock at the front gate, those keys are useless.

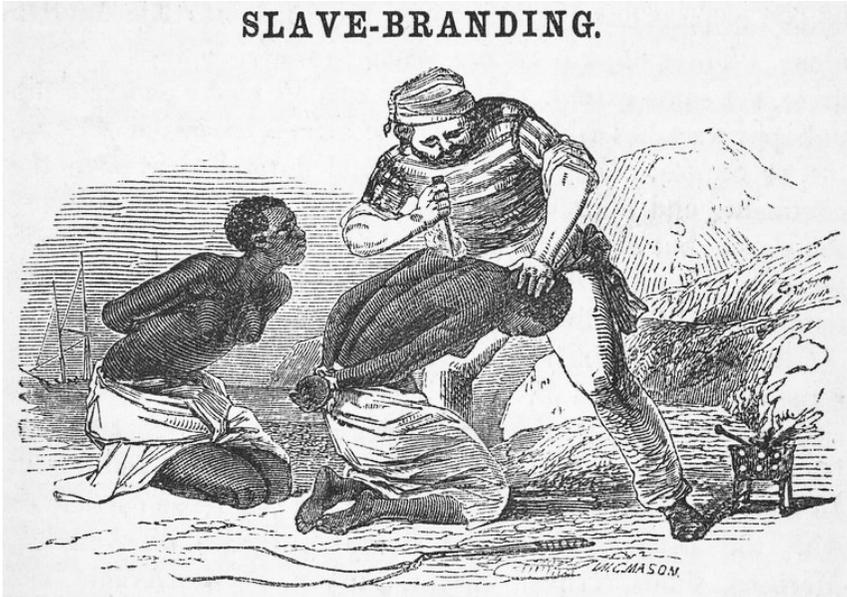


Fig. 3. Picture of slave branding attributed to: "Five hundred thousand strokes for freedom; a series of anti-slavery tracts, of which half a million are now first issued by the friends of the Negro," by Armistead, Wilson, 1819?–1868 and "Picture of slavery in the United States of America," by Bourne, George, 1780–1845.



Fig. 4. An 1845 daguerreotype of Captain Jonathan Walker (inscription on the back reads: “This Daguerreotype was taken by Southworth Aug. 1845 it is a copy of Captain Jonathan Walker’s hand as branded by the US Marshall of the Dist. of Florida for having helped 7 men to obtain ‘Life Liberty, and Happiness.’ SS Slave Saviour Northern Dist. SS Slave Stealer Southern Dist.”)

Now, let’s keep in mind that everyone speaks and writes a brand of English that has its nuances, its deviations. In fact, language practice might best be described as defined by deviation. For instance, not every African American student will speak AAL, and not everyone who uses it will use AAL in the same ways that others will use it. V. N. Volosinov makes this point clear about language generally, arguing against Saussure that there is no language, only parole, only language that is in a constant state of flux and change. Vershawn A. Young’s arguments for code-meshing agrees and helps us see the nuance, helps us see why it’s difficult to speak of AAL or a dominant white discourse alone. In fact, none of us speaks or writes one brand of English alone. We use variations of English that we encounter around us. Young argues that we all have hybrid Englishes. We speak in codes that are meshed with other codes, and we should account for this in the classroom, in the organization, in our journals. Additionally, because the dominant

discourse is a white racialized discourse, associated with white bodies historically, Young explains that

[w]hen we ask Black students to give up one set of codes in favor of another, their BEV [or AAL] for something we call more standard, we're not asking them to make choices about language, we're asking them to choose different ways to perform their racial identities through language. (Your Average Nigga 142)

However, just because we can see the hybridity of any language practice doesn't mean the stigmas go away in judgement practices. The question is: how do we not let the stigmas determine the value and success of students of color or non-white discourses in our classrooms, or in our programs, or in our journals? I'm not asking us to negate the racialized stigmas. That's not realistic. That's denying the power of history and the hegemonic in the academy.

The bottom line is, as judges of English in college writing classrooms, we cannot avoid the racializing of language when we judge writing nor can we avoid the influence of race in how we read and value the words and ideas of others in journals or at conferences or in faculty meetings. Freire says, "reading the world always precedes reading the word, and reading the word implies continually reading the world" (23). When we read the words that come from the bodies of our students, we read those bodies as well, and by reading those bodies we also read the words they present to us; some may bear/bare stigmas, some may not and be coded as white. The CWPA and we as writing teachers and WPAs shirk our ethical duties to make the world a better place by not educating our colleagues, institutions, and students of this racialized linguistic reality, of the fact that the judgment of language if used to rank and enforce standards is racist and we are all complicit in it. We are all racist.

THE CWPA AND WRITING PROGRAMS EMBODY WHITE RACIALIZED *HABITUS*

Apart from language and its association with racialized bodies, the racialized *habitus* (or durable dispositions) of ourselves and of the CWPA as an organization that guides writing program administrators and their scholarship also is a source of racism. I said earlier that I wished to talk today not just about bodies' associations to language practices but also about racialized dispositions that travel with the judgment of language. What I've suggested so far is the primacy of whiteness and white skin privilege to the judgment of language and the construction of so called standards—and its sister term, *rigor*. Now, I turn to the ways whiteness as a discourse

and whitey dispositions are pervasive and racist in our writing programs and the CWPA. And I gently remind us that I'm not blaming individuals, I'm talking about larger structures and individuals' implication to those structures.

Many have discussed how to define whiteness as a construct that affects writing pedagogy (Frankenberg; hooks; Keating), which has bearing on how writing is judged in classrooms by teachers using a local Standardized English or some other academic expectations for writing. Timothy Barnett synthesizes five statements about whiteness that the scholarship on whiteness overwhelmingly confirms and is a good way to begin to understand whiteness as a racial *habitus* in writing classrooms, programs, and the CWPA. It is a set of structuring structures that are performed or projected onto student writing and all decisions made in programs and our organization.

Whiteness is a "coded discourse of race," that "seems **invisible, objective, and neutral**";

Whiteness maintains its power and presents itself as "**unraced individually**" and "opposed to a racialized subjectivity that is communally and politically interested";

Whiteness is presented as a **non-political relational concept**, defined against Others, whose interests are defined as "anti-individual" and political in nature;

Whiteness "is **not tied essentially to skin color**; but is **nevertheless related** in complex and powerful ways to the perceived phenomenon of race";

Whiteness maintains power by **defining (and denying) difference** "on its own terms and to its own advantage"

Fig. 5. Timothy Barnett's Five Statements about Whiteness as a Discourse (Barnett 10)

As a *habitus* that is practiced in language, expected in classroom behaviors, and marked on the bodies of students, teachers, and administrators, whiteness, then, is a set of structuring structures, durable, transposable, and flexible. As Barnett summarizes, these structures construct whiteness as invisible and appealing to fairness through alleged objectivity. The structures are unraced (even beyond race), unconnected to the bodies and histories that create them. They are set up as apolitical and often deny dif-

ference by focusing on the individual or making larger claims to abstract liberal principles, such as the principle of meritocracy. These structures create dispositions that form reading and judging practices, dispositions for values and expectations of writing and behavior. Echoing Lippi-Green and Greenfield's arguments that connect race to language, Barnett offers a succinct way to see whiteness as a racial project in the classroom, and I'll add in writing programs and the CWPA:

“Whiteness,” accordingly, represents a political and relational activity disguised as an essential quality of humanity that is, paradoxically, *fully* accessible only by a few. It maintains a distance from knowledge that depends on the power of authorities, rules, tradition, and the written word, all of which supposedly guarantee objectivity and non-racial ways of knowing, but have, not incidentally, been established and maintained primarily by the white majority. (13; emphasis original)

In her discussion of the pervasiveness of whiteness in bioethics in the US, Catherine Myser defines whiteness as a marker and position of power that is situated in a racial hierarchy (2). She asks us to problematize the centrality of whiteness in bioethics as a field of study and industry. By looking at several studies of whiteness, Myser provides a rather succinct set of discursive and performative dispositions that could be called a white racial *habitus* that writing teachers and administrators also enact. Using her useful account and other sources on whiteness, I've come up with a four-part description of whiteness as a discourse in writing classrooms, which is used to judge and make standards for writing in programs and our journals. Whiteness as a discourse and set of dispositions in writing, like the dispositions distilled from Barnett's summary, can be boiled down to a focus on individualism and self-determination, Descartes' *cogito*, individuals as the primary subject position, abstract principles, rationality and logic, clarity and consistency, order and control, and on seeing failure as individual weakness, not accounting for larger structural issues.

- **Hyperindividualism— self-determination and autonomy** is most important or most valued; self-reliance, self-sufficiency, and self-control are important. Individual rights and privacy are often most important and construct the common good. The truth is always good to hear, no matter how painful, good, or bad it may be (each individual has the right to know the truth).
- **Individualized, Rational, Controlled Self**—person is conceived as an **individual who is rational, self-conscious, self-controlled, and determined**. Conscience guides the individual and sight is the primary way to identify the truth or understanding. Social and cultural factors are external constraints to the individual. Meaningful issues and questions always lie within the self; individuals have problems and solutions are individually-based; both success and failure are individual in nature; failure is individual and often seen as weakness. Control of self is important, as is work and staying busy or being industrious and productive; unsure how to cope with the uncontrollable in selves, society, or nature.
- **Rule-Governed, Contractual Relationships**—Focus on the **individual in a contractual relationship** with other individuals; focuses on informed consent; model relationships negotiate individual needs. Individual rights are more important and non-political, whereas socially-oriented values and questions are less important and often political (bad) by their nature. There is an importance attached to laws, rules, fairness as sameness, contractual regulations of relationships. Little emphasis on connectedness, relatedness, feeling, interconnection with others; individuals keep difficulties and problems to themselves
- **Clarity, Order, and Control**—Focus on **reason, order, and control**; thinking (versus feeling), insight, the rational, order, objective (versus subjective), rigor, clarity, and consistency are all valued highly. Thinking/Rationality and knowledge are non-political, unraced, and can be objective. Anti-sensuality is valued while there is a limited value of sensual experiences, considerations of the body, sensations, and feelings. A belief in scientific method, discovery, and knowledge; deductive logics are preferred; usefulness and pragmatism are important measures of value and success.

Fig. 6. Whiteness as a Discourse (White Racial *Habitus*)

These dispositions are very similar to Brookhiser's six traits of WASP whiteness in the US, but the important thing about whiteness, as Barnet and many others have identified, is that it's invisible, often denied as being whiteness. It's just effective communication. This is the nature of whiteness as a *habitus*, as a set of linguistic dispositions. Ross Chambers explains that

whiteness remains unexamined, that whiteness has been “unexaminable” (or rather, “examinable, yet unexamined”) because it is not only the yardstick by which difference (like quality of writing) is judged and identified in the classroom and out of it, but whiteness is bound to “the category of the individual” first through “atomizing whiteness,” then by homogenizing others, which allows it to be invisible (192).

This invisible and universalizing nature of these dispositions gives some reason for why the first two items are perhaps the most contentious. These two dispositions (hyperindividualism and the primacy of the *cogito*, or rationality) alone make up much of Faigley’s 1992 discussion of tastes in the ways teachers in Coles and Vopat’s 1985 collection, *What Makes Writing Good*, described the best student writing in their courses. What did most teachers say was good writing? Writing that exhibited a strong, authentic, honest voice. And what does strength, authenticity, and honesty look like as textual markers? It is a self-reliant voice that is focused on itself as a cool, rational, thinking self in the writing and in its reading of the writer’s own experiences or ideas. This isn’t to say these are bad qualities in writing, only that they are linked to whiteness, and this link often has uneven racist consequences in writing assessments when used as a standard.

