



WRITING PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION

Volume 43 • Number 2 • Spring 2020

Symposium

Writing Program Administration: A Queer Symposium

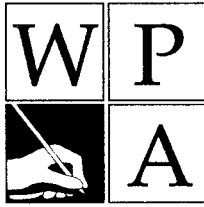
Analyzing Student Evaluations of Teaching:
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with Genre-Informed Pedagogy

Challenging the Efficiency Model: Supporting Inclusive
Pathways Toward Student Success

WPAs as University Learning Space Managers: Theorizing
and Guiding the Creation of Effective Writing Classrooms

A Return to Portland: Making Work Visible through the
Ecologies of Writing Program Administration



Writing Program Administration

Journal of the
Council of Writing Program Administrators

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Guide for Authors

WPA: Writing Program Administration publishes empirical and theoretical research on issues in writing program administration. We publish a wide range of research in various formats, research that not only helps both titled and untitled administrators of writing programs do their jobs, but also helps our discipline advance academically, institutionally, and nationally.

Possible topics of interest include:

- writing faculty professional development
- writing program creation and design
- uses for national learning outcomes and statements that impact writing programs
- classroom research studies
- labor conditions: material, practical, fiscal
- WAC/WID/WC/CAC (or other sites of communication/writing in academic settings)
- writing centers and writing center studies
- teaching writing with electronic texts (multimodality) and teaching in digital spaces
- theory, practice, and philosophy of writing program administration
- outreach and advocacy
- curriculum development
- writing program assessment
- WPA history and historical work
- national and regional trends in education and their impact on WPA work
- issues of professional advancement and writing program administration
- diversity and WPA work
- writing programs in a variety of educational locations (SLACs, HBCUs, two-year colleges, Hispanic schools, non-traditional schools, dual credit or concurrent enrollment programs, prison writing programs)
- interdisciplinary work that informs WPA practices

This list is meant to be suggestive, not exhaustive. Contributions must be appropriate to the interests and concerns of the journal and its readership. The editors welcome empirical research (quantitative as well as qualitative), historical research, and theoretical, essayistic, and practical pieces.

Submission Guidelines

Please check the *WPA* website for complete submissions guidelines and to download the required coversheet. In general, submissions should:

- be a maximum 7,500 words;
- be styled according to either the *MLA Handbook* (8th edition) or the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (7th edition), as appropriate to the nature of your research;
- include an abstract (maximum 200 words);

- contain no identifying information;
- be submitted as a .doc or .docx format file; and
- use tables, notes, figures, and appendices sparingly and judiciously.

Submissions that do not follow these guidelines or that are missing the cover page will be returned to authors before review.

Reviews

WPA: Writing Program Administration publishes both review essays of multiple books and reviews of individual books related to writing programs and their administration. If you are interested in reviewing texts or recommending books for possible review, please contact the book review editor at wpabookreviews@gmail.com.

Announcements and Calls

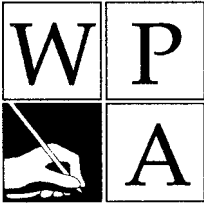
Relevant announcements and calls for papers may be published as space permits. Announcements should not exceed 500 words, and calls for proposals or participation should not exceed 1,000 words. Submission deadlines in calls should be no sooner than January 1 for the fall issue and June 1 for the spring issue. Please email your calls and announcements to wpaeditors@gmail.com and include the text in both the body of the message and as a .doc or .docx attachment.

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Subscriptions

WPA: Writing Program Administration is published twice per year—fall and spring—by the Council of Writing Program Administrators. Members of the council receive a subscription to the journal and access to the *WPA* archives as part of their membership. Join the council at <http://wpacouncil.org>. Information about library subscriptions is available at <http://wpacouncil.org/aws/CWPA/pt/sp/journal-subscriptions>.



Writing Program Administration

Journal of the
Council of Writing Program Administrators
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WPAs in Quarantine

Lori Ostergaard, Jacob Babb, and Jim Nugent

In our last issue, we urged you all to take care, noting how our own health—physical and mental—inevitably has an impact on the work we do. It is April as we prepare this issue for press and most of us are working hard to complete terms that have been disrupted by COVID-19 and the subsequent shelter-in-place orders enacted around the world. Traditional end-of-semester worries like grading and scheduling have been dwarfed by an urgent concern for the well-being of our families, friends, colleagues, and students. And as program administrators, many of us are frustrated or even frightened by the crucial, unanswered questions before us: When will this end? When will we be able to return to our classrooms? How will this impact enrollments and the sustainability of our institutions? How will this affect our part-time colleagues and graduate students?

Most of us never anticipated leading our programs and our departments through a pandemic. We may not have prepared directly for these unsettling times, but what we have witnessed of this community's response over the past two months suggests that our field's belief in the vital work of mentorship in recognizing administration as intellectual work, and in treating students and colleagues with compassion is well placed. From the relative safety of quarantine, we may regularly lose track of what day of the week it is, but we never lose sight of what is important to us as professionals: our colleagues, our students, and our discipline.

Regretfully, the CWPA Conference that so many of us were looking forward to in July has been cancelled. The conference theme of "The CWPA Road Trip: Departures, Detours, and Destinations in Writing Program Work" last year strikes us as tantalizing and outlandish in these days where we rarely venture past our mailboxes. In his conference call Mark Blaau-Hara encouraged us to imagine what happens "when we step out of our comfort zones and explore new spaces." Certainly, this pandemic has forced us all out of our comfort zones, and we may find new spaces

to explore, in our online courses, in our homes (as the divisions between home and office dissolve), and in the hobbies that serve to relieve some of our anxiety. And as we continue to administer our programs under quarantine, we can be assured of a few things: our teachers are committed to giving students the best possible instruction under any circumstances and our courses will be a source of community and normalcy for faculty and students alike during this deeply troubling time. We remain unsure of the long-term impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, but we have already been reminded of a few essential lessons: be kind to yourself, be kind to others, and wash your hands.

This pandemic will have a profound impact on higher education. We are already seeing its effect as some institutions have announced plans to return to face-to-face instruction in the fall, some are weighing multiple scenarios for online or hybrid instruction, and others are facing elimination altogether due to financial distress. The outlook from here may be grim and uncertain, but we invite you to join us in finding new paths forward. Our institutions have always depended on the vision and creativity of committed administrators in adapting to uncertain circumstances.

Finally, dear friends, it may be some time before our physical paths cross again, but we see a call for hope in Mark's conference theme as he asks us to consider "what happens when life sends us on a detour." We do not know where this detour will take us, but we wish you and your loved ones good health on this journey—even if it's a relatively stationary one.

IN THIS ISSUE

This issue features a symposium, five articles, and three book reviews. The symposium, which focuses on queer writing program administration, features the voices of Will Banks, Michael Faris, Collie Fulford, Timothy Oleksiak, GPat Patterson, and Trixie G. Smith. They compellingly demonstrate the tensions and reimaginings made possible through a queer approach to WPA work and they observe that "there are new worlds to build together through our programs"—an invitation that strikes as particularly timely in the midst of the present pandemic.

The five articles featured in this issue highlight many of the challenges WPAs face and offer possible strategies and theories for improving our work and increasing our capacity to have an impact on our programs and our students. In "Analyzing Student Evaluations of Teaching: A Generic Prescription," Alexis Teagarden and Michael Carlozzi advocate for WPAs to study student evaluations more thoroughly and to reassert themselves as critical voices in how these evaluations are used, treating SETs as rhetorical

opportunities. In “Troublesome Knowledge: A Study of GTA Ambivalence with Genre-Informed Pedagogy,” Aimee C. Mapes, Brad Johnson, Rachel LaMance, and Stefan M. Vogel provide a new perspective on genre in composition pedagogy by examining how graduate teaching assistants respond to genre, encouraging those of us who train new teachers to explore the ambivalence new teachers feel toward newly encountered and troublesome knowledge. Next, Christine Busser’s “Challenging the Efficiency Model: Supporting Inclusive Pathways Toward Student Success” urges readers to reconsider higher education’s drive toward efficiency in degree completion, which has the potential to close pathways for many students. In “WPAs as University Learning Space Managers: Theorizing and Guiding the Creation of Effective Writing Classrooms,” Julia Voss frames management of classroom spaces as “an as yet unrealized opportunity” for WPAs to have a pedagogical impact on the places where our students learn. And in this issue’s last article, Leigh Graziano, Kay Halasek, Susan Miller-Cochran, Frank Napolitano, and Natalie Szymanski report on data they collected on making WPA labor more visible, work that exposes the kinds of labor WPAs face at multiple kinds of institutions. Their research leads them to call to revisit the *Portland Resolution* in “A Return to Portland: Making Work Visible Through the Ecologies of Writing Program Administration.”

The book reviews for this issue push at the edges of WPA work, asking us to bring in new perspectives to our thinking about writing programs. Jackie Grutsch McKinney’s review essay of four books about writing centers situates writing center studies within larger conversations about writing and writing programs, asking readers what it means to reconceive the boundaries of the work happening in writing centers and, by extension, the work happening with writing at our institutions. Kimberly A. Turner’s review of *Composing Feminist Interventions* identifies ways that WPAs can take up the feminist interventions discussed in this collection, despite its not being aimed specifically at WPAs. And Amelia Chesley’s review of *Lean Technical Communication* explains what the authors mean by “lean programmatic work” and how the principles of this work can be enacted in different types of writing programs.

SUBMISSION POLICY CHANGE

We have made a change to our submission window: in order to respect the time and labor of our reviewers, we will not be accepting new manuscript submissions from May 15 to August 15. This journal is made possible—or more accurately, it is *made*—by the Herculean efforts of a small volunteer workforce, and the scholars we ask to review for us are generous with their

time and expertise. Please do not hesitate to contact the editorial team at any time with your queries, however.

SPECIAL ISSUE: VISIBILITY, WAYS OF KNOWING, AND
SUSTAINABILITY IN TWO-YEAR COLLEGE WRITING PROGRAMS

We are excited about *WPA*'s forthcoming special summer issue on two-year college writing program administration guest edited by Cheri Lemieux Spiegel, Sarah K. Johnson, and Darin Jensen. We are thrilled to have this opportunity to make the work of two-year college writing program administration more visible, and we are grateful to the hard work of the editors and contributors. We can't wait for you to read it.

THANKING OUR REVIEWERS

We are deeply indebted to the following individuals for their critical insights and constructive feedback this past year: Courtney Adams Wooten, Chris M. Anson, Anthony Atkins, Laura Aull, Nicholas Behm, Tara Brown, Beth Brunk-Chavez, Michelle T. Cox, Irene Clark, Angela Clark-Oates, Kristi Murray Costello, Sherri Craig, Deborah Crusan, Laura J. Davies, Bethany Davila, Katelynn DeLuca, Christine Denecker, Bradley Dilger, Cristyn Elder, Casie Fedukovich, Lauren Fitzgerald, Collie Fulford, Bre Garrett, Heather Hill, Asao Inoue, Kristine Johnson, Laurence José, Michelle LaFrance, Cheri Lemieux Spiegel, Michael McCamley, Jessie Moore, Joddy Murray, Kate Navickas, Andrea Olinger, Margaret Price, Pegeen Reichert Powell, E. Shelley Reid, Gwendolynne Reid, Kevin Roozen, Shirley K Rose, Todd Ruecker, Iris Ruiz, Christina Saidy, James Chase Sanchez, Wendy Sharer, Sarah Snyder, Amy Ferdinandt Stolley, Kara Taczak, Darci L. Thoune, Christie Toth, Lisa Tremain, Christine Tulley, Amy Vidali, Chris Warnick, Sara Webb-Sunderhaus, Jennifer Wells, Carolyn Wisniewski, Anne-Marie Womack, and Kathleen Blake Yancey.



Symposium

Writing Program Administration: A Queer Symposium

William P. Banks, Michael J. Faris, Collie Fulford, Timothy Oleksiak, GPat Patterson, and Trixie G. Smith

INTRODUCTION BY WILL BANKS

The idea for this symposium originated for me in the summer of 2013, when I attended the Council of Writing Program Administrators conference in Savannah, Georgia. I was somewhat surprised then that the conference committee had chosen the theme “Queering the Writing Program.” Conversations around queer work had been decidedly absent at previous CWPA events, so much so that I wondered how we might have a whole conference themed around queer issues, theories, methods, etc. In fact, looking back now at the last ten years of CWPA conference programs reveals that only 8 out of 1,122 sessions (0.7%) were in some way explicitly marked as focusing on LGBTQ+ topics. This percentage does not change when broken down by individual paper titles. LGBTQ+ issues remain less than one percent of the conversation across the last ten years of this conference.

But I was also excited to attend the 2013 event: after all, here was a major annual conference in my field and “queer” was going to be more than a side category or an option of one among many “inclusivity-oriented” strands. Had queer rhetorics come of age?

It wasn't long, however, before I began to think that something wasn't quite right. It wasn't just the paucity of sessions I found at the conference focused on queer work or explicitly engaging queer frames for analysis. Sure, this absence had struck me as odd when I initially went through the program since one can hardly get through the programs at our conferences without tripping over the conference theme keywords in the session titles. No, it wasn't that, exactly. Sitting down now with my old program, a quick count of the session titles, including the plenary addresses ($n = 125$), shows

that only 3% made any explicit reference to the conference theme; three of those were the plenary sessions. And it wasn't the fact that in the remaining session, only one paper/presentation among the three was explicitly queer themed in some way, making the percentage of actual "queer talk" at the conference even smaller than it might have initially seemed.