To put it more bluntly, a white racial *habitus* often has racist effects in the classroom and in program assessments, even though it is not racist in and of itself. The racism occurs by assuming that it is a neutral *habitus*, one that is free from the racial and economic politics we all operate within. The maintenance of whiteness and white supremacy, even if tacit as in the “new racism” that Bonilla-Silva and Villanueva describe, is vital to maintaining the status quo of society’s social, economic, and racial hierarchies, the structuring structures that (re)produce a white racial *habitus*, the structuring structures that reproduce the white hegemonic rule in the CWPA, the structures that brought all of you here today, and only you, not others. A white racial *habitus* keeps the linguistic keys that many students of color already hold in their hands away from the locks of the gates of education and opportunity. Name the last article in the WPA’s journal that was about whiteness or racism in writing programs? You can’t because there hasn’t been one. That’s a bold statement. I can name Craig and Perryman-Clark’s 2011 article on race and gender politics of WPAs, but how many others are there in the last 38 years of the journal’s existence? Maybe one or two. I guess that’s something, something very small. It’s not like we’ve had this racism problem for very long.

The lack of sustained treatment on issues of whiteness and racism in the journal isn’t surprising. The way I’ve seen most compositionists deal with racism and their own whiteness is to have good intentions and then avoid

the topic altogether because that's not what they do, or they're not experts, or others do that work. These practices participate in the new racism that Bonilla-Silva and Villanueva discuss. Bonilla-Silva says that the new racism manifests through five key practices (272), ones we might all do well to check in our own work:

- racial language practices that are increasingly covert, as with those who argue that using a local Standardized English in a writing classroom is not racist because the course is about the appropriate language use for college students, without questioning why that brand of English is deemed most appropriate or providing ways in the class to examine the dominant discourse as a set of conventions that have been standardized by a white hegemony;
- racial terminology that is explicitly avoided (or a universalizing and abstracting of experience and capacities), causing an increasing frequency of claims that whites themselves are experiencing reverse racism;
- racial inequality that is reproduced invisibly through multiple mechanisms, reproduced structurally, as in who takes advantage of this conference or who becomes grad students in rhetoric and composition;
- safe minorities (singular examples or exceptions, often named) that are used to prove that racism no longer exists, despite the larger patterns and statistics that prove the contrary; and
- racial practices reminiscent of the Jim Crow period (e.g., separate but equal) that are rearticulated in new, non-racial terms.

These practices are part of a white racial *habitus*, a set of whitely dispositions that serve the white status quo in the CWPA and our writing programs. This new racism occurs more frequently in writing classrooms and programs because we uncritically promote (often out of necessity) a dominant white academic discourse. As Bonilla-Silva shows in his famous study of whites' attitudes toward racism, whites tend to use four frames, or "set paths for interpreting information," to justify the new racism, a racism that appears to be about other things, not race or racism (26).

- **Abstract liberalism**—using ideas associated with political liberalism (e.g., “equal opportunity,” the idea that force should not be used to achieve social policy) and economic liberalism (e.g., choice, individualism) in an abstract manner to explain racial matters.
- **Naturalization**—explaining away racial phenomena by suggesting they are natural occurrences.
- **Cultural racism**—relying on culturally based arguments such as “Mexicans do not put much emphasis on education” or “blacks have too many babies” to explain the standing of minorities in society.
- **Minimization of racism**—suggesting that discrimination is no longer a central factor affecting minorities’ life chances (“It’s better now than in the past” or “There is discrimination, but there are plenty of jobs out there”)

Fig. 7. Frames of Color-Blind Racism (or the New Racism) (Bonilla-Silva 74–78)

These discourses and sets of linguistic conventions, along with the discourse of whiteness, need interrogating with students as structuring structures that give us certain tastes in language and thought. But writing programs cannot leave a white racial *habitus* at that, at just critical discussions of language and texts, without also using those discussions in some way to change the program, to change the dispositions toward language that drive judgment in the program. The same goes for the CWPA. For instance, what is our outcomes for the Diversity Committee in the CWPA? What do we expect? What tangible goals is our Executive Board formulating that will make less racism in the organization and field tomorrow, and how are they measuring success? How is the CWPA guiding future administrators toward antiracist agendas, ones that don’t try to administer fair programs but administer writing programs that are NOT unfair. There’s a difference between trying to be fair and trying NOT to be racist. The difference is in what we assume about the systems we work in. None of this is easy work, and to be fair, some of it is already beginning in various committees.

THE CWPA AND WRITING PROGRAMS ENACT WHITELY WAYS OF JUDGMENT

Finally, one aspect I’ve not mentioned of a white racial *habitus* is the whitely ways in which we enact judgment and policies. Bonilla-Silva gets at this whiteness in his frames, which are a result of such ways with dealing with others. In “The Race to Truth: Disarticulating Critical Thinking from

Whiteness,” Catherine Fox argues that many critical and feminist pedagogies in writing classrooms work against their stated goals of helping students do critical consciousness-raising, or critical thinking through their writing, because those who enact these pedagogies do so in whitely ways. She explains that the problem in writing classrooms is four-fold (201), which I summarize as the following:

- We think of *critical thinking* as a kind of god-term, in which teachers already understand what it is and looks like.
- We equate our notions of critical thinking to the right way of seeing things and judge our students against our versions of this right way.
- We often confuse critical thinking with feminist and critical ideologies, leaving little room for other critical thinking ways with words.
- By doing the first three things, we end up enacting a pedagogy of transmission, or a kind of banking model, that we ostensibly criticize.

Today, I argue that this critique can be leveled on most writing programs and the CWPA as an organization. I say this not because I’m hatin’ on ya but because I love this organization and the good people who make it what it is. *And I want more for us.* I’ve said in the past that one problem with the CWPA is that it’s really the Council of White Program Administrators. Much of this problem is due to the ways we judge language and ignore the racialization of language in our teaching, assessing, and scholarship. Recently, the organization’s Executive Board and its executive officers, such as Rita Malenczyk, Susan Miller-Cochran, and Dominic DelliCarpini, as well as the WPA-GO, have made important strides toward better representation and participation by academics, WPAs, and teachers of color in the organization, but that’s not the only reason I’m bring up Fox’s problem. Representation is a problem that results from the racialization of language but not the only problem of structural racism in writing programs and in the CWPA. I’m talking about the problem of whitely ways of administering writing programs and judging the languages of non-white others. And I’ll end on this point.

In 1985, Minnie Bruce Pratt offered her own white ways of being in the world, and in “White Woman Feminist,” Marilyn Frye, using Pratt, offers a list of dispositions that equate to whiteness. These dispositions amount to (and again, I summarize):

- Being a judge and peacemaker: a disposition toward giving responsibility and punishments, being the preacher and martyr, taking responsibility and the glory.
- Self-understood benevolence: a disposition toward seeing oneself as benevolent, good-willed, fair, honest, and ethical.

- Being procedurally ethical: a disposition toward forms, procedures, due process, and rules as the basis of the ethical.
- Authority: a disposition toward running the show, or aspiring toward it, and a belief in one's infallible authority in most matters.

In her critique of critical pedagogies, Fox reveals these whitely dispositions as the source of the four problems she mentions. She poses the problem as a question to writing teachers, which I think applies well to WPAs and all of us as officers and members of CWPA. All we have to do is replace in her questioning "critical thinking" with something like "WPA outcomes" or "writing standards." Fox asks:

How much of the critical thinking that we laud in ourselves is embedded in our assumed righteousness, principled conduct, goodness, and standing as moral and ethical citizens and teachers who, because we possess these whitely qualities, have the authority to run things? Does the critical thinking we encourage our students to apply lead them to aspire to the same qualities? If so, it poses the danger of reproducing the very hegemony that radical pedagogues aim to disrupt. (204)

Is it possible that our programs and the CWPA are run by whitely dispositions, by a white racial *habitus* that ignores the racialization of language, thus making most of what we do racist because of our good intentions? Is it possible that you each are here at the cost of someone of color? Is it possible that you have been and are racist because of a white racial *habitus* and a set of whitely ways that you embody, not out of choice or intention but out of necessity and luck of birth? Is it possible that along with your hard work, this white racial *habitus* and your whitely ways have granted you privileges and benefits at the expense of others? If so, how is that socially just and what do we do about it now that many of us do run things? I realize this may be a tough thing to swallow and a tough question to answer. That's the work of antiracism. Marilyn Frye too suggests that you'll have a hard time with seeing your whitely ways, that it will be an attack on your very being. It will be violence. I say, let the violence begin. Do violence to your own whitely *habitus*, to your writing programs so they cease to be white programs, and do violence to the organization so that we can be even better tomorrow, so that we directly address the racism that has helped most of us get here at the expense of others, of the Other.

Thank you.

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Saturday Plenary Address: Creating a Culture of Access in Writing Program Administration

Melanie Yergeau

I have no pronouncements to make, or perhaps I have many. But rather than thinking through this essay as an argument, I want us to think through questions and crises, in all of the resonances that questions and crises might summon. Put alternatively, I want us to dwell on the stories our field tells about disability. The title of this paper, “Creating a Culture of Access,” is one such story. This title borrows from Elizabeth Brewer’s work on mental disability, *ethos*, and the design of campus spaces. A culture of access, she notes, is a culture of participation and redesign (Brewer, Selfe, and Yergeau). A culture of access, then, stories disabled people as cunningly present, as rhetors who crip and dismantle the material and conceptual structures of our field, structures that are, to put it mildly, woefully problemated. Admittedly, I am about to linger on these problems, on the ways in which the very design of writing studies works to promote ideologies of hyper-ability. But I linger on the badness, as it were, because in order to redesign our field, in order to foster a culture of access, we need first to recognize that disability is not the problem. Rather, we are.

NON-EXPERTS WHO DECIDE THEY ARE EXPERTS

When the Americans with Disabilities Act passed in 1990, non-disabled people started panicking. Journalists claimed that the ADA offered a “life-long buffet of perks, special breaks and procedural protections” for people with “questionable disabilities” (qtd. in Colker 5–6). Politicians, Ruth Colker notes, complained that the ADA was an invitation for an “avalanche of frivolous lawsuits” (7). Celebrities also joined the panic wagon. At one point, Penn and Teller (in)famously claimed that the ADA coddled disabled people (because goodness knows that when we think about ramps and Braille signage, we instantly think about coddling).

Higher education was not exempt from ADA outcry. Faculty and administrators complained that so-called reasonable accommodations would only enable lazy students and fakers to game the system and lessen the rigor of a college education. Perhaps one of the more iconic stories of ADA backlash is that of Somnolent Samantha. In 1995, then-provost of Boston University Jon Westling severely restricted accommodations for learning disabled students: among other moves, he forbade the disability services office from approving accommodation requests and instead moved all authority to his office. During the course of the school year, Westling delivered a series of talks that warned of the excesses of accommodation. As one example, he described Somnolent Samantha, a student in one of his classes who, because of her supposed learning disability, required accommodations. With disdain, Westling proclaimed,

The letter explained that Samantha had a learning disability “in the area of auditory processing” and would need the following accommodations: “time and one-half on all quizzes, tests, and examinations;” double-time on any mid-term or final examination; examinations in a room separate from other students; copies of my lecture notes; and a seat at the front of the class. Samantha, I was also informed, might fall asleep in my class, and I should be particularly concerned to fill her in on any material she missed while dozing. (Blanck 36)

Notably, Westling later revealed that Samantha was a fiction: he completely made her up. When several students sued Boston University over disability discrimination, the court ruled in their favor in 1997 in large part because Westling’s Samantha stories “expressed certain biases . . . about learning disabled students” (Guckenberger et al. v. Boston University). After losing the lawsuit, Westling continued lambasting the ADA and disabled students, claiming, among other things, that Somnolent Samantha “symbolized real learning disabled students,” that “learning disabled students are victims of overblown and unscientific claims by . . . disability advocates,” and that “Universities have acceded to demands from extremists to exempt students from a growing range of academic requirements” (“Rule of Law”).

It is now 2016, and yet these remain familiar arguments.

MICROAGGRESSIONS

Shortly after a psychologist remarked that my IQ was too low for me to become a professor, I moved to Ohio and entered a PhD program in Rhetoric and Composition. When I started a PhD program, I had no intention of becoming a disability activist, despite always having been disabled. I dabbled in online forums, even started a disability blog. I lurked on list-

servs. I ignored the voicemail messages from the disability services office and instead scoped out the autistic island in Second Life. Stigma imposed distance. Was I a faker? Was I worthy of an education?

This essay veers toward the angry, much like the photograph pictured. In this image, the iconic wheelchair user logo has been vandalized on an access sign, the stick figure's face penciled in with an angry glare—complete with downcast eyebrows and a triangular frown. The figure's chair faces the right, while an arrow identifying the accessible entrance points to the left. Rage.



Fig. 1

As someone who is multiply disabled and whose primary disability is often profiled as a condition afflicting school shooters, this anger is borne out of a frustration that has been building over the past decade, or, more realistically, my whole life. While I am using personal narrative as a means of arriving at larger points, I am by no means suggesting that disability is individual or individualistic. Stephanie Kerschbaum maintains that “storying is an important move toward practices that are inclusive, rather than

exclusive, of disability.” All too often, she describes, the stories we tell about disability are told from a nondisabled perspective: that one student we had that one time way back when; that really weird colleague; that technology that’s killing our brains; those creepy people and those creepy conditions “over there” (Yergeau et al.).

To be clear, as far as disabled people go, I am relatively privileged. I made it. I am afforded privileges based on my whiteness, based on my transition from childhood poverty to the gainfully employed middle class, based on how others perceive my speech and bodily comportment—I can sometimes pass as non-disabled, thanks to years of drill and repeat exercises and abusive therapies. (I mean the *thanks* sarcastically. As in, “thanks, mom!”)

I am hoping, then, that we might story together, that we might collectively and angrily survey a disciplinary landscape that is not only inaccessible or inhospitable to disabled bodies, but a landscape that also actively hides disabled bodies from view and perpetrates exponential violences on those who are multiply marginalized. We might, for instance, begin with the very room in which this plenary takes place, with our very conference space, in order to apprehend how the design of this space makes particular statements about the bodies it values. The arrangement of tables and chairs, the lack of aisle space, the positioning and placement of screens and speakers, the way in which our bodies are packed into this room, the line setup of our food stations, the proximity of our exhibition tables to the walls, the un-ease or uneasiness or sheer mortal peril in which certain groups of people can or cannot access restrooms, the absence (or presence) of prepared materials and handouts during sessions, the unspoken belief that all participants are ready to engage, in the words of Jay Dolmage, in all modes at all times (“Disability”).

To be clear, in making these statements about this space, I am not laying blame at the feet of our amazing (truly amazing) conference organizers, nor am I trying to claim that our space here is somehow more emblematic of ableism than other spaces. Rather, I am making the claim that ableism is a structuring logic of Rhetoric and Composition, of higher education writ large, and we can keenly feel that ableism even in a well-meaning, mentorly space like the CWPA Conference. As Asao Inoue made clear in his plenary, there are people missing from this space, people who have been violently absented from this room. Inaccessibility is among the primary topoi of college discourse: Without inaccessibility, we would not be rigorous. Without inaccessibility, we would not have placement. Without inaccessibility, we would not have assessment. Without inaccessibility, we

would not have literacy. Without inaccessibility, would we even know ourselves as a discipline?

DISABILITY ACTIVISM

Nothing about us without us: There is a reason that this is the disability rights rallying cry.

I wasn't a *we* until graduate school. I had never knowingly met anyone with my disability until that point in time, despite the fact that two percent of the population is supposedly autistic. My experience isn't unique to myself nor is it unique to my disability: Rarely do disabled people grow up around other disabled people. Clinicians frequently worry that putting multiple disabled people together in a room might cause them to act more disabled. Disability is a problemed currency, a contagion, blight. So, segregation, whether physical or conceptual, is part and parcel of the disabled experience. As disabled people, we often have non-disabled families, are tracked into special education classes or residential schools, are forced into life-skills curricula or sheltered workshops, are prevented from accessing spaces due to physical and social and sensorial and financial obstacles, are murdered by our caregivers and blamed for our own deaths. According to university provosts and *Salon* columnists alike, our want of social change is merely a want of unearned handouts and perks.

But my focus here isn't on the nuances and breakdowns of disability history. As I mentioned earlier, my focus, rather, is on the *we* of disability and the *we* of the non-disabled. And, among other examples, I want us to examine how we—as WPAs, teachers, and colleagues—operationalize and reinforce ableism in the very design of our programs. But I don't want to end there. How might we contest that ableism? Audience is a treasured rhetorical concept, a concept that often organizes how we talk about the work we do as WPAs. However, I remain unconvinced that audience-as-concept is meant to include the so-called cripples and the feeble-minded among its ranks. I want us to consider, to deeply consider, the ways in which we propagate a non-disabled default in our professional and our pedagogical spaces. I want us to consider, as many of our colleagues have claimed about whiteness and heteronormativity, whether writing program administration, whether the very act of administering or teaching, can ever be anything but ableist.

This, I realize, is a long prelude. But the systematic segregation of disabled people has not been emphasized enough. Disability is, to quote Tanya Titchkosky, a “reasonable exclusion” (78). Titchkosky's use of the word *reasonable* is a wry one, a sarcastic one—a belabored and despondent and

annoyed invocation of the ways in which disabled people's absence from the body politic is all too often represented as a public and moral good. In WPA work, disabled people are reasonably excluded through multiple modes and means. We are reasonably excluded from first-year writing because we read with sound. We are reasonably excluded from health insurance plans because we are contingent. We are reasonably excluded from receiving job accommodations because being disabled and being older than twenty-one is impossible—we must be faking. We are reasonably excluded because interpreters and real-time captioning are too expensive, and imagine what the writing program could buy were it not for deaf scholars. We are reasonably excluded because we cannot afford a \$2,000 diagnostic assessment for ADHD and the university will not provide services without it. We are reasonably excluded because the beginning-of-the-year program reception is hosted at the WPA's house—and it is more important to have a homey party than it is to consider the mobility and transportation needs of our graduate students and colleagues. We are reasonably excluded because conference presenters do not distribute scripts or handouts of their talks nor do they describe their slides and images. We are reasonably excluded because if a full-fledged faculty member cannot hear, process auditory information, or maintain attention, then she should not be a faculty member. We are reasonably excluded because the DSM isn't real. (It's Tinkerbell. It sports a wand and tights, even.) We are reasonably excluded because our course management and e-portfolio systems are inaccessible.

We are reasonably excluded because, as Amy Vidali suggests, disabling writing program administration involves disabling and crippling and fucking with everything that writing program administration holds dear. Disability is a defiance of standards. Notes Vidali, "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" (40–41).

HAVEN'T YOU OVERCOME THAT YET?

Upon arriving on campus as a new assistant professor, I begin searching for information on how to request disability accommodations. To my surprise, there is nothing that I can find about this online. The campus disability services office only serves students. The hospital's autism center only serves individuals under the age of twenty-five. The university HR website might as well be the seventh circle of hell. Photos of shiny happy presumably able people holding hands in a cubicle. Who smiles in an HR cubicle? Are they holding hands because they need a love contract? Whither disability policy? Disabled faculty and staff seem not to exist.

In desperate need of disability support, I make several inquiries. I ask my new colleagues about who the disability services contact is for faculty, and one colleague tells me there's no such thing. I am eventually routed to the mother of a friend who used to TA at my university fifteen years ago, who then routes me to an administrative assistant, who then routes me to a singular name at HR: The university's ADA coordinator, whose office is located on another campus in a lonely administrative building near the football stadium. I take two city buses to get there. The ADA coordinator is lovely, kind, welcoming. She asks what I need. I describe the accommodations I received at my previous institution, and she stops me. "I don't grant requests," she explains. "I mediate disputes over requests." I need to contact my chair and/or direct supervisors, she tells me. I need to request accommodations from the body that, in part, determines whether or not I receive tenure.

In her work on mental disability and writing studies, Margaret Price has argued that mental disability is rhetorical disability. In making this claim, Price is not suggesting that disabled people are rhetorically impaired. Rather, following the work of Brenda Brueggemann, Catherine Prendergast, and Cynthia Lewiecki-Wilson, Price is suggesting that we are all culturally primed to understand disability as a force that negates rhetoricity, communicability, and humanity. The braining of discourse, she contends, wields particular violences on those who are neurodivergent. Disability chips away at something, and in higher education, that something is teacher-scholars' *raison d'être*: If you are non-rhetorical, how can you succeed in a writing program, much less administer one? If others believe that you pathologically lack *ethos*, how will you ever be believed?

Post-Newtown discourse on mental illness has added interminably soul-crushing layers to how faculty and administration have come to understand—and treat—disability. In the days after the shootings, I began collecting any news article I could find relating to mental disability. Within three days' time, I'd amassed sixty-five articles that in some way connected mental disabilities with planned violence, plus a half dozen that blamed school shootings on de-institutionalization and the disability rights movement. Lock up the crazies, the articles said. Sterilize the crazies, the articles said. Most striking to me about the media coverage, though, were the assumptions made about audience, authorship, and competence. We heard from parents and psychologists, neighbors and siblings, news anchors and politicians, teachers and administrators—all with theories to offer, all with suggestions for restructuring the mental health system, some with suggestions about how to read student poetry and disturbing writing assignments. Find the warning signs. Student writing might be predictive. Inter-

pret a student's villanelle like it's *Ulysses*. Put your literature PhD to work. Some months later, staff from a dean's office visit a department meeting, and we discuss how to handle students in crisis. One of the speakers relates a story about a former student who started hearing the voice of God. The faculty are supposed to be fearful of this anecdote, even as some in the room nervously laugh out of discomfort. Memory transposes me. "I don't grant requests," the ADA coordinator explains. "I mediate disputes over requests." I need to contact my chair and/or direct supervisors, she tells me. I need to request accommodations from the body that, in part, determines whether or not I receive tenure.

I wonder: Do I really need an accommodation? Am I too crazy to be here?