Or maybe it was: maybe it was surprising that for a conference focused on "Queering the Writing Program," after the plenary addresses, there was virtually no explicitly queer work happening at the conference. How could that be? And as I sat in session after session, not one presenter framed their argument about assessment, or hiring, or instructor evaluation, or program design, or textbook selection in terms of queer theories of labor, production, assessment, pedagogy, identity, gender, etc. And then finally, one presenter said what I'd been suspecting all along: "I know this session doesn't really address the conference theme, but it turns out, we don't really know anything about queer theory, and we didn't want to embarrass ourselves by reading one or two articles and then trying to make our presentation connect to them." A few people in the room chuckled knowingly. Frankly, it was the most honest moment of the conference for me, far more so than in the session where one presenter forced herself to read a Judith Butler essay, squeezed a quotation out of it and into her introduction, and then never brought it up again. A queer theory drive-by.

Of course, on some level, conference leadership only gets us so far. The CWPA Board and the conference planning committee can theme the conference and invite the plenary speakers, and they can set up a great new thread in the program that year called "Speaking Out" sessions, but if writing studies, and writing program administrators more specifically, do not take queer and trans work seriously in our day-to-day work—engaging with it as experienced WPAs, making it part of our graduate training programs and coursework, helping early-career WPAs to see how queer and trans inclusivity matters, not just for LGBTQ+ persons but also in terms of theorizing our work—then all the themed conferences in the world will probably do little to effect changes many of us would like to see in our discipline. This failure to reimagine our work has real, embodied consequences, as well. It means that queer and trans scholars in our field do not see CWPA as a space that invites them and their experiences in. It means that queer and trans scholars themselves may struggle to see the connections that exist between their lived experiences, queer/trans rhetorics, and administrative work—and it means that when queer and trans scholars find themselves occupying administrative roles, they may not be prepared to imagine how such spaces both resist their bodies and ideas and how their bodies and theories might also change those spaces for the better. In 2009, when

Jonathan Alexander and I published “Queer Eye for the Comp Program,” perhaps the first explicitly queer exploration of WPA work in our field, we had also struggled to imagine ways that queer theories could inform and disrupt our administrative work. So much of what we had seen and done in our years as writing center and writing program administrators was based in neoliberal frames of zero-sum competitive economics and seemingly unflinching policies rooted in organizational hierarchies of control. The queer theoretical frameworks for our research seemed not to speak at all to our administrative issues, and led us to conclude at the time that “queerness may be, at best, a marginal enterprise” in writing program administration (97). In some ways, the colloquy of voices in this symposium suggests that we still struggle to bridge the space between what we imagine theoretically and what we do in the daily practices of administration—but we are also starting to get there. The problem, as much as anything, may simply be a failure of imagination, an inability (yet) to see antinormative options for programs conceived in a need for mass normalization—of student writers, of programs, of an emerging discipline.

Beyond the members of CWPA, of course, the impact may be even greater. This absence means that issues and concerns of queer and trans students are not necessarily at the forefront of administrators’ minds when designing curriculum, selecting textbooks, imagining assessments, or any of dozens of other day-to-day activities that directly impact the lives of queer and trans students, as well as the lives of queer and trans writing instructors, and ultimately of all our students and colleagues. When Nicole Caswell and I began asking these questions at our own institution, particularly in terms of the writing center and WAC programs we direct, we found the resulting institutional pushback extremely frustrating (Caswell and Banks). Tenure helps, a bit, when the university attorney calls and leaves an intimidating voicemail; it helps when the provost calls you to his office to talk about “what y’all are doing over there in the writing center”—all because we bothered to ask about (and attempt to track) persistence and retention issues specific to LGBTQ+ students. While we were not dissuaded from doing this work, and ultimately found support from the administration, it seems that even wanting to do this work raised a host of red flags with upper-level administrators and some students/parents who had brought this work to their attention.

When the editors of this journal asked me about putting together a symposium to explore queer issues and writing program administration, despite being uncertain if there were enough queer and trans WPAs in our field to create a robust conversation, I was certain that there were queer and trans scholars who had engaged and been engaged by various aspects of writing

and administration; I knew there were scholar-teachers who could help me and readers of the journal to unpack some of the complexities around these issues and to suggest some future directions for our work together in writing program administration. To that end, I asked a number of queer- and/or trans-identified writing studies scholars, most of whom were current or recent WPAs, to respond to the following large questions:

1. How have your experiences as a queerly embodied person impacted your work with writing program administration—as an administrator or a teacher, or both?
2. What LGBTQ+ theories or methodologies do you think have had the biggest impact on your teaching and administrative work, and why?
3. What sort of LGBTQ+ works (research, theory, methodologies) do you wish had been available to you in graduate coursework, especially coursework around teaching writing and writing program administration?
4. I also asked them, while thinking about their stories and experiences, to imagine they were teaching a graduate course in writing program administration/writing center administration, and what LGBTQ+ works and texts they thought would be important to include right now, and perhaps why.

The answers below suggest a host of rich spaces for additional research and application by WPAs and for writing studies more generally. I hope that the stories and experiences in this symposium encourage readers to imagine how LGBTQ+ experiences, bodies, theories, and methods can engage WPA work at not only the theoretical level but also in our day-to-day administrative work.

1. STORYING EXPERIENCE

How have your experiences as a queerly embodied person impacted your work with writing program administration—as an administrator or a teacher, or both? Is there a story of your experiences with teaching and/or administration that illustrates how your being or identifying as LGBTQ+ has been important in that work? In short, do you have a story that makes it clear how LGBTQ+ bodies/experiences are impacted by WPA work?

Collie Fulford

I was hired as first-year writing (FYW) director immediately out of my PhD program. I had been out to the hiring committee, and during the on-site interview, I had asked about the culture for gay people on this southern campus. Although the answers were not completely reassuring, the people I met seemed to take my question in good faith, and I thought my family and I would be okay moving for this job. I looked forward to learning about HBCU culture and seeing what I could contribute.

It took me some time to figure out ways to belong as a white and queer person at this primarily Black and straight university. At the time I was hired, there was not yet an LGBTQA center on campus, nor an organization for faculty and staff; both of these came later. I felt isolated in my queerness during those first years. I think that was a factor in my relatively cautious leadership style. Mostly at first I lay pretty low, taking the temperature of colleagues and the measure of the existing writing culture more so than initiating ambitious changes.

However, several years ago, my colleague Kathryn Wymer and her students approached me specifically because of my identity as a queer WPA. Kathryn was teaching the first LGBT literature class our department had ever offered. Midway into the semester, her students pointed out that the handbook commonly assigned for writing classes included a writing sample that struck them as harmfully heteronormative, cisnormative, and antifeminist. The edition also lacked inclusive pronoun advice. I had been responsible for leading the committee that made textbook selections. And I'm queer. How had I missed this?

Meeting with the class was humbling. Students wove together queer theoretical perspectives and their personal experiences to show me that a program's endorsed text can do harm. Even more challenging, they talked about teaching practices that mirrored the erasures they noted in the text. I felt appropriately called to task. Fortunately, the handbook's authors and publisher met our criticisms with real respect—even gratitude—for pointing out the problems in time for revisions to the next edition. The students pushed back against an authoritative text, and they changed it. Beyond text selection, my colleagues and I still have work to do to normalize queer- and trans-inclusive teaching practices.

We have presented and written about this experience because it struck us as a moment of queer agency and student-faculty partnership that has consequences for student equity (Wymer and Fulford). The students helped me see that taking a quiet back seat on queer issues is not appropriate as a program leader. Resting tacitly on my own identity as a queer person won't get

the job of equity done. It's not about me. It's about what Trixie notes below: "We have to remember that we're working with people, people with bodies, feelings, lives outside the academy," and therefore our actions (and inactions) within the structures of the academy have real human consequences.

Timothy Oleksiak

Some faculty are WPAs and others have WPA work placed upon them.

Like Collie, I was also hired as a WPA immediately out of my doctoral program and then again when I went on the market a second time. Emotional and financial needs were more determinant than my personal, professional goals. I didn't study WPA work in graduate school, but I am actively curious about institutional structures and have a knack for administration. I also love attending well-run meetings. During campus interviews, I asked pointedly, "I'm gay, is that going to be an issue here on this campus?" and I listened to how folks responded.

I wasn't interested in being in a space where my mentioning being gay was going to be a problem, so I asked during interviews. I make it a conscious point to say to students that their instructor is gay. It is a declarative statement totally unrelated to the task at hand: "I'm gay, what did you like about the reading for today?" During classes, I draw many illustrations from my LGBTQIA+ experiences to help clarify students' questions or ideas we talk about in class. I imagine many of our straight colleagues also organically and purposefully draw upon their own lived experiences as illustrations. I do not struggle with coming out in the classroom, in the ways that many queer and trans faculty have in the past (Crew and Norton; Morrison) and still do.

When students enter my office, they notice books with phrases/titles like "queer" and "No Tea, No Shade" and "Color of Kink." I think these students put one and one together to make *gay*. I move through the world as a low-femme man, so people presume (often correctly) that the man they are engaging with is gay, but that is still a presumption. I perform something other than straight in the classroom, and because I think that my queerness might not always be recognized, I state it. I think intentionally about marking space as queer. There is, however, always in the back of my mind the question of whether or not my being gay is going to be a meaningful category of difference for someone. Sometimes my gayness speaks louder than my socks. And for some people, that's discomfoting. And if and when that discomfort arises, I then have to do the emotional work of either putting folks at ease or wondering if I should.

GPat Patterson

While I haven't yet served as a WPA, I do have a story about my queer, trans body as it aligns (or misaligns) with WPA work. It's a short story, and it goes back to my time in graduate school. My graduate program didn't offer a WPA course. What it did offer, however, were two intern-type positions where graduate students could serve as assistant WPAs, learning the trade alongside the director. To earn one of these slots, a grad student had to apply with a vita, a cover letter, and a trove of teaching materials; these documents would then be reviewed by the current graduate students serving as assistant WPAs. Generally, seniority comes into play, too, so that a student toward the end of their coursework would be given preference over a student new to the program, who had more chances to apply. As a cautious person, I'd waited to apply after other students in my cohort had already served as WPA. My waiting also gave me a chance to acquire coursework and other training in digital writing experience. My application materials, I imagine, were as polished as they could be for a PhD student toward the end of their studies.

While I certainly didn't expect to be given a WPA slot, I had hoped my training, experience, and enthusiasm for the position would give me a solid chance. There was nothing, however, to prepare me for the content of the email rejection I received from my assistant WPA peers who explained that, while I was a "talented educator" with "strong application materials," they nevertheless felt I "lacked the professional polish" needed for administrative work. As the only out queer person in the rhetoric and composition grad program, as someone whose gender performance was demonstrably gender-nonconforming, and as someone who identified as genderqueer at a time when few folks understood nonbinary trans identities (and, indeed, "non-binary" wasn't even recognized in the popular lexicon), it was abundantly clear to me that the "polish" I lacked had little to do with my competency or aptitude for the job.

That kind of gatekeeping didn't just affect me on a personal level. As someone who specializes in queer and trans work—in an academic job market that (to this day) tends to read this expertise as too specialized to qualify as a pressing departmental need—being denied the only WPA training available to me (an experience often prized by search committees) meant that my chances on the job market were even more precarious. And, indeed, rather than getting the tenure-stream job I now hold straight out of graduate school, I spent five years on the non-tenure-track.

Rejected from WPA work back then, I threw my energies into acquiring the expertise needed to teach professional and technical writing—and it

was that experience in professional and technical communication (not my published scholarship in queer and trans rhetorics) that helped me claw my way out of economic precarity.

Trixie Smith

As a new tenure-track faculty member straight out of grad school, I was directing the university writing center and also serving as the faculty sponsor for our student Lambda organization. I had control over the space of the writing center, so it also became the home for Lambda and its regular meetings. The writing center became a queer space because, as an out queer woman, I had moved into it and opened it up for other queer faculty and queer students. The writing center became the cohost for a workshop on safe sex practices, the training space for Lambda's speakers' bureau, the place to draft and revise materials for events and grant requests. The stash of condoms, dental dams, and AIDS testing kits provided by the local AIDS education organization were stored in my office and in the writing center, so they were thus available through the writing center and through my office. This visibility brought other queer students to me and to the center. I definitely think it helped draw queer students to the center as a place to work.

I was simultaneously teaching the lesbian studies seminar for the women's studies program and a cross-listed course in lesbian literature, and I see all of these events as intersecting. The more out I became, the more I was called on as an example, as a spokesperson, as a mentor, as an informant, as a leader. And the more queer the writing center became.

By the time I moved to my next writing center and next university, queer administrator was a fundamental part of my identity. Building up an existing writing center meant that I was going to be building a queer-friendly place, but over the years, it has come to mean so much more than that. Our WC space is a place for social justice work, for challenging the status quo in our college and on our campus; it is a place where diverse students come to work, as both employees and writers—and we consciously define diversity very broadly, from our trans students to our students of color, to our neurodiverse students, to our disabled students, to our range of disciplines, and certainly to our queer students with a broad range of identities. Being a queer administrator has meant that (again) the WC often hosts workshops and events that are related to queer issues (put on by a range of organizations across campus, not just the WC); that queer theory is a part of our training for consultants and in the WC administration class; and that queer ways of thinking are a part of my administrative decision

making. My personal philosophy and my philosophy for the center is that we're all just humans working with humans; we have to remember that we're working with people—people with bodies, feelings, and lives outside the academy—and this way of thinking, for many, is rather queer indeed.