DESIGNING FUTURES

When our field talks about access in the context of disability, we often talk about universal design—a concept that harbors local histories, given the work of Ron Mace and the Center for Universal Design at North Carolina State University. UD is, in short, a design process that endeavors to include the maximum numbers of bodies possible. UD's histories are architectural, but its current trajectories are interdisciplinary and are especially present in scholarship on pedagogy and education more broadly.

There have been some notable and important critiques of UD, many of them emerging from scholars in writing studies. Jay Dolmage, for instance, has argued that "universal design has become a way to talk about changing space to accommodate the broadest range of users, yet consistently overlooks the importance of continued feedback from these users" ("Disability" 172). Importantly, Dolmage observes that, pedagogically, UD often functions as little more than a series of checklists, items that instructors and WPAs can simply check off and then contentedly ignore ("Universal Design"). Building upon Dolmage's work, I would also add that UD does not, in the words of Vidali, disable, cripp, or dismantle WPA work. In centering universality, UD ironically de-centers disability. What's more, as Sami Schalk and Aimi Hamraie have made clear, UD not only de-centers but flattens disabled people's experiences: UD often assumes that all blind people experience blindness similarly, that disabled people are by default white, that a nondisabled person's assumptions about disability constitute disability.

Here is where I would like to close. Vidali's call for interdependence in "Disabling Writing Program Administration" presents us with a timely challenge as well as a call for action. Although there is no saccharine, easy

mechanism for us to categorically undo ableism in one conference meeting, we should by no means feel exempted from or defeated by the work of disability activism. Vidali's point, rather, is that disability disclosure is often interpreted as a welcoming of discrimination—that, in admitting disability, our colleagues and students are forced to make themselves vulnerable, subject to institutional violences. Interdependence, she maintains, is coalitional work that disables the everyday and mundane work of writing program administration. Indeed, Vidali is not alone in making this claim. Tanya Titchkosky, Lydia Brown, and Isaac West, for example, have each independently advocated for coalitional activism around resonant social issues, noting that both trans people and disabled people are routinely denied access to bathrooms and other spaces that are necessary preconditions for comfort, safety, visibility, community, and life. As Titchkosky notes, the question of “to pee or not to pee” has become an ordering logic for how disabled and queer people are forced to navigate the daily world, concerns that structure one's minute-to-minute life, concerns that nondisabled and cisnormative others might on some level understand, yet can never gutturally or fully or emphatically know (69).

In this vein, in *Disability and the Teaching of Writing*, Brenda Brueggemann, Cindy Lewiecki-Wilson, and Jay Dolmage describe an exercise in which their classes formed human chains around the inaccessible (or, most trafficked) entrances of a campus building, forcing non-disabled pedestrians to take the accessible route. Nondisabled people were, of course, confused and inconvenienced, as accessible entrances as well as accessible and/or gender-neutral bathrooms are typically located in the most awkward and difficult to access of places. These are spaces and structures that are generally and purposively designed to reside in the back of buildings. Locating these entrances and spaces up front would ruin the beauty of a structure. Disability, non-normativity—our architecture and our discipline considers them blight.

How might we interdependently say otherwise? What might be resonant or shared in our grievances, in the multiple oppressions that those in our discipline routinely face and often at the hands of that very discipline?

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Review Essay

Thinking Ecologically and Ethically about Assessment

Katrina L. Miller

Dayton, Amy E., editor. *Assessing the Teaching of Writing*. Utah State UP, 2015. 216 pages.

Inoue, Asao B., *Antiracist Writing Assessment Ecologies: Teaching and Assessing Writing for a Socially Just Future*. WAC Clearing House/Parlor Press, 2015. 339 pages.

White, Edward W., Norbert Elliot, and Irvin Peckham. *Very Like A Whale: The Assessment of Writing Programs*. Utah State UP, 2015. 202 pages.¹

Many WPAs find themselves in unfamiliar territory when it comes to writing assessment work. We may feel underprepared to claim expertise in assessment (as Chris Gallagher notes in his *WPA: Writing Program Administrators* article, “What Do WPAs Need to Know about Assessment?”) and find ourselves searching for resources to answer questions about how to collect and interpret assessment data in ways that are not only valid and reliable, but also ethical and fair. Luckily, assessment scholarship in Rhetoric and Composition is shifting away from technocratic and deterministic views of methods and towards a humanistic view privileging discussions of the ethics and effects of our assessment practices. Indeed, as the three books reviewed here exemplify, re-centering writing assessment on its human elements—both in terms of the professionals doing the work of assessment and students who face the consequences of assessment—is an important step towards the goal of creating the fairest assessment theories, practices, and policies possible.

Each of the three books under review call for mindful interpretation of assessment data by critically posing questions about what data we should be collecting, for what purposes it will be used, and how those interpretations

may affect the working lives of our faculty and the learning opportunities of our students. While these considerations may not seem groundbreaking, these three books collectively reflect an emerging ecological perspective on writing assessment and writing program assessment that complements ecological work in writing assessment (Dryer and Peckham; Wardle and Roozen) and writing program administration (Ryan; Kahn) while dovetailing with the overt philosophical commitments expressed in the emerging social justice turn in writing assessment theory.

I find the ecology metaphor to be especially useful because it is inherently relational. Ecology deals with the relations of organisms to one another and to their physical surroundings, and to claim that writing assessment is somehow ecological enables us to consider what forces both within and beyond our control might affect our assessments. WPAs act within systems and institutions motivated by a plethora of interests, concerns, and imperatives, and recent writing assessment scholarship is helping illuminate how such forces shape our work. Thinking ecologically and thinking ethically about assessment go hand-in-hand for me because both lines of inquiry draw our attention to relational dynamics in our assessment acts and processes. The three timely contributions reviewed here cover the three important components of university writing programs—program review, teaching evaluation, and classroom writing assessment—from a wide array of standpoints, but what connects them is this underlying concern about operating ethically within our assessment ecologies. Indeed, these book share a similar aim: to create the fairest learning environments possible.

DESIGNING MORE ETHICAL PROGRAMMATIC ASSESSMENTS

In *Very Like a Whale*, Edward M. White, Norbert Elliot, and Irvin Peckham situate their design approach for programmatic assessment within a whole host of forces shaping and reshaping higher education. Their title is a reference to a line in *Hamlet* that occurs at a pivotal moment in the drama wrought with many questions. They identify this moment as “one at which past and future swirl into that labyrinth of questions” (2). White, Elliot, and Peckham argue the field of writing assessment has reached a similar moment filled with “complexity and contingency, irony, and indeterminacy” (3). The way forward, they advise, is to take action and understand the complex context of our work in contemporary postsecondary writing program assessment. Fittingly, their aim is to empower WPAs through new models of writing program assessment as well as new strategies.

The book is arranged in five chapters, each of which ends with a set of questions that reflect key concepts in the form of generative questions that

can be used to apply the authors' Design for Assessment (DFA) model. Chapter one presents a history of trends about programmatic assessment, including the strong influence of postsecondary accreditation and the development of standards such as the WPA Outcomes Statement and *Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing* developed by CWPA, NCTE, and the National Writing Project. It also defines key concepts including writing program, validation, and construct. Chapter two explores case studies of writing programs that demonstrate program structures and categories of validation evidence that are integral to the DFA approach. Chapter three explains best practices for program assessment with special attention to sources of evidence, and chapter four reviews empirical reporting guidelines for evidence-based writing program assessment. These guidelines cover a wide variety of methods including descriptive statistics and coding systems for qualitative content analysis that the authors contend are capable of yielding comparative information. The final chapter presents a fuller explanation of the authors' DFA model that they suggest be used in advance of cyclical assessment mandates such as accreditation reviews.

Writing program assessment is a key term for White, Elliot, and Peckham and one worth considering carefully. Their definition of writing program assessment is "the process of documenting and reflecting on the impact of the program's coordinated efforts" (3). They later describe such assessment as a "longitudinal process of accountability" designed and controlled by WPAs (4). White, Elliot, and Peckham help us understand how assessing a writing program is different than assessing the writing of students who pass through that program, and they also point out the opportunities that are missed when writing program assessment is reductively understood as synonymous with writing assessment. However, I am conflicted regarding how far the authors expand the definition of a writing program. If we talk (as the authors argue we should) about pre-enrollment placement, the first-year course sequence, writing center, WID/WAC work, and even graduate thesis and dissertation guidelines as elements of one unified writing program, then audiences in higher administration may receive that message as an invitation for additional managerial responsibility for a single WPA. Although I agree with White, Elliot, and Peckham that writing programs are foundational and integral to undergraduate education, part of me could not shake the feeling that this line of reasoning might unintentionally result in even more uncompensated and unrecognized work for already over-burdened WPAs. To be fair, I do not mean to suggest that White, Elliot, and Peckham are insensitive to labor issues; in fact, they are exceedingly sensitive to the effects of the adjunctivization of higher education and mention several times that salary and benefits for all our faculty

colleagues should be part of strategic plans for the financial stability of a program. Yet, as a junior faculty member with pre-tenure program assessment responsibilities, I find the expansive definition of a writing program rhetorically tricky; it could certainly help unify what might otherwise be isolated islands of writing instruction and support into one coherent campus unit, but it could also inadvertently expand the scope of my position. That being said, this critique of the definition would be moot if a team of WPAs and writing specialists at an institution were working synergistically, which is perhaps what the authors were envisioning.

In much writing assessment literature, quantitative methods are viewed with skepticism given their assumed relationship to positivism and psychometrics, yet White, Elliot, and Peckham convincingly argue that we need not think of institutionalized discourses and the empirical methods they often employ (or ask WPAs to employ) as weapons to be wielded against us. *Very Like a Whale* adeptly translates complex concepts and methods from educational research in ways that are immediately useful for WPAs unaccustomed to or untrained in quantitative research methods such as descriptive statistics. Indeed, while many have adopted this combat metaphor to signal a pragmatic need to brandish the weapon of assessment for our own purposes (something akin to the oft-cited White's Law of Assessment—assess thyself or assessment shall be done unto thee), what if these empirical and quantitative methods could be more of a shield than a sword? What if we wielded these methods not with the intent of fighting for our pedagogical and philosophical interests, but to protect those who are disproportionately affected by certain assessment practices within classrooms and writing programs such as students from minority groups and contingent faculty colleagues? Understanding the potential of using quantitative methods might help assuage the typical perception of disharmony between our humanist instincts and such empirical, quantitative methods. White, Elliot, and Peckham go as far as arguing that programs in the Consortium of Doctoral Programs in Rhetoric and Composition/Writing Studies should begin to incorporate more writing assessment training, including formal training in quantitative methods to complement the typical research methods course, which may be an interesting proposition for graduate programs with a strong tradition of WPA training.

In addition to providing much needed background in empirical analysis, reading *Very Like a Whale* also helped me consider transferability as part of writing program assessment. Although localism is the most prominent tenant of contemporary writing assessment theory and practice, White, Elliot, and Peckham make a compelling argument that localism and inter-institutional collaboration are “not mutually exclusive” and can in fact

work synergistically (64). Hyper-localized and context-sensitive assessments yield crucial information about specific student populations. Yet such situated assessments risk failing to fully address omnipresent calls for accountability from more distant sources like accreditation agencies. Returning to the ecology metaphor, White and his co-authors help illuminate how our writing programs exist in not only institutional ecologies, but also in interinstitutional ecologies. White, Elliot, and Peckham provide guidance in how we might begin to design our programs and assessments in ways to make such collaboration across institutional boundaries possible.

TELLING THE WHOLE STORY ABOUT TEACHING

The contributors to Amy E. Dayton's collection are also concerned about creating fair and ethical ecologies of assessment. Continuing the theoretical and practical investigations in *Evaluating Teachers of Writing* edited by Christine Hult in 1994 and responding to the contemporary rhetorical scene wherein WPAs increasingly face pressure to demonstrate the efficacy of writing programs, the contributors to Dayton's collection argue that in the swirl of internal program reviews, institution-wide assessments, and accreditation cycles assessment of arguably the most essential element of writing programs—the teaching of writing—has been elided. Their focus on pedagogical and professional aspects of assessing the teaching of writing adds a much-needed dimension to current conversations about writing assessment. Two core questions guide the collection: 1) what counts as good assessment data to evaluate the teaching of writing and 2) how can that data be interpreted in meaningful ways? Contributors offer compelling answers to these two queries that both engage familiar modes of assessing (such as the ever-present course evaluations) and introduce emerging technologies related to student learning that may be applicable to assessing the teaching of writing (e.g., multi-institutional student engagement surveys).

Assessing the Teaching of Writing has two sections: one describing theoretical frameworks for assessing teaching and one exploring the impact of new assessment technologies. The frameworks in the first section are impressive in their variety and in their consideration of assessment methods (both familiar and new). For example, Meredith DeCosta and Duane Roen develop a framework from Ernest Boyer's model of teaching-as-scholarship and provide a heuristic for evaluating teaching. Dayton examines several interdisciplinary meta-analyses of student evaluations of instruction to address common concerns about the questionable validity and potential biases associated with this form of evaluation (32). Brian Jackson explores the challenge of classroom observations, especially for those who may be

uncomfortable with the manager-employee binary that often emerges when observations are done by a WPA. He advocates a formative approach and includes a handy observation sheet intended to structure the evaluation around specific skills and practices valued by a writing program while still allowing enough free response for seasoned teachers to impart wisdom on their newer colleagues. Gerald Nelms writes about a new approach: mid-term in-class focus groups, which he describes a class interview facilitated by “instructional consultants” from a faculty resource office or center for teaching excellence (68). Lastly, Kara Mae Brown, Kim Freeman, and Chris W. Gallagher argue that digital teaching portfolios can serve a much more generative function than simply being repositories of syllabi, assignments, and responses to student writing. Their formative approach envisions the teaching portfolio as a space to negotiate many of the tensions inherent in teacher evaluation (e.g., the request to both honestly reflect on one’s pedagogy—including possible weaknesses—and to demonstrate one’s effectiveness as an instructor).

The second section of Dayton’s collection explores technologies for assessing the teaching of writing. In this section, we learn about contexts and trends that are pushing the boundaries of assessing teaching, including the use of big data to better understand the dynamics of our writing programs. Although I was initially wary that this split focus on theory and technology might inadvertently reproduce decades-old false dichotomies about the theory-practice divide in writing assessment, the division ended up working well as an organizational structure given the intended audience of WPAs. We may at times turn to a text for theoretical grounding from which to build an argument for changing policies of writing assessment. At other times, we might reach for a primer on a technology of writing assessment that is new to us or for a pragmatic guide for how to handle an assessment situation within our writing programs. Dayton’s volume would be a helpful resource in all three scenarios.

One of the highlights of the collection is an explicit acknowledgment that assessing teachers and teaching can often feel much more invasive than assessing student learning. Although pedagogical and programmatic goals may guide such evaluations, it is imperative to recognize that assessment of teaching is also a labor issue; power differentials and the institutional precarity of certain academic labor subjectivities, such as contingent faculty positions, become amplified when we assess the work of writing teachers. Dayton’s chapter on the ethical and responsible use of student evaluations of instruction—arguably the most ubiquitous form of assessing teaching in higher education contexts—tackles the tensions that arise from these high-stakes assessments. Reappointment, promotion, and tenure decisions are

almost always informed by data from student evaluations, yet Dayton comments that faculty and WPAs often have little-to-no control over this institutional assessment mechanism. What we can control, however, is how we interpret and use this data, and Dayton provides a generative ethical framework that acknowledges the “important material effect on the professional lives and career prospects of postsecondary teachers” (32). She returns to the two core questions of the collection to consider how teaching evaluations might be considered valid assessment data and how the data might be interpreted in meaningful ways. While weaving in important findings from two meta-analyses of student evaluations, Dayton focuses on the ethical tensions that arise from student evaluations of instruction and argues for WPAs to adopt “a more nuanced understanding of student evaluations—particularly concerning validity, interpretation, and survey design” (32). In addition to recommending that evaluations be tailored to specific courses, aligned with course outcomes, and written in accessible language that teachers and students actually use in the classroom, Dayton also recommends that data from student evaluations be interpreted by a community of teachers guided by communally-developed interpretative guidelines (38).

Because the authors in *Assessing the Teaching of Writing* consider teaching to be a multifaceted activity, they collectively argue that fair and ethical assessment of teaching requires multiple measures to “tell the whole story”—a refrain that appears in one form or another in several chapters that draws a lovely parallel to the goal of capturing richer accounts of student learning in Wardle and Roozen’s ecological model of writing assessment. While summative evaluations of teaching may be seen by some as a perfunctory process that relates only to personnel decisions, Dayton and her fellow contributors recast the assessment of teaching as an opportunity for formative assessment that can promote pedagogical growth and programmatic reflection. Without diving too deeply into overly technical discussion of validity and reliability (concepts that are covered in much more detail in *Very Like A Whale*), *Assessing the Teaching of Writing* emphasizes the advantages of formative assessment that make it worthwhile even when it requires additional time, energy, and money. Cindy Moore explicitly addresses how well-informed scholars and teachers can “struggle themselves to match theory with practice when placed into a supervisory role” such as being a WPA (134). Her chapter adopts a pragmatic approach informed by what she identifies as common administrative priorities and recommends WPAs acknowledge the fact that multidimensional assessment undoubtedly requires more time. However, she contends we can work to invent new arguments to justify the additional time investment required for more robust and meaningful assessments in ways that address local administra-

tive concerns as well as the concerns of external audiences such as regional accrediting agencies.

Helping administrators understand the value of the additional time and resources needed for multi-dimensional assessment requires a delicate rhetorical and ethical balance, which Moore outlines very well in her chapter, but such assessment also requires the buy-in from faculty members who are being assessed. In chapter seven, Chris Anson discusses how faculty often resist assessments done in a manner that resembles surveillance of what many often consider to be the most private and autonomous part of our jobs. To ameliorate this tendency to react defensively, Anson advocates a multi-dimensional approach that embraces assessment as a collaborative and reflective form of professional development. I read this chapter while preparing my binder for annual review, which at my previous institution was a decidedly non-reflective and non-collaborative process, and the juxtaposition between what I was reading and what I was doing was stark. Anson's arguments added considerable rhetorical possibility to the perfunctory task that appeared as the next item on my to-do list.

The programmatic stakes of writing assessment have arguably never been higher, and the tenor of the technology-related chapters within *Assessing the Teaching of Writing* harmonize well with White, Elliot, and Peckham's DFA model in their emphasis on negotiating local priorities with the priorities of other stakeholders on campus and beyond. As the second section of Dayton's collection indicates, we have new data collection tools at our disposal that may help us craft more accurate and persuasive arguments about what writing teachers do and how well they are doing it. One premise of Deborah Minter and Amy Goodburn's chapter on big data as a means of supplementing traditional means of documenting effective teaching (e.g., teaching portfolios, peer observations) is that WPAs and teachers have an obligation to "educate ourselves on what big data can—and can't—do" in terms of assessing teaching (197). As they rightly point out, institutions and systems of higher education are increasingly turning to learning analytics as a way of measuring instructor and program performance. We need to understand these tools in order to insure the responsible use of new technologies in our home institutions. In addition to familiarizing ourselves with the technologies of big data, White, Elliot, and Peckham would likely add modes of statistical analysis as well so that we may critique arguments informed by learning analytics when they negatively impact our programs.

In this cultural moment when teacher expertise and judgement is often undermined by reductive modes of teacher assessment driven by an accountability agenda, there is much opportunity to reclaim writing assessment as one means of demonstrating the value of our work in our

own terms. (Gallagher, *Reclaiming*). Because Dayton's collection addresses many of the pedagogical, political, and programmatic issues related to the assessment of teaching and offers practical descriptions of new and familiar technologies of assessment, it would be an interesting text for graduate courses on WPA issues, writing assessment, or program design. However, the theoretical background related to assessment felt thin at the beginning, and I found myself filling in conceptual gaps with my knowledge from my own background in assessment theory. For example, in her introductory essay, Dayton recites the foundational purports to definition of validity and rightly argues that data and interpretations are what we validate, not assessment tools or tests. Her one-paragraph-long discussion of validity is impressively succinct, but it lacks the depth and nuance of White, Elliot, and Peckham's discussion of construct representation as it relates to validation evidence. Dayton does delve deeper into consequential validity in chapter three, but the theoretical overview of validity first presented in the introduction glosses much. As a result, I was left with the impression that this book might not be the best first introduction to writing assessment within Rhetoric and Composition/Writing Studies—a niche filled by Brian Huot, Peggy O'Neill, and Cindy Moore's *A Guide to College Writing Assessment* and Huot and O'Neill's *Assessing Writing: A Critical Sourcebook*. However, it certainly remains a valuable addition to the growing canon of writing assessment scholarship, especially for graduate students and WPAs already familiar with writing assessment theory and practice who are looking for new ways to create more ethical and sustainable cultures of assessment within their programs.

MAKING RACE PART OF THE STORY

Asao Inoue similarly invites us to reexamine our pedagogy and assessment practices to ask if writing assessments are not only productively connected to programmatic objectives like course outcomes but also informed by a sense of ethics and fairness within our writing classrooms. In *Antiracist Writing Assessment Ecologies*, Inoue argues that WPAs have an imperative to consider how race and racism may overtly or tacitly inform our theories and practices of writing assessment. Echoing and extending previous calls for more racially-aware assessment (Inoue and Poe; Poe et al.), Inoue makes a powerful case for critical examination of writing classrooms as sites where we can calibrate our theories and practices of assessment to be more appropriate for our increasingly diverse student populations. For Inoue, approaching writing assessment as an antiracist project requires more than doing away with outmoded assessment practices that may perpetuate

inequality because of racial, class, gender, or sexual bias. For example, he discusses racism and racializations within larger-scale assessments such as IQ tests, the ACT, SAT, AP, and CSU's English Placement Test, and WPAs interested in resisting institutionally mandated standardized testing could use Inoue's analysis as grounding for arguments to revise or reimagine large-scale placement tests that have historically produced racially aligned results. However, Inoue's identification of classroom writing assessment as means for creating a more socially just educational environment remains his unique contribution among the three books within this review.

In the simplest of terms, Inoue argues that writing assessment guided by an antiracist agenda can be an instrumental means of promoting justice, fairness, and equality, and in this way his book reflects the philosophical commitments expressed in the emerging social justice turn in writing assessment theory, a turn that complements the broader public turn in Rhetoric and Composition/Writing Studies. Generally associated with the notion of assuring equitable social opportunities, social justice work is guided by a commitment to the protection of the least advantaged members of a society. In response to a confluence of socially-conscious writing pedagogy and theory and growing anti-testing sentiment at all levels of public education, social justice has been taken up as a way for writing assessment scholars to challenge status quo policies, practices, and politics that by design offer advantages to students of certain social backgrounds and disproportionately disadvantage students of other backgrounds. Although his argument aligns with principles that are likely quite familiar to writing teachers and administrators, Inoue acknowledges that thinking about racism in our classroom assessment practices can be uncomfortable but nonetheless important.