In my queer rhetorics courses, I have cishet students ask why we talk about sex so much. Can't we talk about queer theory without talking about sex? Because it's not their own lived experience, they don't get it: you can't take queer sex out of queerness; it is a fundamental part of its existence. I feel the same way when I talk about my administration. I can't take the queer out of my administration because it's a fundamental part of my existence and it colors both the what and the how of my decision-making processes. So even though this cishet student doesn't get it, I still want them in the queer rhetorics class because I think they can learn something from the experience and perhaps become a little more queer in their thinking. The same is true for administration and WPA work; I want queerness in administrative discussions because maybe our non-queer colleagues can learn something new about difference, about taking new perspectives, about re-orienting themselves, their programs, their assignments. It also creates space for queer students/administrators-in-training to be out and brave with their own queer ideas.

Michael J. Faris

In 2006, I rollerbladed into my first-year writing class dressed in drag—a short skirt and tube top, a wig, and makeup. I had just been passing out fliers on campus advertising Oregon State's Pride Week, and I thought, why not teach in drag and discuss bodies as rhetorical, as making arguments? I don't really remember my students' conversation or responses that day (other than I think they got the point that bodies do make arguments).

I do remember writing that year in Lisa Ede's graduate seminar about how tightly bound our normative assumptions about writing are with our normative assumptions about gender. Early on in my MA program, I was developing a nascent understanding that the norms of composition studies privilege certain ways of being in the world, and that genres do work to normativize people, including the genres of gender. As Lauren Berlant argues, "Genres provide an affective expectation of the experience of watching something unfold, whether that thing is in life or in art" (6). Her point is that genres do normative work, orientating us in space and time and to each other. In a two-page broadside for our first project, with scissors and tape, I cut and pasted together quotes from punk songs, Geoffrey Sirc's

“Never Mind the Tagmemics, Where’s the Sex Pistols?” and other texts to explore the norms of forms. The takeaway: they sucked.

I carry these two memories with me now, two graduate degrees and two academic positions later, as the WPA at Texas Tech. I’m perhaps a much more conservative teacher now. I probably won’t ever teach in drag again, though I do talk about sex more explicitly in classes, often couched in more nuanced discussions of power, the public/private distinction, and normativity than when I was a graduate student. Texas Tech has a standard curriculum for our two-course sequence, in part because our program is mostly staffed by graduate part-time instructors, so many of our teachers are teaching for the first time, and we have a high instructor turnover rate. Like others in this symposium, I think my queer experiences have led me to value a diversity of approaches to teaching. Thus, when I learn about graduate students experimenting in their classes—one dressed up in costume for a lesson!—I think, oh, yeah, that’s a fucking risk, and it’s awesome that you took it. Like Banks and Alexander, I don’t think we can create queer writing programs—writing programs are too institutional to ever become fully queer—but as they write, “the real value of a queer WPA lies in how the WPA validates or welcomes the sort of queer guerilla tactics that would act at the local levels, in individual classrooms or assignments” (97).

For me, being a queer, white, visibly able-bodied man has meant practicing a certain slantwise orientation toward the program, toward writing, and toward teaching, an idea I return to below.

2. THEORIES & METHODS

What LGBTQ+ theories or methodologies do you think have had the biggest impact on your teaching and administrative work? What theorists/ideas do you find yourself returning to again and again when you’re faced with teaching and administrative dilemmas? Why do you think these thinkers/ideas are so important to your practices?

Timothy

Linda Adler-Kassner’s *Activist WPA* is a really delicious and important intellectual contribution to the way I consider my WPA work. The link she articulates between strategies and ideals has been helpful for me prior to coming to my current position, where my first move was to negotiate funds for the CWPA Consultant-Evaluator Service to come in and help set an agenda I could point to for buy-in at the department and college level.

Worldmaking is an increasingly important concept in my research, teaching, and administration. I understand worldmaking as a queer con-

cept that situates writing as a mode of survival within worlds that extend well beyond publics, an understanding shaped, in part, by Berlant and Michael Warner's "Sex in Public" and Warner's *Publics and Counterpublics*. They help me see where my program fits into the larger institution and community, and they help me pay attention to the specific needs circulating around the Boston area.

The work of Aja Martinez and those working with these critical race theory methods is important especially when thinking through our journalism and advanced non-fiction writing courses. Professional programs also need to think about the counterstories available in business writing genres like report writing and even memos. It is crucial that WPAs working across disciplinary boundaries are able to play cool when we inevitably hear statements about students and about writing that we know to be either regressive or harmful, as enacting stock/colonialist stories. As such, I find myself reaching toward Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's *Touching Feeling* and Becky Thompson's *Teaching with Tenderness*. I need to be kind to those whose professional interests are not the same as mine. Handing someone John C. Bean's *Engaging Ideas* is not the same as listening to someone talk about how frustrating it is when seniors do not know how to write in APA format, you know? So, I think part of our WPA scholarship has to be how to keep a cool head or how to engage those who do not know writing and the teaching of writing like we do. Studying this stuff is leading me to think more carefully about queer listening as an important part of administrative work, as a way to build on Krista Ratcliffe's *Rhetorical Listening*.

Finally, *Women's Ways of Making It in Rhetoric and Composition* (Balfanz, Davis, and Mountford) and the chapter on administration in Cheryl Glenn's *Rhetorical Feminism and This Thing Called Hope* are important to me for understanding which battles to pick and when to keep my head down (the tensions among silence, speech, and listening are always ethical and come with emotional labor). The first semester of my first tenure-track job, I presented a 5-year plan to the highest administrative council on campus. My budget was lauded but denied, which put my program on the university's radar when it wasn't ready for that level of scrutiny. The result was that things were much more difficult to the extent that more people were now focused on the program. I have spent a lot of time since then reflecting on my culpability and where others around me might have supported me differently had we all known that the program needed less of a spotlight. I say this, of course, not to denigrate others, but to highlight the need to be full of care in terms of visions we have for our programs' developments.

Collie

I confess, I did a double take when Will asked this question because I realized I had not often turned to explicitly LGBTQ+ theories and methodologies as my touchstone ways of working. Then again, one thing that queer theory teaches us is that texts can be queer—or read queerly—even when the authors do not identify their work as forwarding queer perspectives. So here I offer several antinormative articles that have afforded me solace and rationales at critical points in my administrative work.

For example, early in my WPA life, I experienced unexpectedly high discomfort when I encountered a department-wide grading rubric for writing posted on a colleague's door. Investigating, I learned that it had served as a standard departmental reference point for many years, origins unknown. That's not to say that everyone used this rubric, but it was a norm that my colleagues knew well. I needed to do some work to unpack the dissonances between my resistant reaction and this cultural norm. "Big Rubrics and Weird Genres: The Futility of Using Generic Assessment Tools Across Diverse Instructional Contexts" (Anson et al.) offered me empirical reasons for resisting all-purpose rubrics. Although not positioned by its authors as a queer theory piece, this article's thoughtful questioning of decontextualized standardized rubrics and careful analysis of why they are futile makes the kinds of antinormative moves that queer theorists make, moves that were already part of my own theoretical and pedagogical practices.

Another antinormative yet not-queer piece that has stayed with me is Laura R. Micciche's "For Slow Agency." Micciche identifies an anxiety-producing common context of WPA work, those "conditions that are made to feel like emergencies" (82), and argues that we can counter this fiction with contemplative and collaborative administrative practices. More feminist than queer in its approach, Micciche's piece nevertheless questions and destabilizes higher education's normal labor culture in ways that resonate with queer thinking. Years into my WPA gig, I was anxious over all that I had not accomplished, all the conditions that I had yet to change with my colleagues and students. Micciche's work helped me reframe programmatic incompleteness as a necessity rather than a failing.

Tara Pauliny's "Queering the Institution: Politics and Power in the Assistant Professor Administrator Position" was the first piece I read specifically about queer persons in WPA positions. It also addresses the common yet contested situation of assistant professors serving in program administrative roles. Far from handwringing about that, Pauliny explains how these inherently queer positions can be enacted with more agency than the field generally imagines. Pauliny identifies the central conundrum for would-be

activist WPAs: “an apparent impasse is created when one is both part of an institution and working to upset that institution, or when one is both authorized and de-authorized by an institution.” Yet her article demonstrates that adopting a queer stance toward the role gives rise to possibilities for productive disruptions.

GPat

The queer theorist I turn to again and again in my classroom is Judith Butler—but not, perhaps, in the way one might expect. The quote I return to is from Butler’s *Undoing Gender*, where she asks: “what forms of community have been created, and through what violences and exclusions have they been created?” (225). I return to this quote over and over again, because it helps me solve a disciplinary dilemma I face when teaching rhetoric: the vision of our field that gets communicated through composition textbooks suggests to our students that the study of rhetoric focuses on a neoliberal version of Aristotle’s “available means of persuasion,” one in which arguments are to be measured simply by how persuasive they are.

Rarely, if ever, do we mention the broader impact of our arguments—the conduct our arguments inspire. And that’s a problem: our field (again, at least as it’s communicated to undergraduates) tends to divorce rhetoric from ethics. When ethics come up in composition contexts, it seems to happen after the fact—after a student has presented the instructor (or their peers) with a problematic, dehumanizing argument. Instead, we tend to focus on the quality of a student’s sources, whether or not they meet academic guidelines, whether they anticipate readers’ rebuttals, and whether they avoid rhetorical fallacies.

The open secret, however, is that this isn’t how arguments work in real time. Arguments need not be fair, or even factual, to persuade their intended audiences. In the Trump era of “alternative facts,” all one needs to do is repeat a lie, pepper it with enough vitriol to rile up an audience’s fear/anger, and gaslight reasonable bystanders until they’re forced to engage (and thus grant credibility to) a dangerous argument.

My dilemma is this: the way we introduce rhetoric to undergraduate students—the majority of whom will go the rest of their lives without ever thinking of rhetoric once they’ve met their degree requirements—is plain terrible.

Queer theory, as an intellectual practice, gave me the theoretical tools, as Deborah Britzman and Jen Gilbert would put it, to do the work of “thinking about our thinking” (82). Queer theory opened up the space for me to dare disciplinary heresy and question whether the way we’re defining

rhetoric actually works in real time. And, as I've said, to my mind, it doesn't work. Queer theory, then, gave me the permission to queer our definition of rhetoric—to tell my undergrads: “Sure, your textbook says rhetoric is about the study of the available means of persuasion. But that's boring and it doesn't really give you any context for understanding what rhetoric is about and why a person might want to study it.” Queer theory enabled me to offer an alternative definition of rhetoric as “the study of storytelling, the way people tell stories to inspire people to believe certain things and to act on those beliefs—and the consequences therein.”

That emphasis on consequences is important to the way I teach rhetoric, in the sense that I refuse to divorce rhetoric from ethics. Drawing from Butler, I'm clear with students that rhetoric does a good many things, but the most important among them is that rhetoric communicates who belongs (and who doesn't) in our vision of community. Queer theory allows me to emphasize that rhetoric communicates—through the stories we tell, the stories we repeat, and the stories we refuse—who will be seen as human. Queer theory allows me to be clear that the ultimate goal of rhetoric ought to be to expand (not foreclose) our vision of community. Queer theory allows me to attend to arguments that dehumanize—to ask students to articulate what conduct an argument inspires, when, for example, the most powerful government official in our country characterizes an entire group of people as violent criminals and sexual deviants. How does repeating this argument, this white supremacist talking point, allow us to strip people of their humanity? And, once that dehumanization is “accomplished” through repetition, how does this racist construct enable agents of the state (and their accomplices) to violate people's most basic human rights (to say nothing of inter/national law)?

I want students to understand that there are a lot of shitty arguments out there. I want students to understand that persuasion isn't some kind of gold standard to determine an argument's success. I want students to understand that “talking points” aren't just a way to tally one's wins on a political leaderboard; we must attend to the wake, the violent afterlife of the stories we tell. We must take them seriously enough to follow them through to their (often deadly) conclusions. And we must ask ourselves: Is this the story we want to tell? And, if it isn't, then we must do the courageous work of telling new ones.

Trixie

There are a couple of queer women/theorists I turn to the most often. One is Sara Ahmed, specifically her ideas in *Queer Phenomenology* about (re)

orientation. As an administrator, I often ask myself if I'm stuck in a rut, are there other paths/solutions/ways of being in this moment that could be equally viable if not even better than what I've known or what's been done before? The idea of changing my perspective in order to see new possibilities is hard, challenging sometimes, but also an important method of changing/challenging the status quo. Consequently, when I'm mentoring and teaching new graduate coordinators, would-be administrators, or even new administrators, I recommend they read Ahmed: *Queer Phenomenology, On Being Included, Living a Feminist Life* (especially her discussion of citation practices), and *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* are all good choices that can challenge administrators to think queerly in order to be more effective WPAs.

I also draw on Gloria Anzaldúa a good bit. Her history of challenging the *status quo* in multiple arenas can be inspirational to a WPA who also wants to challenge the *status quo* and the administrative idea, often inherited, of this is how we have (always) done it, so this is how we should do it now. As a queer administrator, I'm usually quite adamant that change can be good and productive. We need to listen to voices we haven't listened to in the past—students, adjunct faculty, community members who are hiring (or not) our students, overworked NTT faculty who do so much of the teaching in first-year writing, as well as graduate TAs who carry the other bulk of FYW teaching. We have to listen more to students of color, international students, ELL students, others who speak/write in a variety of Englishes, who have different rhetorical patterns for building arguments, who practice a range of techniques for translanguaging, code meshing, and other linguistic mashups, as well as those who have other genres and forms to show us. While this may not be a strictly queer agenda, it is part of my queer agenda, which I see being informed by lesbian/feminism, and cultural rhetorics methodologies, as well as queer theories and practices. Anzaldúa's ideas about borderlands help me think about the highly varied experiences of students in my class, clients in the writing center, even consultants in the writing center; and when I think about this range of experiences, I also have to ask myself what barriers these students have overcome to be here, what baggage are they carrying on and in their bodies, what has writing been/done/allowed/not allowed in their pasts? Anzaldúa inspires me to see these varied experiences as strengths, so I want to help my students/staff/faculty to also see these as strengths for themselves and their students/clients. How can we build from these strengths in productive ways, in humane ways, something more than what the various authors explicate for readers in *This Bridge Called My Back* (Moraga and Anzaldúa)?

I also find Anzaldúa (and Joy Harjo) important for thinking about the need to trust your gut, your intuition (the snake). This is so important for WPAs. My favorite image from Anzaldúa is that of her cutting up her manuscript into small bits in order to rearrange it and revise it. I think we have to do this as administrators sometimes, break things down to smaller parts so that we can see what we need, what we don't need, and how to put it together in new and different ways.

I also draw on various ways of thinking taken from cultural rhetorics scholars such as Malea Powell, Andrea Riley-Mukavetz, Qwo-Li Driskell, Angela Haas, and others, some of whom identify as queer and some who don't. They help me think about relationality, reciprocity, community/culture, and decolonialism, which I see as tied up in queer ways of thinking as well. Whenever I read an indigenous text like Thomas King's *The Truth about Stories* or Shawn Wilson's *Research Is Ceremony*, in my head I'm constructing a parallel text that makes the same moves from a queer perspective, so they're all tied up together for me.

Michael

I'm not sure I have a great answer to this question without risking writing for pages and pages and pages. I'll try to focus. Like Trixie, I have found Ahmed's work to be greatly influential in my thinking. In addition to the books Trixie listed, Ahmed's recent *What's the Use? On the Uses of Use* traces the word *use* in order to explore queer uses, or "how things can be used in ways other than for which they were intended or by those other than for whom they were intended" (198). Queer use comes from "releasing a potentiality" (200) of objects or spaces, drawing on affordances that might have been ignored as their uses have become standardized. We might ask how to make queer use of a classroom? A rubric? A textbook? Or even a writing program?

While Ahmed's call in her conclusion leads to "throw[ing] usage into a crisis" (209)—perhaps an impracticality for WPAs—I do find her argument provocative and worth considering alongside conversations in critical pedagogy and queer theory. As I read critical pedagogues like Paulo Freire and bell hooks (among so many others), critical pedagogy isn't about critique or merely unveiling ideology; rather, it's about challenging and changing our normative practices about what it means to be together in the world. That is, a classroom informed by critical pedagogy is one in which students and teachers together invent new ways of relating and being together—ones that challenge masculinist, racist, ableist, straight, and colonial norms. A queer use of the writing classroom—using it as it wasn't intended or

planned—this potential for new relationality is perhaps where I’ve been most influenced by queer thinking. As many queer thinkers have argued, those most marginalized by society are potentially also those who are most inventive in developing new ways of being and being in relations with others. In an interview with *La Gai Pied*, Michel Foucault famously explained that what is most threatening about gay men isn’t gay sex, but rather their new intimacies, which threaten society’s expectations of how we should act and relate to each other. Consequently, as a WPA, I encourage my teachers to “think outside the box” (to use a tired cliché) about how they architect their classes and classrooms: how do their decisions and actions encourage or discourage ways of relating, of being, in the world? Can a writing class offer new modes of intimacy, relationality, or publicity? Can a WPA foster the sort of queer guerilla tactics promoted by Banks and Alexander?

It seems that I should mention two other important concepts. The first comes not from queer theory exactly but from feminists of color: intersectionality. I think it’s incredibly important to read the work of marginalized scholars, and reading the work of feminists and queers of color has led me to value intersectional analysis as a WPA. Intersectionality sometimes gets reduced too easily to how marginalized folks have intersectional identities, but as Kimberlé Crenshaw first articulated intersectionality, it is a mode of analysis that attends to how various axes of difference and oppression intersect and operate institutionally. That is, “Intersectionality is inextricably linked to an analysis of power . . . [that] emphasizes political and structural inequalities” (Cho, Crenshaw, and McCall 797). If we take seriously calls by feminists and queers of color that we cannot ignore the intersections of class, gender, sexuality, ability, race, nationality, and so on, we must interrogate our writing programs for how they include and exclude in a variety of intersectional ways.

The second concept comes from Sedgwick: cross-identification. Queer thinkers have been tackling the incredible difficulty of cross-difference alliances for decades. For example, Cathy Cohen has famously argued that queer politics too often ignore difference and issues of power concerning race, gender, and class, thus contributing to the reproduction of social hierarchies. In *Epistemology of the Closet*, Sedgwick makes a claim she calls “axiomatic”: “People are different from each other” (22). This claim might seem banal, but Sedgwick’s exploration of it is also powerful: differences don’t *mean* monolithically, and instead we *do* things with difference. As Ramzi Fawaz comments on her work, Sedgwick was a theorist of multiplicity, “promiscuous” in her cross-identifications (18):

Sedgwick's identity politics . . . are precisely a politics of *cross-identification*. At her most forceful, Sedgwick posits cross-identification as having life-or-death implications: in the absence of the ability to identify with others, we become incapable of grasping or wholly insensible to the fact of human multiplicity and consequently lose any ethical ground on which to construct a mutual sense of care, investment, and love, even for ourselves. (20)

As a queer WPA, I am constantly working to not identify others monolithically, to instead identify across differences and to promote amongst teachers the willingness and even eagerness to cross-identify with each other and with students, which can “multiply or complicate the very possibilities and meanings of their own identities,” as well (Fawaz 20).

3. WHAT IF?

What sort of LGBTQ+ works (research, theory, methodologies) do you wish had been available to you in graduate coursework, especially coursework around teaching writing and WPA (if you experienced any)? What key ideas about teaching writing or WPA work need to be re-thought or re-engaged through the lenses that LGBTQ+ works provide? In what ways do you bring LGBTQ+ works to your teaching and administration now so as to address the gaps you experienced as a graduate student?

Timothy

I'll pose my response in the form of three questions and then elaborate a bit below:

1. What can queer theory teach us about the financial dimensions of WPA work?
2. How can queer theory help WPAs engage with multiple stakeholders (perceived and actual)?
3. What can queer theories and rhetorics teach WPAs about identifying, documenting, and understanding emotional labor?

Finances. Administrators are closer to the business side of the university than teachers and researchers. I prefer not to draw sharp lines around those three positions but unless and until you are an administrator, learning the business of the university is an act of will. For WPAs money is not a choice. We have to think about finances: how to get money and how to use it responsibly and how to adjust ethically to cuts when they come, as they always do.

WPAs who teach classes on administration would serve students well to engage them on financial issues, both rhetorically and as a social justice concern. May we think not only about how to get money, but what money is used for and how WPA budgets might contribute to social justice work and equity across campuses. Too often finances are considered via logics of straight time and a kind of familial inheritance logic (I'm thinking of Halberstam's *In a Queer Time and Place* here) that keeps WPAs focused on what is good for our own to the detriment of how programs can perform methods of queer kinship. If our programs have genealogies that intersect/link with other programs, maybe we turn toward Elizabeth A. Povinelli's "Notes on Gridlock: Genealogy, Intimacy, Sexuality" for a touch of inspiration?

What would WPA work and writing programs do if we were allowed to think about such things? And we need to not allow austerity and discussions of tight budgets to silence conversation on socially just, equitable budgeting practices. How can we queer WPA budgets? This might be nearly impossible to do given that my WPA experiences have revealed how often budgets are used to pit programs against each other, how conversations of social justice and equity are often silenced when it takes emotional and physical energy to request modest finances.

Stakeholders. I talk often with colleagues who neither know what I do nor share the same level of commitment to WPA work. But my responsibilities require an interdisciplinary approach that attracts students from across colleges. WPAs are in unique positions to translate programmatic and disciplinary needs to those who have a perceived or actual interest in what we are doing. Translating WPA needs to multiple individuals is a rhetorical challenge and where there is a rhetorical challenge, queer rhetoric and theory can offer guidance. I also have to work with for-profit and nonprofit communities to offer useful and interesting internship experiences for students. Explaining the work of rhetoric and composition to businesses can sometimes be daunting but often is surprisingly delightful how aligned the perspectives are. For example, recently, I was talking with a potential business partner and this person mentioned that their company gives timed writing as part of the interview. I braced myself in the way that compositionists can when we hear "timed writing." But they knew immediately not to focus on grammar and mechanics and how to look for the types of thinking that we teach in our classes. So, as I listened more, I was able to relax, if that makes sense.

Emotional Labor. All academic labor benefits from unrecognized emotional labor. In this regard WPAs are not different (see Richard Miller's "Critique's the Easy Part" and Micciche's "More than a Feeling," for exam-

ple). However, when part of the requirements of WPA work is to speak with non-rhetoricians, students, those outside the university, and administrators who are not hip to rhetoric and composition, translating what it is we do is emotionally draining, exhausting, and yet often also satisfying work. However, it took me nearly two semesters to receive \$1,500 for a pilot study at my former institution. The process involved interacting with my department chair, the chair of another department, my college dean, and the college dean's administrative assistant. During meetings I had to speak with folks whose knowledge of rhetoric and composition and resistance to honoring my expertise was frustrating. Though CCCC and CWPA have encouraged the hiring of WPAs at the associate level or higher, this is often cost prohibitive for small universities or colleges. I was placed in a position as a pre-tenure faculty member to have to persuade people in positions well above my own with wider institutional knowledge and power. If my experience is common, many folks simply cannot turn down administrative gigs if they are offered to them right out of graduate school. Saying that assistant professors should not have to engage such work does not pay attention to the reality that assistant professors are regularly hired to do this work. Given that reality, how might we provide departments/programs and untenured WPAs with frameworks for supporting these faculty while recognizing the very real problems that emerge for untenured administrators?

Collie

I was fortunate. Queer persons were valued and queer theory and other theories of difference were woven into key courses in my graduate program in the early 2000s. Although we did not have a WPA course, I recall reading Butler and Sedgwick in our general theory class and collaborating with classmates on a ridiculous performance illustrating some of the concepts. In a research methods course, Anne Herrington assigned Harriet Malinowitz's *Textual Orientations*, a study of an experimental writing course designed specifically for lesbian and gay students. I was also mentored in basic writing pedagogy by Marcia Curtis, who integrated queer and nonwhite readings into the custom textbook for the course (*The Composition of Our "Selves"*). If I'm recalling correctly, Curtis had successfully positioned basic writing as a credit-bearing course at UMass Amherst by designing a curriculum that met a general education requirement in cultural diversity. Basic writing is almost always under some sort of institutional duress, so this action was an instructive example of how to work on behalf of students by creatively side-stepping normative framings of first year writing. That subversive curricular move, the inclusive textbook, and the critical pedagogical community

of basic writing practitioners had a queering effect on my teaching and on my awareness of how WPAs make things happen.

Probably the most important theoretical preparations I had, however, were from Donna LeCourt's Writing and Difference class. During my first year of grad school, I recall struggling with Derrida, Butler, and Foucault, then gradually gaining traction with the concept of difference through readings LeCourt introduced to us. That class rewarded me with hyper-awareness of relationships between the marginalized and the normative and an unshakeable investment in those whose discursive practices disrupt what we think of as standard.

Because WPAs are so often caught up in day-to-day institutional labor, the lenses afforded by LGBTQ+ and critical race and class theories remind us who and what we are working for. No doubt the 2020 version would differ from the 2003 iteration, but courses that adopt a principle of interrogating educational commonplaces in light of scholarship on a wide range of differences are crucial for any aspiring WPA to take.

GPat

My answer is simple: I wish there'd have been *any* course in queer or trans rhetorics available to me. Any training I acquired around LGBTQ+ scholarship came through my (optional) graduate coursework in women's, gender, and sexuality studies. To be clear: this additional coursework was invaluable to me, and I urge any student interested to put in the extra time and effort to acquire a graduate certificate (or minor) if one's institution offers it. That said, I'd have loved to have worked with a rhetoric and composition scholar who specialized in either queer or trans rhetorics. What I'd like to pose here, in this "what if?" section, is the following question: what if we took queer and trans rhetorics seriously enough that graduate programs prioritized hiring specialists in both of these areas? I say both of these areas because queer and trans rhetorics are distinct areas of study and, as a field, we need to really practice mindfulness when we're throwing around the LGBT moniker or "queer" as an umbrella term, because both of these rhetorical moves tend to erase the presence and rhetorical contributions of our trans students and colleagues.