His first two chapters extend the theoretical groundwork laid in his earlier co-edited collection with Mya Poe, *Race and Writing Assessment*, and explain his concept of antiracist writing assessment ecologies. This concept of antiracist writing assessment ecologies is premised on the idea that writing assessment "is not simply a decision about whether to use a portfolio or not," but a complex system of beliefs and practices that can be cultivated and nurtured (12). An antiracist classroom writing assessment ecology, then, is one that is designed and implemented in ways that promote fairness and honor the complexity of diversity. Inoue's explanation of antiracist classroom writing assessment ecologies in chapters one and two involves definitions of familiar terms like race, racism, racial formation, and the introduction of a new term—*racial habitus*—to describe how racism may manifest consciously or unconsciously in classroom writing assessment. Inoue's term is a redeployment of Pierre Bourdieu's concept of *habitus*, which Inoue defines as "an historically organizing set of structures

that structures social interactions and society” (42). These structures, Inoue explains, are entangled in a complex feedback loop with perceptions of the world and practices of social division. Habitus is simultaneously a “structuring structure, which organizes practices and the perception of practices” of social division and also a “structured structure” that is reified by these perceptions and practices (Bourdieu qtd. in Inoue 42–43). Inoue’s adoption of habitus to explain the socially-constructed nature of race in a slightly different light is complex but useful for writing assessment scholarship because it focuses our attention on the way social identities can be rendered visible in language, on bodies, in pedagogical practices, and through social performances. For instance, he explains how race can influence the assessment of student writing in classroom settings because conventions of academic writing remain wedded to the dominant discourse that is associated with white racial formations (31).

Although Inoue’s definition of *racial habitus* as a related group of principles that construct and are constructed by racial designations is theoretically interesting, what stood out to me most in this first section of the book was Inoue’s engagement of previous writing assessment scholarship, including a critique of Brian Huot’s emphasis on student individualism as opposed to students’ subject positions in social formations; a commentary on the conceptual limitations of Patricia Lynne’s proposed lexicon of non-technocratic terms such as ethicalness and meaningfulness; and an extended retort to Richard Haswell’s response that identified antiracism as aporetic in Inoue and Poe’s 2012 collection on race and writing assessment.² For example, the major point of contention between Haswell and Inoue is centered around the effects (both intended and unintended) of antiracism as a principle shaping the design and implementation of writing assessments. On the one hand, Haswell writes that we cannot endeavor to eradicate racism without also reifying the concept of race (e.g., adjusting outcomes by using benchmarks that are also informed by racial formations reaffirms the concept of race). But if antiracism is not enough to help us escape racial constructions, what is? Haswell’s answer is that “Racial aporias will end only when race itself ends” (para. 12). On the other hand, Inoue argues that antiracism is essential for eradicating racism and emphasizes that it is possible to end racism without erasing race. I understand and identify with both perspectives: Haswell articulates many of the nagging concerns I had about unintentionally reifying race and racism by adopting an antiracist agenda, and Inoue’s response ameliorates those concerns to a great degree by reminding me of the precise end goal at hand. I imagine this debate is far from over, but the tension between Haswell’s and Inoue’s respective stances is a productive one.

While Inoue's reflective and generative engagement with critics like Haswell in these first chapters felt well-paced, parts of his theoretical framework felt somewhat rushed. Inoue borrows elements of Freirian critical pedagogy, post-process theory, Marxian political theory, and Buddhist theories of interconnectedness in order to produce a theoretical foundation capable of supporting his vision of writing assessment ecologies. However, this theoretical blend is at times disorienting, not because of theoretical incompatibility or complexity but in the sheer number of concepts. I greatly admire Inoue's enthusiastic embrace of so many concepts, but I found the result to be at times overwhelming. As a reader, it was not always clear to me what each theory or concept was adding to writing assessment theory more broadly. I would have preferred one thoroughly developed theoretical lens. At a moment when writing assessment is experiencing an exciting explosion of theory-building, an astute scholar like Inoue who is attuned to issues of race in writing assessment has much to offer. I fear his buffet of theory may not accomplish the kind of theory-building he intended, although it certainly contributes many concepts to the ongoing discussion about writing assessment theory.

Chapters three and four take a more practical turn in which Inoue describes and analyzes his own classroom practices. Chapter three presents seven related elements— power, parts, purposes, people, processes, products, and places—that constitute a classroom writing assessment ecology and includes a heuristic demonstrating how the elements are interrelated (176). Possible excessive alliteration aside, Inoue's seven elements encapsulate many of the important components and systems of smaller-scale writing assessment that work together to paint a fuller picture of his vision of a writing assessment ecology. When describing his upper-division writing course at Fresno State (Inoue is now at the University of Washington, Tacoma) in chapter four, Inoue both recounts his own experiences of racism as a person of color in academia and reflects on his struggle to address the aporias of race and writing assessment in his own classroom. This chapter features Inoue's use of contract grading as one means of cultivating an anti-racist writing assessment ecology. He explains that as an artifact that articulates labor expectations while acknowledging racial diversity in the class participants, the grading contract is an effective alternative to traditional grading systems. Moreover, the use of contract grading, Inoue suggests, has the potential to create "productive antiracist borderlands in the course's writing assessment ecology because the parts can reflect the local diversity of language use while not penalizing students through ecological products like grades" and "offer students landscapes to problematize their existential writing assessment situations" (185). By resisting the dominant practice of

focusing on ecological products like grades, Inoue noted a change in the way both he and students attended to the labor of writing (191). In short, he concludes that the contract rendered visible previously obfuscated elements of the ecology (especially processes, places, and people). He documents this shift with student voices, which are an effective way of highlighting student involvement in assessment because they are the ones doing the actual labor of writing that will be evaluated.

In chapter five, Inoue explores the connections between the concepts from the earlier chapters and his experiences in this 160W writing course in Fresno. The result is a heuristic for designing antiracist writing assessment ecologies, which I found to be one of the most useful parts of the book. Built around the seven elements of classroom writing assessment ecologies, Inoue's heuristic provides pointed questions that can help teachers and administrators design and implement sustainable and ethical assessment ecologies. He complements this heuristic with a handful of "final stories of writing assessment ecologies" from his own childhood and early adulthood. These stories reflect his final major point: It is often more fruitful to consider classroom writing assessment ecologies as dynamic and relational concepts rather than static physical spaces (295).

Inoue's book provides a conceptual vocabulary for thinking about many of the same design questions addressed in the other two books under review here but is guided by a more localized and qualitative perspective. Overall, the many heuristics provided in these three texts offer diverse ways to reconceptualize the design and implementation of writing assessment in writing programs and writing classrooms.

MOVING FORWARD

The political and intellectual stakes in writing assessment are higher than ever. University writing programs and the WPAs who run them face more pressure to assess student learning at the same time that our disciplinary understandings of learning and literacy have become significantly more nuanced. Put simply: We have more complex stories to tell to increasingly impatient audiences. Figuring out how to proceed is a challenge, but we can begin by interrupting reductionist thinking about writing assessment and writing program assessment through programmatic and pedagogical intervention. The heuristics and theoretical foundations presented in these texts provide us many productive starting points.

Assessments of writing and teaching as they are typically constructed are not politically neutral; we sense this as educators who are in tune with the rhythms of learning. The books reviewed here help us understand the

importance of proceeding from an explicit assumption that writing assessments as they are typically constructed are political. In this way, they not only complement recent work on writing assessment as social justice—including a special issue of the *Journal of Writing Assessment* on equity and ethics and a special issue of *College English* on writing assessment as social justice—but also provide ways of illuminating the tacit and pervasive assumptions we and others make about the teaching and assessing of writing. In fact, their greatest contribution is their encouragement for us to take up the politicality of writing assessments in ways that are in harmony with our disciplinary values in order to foster the fairest learning ecologies possible.

NOTES

1. To avoid a conflict of interest, Norbert Elliot, one of the current *WPA: Writing Program Administration* book review editors, was not involved in the procuring, processing, revision, or editing process of this review. Jacob Babb, his co-editor, was solely responsible for the work associated with publishing this review.

2. I have written about this elsewhere in “Working Against Racism: A Review of *Antiracist Writing Assessment Ecologies*” which was published in *Journal of Writing Assessment Reading List*. *Journal of Writing Assessment*, 12 Jan. 2016, <http://jwreadinglist.blogspot.com/2016/01/working-against-racism-review-of.html>.

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Review

Illuminating Bodies: Bringing Tutor-Researchers to the Forefront

Patti Poblete

Fitzgerald, Lauren, and Melissa Ianetta. *The Oxford Guide for Writing Tutors: Practice and Research*. Oxford UP, 2016. 597 pages.

To join a writing center is to be inducted into a particular set of traditions. Writing centers may be found in sunlit learning commons, or they may be cloistered within the library. Writing centers can be geared towards multilingual students or writing across the curriculum initiatives or first-year composition students or career services. Writing centers may be widely embraced, or they may be a grassroots project. They contain multitudes.

What all writing centers have in common, however, is quite simple: they employ folks who use inquiry in order to help others improve their communication skills. In my time working with, training, and mentoring tutors, I've found writing center pedagogy can often be broken down into five frequent questions: What are we working on today? Do you have any specific concerns? What does your instructor say? How much time do you have before your deadline? Would you mind reading your work aloud?

There's much more to tutoring than those questions, of course. If, for example, tutors begin working concurrently with their practicum, their training will likely be concerned with strategies for the everyday. Ryan and Zimmerelli's *The Bedford Guide for Writing Tutors* exemplifies this, as each chapter details exercises a tutor can employ to help writers improve their process. This mode of training is eminently practical, though somewhat oriented towards problem-solving, rather than knowledge-building.

Another way that tutors might be trained, however, is grounded in historical records and theoretical lenses. For these tutor seminars, texts such as Murphy and Sherwood's *The St. Martin's Sourcebook for Writing Tutors*

might be more appropriate. While these articles are certainly important, the knowledge they provide doesn't always translate easily to a 30-minute tutoring session.

To that end, Fitzgerald and Ianetta bring us *The Oxford Guide for Writing Tutors*, a text unique from most tutor guides, as it firmly ties the practice of tutoring with methods of research, highlighting tutor-researchers as essential contributors to the field of Writing Studies. This creation of knowledge is located not only in the interaction of student with tutor but also in the interaction of tutors with the scholarship of Writing Studies. Fitzgerald and Ianetta include the voices of tutor-researchers in references throughout the text, as well as part of the anthology of articles. *The Oxford Guide* continually reminds its readers that tutors aren't just coaches or guides for the students they work with but are also participants and contributors to the scholarly work of all writing centers.

While the chapters of *The Oxford Guide* don't have to be read sequentially, tutor-trainers leading a practicum or a more theory-oriented seminar will find the inherent scaffolding to be generative. The structure of each chapter includes catalysts for discussion, writing prompts that instructors can use, and research assignments that could be implemented through the course a semester.

SO WHAT ARE WE WORKING ON TODAY?