Trixie

In the late 1990s, I was completing my doctoral work in composition and rhetoric as a track inside an English department; I was also completing a graduate certificate in women's studies and doing as much queer work/reading as I could. I even took an independent study in queer theory that my

professor chose to label as gender studies in my paperwork so the word queer on my transcript “wouldn’t be a problem.” A couple of years later my graduate committee insisted I change the title of my dissertation from *Creating Safe Space for GLBT Students in the Writing Classroom* to *Creating Safe Space for Diverse Learners in the Writing Classroom*, a move that felt completely wrong to me. I tell this story to illustrate a fact about my graduate experience: I was having conversations about comp-rhet and administration and I was having conversations about queerness and gender and women studies, but they seemed to be running on parallel tracks that didn’t intersect. I kept trying to intersect them and kept meeting resistance, not because my professors were homophobic or completely resistant to these ideas, but because they lacked the creativity and orientation that allowed them to see the benefits, or even methods, of interanimating these conversations.

During these early days, Malinowitz’s *Textual Orientations* was so important and her phrase that LGBT students were often forced to write outside of their “most secure rhetorical footing” has stuck with me (37). In fact, I just used this phrase when talking to our WC staff about why our center now has a language statement and why we’re focusing on language diversity this year (The Writing Center @ MSU). More than just queer students are being forced to write outside of what they know (and how they know) to write, but this is definitely something I learned from a queer thinker/writer. Likewise, queering the classroom, the center, the policy in order to find more effective methods of moving forward is something I learned from queer ways of thinking, from queer theorists and practitioners. So, yes, I wish I had learned something, anything, about queerness in administration during my graduate studies.

Michael

Like my collaborators, I experienced a dearth of queer theory or queer and trans rhetorics in graduate coursework in rhetoric and composition. When readings on sexuality were assigned, they were sometimes older texts assigned in a series of weeks when we were asked to consider “difference” briefly, before moving on. Instead, I read a lot on my own, and luckily I had a dissertation committee member from literary studies who was an expert in queer theory and who helped me navigate the field for my exams reading list in social theory.

But I can’t say that I’m that much better as a professor now. Sure, I’ve taught a graduate course on “Sexual Politics and Rhetoric.” But can I be honest? I’ve taught a graduate course on writing program administration and didn’t assign anything related to queer or trans concerns. In this ten-

week summer course, we read quite a bit of WPA scholarship, students worked on their own projects, and we engaged in smaller projects, like a practice assessment project, but a course can't cover everything, and so I had to make decisions about what to leave out. But I'm still wondering, what could queer thinking teach us as WPAs? Perhaps it's time to figure that out.

QUEERING WPA: A SYLLABUS

Prompted by a list of texts Michael initially contributed to this symposium, and by our own experiences with how absent queer works have remained in writing studies, we began to imagine a sort of queer WPA syllabus. If we had the opportunity to teach or facilitate a WPA graduate course or seminar/workshop, what readings might we want to add and why? Creating such a list gnaws at us, of course, because none of us wants to create any sort of authoritative canon of queer and trans texts. As such, we note reasons for each text or set of texts we list below, and we hope that our readers will see this list as one that represents a moment: these are the texts we might choose right now, at this moment in our field's history and development. Ultimately, we hope that our fellow WPAs will begin to imagine where some of these works might fit into current graduate courses on writing program administration and writing centers, as well as courses focused on how we teach writing more generally at the post-secondary level:

- Berlant and Warner's "What Does Queer Theory Teach Us about X?," the Introduction to Sedgwick's *Epistemology of the Closet*, and Warner's introduction to *Fear of a Queer Planet* in order to introduce some queer ways of thinking;
- excerpts from Gayle Salamon's *Assuming a Body: Transgender and Rhetorics of Materiality* in order to imagine how bodies are both rhetorical and material, and how the presence or absence of bodies changes spaces, including classrooms and programs; Melanie Yergeau's *Authoring Autism: On Rhetoric and Neurological Queerness* to forge connections among bodies, dis/abilities, and queerness;
- Ahmed's *On Being Included: Racism and Diversity in Intellectual Life*, which provides a wonderful discussion of how institutions resist diversity work (while claiming to promote it) and might make a wonderful pairing with James E. Porter et al.'s article "Institutional Critique";
- Rosemary Hennessy's *Profit and Pleasure*, particularly the introduction and "Queer Visibility in Commodity Culture," to help us think through the ways bodies and identities are marketed, but also to imagine more queer ways of thinking about finances and budgets;

- Berlant and Warner’s “Sex in Public” to challenge notions of the public/private distinction, to raise questions about how a writing program might mediate intimacy and privacy in certain ways, and to challenge us to think about what we mean by public or civic engagement;
- Britzman’s “Is There a Queer Pedagogy?” and “Queer Theory and Its Strange Techniques”; a chapter from Alexander’s *Literacy, Sexuality, and Pedagogy*; Donald Hall’s “Cluelessness and the Queer Classroom”; and Stacey Waite’s *Teaching Queer: Radical Possibilities for Writing and Knowing*—all to explore queering pedagogy and the relationships between sexuality, literacy, and pedagogy;
- Banks and Alexander’s “Queer Eye for the Comp Program,” Pauliny’s “Queering the Institution,” and Harry Denny’s “A Queer Eye for the WPA” to ask if, and how, we might queer work in institutional settings;
- G Patterson’s “Queering and Transing Quantitative Research” and Caswell and Banks’s “Queering Writing Assessment: Fairness, Affect, and the Impact on LGBTQ Writers” in order to challenge the ways that data and positivist notions surrounding metrics in programmatic assessment are often taken up uncritically in WPA work;
- Alexander and Rhodes’s “Queer: An Impossible Subject for Composition,” excerpts from Anzaldúa’s *Borderlands/La Frontera*, McRu-er’s “Composing Bodies; or, De-Composition,” Sirc’s “Never Mind the Tagmemics, Where’s the Sex Pistols?,” excerpts from Alexander and Rhodes’s *On Multimodality*, Waite’s “How (and Why) to Write Queer”—all of which challenge normative constructions of writing;
- Howard’s “Sexuality, Textuality: The Cultural Work of Plagiarism”—a fabulous essay that shows how rhetorics of sexuality run through how we talk about writing (in this case, plagiarism);
- Crenshaw’s classic article on intersectionality, Alyssa A. Samek and Theresa A. Donofrio’s conversation on “Academic Drag,” chapters from Moraga and Anzaldúa’s collection *This Bridge Called My Back* (particularly by Moraga, Audre Lorde, the Combahee River Collective), and Eric Darnell Pritchard’s critique of discourses around bullying that leave race and class oppression unaddressed, and Johnson’s “‘Quare’ Studies, or (Almost) Everything I Know about Queer Studies I Learned from My Grandmother”—all to bring attention to issues of positionality, difference, and power;
- excerpts from Ahmed’s *Queer Phenomenology* to promote a discussion of how we are oriented toward objects, others, and the world, *The Promise of Happiness* (particularly her chapter on “Feminist Kill-

- joys”), and *Living a Feminist Life* (a portion paired with Susan Miller-Cochran’s CWPA keynote on not “losing your soul”);
- the introduction of Jack Halberstam’s *The Queer Art of Failure* to promote a discussion of how logics of futurity and success might be challenged or queered, alongside Caswell and West-Puckett’s chapter on “Assessment Killjoys”;
 - Kathryn Bond Stockton’s chapter “Growing Sideways, or Why Children Appear to Get Queerer in the Twentieth Century” as an exploration of non-linear models of “growth” and “change” which can disrupt the metaphors of reproduction and futurity that remain central to our writing programs and curricula (see also Lee Edelman’s *No Future*);
 - David Halperin’s essay on “The Normalization of Queer Theory,” where he explores how queer theory might becoming trendy, divorced from the lived realities of queers and too often simply used to explore “subversion” or “transgression”;
 - selections from *Intersectional Pedagogy: Complicating Identity and Social Justice*, edited by Kim A. Case, which challenges us to think about how intersectionality plays out in the classroom, through topics, pedagogies, assignments, student responses, etc.;
 - Denny’s *Writing Center Journal* essay “Queering the Writing Center” or selections from his *Facing the Center*, which asks us to think about identity(ies) in the writing center, in our work with writers, in our writing, as well as selections from (or perhaps the whole book) *Out in the Center: Public Controversies and Private Struggles*, which continues this questioning but brings in various voices and positions;
 - the introduction to Laura Greenfield and Karen Rowan’s *Writing Centers and the New Racism*, which they label “A Call to Action”—while the ideas in this collection are centered on racism, they are also applicable across marginalized identities and ask us to reconsider business-as-usual in our centers through our administrative practices; and excerpts from, Greenfield’s *Radical Writing Center Praxis*, which offers a powerful argument for change as well as a range of approaches to accomplish this change; and
 - hooks’ “Love as the Practice of Freedom,” which is a powerful call to look at the politics of the academy in a different light, paired with Lorde’s “Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power” to expand the ways we look at love/erotics and its/their role in our decision-making processes.

PARTING GLANCES

The stories and experiences here suggest a number of ways that WPAs and the broader field of writing studies could engage its work differently through queer and trans lenses, not just in terms of theoretical imaginings but also in terms of our day to day work with budgets, hiring, assessment, and curricular planning. To highlight some of these, we offer the following:

1. Our field works diligently to keep *queer* and *WPA* operating in separate contexts, as separate work: queer and trans rhetorics “belong” in cultural rhetorics or specialized research contexts, it seems, but not in the day-to-day operations of writing program administration. And yet, as queer and trans WPAs and writing teachers, the theories and scholarship we gravitate toward are often those which are working from or which seem to open a space for antinormative practices. We queer our work as a practice, even if we don’t/can’t always name it as such. This is a queer WPA world-making practice. We would like to see more space for remaking administration.
2. Historically, queer and trans work has been particularly about bodies, about the connections between our theories and our bodies. As such, one way WPAs can remake our world is through continual returns to the body and its experiences in our research and in our administrative practices: who is building curricula? What curricula? How might we resist intuitional writing and representational practices that enact trauma on student bodies by remembering the bodies that are experiencing the curricula we build? And how might we invite students into the curriculum building process, further leveling out some of the institutional hierarchies at play in our work?
3. We could also engage ourselves—as well as graduate students and faculty colleagues—more fully with queer and trans rhetorics as part of how we develop and articulate our administrative philosophies. From work on queer and trans kinship to work on disrupting reproductive capitalist logics, to the significant work done in the last decade on affective economies, queer and trans theory is poised to offer us meaningful ways to reorient ourselves to the work of writing program administration. This is structurally disruptive work that we believe is needed in higher education generally at this moment.

Queer and trans work is about LGBTQ+ people, but it not just about them; it is about bodies and sex/uality, but it also not just about those things. The productive tensions that have emerged for us as we have tried to understand ourselves as writers, activists, scholars, teachers, and administrators—as we have tried to bring our lived experiences to spaces where our bodies, emotions, and values are rarely at the center of our work—have started to show us how we might reimagine much of the research and scholarship we engaged with as graduate students. As is typically the case with marginalized identities and work, we have done much of this on our own time, looking for theories to make sense of our daily tasks, struggles, and successes without disciplinary, curricular, or collegial/campus supports already in place. But we hope the stories (and counterstories), theories, examples, and texts we’ve highlighted in this brief symposium demonstrate why that work has been important to us and why it might also be important to other graduate students and WPAs-in-training, as well as to current WPAs and for our discipline more generally. There are new worlds to build together through our programs; we’re excited for more WPAs to join us in that work.

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Analyzing Student Evaluations of Teaching: A Generic Prescription

Alexis Teagarden and Michael Carlozzi

Responding to calls for better use of student evaluations of teaching (SET) data, we report on a “generic” method of SET analysis. To test its efficacy, we generated score distributions from ten semesters of first-year writing course SET data in terms of unacceptable, adequate, and exceptional rankings by using three statistically orthodox approaches of categorizing scores and two versions of our generic method. We found that all methods yielded practically identical results. Our findings suggest WPAs have options for fair, transparent, and efficient use of SET data that do not require deep statistical expertise. More generally, we argue that if WPAs can promote responsible and sound methods of assessing SETs, they would not only improve the fairness of faculty evaluation processes but also help (re)establish themselves as critical voices in how such reviews should run. The complexity and copiousness of SET debates afford WPAs the opportunity to make such proposals since, we argue, SETs, like medicine or rhetoric, have value not in themselves but rather in their use.

Though scholarly debate swirls around student evaluations of teaching (SETs), several consensus points stand out. One is that the semesterly ratings of instructors play an increasingly prominent role in faculty evaluation worldwide (d’Apollonia & Abrami, 1997; Beran, Violato, & Kline, 2007; Linse, 2017; Wooten, Ray, & Babb, 2016). A second is that the typical SET form, with its mix of Likert-scale questions and open-ended comments, produces data that are difficult to analyze and interpret (Brockx, Van Roy, & Mortelmans, 2012; Darby, 2008; Dayton, 2015b; Gravestock & Gregor-Greenleaf, 2008; Harpe, 2015; Sullivan & Artino, 2013). Accordingly, a third consensus point arises: administrators and evaluators struggle to use SETs fairly in high-stakes decisions about faculty retention, promotion, and

tenure (Beran et al., 2007; Boysen, Kelly, Raesly, & Casner, 2013; Franklin & Theall, 1990; Linse, 2017; Thorne, 1980).