Chapter one begins by introducing readers to writing as a scholarly pursuit. Being a good writer, after all, isn't necessarily equivalent to being a good writing tutor. Having an understanding of composition theory, then, gives tutors and their students the vocabulary necessary to talk about the writing process in a generative way (Downs and Wardle), as well as what standards they're aspiring to uphold. Before tutors can get to good writing, they need to know what they think that means.

In order to dispel common writing myths, Fitzgerald and Ianetta have constructed *The Oxford Guide* as, ultimately, a description of writing research. The authors opt to define research broadly, including lore, archival studies, theoretical work, empirical research, and rhetorical scholarship. Encouraging methodological pluralism (9), they create a space where any tutor can become participant in the field, regardless of their current level of training. By being identified as researchers up front, tutors are prompted to frame all their work according to three questions: "Is my research valid? Is my research reliable? Is my research ethical?" (10).

Moving from disciplinary space and into physical space, chapter two focuses more on the locality and materiality of a writing center. How does

a writing center remain cohesive across its platforms? Is a writing center a site, or is it a method? Are we beholden to our pencils and round tables? Must we have “cozy” spaces in order to be perceived as spaces (Grutsch McKinney 30)? Can we, as Kjesrud pondered, do away with walls and go to where the students are? Or, as the tutors of Marian University do, can we have pop-up writing centers, our locations determined by the weather and available chairs (Latta et al.)? While the physical spaces might not always be what we envision, the pedagogy of writing centers remains fairly consistent.

Just as writing centers can inhabit many kinds of material places, so too can writing tutors function in a variety of disciplinary spaces. By working with students from different backgrounds, tutors rely more upon interpersonal and dialogic communication. Because the tutor-student relationship lies outside of the instructor’s sphere, the shared inquiry becomes focus of the session, rather than a grade for the document (though, like many other tutor handbooks, the authors perhaps understate students’ concerns about their grades).

Chapter two also includes a historical overview of writing instruction and how that history frames the way our perceptions of writing. Fitzgerald and Ianetta highlight the need for theory in writing centers, for “unless we know why we’re doing what we’re doing and where we expect to get by doing it—unless we theorize it—we won’t be able to assess whether we are making the best choices” (28). What then follows is a bracing and concise walk-through of composition as a scholarly field. The authors neatly categorize different schools of thought as centripetal theories—theories focusing on communities and what writers might have in common—and centrifugal theories—theories emphasizing the individual writers and how they differ (29).

DO YOU HAVE ANY SPECIFIC CONCERNS?

The second section of the text looks more specifically at the specific tasks of a writing tutor. Chapter three details the habits of mind a tutor should acquire in order to work effectively. This foundational advice encourages tutors to be specific and flexible in sessions, allowing the student’s concerns to guide the session.

Chapter four continues the pedagogical thread, turning attention to the process of authoring a piece. While most students are familiar with the traditionally accepted stages of planning, drafting, revising, and editing, they may not have considered the fluidity of these stages. The act of writing and working with a tutor illuminates the ways writing helps students sort and articulate their thoughts, and a tutor’s feedback can help them recognize

how their personal writing process functions. The dialogue and questions that take place during a tutoring session will help students assume control of their own process.

Calling back to the contrast between centripetal and centrifugal ideas of writing, however, tutors must also pay attention to shifting perceptions of authorship and originality. *The Oxford Guide* offers explicit ways to discuss plagiarism and attribution without sounding accusatory but also notes the common concern that a tutor might be providing too much help. Invoking Stephen North's maxim of helping writers improve rather than improving a piece of writing, *The Oxford Guide* concedes that nondirective pedagogy is important but failing to be direct on some points can be harmful. Tutors must strike a balance to provide just enough help as students enter into their own scholarly conversations.

Turning from academic identity to personal identity, chapter five provides strategies for fostering discussion when the two intersect. Given our understanding of students' identities, what strategies can we employ in order to help them achieve their academic goals? The authors caution, of course, that "such categorization never tells even part of the story about a person" (110), but it behooves tutors to understand issues of identity that students might experience and perceive.

Because identity is constructed through a variety of factors, Fitzgerald and Ianetta highlight ways that physical, cultural, and behavioral expectations might differ from the tutor's own. As many universities are experiencing rapid growth of international student enrollment, including many multilingual students, *The Oxford Guide* devotes extra attention to how linguistic and cultural diversity might factor into a tutoring session, as well as cautions tutors to be aware of unconscious bias they might have developed. If tutors don't take students' intersecting identities—including race, ethnicity, sex, gender identity, nationality, language, age, ability, class, and more—into account, the negotiation of session goals and priorities can become especially fraught.

WHAT DOES YOUR INSTRUCTOR SAY?

Chapter six tackles disciplines and writing genres, particularly looking at writing across the curriculum and writing in the discipline. While in some cases, such as with writing fellows programs, tutors may have specific knowledge of particular genres, tutors often work with students coming from very different disciplinary backgrounds. In order to be effective in those cases, *The Oxford Guide* encourages tutors to take a genre-based approach to their work. Through rhetorical analysis, the tutors can help stu-

dents articulate what they believe is expected for their field. Further, when tutors take the role of novice, they encourage students to articulate threshold concepts—ideas that the students might assume everybody knows and, thus, have left ambiguous.

Chapter seven similarly suggests tutors use rhetorical analysis as a tool. Under the banner of technology, the authors tackle two aspects of media: tutoring students on new media and tutoring through digital platforms. “Sometimes, our jobs as tutors include helping writers negotiate this technology” (167), and sometimes, it means learning how to effectively use technology ourselves. Invoking Bitzer’s work on rhetorical situations, the authors highlight how writing centers are, in fact, multiliteracy centers (177), wherein tutors and students sharpen their understanding of how audiences are influenced by media and vice versa.

In the realm of online tutoring, the authors encourage that tutors use the same rhetorical strategies, in which the act of tutoring is framed by the same language. In synchronous tutoring, tutors need to take into account how the medium may constrain or impede communication. In asynchronous tutoring, tutors need to be cognizant of how their suggestions might play—multiple notes on copyediting, for example, are easy to change but might lead the student to ignore more substantive suggestions. In both methods, however, tutors have to possess a clear sense of the mindsets their electronic environments encourage.

HOW MUCH TIME DO YOU HAVE BEFORE YOUR DEADLINE?

The third section of *The Oxford Guide* returns to the research tutors might do. In chapter eight, Fitzgerald and Ianetta articulate how to effectively design a study. By articulating methods as lore, theory, historical, and empirical research, they provide tutor-researchers a number of ways to ethically participate in scholarly work, typically with a writing center director’s guidance.

Chapter nine emphasizes that the goal for tutor-researchers “is the activity of theorizing, not the mastery of all theory” (211). Because tutor-researchers might come from any field, rather than just Writing Studies, their own understanding of disciplinary epistemologies will enrich the work that we do in our writing centers. Conversely, while “all tutoring work is theory work” (213), the authors walk tutor-researchers through learning the rhetorical moves that are made in writing center theory.

As writing centers are rich in lore, the history of writing center practice is essential to understand, thus chapter ten focuses on historical research. But first, Fitzgerald and Ianetta ask tutors to recognize writing center his-

ories—both oral and written—as ideological work that appeals to community values (224). Tutors are asked to recognize the intentionality of the stories we tell and how they reveal the ecology of the institutions that house our writing centers.

Chapter eleven responds directly to recent calls for more data-driven and longitudinal research (Babcock and Thonus; Driscoll and Perdue). The authors provide a brief but thorough description of empirical research, both qualitative and quantitative. By framing the chapter with a conversation between three comically competitive tutors, they demonstrate how even the unofficial title of best tutor might be assessed differently according to how the supporting data is collected and interpreted. Fitzgerald and Ianetta also spend time discussing how effective different methods of data collection can be conducted effectively in the time tutor-researchers might have.

WOULD YOU MIND READING YOUR WORK ALOUD?

The fourth and final section of *The Oxford Guide* is an anthology of readings. Compared to similar anthologies, Fitzgerald and Ianetta's selections are largely contemporary. While texts like *The Longman Guide* present a historical narrative of writing center development—starting in 1950 with Robert H. Moore's "The Writing Clinic and the Writing Laboratory—*The Oxford Guide* presents fairly recent articles, written by both established scholars and aspiring tutor-researchers. Aside from Kenneth A. Bruffee's 1984 article, "Peer Tutoring and the 'Conversation of Mankind,'" the earliest article reprinted is from 2004. Tutor-researchers, then, can begin to see how research conducted by their peers connects and supports more theoretical work.

The Oxford Guide is a unique contribution to the field of writing center studies, both through its consistent positioning of tutors as scholars and its thorough examination of writing center research methods. By encouraging tutors to position themselves, first and foremost, as tutor-researchers, Fitzgerald and Ianetta foster a scholarly community in which all participants are invested, and all contributions are vital.

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Review

Enacting Transcultural Citizenship by Writing Across Communities

Matthew Tougas

Guerra, Juan C., *Language, Culture, Identity and Citizenship in College Classrooms and Communities*. NCTE-Routledge, 2016. 179 pages.

During his 2015 Chair's address at the Conference on College Composition and Communication, Adam Banks challenged scholars in the field of Rhetoric and Composition/Writing Studies to fly beyond traditional practices and beliefs of writing instruction and instead actively imagine a new and more equitable field of play—one where students and scholars alike are free to transcend dominant structures that often serve merely to reinforce standardized conceptions of language, identity, and social space. The speech struck a crescendo when he demanded we “free ourselves from [. . .] the set of handcuffs the same old theory and the same old theorists and the same old scholarship *place* on us” (276; emphasis added). Extending this point, Banks declared we will only obtain true intellectual freedom as scholars when not just “the demographics of our conferences and our faculties look like the demographics of our society, but when our citation practices and works cited lists do too” (277).

Juan Guerra's 2016 publication *Language, Culture, Identity and Citizenship in College Classrooms and Communities* in many ways resonates with the charges put forth by Banks. It extends many of the ideas Guerra had previously brought forward in his 2013 article, on “Cultivating Transcultural Citizenship in a Discursive Democracy,” from the collection *Texts of Consequences: Composing Social Activism for the Classroom and Community* (Wilkey and Mauriello). In addition to making the case that the lives, languages, and communities students inhabit ought to be validated and made central to any writing course's objectives, he also presents a model

for how to extend a WAC/WID-type of program that is more flexible, fluid, and engaged with the community. Part theory, part play, *Language, Culture, Identity and Citizenship* spans a variety of genres—from critical essay to teaching reflection to case study—each incorporating a range of voices from top scholars to undergraduate writers. Situated within such contexts as writing across communities (Kells “Leveling,” “Out of WAC,” and “Writing Across”), activist writing program administration (Adler-Kassner), and a range of linguistic and literacy studies (Canagarajah; Lu and Horner), Guerra’s research probes the possible means by which teachers and programs writ large might more effectively engage students’ unique backgrounds and experiences and help cultivate a broader culture of literacy based upon active citizenship. In addition to the scope of its theoretical research, what makes this book stand out among other texts that address similar issues of literacy, citizenship, and civic engagement is its practical application.

The book is split into two parts. Part one, “Building Theory through Lived Experience,” lays the theoretical groundwork for a broader, more inclusive WAC program by looking at a range of linguistic and educational concepts such as code-meshing, critical cultural awareness, cultural modalities of memory, and cultures in transition, to name a few. Part two, “Putting Theory into Play,” examines what it looks like when those ideas become implemented at both the classroom and community levels.