Many issues surrounding SETs can therefore be traced to not what they are but rather how they are used. For example, even SETs' strongest advocates argue these data should play a limited role in faculty evaluations, as they are "crude" measures (d'Apollonia & Abrami, 1997) and cover only one of teaching's many dimensions (Marsh, 2007). But reports show annual teaching reviews too often depend entirely on SET results (e.g., Franklin & Theall, 1990). Even within the field of Writing Studies, with its commitment to holistic, situated assessment, Moore (2015) claimed faculty evaluators "struggle themselves to match theory with practice when placed in a supervisory role" (p. 135). Wooten et al.'s 2016 field survey on SETs further demonstrated this problem, with WPAs reporting SET use to be prevalent but contested. The constant attention to SETs has not yielded widespread improvement in their use.

In considering how to improve faculty evaluation, Moore (2015) advocated practical responses to real constraints, including those of time and institutional demands. Dayton (2015b) proposed several best practices for handling these data, such as avoiding "norm referenced" evaluations, drawing on multiple forms of teaching evidence, and circulating a "written policy" regarding SET administration (pp. 41–42). Wooten et al. (2016) also proffered a set of guidelines for SET use, which emphasized consistency and transparency. Together these recommendations codify the principles that should guide SET use in faculty evaluation. But the articles do not go so far as to offer concrete measures for enacting these principles.

In response, our article offers a method for operationalizing the goal of consistent, fair, and transparent SET analysis as part of a wider faculty evaluation process. We do so by reporting on a "generic" SET review process that we developed for high-stakes, summative evaluation in a first-year writing program, using data that Wooten et al. (2016) found to be commonly made available to WPAs: means and standard deviations. Similarly, our generic method requires only a basic understanding of statistics and Microsoft Excel, and it aligns with the few points of consensus in SET literature, namely that SET data should be understood as permitting only broad evaluative characterizations such as "unacceptable, adequate, or exceptional" (d'Apollonia & Abrami, 1997, p. 1205).

While our method conforms to some SET research best practices, it deviates from traditionally prescribed methods of statistical analysis. So to test the efficacy of our generic method, we compared the results from two versions of our method to the results of three, statistically orthodox methods recommended in SET literature. For data we used ten semesters

of a first-year writing program's SETs. We found high to perfect agreement among all of the tested methods—in other words, the faculty scores almost always fell within the same evaluation category regardless of the method used. Since our generic method produced almost or entirely the same results as more resource-demanding ones, we argue that it should be regarded as a viable approach.

We conclude by stepping back from the method itself in order to discuss how SET analysis is inherently rhetorical work and how SETs are better understood as a rhetorical, rather than statistical, problem. In doing so, we discuss the pros and cons of the various methods reviewed in terms of a writing program's potential goals for faculty evaluation. For example, Wooten et al. raised questions about the role SETs can and should play in determining teaching excellence. For WPAs who shape SET review policies, we discuss ways of building analysis processes to either identify excellent instructors or to concentrate instead on delineating acceptable from concerning results.

For WPAs lacking such direct control over SET review, we argue our method could be used for internal assessment to help explain results to faculty and to direct coaching or mentoring discussions. Wooten et al. (2016) noted how WPAs are frequently assigned such roles and lack ways to make sense of SET scores for faculty (pp. 54–55); our generic method provides a simple and quick way to show faculty how to read scores according to SET scholarship's best practices, providing both transparency and the one-on-one consultation work often needed to make SET results useful to instructors (Boysen, 2016b; Neumann, 2000; Penny & Coe, 2004).

Maintaining consistency and transparency in high-stakes decision making is a constant good; it might also be a constant fight. But Wooten et al. (2016) also suggested that the contested role of SETs provides an opportunity for WPAs to establish authority and agency; we can see them as a site for what Adler-Kassner (2008) named “strategic action,” or the harnessing of ideals and strategies. Adler-Kassner argued that WPA work has historically demonstrated the potential and significance of strategic action around two issues: assessment and labor. If we broaden assessment from its roots in student work to that of faculty, we can see how SETs create a space where assessment and labor issues meet (see also Dayton 2015a). Further, as Moore argued, given writing studies' historical engagement with assessment practices, WPAs “are in an ideal position to assist with campus-wide rethinking of faculty evaluation practices” (p. 147). Drawing on our disciplinary expertise and Adler-Kassner's strategic agency practices, WPAs can be important voices on improving the use of SETs and the overall evaluation of faculty.

Thus, in offering a method of efficient SET analysis, we also seek to intervene in larger issues regarding writing faculty and WPAs in particular. Overall, we join previous calls encouraging all WPAs to campaign for the ethical and effective use of SET data, to better support their program instructors, and to build their own ethos as experts in all aspects of faculty evaluation. Regardless of the exact form, we advocate a process that enacts fairness and transparency, aligns with local faculty evaluation priorities, and best allocates the often-scarce resources of time and skill—with Moore (2015), we argue those constraints are too significant to ignore. In this way, we argue WPA's subject matter expertise is necessary for understanding the contextual and disciplinary features of “unacceptable” SET results and for making decisions about concerning cases, and that SETs create a rhetorical problem, one not by solved statistical software but rather continually managed though situated knowledge and prudent judgment.

A GENERIC PRESCRIPTION: JUST WHAT THE DEAN ORDERED

Co-author Teagarden's experience with SETs aligned with many elements discussed in Wooten et al.'s (2016) survey; it differed in one key way. From her first year as WPA, Teagarden was granted a great deal of authority over SET evaluation, at least for the writing program's full-time and part-time instructors. In her first semester, she was tasked with independently analyzing SET scores for thirty-some faculty as part of the contractually mandated annual review, a now permanent responsibility.

As she began reviewing SET reports, Teagarden realized the project required not just analysis but also the creation of an entire evaluation procedure; her institution lacked formal guidance. What few protocols the author could find resembled what Wooten et al. (2016) described with rightful concern: instructor scores were compared to some mean, exemplified as “higher than average is excellent, within a couple decimal tenths is fine, [and] lower is concerning” (p. 58). Wooten et al. (2016) argued against such an acontextual emphasis on numerical results. In doing so, they echo a call long cried by the SET literature.

One of the few points of consensus within the highly-debated world of SET research is that administrators and evaluators struggle to make fair use of SET in high-stakes decisions about faculty retention, promotion, and tenure (Beran et al., 2007; Boysen et al., 2013; Franklin & Theall, 1990; Linse, 2017; Thorne, 1980). As early as 1980, Thorne was arguing that poor or absent methods for using SETs created serious issues: “we have rarely found explicit decision-making rules for the use of such data, so their potential administrative abuse has been omnipresent” (p. 214). While

Thorne ultimately reported on positive outcomes regarding SET use in faculty evaluation, research in the following decades grew grim. Aleamoni (1999) argued “the disadvantages of gathering student ratings primarily result from how they are misinterpreted and misused. The most common misuse is to report raw numerical results and written comments assuming that the user is qualified to interpret such results” (p. 160). More than fifteen years later, Boysen (2016a) discovered that faculty continued to misinterpret SET data, irrespective of their statistical training. Reading the last forty years of research on the use of SETs leads one to conclude these data are used everywhere and everywhere used badly.

Even those who champion SET usage have registered alarm at how SETs are interpreted. Gravestock and Gregor-Greenleaf’s (2008) comprehensive review of the literature calls attention to “a significant absence of policies regarding, or information available to instructors and administrators providing guidance about the interpretation of course evaluation results [. . .] most institutional policies and information address only the process of conducting evaluations and disseminating the results” (p. 18). Decision makers have also been found to employ flawed metrics for evaluating SETs (Boysen et al., 2013) and to base important decisions on questionable comparisons (Franklin & Theall, 1990). While one might have expected the rising use of SET to bring better methods, the opposite appears true. As the significance of SET data expanded, concerns about their misuse also proliferated (Dewar, 2011; Linse, 2017; Palmer, 2012).

Poor interpretative practices deserve scrutiny, but they also warrant sympathy. For multiple reasons, SET data resist simple analysis. We summarize four key reasons below, since, understanding these reasons can help WPAs build better review processes and promote them to cross-disciplinary audiences.

First, most SET data come from Likert scales (Gravestock & Gregor-Greenleaf, 2008). Statisticians continue to debate how to best analyze Likert data (Harpe, 2015; Sullivan & Artino, 2013). Meanwhile, research on how to analyze open-ended SET comments is nascent, further complicating evaluation methods and prompting more debate than policy (Brockx et al., 2012), though Wooten et al. (2016) suggested that when WPAs have access to comments, they feel well-prepared to handle such data.

As SET data are generated from Likert scales, it is unsurprising that they are non-normally distributed (Darby, 2008). Thus, many scholars warn that neither parametric tests (such as *t* tests) nor popular descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) are appropriate comparative measures (McCullough & Radson, 2011; Mitry & Smith, 2014). Non-normally distributed data generally require specific methods of analysis that may be

unfamiliar or unknown to evaluators. These alternative analyses furthermore require SET scores to be reported in specific ways or that evaluators are capable of transforming data to the needed form.

Likert data are also ordinal, further muddying interpretation. There is not usually a normed or objective standard for choosing one score over another. In the case of SETs, what one student may rate as “strongly disagree” another may rate only as “disagree” or even “neutral.” This has led some authors to claim that means and standard deviations do not comprise a “valid metric” and thus use of them “should cease” (McCullough & Radson, 2011, p. 189). Such arguments emphasize how difficult it is to imagine a meaningful average between, for example, strongly disagree and strongly agree.

Finally, a significant challenge to using SETs in summative decisions comes from generating acceptable and unacceptable rankings. Any evaluation must include the possibility of finding a faculty member’s scores below expectation. But at what point should an instructor’s scores be judged acceptable or unacceptable? The answer will always be non-statistical and thus open to the charge of arbitrariness.

So what was an allowable way to analyze SETs, Teagarden wondered? Scholars did offer multiple solutions to the problem of evaluating SET data. Three common themes emerged:

1. Require statistical training for any faculty evaluator engaged in SET review (Emery, Kramer, & Tian, 2003).
2. Use appropriate methods for analyzing non-normally distributed data when comparing faculty, such as interquartile range (IQR) and median, interpolated median, or proportions (McCullough & Radson, 2011; Mitry & Smith, 2014).
3. Use null hypothesis significance testing, such as *t* tests, when comparing faculty to determine if SET scores significantly differ, given that such tests tend to remain effective even when data violate normality assumptions (Boysen, 2015).

As Teagarden reviewed potential analysis protocols, the published recommendations began to resemble the marketing of name-brand commercial drugs. Each new version promised an innovative solution, a novel delivery system, a more personalized approach. They offered much, and they cost more. Proposed solutions invariably required advanced statistical knowledge, specialized software, extensive data preparation, weeks of one-on-one discussions, or all of the above.

For example, mandating only trained experts to interpret SET would likely require dramatic shifts in institutional staffing; moreover, the efficacy of this solution is questionable, as some research suggests expertise cannot guarantee proper analysis (Boysen, 2016a). The second and third solutions entail significant time and labor costs. Calculating appropriate methods of comparisons, such as an IQR, require that SET data be reported in specific ways and that evaluators have the expertise to manage these comparisons and the hours needed to calculate them. Such conditions strike us as unlikely for many departments and institutions, not just writing programs.

Teagarden's institutional context did not support any—let alone all—of these costs.

But even in departments or programs backed with statistical expertise, time constraints and labor distribution raise barriers (Moore, 2015). Faculty evaluation often occurs at the end of the academic year, with little time between the distribution of SETs and the review process. If (or, more likely, when) departments and programs cannot find an accommodating expert, how are they to follow the institutional mandates for SET use and the literature's guidelines for interpreting them?

Perhaps institutions with deep pockets can absorb such a bill without disruption. For Teagarden's program, as for many we suspected, a new approach was necessary. And if published solutions were the branded drugs of SET analysis, we thought perhaps there were generic options available. Generic drugs cost much less while offering the same active pharmaceutical ingredient. A generic SET process, by analogy, would cost less in time and labor while offering the same results in faculty evaluation. Thus, we developed an SET analysis method that worked with the typical skillsets of WPAs and within their typical constraints. We aimed to create a method that would produce fair, transparent, and efficient SET data analysis so that WPAs could spend more time on cases the process flagged as unusual or concerning—cases that called for subject matter and local program expertise.

We based our method—cheaper in resource demands, easier to implement, and just as good in results—on consensus points of SET scholarship rather than those of statistical analysis. That is, we

- compared SET scores only among instructors within a “similar teaching context” (Marsh, 2007; Neumann, 2000);
- calculated a faculty member's aggregate mean within the similar teaching context (Boysen, 2015; Harrison, Douglas, & Burd-
sal, 2004);

- evaluated scores following the standard three-tier category system: “unacceptable, adequate, or exceptional” (d’Apollonia & Abrami, 1997, p. 1205).

Then we tested to see if our generic version would offer the same results as more traditional prescriptions.

RESEARCH METHOD AND DATA

In seeking out a generic method of SET analysis, we compared results from various interpretative methods. We applied all methods to SET data from a public, American northeastern, doctoral research university’s first-year writing program: the sequence of fall English 101 courses and spring English 102 ones. We thus followed the best practice of comparing SET scores only among instructors within a “similar teaching context,” which here meant a required, introductory-level writing course capped at twenty-five students (Neumann, 2000). Within each semester, instructors were compared only to those teaching the same course numbers. English 101 and English 102 could not reasonably be compared within the same semester because they differed in not only pedagogy but also in student population, class sizes, and the offers of additional tutoring support.

We requested the first-year writing program’s past ten semesters of anonymized SET data from the institutional research department. We received 6,075 completed SETs for 247 total sections/instructors. SET questions were 1–5 scale Likert-type items responding to a statement in terms of agreement such as “The instructor was prepared for class.” The scale was symmetrical, with 1 equaling “strongly disagree,” 2 equaling “disagree,” 3 equaling “no strong opinion,” etc. Students responded to fifteen distinct statements about the course, rating concepts such as the instructor’s availability, overall effectiveness, and preparedness.

Institutional research provided data in the form sent to faculty and evaluators: aggregated score tables with a section’s calculated N , mean, median, and SD along with those for the department’s overall N , mean, median, and SD at that course level, i.e. all 100-level courses. To conduct the literature’s recommended analyses, the data required significant transformation. We were given almost 7,000 rows of data that reported only aggregate counts for each individual instructor; for example, we might learn that 13 students in one class responded 5 (strongly agree) on one specific question. Since we needed to rank data, Carlozzi coded a Python program to convert these aggregate counts into individual student responses and then exported them to a spreadsheet for further analysis. We then followed recommended prac-

tice by combining the instructor's semester of classes to create one aggregate mean (Boysen, 2015; Harrison et al., 2004).

For every semester of received data, each instructor was scored according to all of the aforementioned evaluative systems, receiving a label of "unacceptable, adequate, or exceptional," following the standard three-tier category system (d'Apollonia & Abrami 1997, p. 1205). Comparisons between methods were first made to determine agreement when rating instructors as adequate or unacceptable. Comparisons were made again to determine agreement on rating instructors as adequate or exceptional. Ratings were inclusive; instructors rated exceptional also received ratings of adequate.

When comparing instructors, we investigated five distinct analytical methods, three from the published literature to represent resource-demanding "name-brand" methods and two versions of our "generic" one.

Traditional SET analysis models:

1. IQR and median (IQR/Median). Student scores were ranked and then an acceptable range was generated based on the course's interquartile range. For every semester, the first quartile was 4 and the other quartiles were 5. Instructors whose median scores fell below 4 were rated unacceptable.
2. IQR and interpolated median (IQR/IM). As above, the first and second quartiles were 4 and 5. However, because this statistic interpolates scores, it afforded more opportunity to identify unacceptable results.
3. *T* test. Because of unequal variances and sample sizes between groups, Welch's *t* tests were run. Instructors who differed significantly from course means were rated unacceptable or exceptional, depending on the direction, and according to a significance level of 0.05. *T* tests were used because they are recommended in the literature; however, it should be noted that multiple comparisons increase the familywise error rate.

Our Generic SET analysis models:

1. M+One. Generic version A, with mean and one standard deviation. Instructors whose means fell below one SD of the course mean were deemed unacceptable; one SD above were deemed exceptional.
2. M+Half. Generic version B, with mean and one half of a standard deviation. As above, except that one half of a SD was used rather than one.

As part of these comparisons, we considered each method as an independent “rater” and calculated inter-rater reliability through Cohen’s kappa coefficient. Although somewhat controversial over its calculation for random effect (Guggenmoos-Holzmann, 1993), kappa attempts to produce agreement coefficients by estimating those agreements between raters that may have occurred “by chance.”

Low kappa values in spite of high agreement stem from the “kappa paradox” whereby kappa values are lower in datasets with a high prevalence index (Feinstein & Cicchetti, 1990). When this occurs, kappa assumes that a tremendous number of cases will agree by chance. Our data had exceptionally high prevalence indices; in almost all of our comparisons, kappa assumed that the methods should agree by chance over 90% of the time. That is because unacceptable scores were rare; most instructor scores fell into the adequate category. Therefore, a prevalence-adjusted bias-adjusted kappa (PABAK) statistic is also presented whereby the expected agreement by chance is held constant. Readers may interpret kappa and PABAK values as they see fit, but the literature suggests general—though arbitrary—guidelines: < 0.21 = slight agreement; $0.21\text{--}0.40$ = fair agreement; $0.41\text{--}0.60$ = moderate agreement; $0.61\text{--}0.80$ = substantial agreement; $0.81\text{--}0.99$ = almost perfect agreement.

Proportions (McCullough & Radson, 2011) were not included because they required too arbitrary a judgment for discernment. Median and interpolated median worked alongside interquartile range, for example. Proportions, on the other hand, required an arbitrary decision on what constituted an acceptable cut-off point, one we could not confidently make.

RESULTS: WHAT COMPARISONS OF SET ANALYSIS METHODS REVEAL

In Tables 1–3, Percentage Adequate Instructors is the total percentage of instructors that the statistic rated as adequate or exceptional. Agreement is the percentage of time when a mean differentiation method agreed with another method when rating instructors as at least adequate. Percentage Exceptional Instructors is the percentage when that method—not compared to any other—rated instructors as exceptional. Kappa and PABAK columns report their respective values.

First, we compared the generic methods to IQR/Median. IQR/Median and M+One were functionally identical, agreeing in all instances. They were, however, unable to discriminate among instructors, rating 99% of teachers as adequate. M+Half discriminated better in determining unacceptable instructors (92% adequate).

Table 1

Mean differentiation compared to IQR/Median

Method	Agreement With IQR/ Median	% Adequate Instructors	Kappa	PABAK	% Exceptional Instructors
IQR/Median	-	99%	-	-	0%
Mean + 1 SD	100%	99%	1	1	0%
Mean + Half SD	93%	92%	0.09	0.86	1.6%

Course $N = 247$; SET $N = 6,075$.

We then compared mean differentiation to IQR/IM. As expected, IQR/IM was more discriminating than IQR/Median, rating 93% of instructors as acceptable. Agreement for M+Half was higher than with IQR/Median because interpolation could identify low performing instructors (table 2).

Table 2

Mean differentiation compared to IQR/IM

Method	Agreement With IQR/IM	% Adequate Instructors	Kappa	PABAK	% Exceptional Instructors
Interpolated Median	-	93%	-	-	0%
Mean + 1 SD	94%	99%	0.12	0.89	0%
Mean + Half SD	97%	92%	0.82	0.95	1.6%

Course $N = 247$; SET $N = 6,075$.

We then compared mean differentiation to t tests. The t test had the greatest discernment, scoring the most instructors as unacceptable and exceptional. It agreed overwhelmingly with mean differentiation (table 3).

Table 3.

Mean differentiation compared to Welch's t test

Method	Agreement with Welch's t test	% Adequate Instructors	Kappa	PABAK	% Exceptional Instructors
Welch's t test	-	89%	-	-	20%
Mean + 1 SD	89%	99%	0.06	0.79	0%
Mean + Half SD	95%	92%	0.73	0.91	1.6%

Course $N = 247$; SET $N = 6,075$.

DISCUSSION: ALIGNING METHODS WITH SUMMATIVE EVALUATION PURPOSES

Our results suggest that nonstandard comparative measures may effectively analyze SET data. IQR/Median, one recommended methodology for analyzing non-normally distributed data, performed identically to M+One, agreeing 100% of the time.

But this perfect agreement lacks utility for summative evaluations, as neither method could differentiate among instructors; only one instructor out of 247 was rated as unacceptable. This conclusion might satisfy some evaluators, as it suggests that all SET scores meet expectations, but this is not a conclusion we are willing to draw. To illustrate our concern, consider the case of Instructor P and Instructor R, scores taken from the same semester. In the below charts, Instructor P and Instructor R received median scores of 4 and were rated adequate under IQR/Median and M+One. Instructor P's results look respectable, scoring only 11% unacceptable responses.

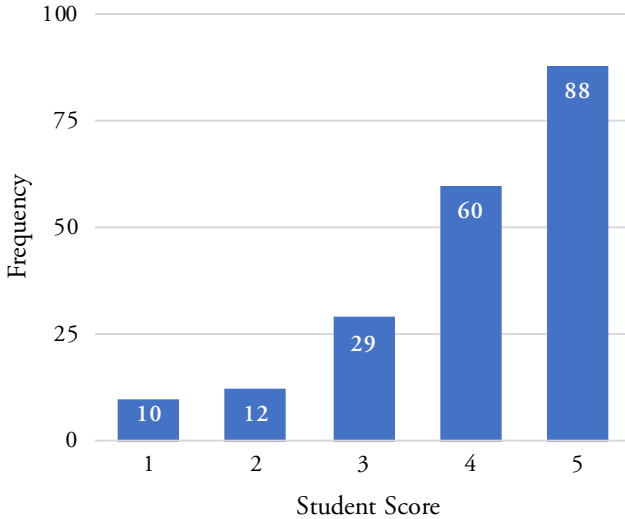


Figure 1. Instructor P's chart, fall 2015. Mean = 4.0; SD = 1.1; Median = 4.

Instructor R's results, however, are more problematic, with 28% unacceptable scores. This instructor was rated as unacceptable in M+Half, IQR/IM, and Welch's t test. We find this a more intuitive conclusion; an instructor receiving about 29% of responses as 1s and 2s should not be equated with one with only 11% of such responses.

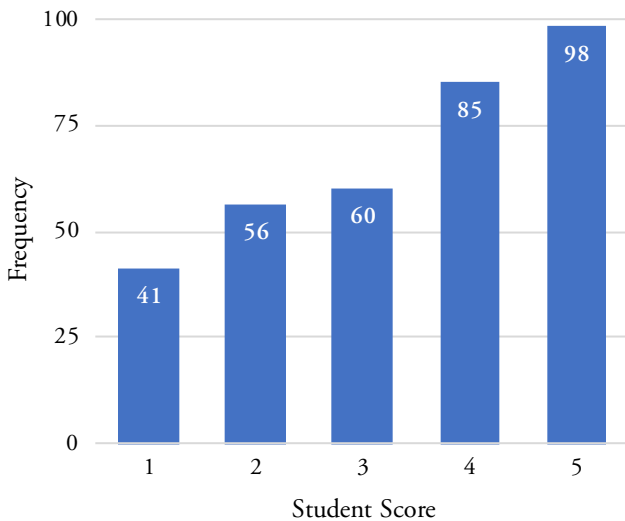


Figure 2. Instructor R's chart, fall 2015. Mean = 3.4; SD = 1.3; Median = 4.

This lack of differentiation suggests that those universities that have chosen interpolated median have done so for good reason. IQR/IM rated 7% of instructors as unacceptable, similar to results from other methods. But generating this result demands considerably more work and time, without any obvious advantage, over mean differentiation. Indeed, almost 98% of the time IQR/IM agreed with M+Half. In practical terms, they were essentially identical with respective kappa and PABAK values of .82 and .95. In other words, M+Half approximates the results of IQR/IM without the latter's logistical headaches. The data similarly show strong agreement among mean differentiation and the *t* test.

But efficient and statistically aligned analysis answers only some of the issues involved with SETs. Wooten et al. (2016) raised other discussion points to consider. They claimed "Focusing on SET averages alone is difficult to justify" (p. 58) and supported this by noting concern with the influence external factors have on SETs, such as "age, gender, level of course, and/or if course is required or elective" (p. 59). The best practice of comparing faculty's SET results among "similar teaching contexts" eliminates issues of course level and status; we believe every WPA should advocate for this approach and model it within their own reviews. Indeed, writing programs' hallmark of many-sectioned courses offers an ideal starting place for such practices.

The SET literature is more divided on how much age, gender, and race biases affect SET scores. Gravestock and Gregor-Greenleaf (2008) concluded: "In general, no variables have been found to have a substantial effect (e.g. something that would alter the ratings beyond the second decimal place) on ratings, except for expected grades" (p. 39). How to understand the "expected grade" variable remains contested. The field has developed several competing interpretations, with the "grade leniency hypothesis" and "validity hypothesis" predominating. While review of this debate is beyond the scope of our article, interested readers can consult Dayton (2015b) for a summary and Brockx, Spooren, and Mortelmans (2011) for a comprehensive treatment.

As the field of SET research is vast, articles can be found that support any number of positions, especially on the question of gender bias. Spooren, Brockx, and Mortelmans's (2013) review pointed out two articles showing female faculty received statistically significantly higher SET scores than male faculty and one showing the reverse. However, some of the most rigorous studies concluded that if gender bias exists, its effects are small enough to be eliminated by well-established analysis processes (Li & Benton, 2017). An appropriately wide "adequate" range could therefore wash out differences due to bias. Our generic model offers a further affordance. If a WPA

determines a particular external factor to severely bias results, then that factor can be considered part of the “similar teaching context.” If gender bias is the concern, for instance, then gender could be a required element of the context, with faculty members only compared to instructors of the same gender. This is easier said than done, of course; the larger point is our generic method provides several ways to account for possible biasing factors.

More importantly, our argument for efficient data review aims to make time for the WPA to consider borderline cases or check for concerning patterns. Wooten et al. (2016) argued “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” (p. 59). This position matches that held by SET advocates: SETs should never operate as the only form of evidence for teaching review (Marsh, 2007).

Since SET data are likely a part of all faculty evaluation, careful review is necessary; as Moore (2015) argued, it is also a time-intensive task. One goal of our generic method is thus to allow a WPA to quickly distinguish between the majority of “adequate” cases and the few outliers, precisely so a WPA can conduct a deeper review and better determine the reason for unusual scores. We also hope the expedited process affords the WPA time to analyze overall results and identify concerning patterns by, for example, checking for systematically lower scores within a specific category like gender, race, rank, or age.