In chapter one, “Fixity and Fluidity,” Guerra situates his discussion within tensions surrounding language standardization (fixity) and difference (fluidity) and the extent to which writing teachers and/or administrators ought to weigh one camp more heavily over the other. For Guerra, the traditional emphases on standardization (beyond just prescriptivist grammar policing, but also of pedagogies, program structures, best practices, etc.) not only reinforces inequities in the classroom, it also limits opportunities to expand how we come to understand what it means to be literate in an increasingly diverse world. Guerra discusses translanguaging and translingualism and reflects on his “Deleuzian dreamscape of desire” as metaphors to illustrate how language, like every other space we inhabit, “is in continuous motion” (3). For him, this perpetual fluidity is itself justification for why writing classrooms must be more malleable, accessible, and inclusive. Lu and Horner reflect on some of Guerra’s teaching philosophies in their introduction to the 2016 *College English* issue on “Translingual Work in Composition.” They note how Guerra suggests “teachers might pursue a similar reorientation to language difference among their students” (209). Guerra brings to light the rationale for this “reorientation to language” in part by acknowledging how the interactions students are already

having with others in their communities and that they, in turn, bring to the classroom,

signals a significant turn toward developing curricular and pedagogical practices . . . that will equip students with the tactical and strategic tools they need to thrive in the fluid *and* fixed social spaces they inhabit over the course of their daily lives. (11; emphasis original)

Guerra's emphasis on pedagogical accountability permeates throughout the book, demonstrating his passion for teaching as well as his commitment to change. The following four chapters tease out both the theoretical rationale and analytical backing that supports the kind of flexible pedagogical practices Guerra is advocating.

The next two chapters focus primarily on language and culture. Chapter two, "Language Difference and Inequality," begins with a personal story of how Guerra and his siblings learned to understand the inequalities inherent in language use as their use of Spanish was often met with contempt from teachers and students at their school. The paragraph begins in Spanish, then evolves into Spanglish, and ultimately switches entirely to English. In this and the third chapter, "Navigating Cultures in Flux," Guerra offers code-meshing as a pedagogical alternative to code-switching and code-segregation, preferring it for its emphasis on malleability. He then visits the concepts of critical language awareness and critical cultural awareness (27, 31), citing the need to be reflective of the liminal spaces that students occupy. While his emphasis on critical may sound fundamentally resistant to standardization, he is quick to note he believes appropriateness (discursive, situational, behavioral, etc.) can, and often should, have a place in the choices writers and communicators make.

Chapter four extends the critical discussions on language and culture and applies them more specifically to identity. In arguably the most salient section of this chapter, Guerra offers a personal deconstruction of his own "Mexicanness" (82). He does this to demonstrate how and why he has his students deconstruct their own identities, particularly in relation to the communities in which they inhabit. Guerra firmly believes the difficult, often-messy conversations of identity (at all of their intersections) must be allowed in the writing classroom. As he makes clear,

Just as we need to give students the opportunity to decide how they wish to invoke their language and cultural differences in the course of representing themselves rhetorically and discursively, we need to provide them with opportunities to perform as limited or broad a range of identities as they so choose. (90)

The issue of student-agency is of central concern for Guerra, one he sees as pivotal in enacting transcultural citizenship.

Chapter five is aptly titled “Cultivating Citizens in the Making.” As its name suggests, Guerra sees the rhetorical act of citizenship as a process in constant motion—always in the making. He invokes the phrase *cultural citizenship* as an alternative way of thinking about citizenship as a shared, constantly evolving status informed by “translingual and transcultural forces” (97). Because Guerra sees cultural citizenship as an essential literacy/identity-marker, he reflects deeply on the relationships between pedagogy, democracy, and citizenship. Drawing on the language of the New London Group, Guerra argues that one of the ways teachers can cultivate citizenship is in giving students “actionable opportunities” that can in turn be put to work in other spaces (110).

In order to put his theories to play in chapter six, Guerra first reflects on his own experience teaching an advanced writing course on “Language Variation and Language Policy in North America” at the University of Washington in 2012 (118). Included in this chapter are the perspectives of several students who were enrolled in his course, both graduate and undergraduate. From personal interviews and their own writing, Guerra’s students’ reflections reveal the complex rhetorical acumen citizens in the making can display when encouraged to “[call] on their prior knowledge in ways that acknowledge shifts in context, purpose, and audience” (119). Writing teachers looking for ways to incorporate engaging meta-discussions on language, culture, and politics into their courses will find this chapter particularly useful. Not only does it offer poignant insights from the students themselves, it also provides sample essay-prompts that aim to generate dialogue on many of the issues presented in the first five chapters.

In his final chapter, Guerra presents readers with a case study of UNM’s writing across communities (WAC²) initiative. Calling it the “best response currently available to address our [FYW and WAC programs] collective concerns,” Guerra details the histories and exigencies that prompted the inception of WAC² (146). Charged with the task of creating a WAC program at UNM, Guerra explains how Michelle Hall Kells drew upon her experiences working with underserved, underrepresented writers in south Texas to inform how she would lay the groundwork for what would become a grassroots-styled, community-based WAC. Kells explains that in practice, her original role as WAC²’s program chair was less an “administrator and more of an agitator and intellectual architect” (qtd. in Guerra 149). Guerra sees in WAC²’s vision a blueprint for how those in positions of influence might be able to implement a more community-responsive WAC program at their own institutions.

To illustrate why he feels WAC² represents a model WAC program, Guerra turns to its successes as a coalition-builder driven primarily by graduate students. He describes how in the beginning, Kells and a few graduate students hosted a variety of colloquia around campus focusing on local needs and concerns. As the guest speaker at WAC²'s first colloquium in 2005, Guerra himself facilitated discussions on creating pathways to student success in and beyond college. Following this success, WAC² organizers continued to host colloquia, bringing in such accomplished guests as Susan McLeod, Barbara Johnstone, Michael Palmquist, and John Bean to discuss a wide array of issues concerning the "personal, academic, civic and professional needs of all, but especially historically underserved students, by building on the language and cultural practices that inform their varied communities of belonging" (156–57). Eventually, in 2007, a handful of graduate students took over the reins and chartered WAC² as a student organization called the Writing Across Communities Alliance, thus cementing a structural model that by nature was fluid and decentered. Since then, WAC² has hosted numerous symposia focusing on social justice and literacy; organized small- and large-scaled events targeting first-year writers; and has worked with and alongside community and campus partners on numerous projects.

Guerra cautions, however, not to mistake his profile of WAC² as a utopian vision. Through his interviews with WAC² graduate students, UNM's dean of the college of arts and sciences, and Kells, Guerra notes some of the difficulties in not being an institutionalized entity on campus. For example, because it is a graduate student organization, WAC² has no office, no (paid) full-time director, and no official budget. It also lacks some of the agency, *ethos*, and resources that a more firmly established, institutionally protected program might possess. Yet despite some of these constraints, Guerra sees the counter-discourse position of WAC² as one of its strengths.

Certainly my description of UNM's writing across communities is not in itself sufficient in affirming Guerra's claim that it's the best WAC program out there. The care and attention he brings to telling WAC²'s story while linking it so seamlessly to his linguistic, pedagogical, and administrative beliefs is much more thorough and convincing. As a PhD student and emerging scholar in the field of Rhetoric and Writing, I appreciated the way in which Guerra incorporates student perspectives, clearly giving their insights significant weight. It sends a powerful message that throughout the final two chapters on putting theory into play, we predominantly hear from students in his interviews. While his description of WAC² is indeed applicable and actionable, it would have been helpful to have compared WAC² to other programs with a similar level of thoroughness to their descriptions.

Guerra's book offers a well-grounded, reflective, and ultimately actionable set of resources for anyone willing and able to play with the conventional structures of WAC/WID programs. WPAs, teachers, and scholars in such fields as writing studies, communication studies, and education will no doubt appreciate Guerra's detailed explanation of WAC's organizational structure, his heavy emphasis on pedagogy, and the substantive theoretical rationale he provides throughout. What his book provides to the WPA community, in particular, is a demonstration of how a creative and empathetic administrative approach—one that places students' diverse lives and experiences front and center—can effectively promote literacy, citizenship, and community, while consequently teaching students to become more rhetorically sophisticated.

As our field continues to expand its disciplinary and scholarly foci while our work is still largely perceived as skills- and/or service-based, it is perhaps more important than ever that we wrestle with these tensions Guerra brings to light. Who does our scholarship and our teaching serve? Who is being left out or overlooked? How can we more ethically and efficaciously cultivate students' own language, culture, identity, and citizenship? At what point must we remove the rigid handcuffs of standardization—in theory, in practice, and in our scholarly identities—and instead embrace uncertainty, flexibility, and imagination in our methods? Guerra's book addresses issues that reflect the unstable, precarious reality of American higher education at this time, and yet he remains an optimistic advocate for the positive work institutional involvement can do—particularly for the historically underserved and underrepresented—when committed to enacting transcultural citizenship at the community-campus-classroom level. We can only hope such optimism encourages other WPAs to embrace similar work at their institutions.

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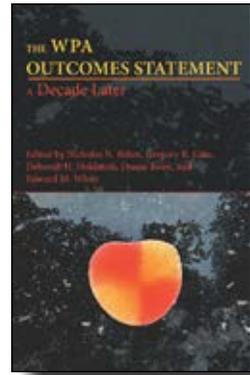
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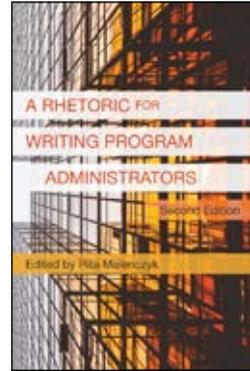
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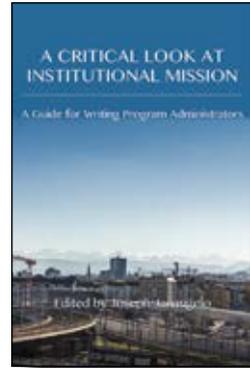
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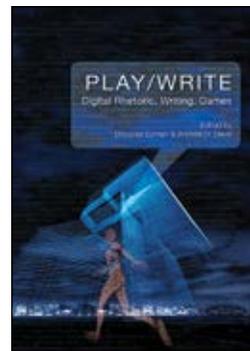
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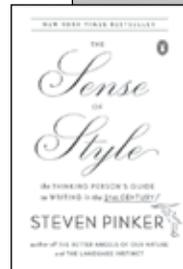
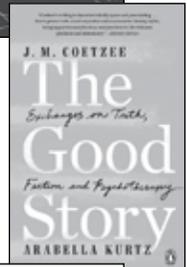
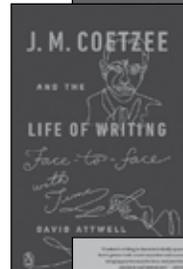
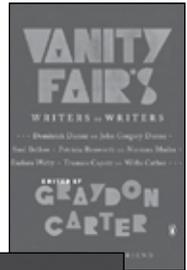
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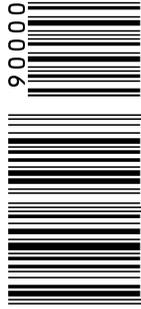
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