Wooten et al. (2016) also noted a concern about SETs’ role in determining teaching excellence. For example, they argued “WPAs may want to openly question why [SETs] would be used to sanction some instructors and not used to commend others” (p. 61), but here we must disagree. Following d’Apollonia & Abrami (1997), we see SET scores as “crude” measures, unable to discern fine detail. We argue SETs should therefore have a limited role to play in determining teaching excellence. A pattern of consistently exceptional scores would point to a faculty member’s ability to connect with and support students. While a writing program might deem that a necessary feature of teaching excellence, it cannot be sufficient. Rather, just as we argue “unacceptable” SET results call for further review to identify issues, “exceptional” scores call for consideration about what is working so well and why. It is in that discussion that multi-faceted evidence for teaching excellence can emerge. Thus, we argue for minimizing the role of SETs serve in either “sanctioning” or “commending” faculty. However, we also note that our generic method can be tailored to suit a program’s goals. A WPA seeking ways of identifying outliers at both ends can narrow the range; one seeking to minimize exceptions can widen it.

Finally, Wooten et al. (2016) found a majority of survey respondents have mentoring roles attached to SET scores. We see our generic method as a means of navigating scores for faculty, even if the process cannot be used in formal assessment. Research has shown faculty struggle to make sense of SET scores, and active, engaging consultations are the best way to ensure that SET feedback improves teaching practice (Boysen, 2016b; Penny & Coe, 2004). Our generic method can help faculty put their results into a specific perspective—that of comparison across similar teaching contexts and within general categories. Teagarden has used this method with her campus's writing program faculty and finds it demystifies SET scores, to the relief of many and the disappointment of some. Approaching SET data this way shows how scores often mean less than they initially appear. Using our method for coaching can therefore afford opportunities to calm fears, but we caution WPAs that it can also puncture self-images, when faculty come to see that scoring above a mean does not automatically translate to an “exceptional” score. Avoiding “unacceptable” scores reassures many, but being called “adequate” can upset others. Thus, with the generic method, as with any other, discussion and contextualization are necessary to help faculty understand what terms mean and how to interpret data (Neumann, 2000; Penny & Coe, 2004).

LIMITATIONS

This study was limited by sample; we looked at one program in one university. And because we worked with anonymized data, we were unable to examine instructors longitudinally. Our program averaged around 30 instructors per semester; it did not have 247 distinct instructors over ten semesters. We are therefore unsure how these methods compare to each other if applied to dramatically larger sample sizes. Further research could examine how robust and congruent IQR and SD are around other kinds of data, in different institutions, and with programs other than first-year writing.

Our study also analyzed only one form of SET data, a composite mean score for all questions. SET scholarship remains divided on the best kind of data to generate and use. Each department will need to consider which data to analyze, be it a single “overall” question (e.g., “how effective was this instructor's teaching?”), a weighted formula of multiple questions, or, as our approach here, an instructor's semesterly composite mean. Additionally, as we drew on data from first-year writing courses, we followed the best practice of comparing faculty teaching within a “similar teaching context.” Departments and institutions evaluating more heterogeneous teach-

ing contexts would need to perform additional work establishing reasonable comparators.

And, taking a wider view, we acknowledge the limitations inherent in SET data. Fair and effective use of SET data might be a necessary part of faculty evaluation, but it alone is not a sufficient representation of teaching's complex art. A larger challenge may be raised that SET data deserve no standing in faculty review processes, as they support problematic aspects of the university, such as neoliberal market rhetoric in general and, more particularly, contingent labor practices or student-as-consumer frames (Crowley, 1998; Schweitzer, 2009). We acknowledge this perspective but choose to advocate for strategic action over outright renunciation. Simply put, we believe students have important, if limited, insights into teaching and that instructor efficacy merits attention. There are better and worse ways of conducting SET analysis; we argue WPAs should take positions on how to best use SETs rather than reject them outright.

Finally, we reiterate that this analysis is strictly comparative. That is, it aims to identify agreement among analytical methods recommended in the literature to our generic method. The validity and appropriateness of the primary methods remain separate concerns. Some evaluators, for example, may protest about using *t* tests on skewed data. We stress that these issues are separate from the current analysis, and we guide interested readers to the robust literature on SET data (Marsh, 2007; Spooren et al., 2013).

CONCLUDING REMARKS ON STATISTICAL VS. RHETORICAL PROBLEMS

In developing and testing a “generic” method of SET analysis, Teagarden drew, in part, from her upbringing. She is the daughter of a pharmacist; medical metaphors come naturally. But the metaphor of drugs also emphasizes the rhetorical nature of SETs and their use. To read SET articles for any time is to be reminded of Gorgias' comparison of speeches and drugs, where some “cause pain, some pleasure, some fear; some instil courage” (p. 287). SETs elicit the same range of responses, and the divergence can often be traced back to how fairly and transparently these data are treated.

For as with rhetoric, the analogy to drugs reminds us that SETs' value is not inherent but rather emerges from their use. Almost all SET advocates argue they provide only a rough measure of a single teaching facet. We agree and argue this simple sorting is an important first step—not a final one. We also argue that impossible-to-implement recommendations serve no one. Moore (2015) enumerates the many hurdles departments face when trying to perform multi-faceted evaluation of faculty. Tight deadlines cannot justify unfair assessment, of course, but SET analysis must work

within the likely constraints administrators and evaluators face. Time limits are a real factor; limited statistical expertise is another. These are particularly likely to affect evaluators' ability to use IQR, IM, and significance testing; the same is doubly true for more complicated measures like the "distributions of responses" (p. 61) referenced by Wooten et al. (2016). For instance, obtaining and analyzing raw student responses proved challenging for us, even though we explicitly requested the data in a specific format and worked outside of customary evaluation timelines. To render data useable for our analysis also required considerable labor as well as computer programming skills. What hindered our work could completely stop other evaluators working with fewer resources or different training.

Such issues cannot be underestimated. As a case study, Samuels (2018) recounts how his institution's team was unable to alter the role of SETs in non-tenure-track (NTT) faculty review, in part because "university administration told us that it would be too costly and time-consuming to develop a different model of performance evaluation" (p. A23). While we do not entirely share all of Samuels's views towards SETs, we do agree that SET use should conform to ethical principles, and that if such processes are to win institutional approval, they must work within local constraints. As Samuels's case illustrates, evaluation systems perceived as requiring too many resources can be rejected out of hand. But since our generic approach showed minimal variation in results from those generated by the more resource-demanding methods, we argue the advanced recommendations in the literature are unnecessary. Our mean differentiation approach—easily generated and distributed—achieves the same goal.

To conclude, for our specific dataset, we found that mean differentiation (mean + a chosen SD range) provided an efficient way to compare faculty scores, given one works within the research consensus on similar teaching contexts and differentiation (e.g., exceptional, adequate, and unacceptable). Agreement was strong among all methods tested. We suggest WPAs seeking ways to best use SET in summative evaluations, and with similar SET score distributions as ours, adopt one of proposed mean differentiation methods for summative or formative purposes, as their local context allows. Evaluators can be confident that our generic method, while perhaps not in harmony with orthodoxy, has been supported by empirical data.

While the data analyses work out similarly, we also note such results call for careful interpretation. Recognizing this, we also argue evaluators use these findings as "alerts" rather than immediately act on them. One benefit to efficiently generated analysis is that it allows evaluators to quickly sort the standout cases from the unexceptional ones. Having completed a general delineation, evaluators can devote more attention to borderline

cases, determining which cases require further information before rendering a judgement.

As such our method illustrates how SETs must be understood as rhetorical, not merely statistical, problems. To treat them as objective data is to misread what numerical ratings report, to mistake teaching for a single-faceted activity to, and to miss entirely the real work involved with evaluating faculty. Dayton (2015b), however, framed this persistent problem as a rhetorical opportunity, arguing that writing programs can address these issues by making SET analysis more transparent to all stakeholders, including faculty members, students, and “the larger constituencies who are nudging us in this direction” (p. 42). In other words, if how an institution treats SETs mirrors the way it treats WPAs and writing faculty in general, then creating fair and transparent approaches to these data can help further situate WPAs and writing instructors as authoritative experts who responsibly engage with institutional questions of education quality.

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Troublesome Knowledge: A Study of GTA Ambivalence with Genre-Informed Pedagogy

Aimee C. Mapes, Brad Jacobson, Rachel LaMance,
and Stefan M. Vogel

Recognized as a threshold concept of writing studies and as a potentially useful tool for knowledge transfer, genre seems ubiquitous in first-year writing (FYW) programs. Yet, while genre-informed pedagogies gain prominence, little scholarship examines how graduate teaching assistants (GTAs) respond to genre-informed curricula. Hoping to understand how new GTAs experience teaching an imposed genre-informed FYW curriculum, this study collected written reflections and focus group interviews from 33 GTAs and examined their responses through a framework of threshold concepts scholarship. Based on how teachers describe challenges and benefits of a genre-informed curriculum, our findings suggest that ambivalence emerged for new GTAs who were both learning about and teaching genre as a threshold concept, which was more pronounced for novice teachers. Given the presence of threshold concepts in FYW, we present strategies for better supporting GTAs to tolerate ambivalence when teaching troublesome knowledge for the first time.

My students seemed to do okay with grasping the assignment prompt, though I'm not confident at all that any of them would be able to talk about "genre" as a concept very intelligently. (I barely can!)

—Parker, GTA and creative writing student

Genre has become ubiquitous in composition scholarship and pedagogy. Recognized as a threshold concept of the field, genre has been central to research of metacognition and writing transfer (Adler-Kassner, Majewski, & Koshnick, 2012; Bawarshi & Reiff, 2010; Yancey, Robertson, & Taczak, 2014). Genre appears 10 times in the *WPA Outcomes Statement for First-Year Composition (3.0)* (CWPA, 2014), and there is even a modest indus-

try of textbooks advocating genre pedagogies (Braziller & Kleinfeld, 2014; Devitt, Reiff, & Bawarshi, 2004; Jack & Pryal, 2014). At our institution, home to one of the largest writing programs in the US, genre has become a central concept and guiding theory in FYW.

Despite a boon in genre-based pedagogies, there is surprisingly little conversation about how novice instructors appropriate this threshold concept in their teaching. Recent writing pedagogy education (WPE) research has demonstrated many challenges inherent to teacher preparation, including the tension between theory and practice (Dryer, 2012; Estrem & Reid, 2012), the diversity of approaches to orientation and ongoing training (Obermark, Brewer, & Halasek, 2015), the identity crisis of practicum (Dobrin, 2005; Reid, 2004), labor conditions (Fedukovich, Miller-Cochran, Simoneaux, & Snead, 2017), GTA resistance to training (Hesse, 1993), and GTA confidence as teachers (Dryer, 2012). Yet the impact of specific curricular approaches to FYW on GTA training, such as teaching for transfer, writing about writing (WAW), or genre pedagogies, has garnered less attention. This is not to say that scholars and administrators ignore genre-informed pedagogies, as previous studies have examined GTA experiences in local contexts where writing instruction supports such an approach (Obermark, Brewer, & Halasek, 2015; Rupiper Taggart & Lowry, 2011), but a gap remains for research exploring how threshold concepts intermingle with GTA development.

Adler-Kassner et al. (2012) explain that threshold concepts are “portals” or gateways to learning, the necessary lenses through which members of a discipline develop, investigate, and answer scholarly questions. Threshold concepts such as genre in writing studies involve more than acquiring knowledge because once adopted they fundamentally transform how one views the world. Accordingly, threshold concepts trigger a personal transformation because this “troublesome” or “alien” knowledge (Meyer & Land, 2006, p. 3) requires viewing the world differently (Adler-Kassner et al., 2012; Land, 2016). Meyer and Timmermans (2016) argue these transformations “provoke a liminal state and create stuck places” (p. 32) that instigate cognitive, affective, and ontological conflicts. Liminality, according to Ellsworth (2005), is “being somewhere in between thinking and feeling, of being in motion through the space and time between knowing and not knowing” (p. 17); it is a capacious space for thinking, feeling, and being altogether, which means threshold concepts frequently accompany intense feelings of uncertainty with new knowledge. Despite a body of literature exploring GTA teacher development in writing studies, there are fewer accounts of how GTAs grapple with such troublesome knowledge as they learn to teach.

In this article, we apply a threshold concepts framework to understand how novice teachers describe the relevance of teaching genre-informed pedagogy in FYW curriculum. We found that new teachers generally saw benefits of genre, but they also described uncertainty and anxiety that posed teaching challenges. As a result, we examine GTA's ambivalence to learning and teaching genre to better understand challenges of teaching threshold concepts. Ambivalence—defined here as the felt tension between recognizing genre's relevance to teaching writing and struggling with the definition of the concept and its teachability—manifested in GTAs' reflections as uncertainty about how to teach genre, teacher confidence, and tensions with prior knowledge. If ambivalence is necessary to learning threshold concepts, then research should attend to anxiety and uncertainty in WPE. In other words, this study explores an important question for writing studies as a field: in the context of GTA training, how can we teach threshold concepts without doing more harm to an already fraught process of learning to teach?

METHODOLOGY

The data presented in this article were collected as part of a larger, IRB-approved study on graduate assistant teachers' evolving understanding of genre and genre pedagogy at the University of Arizona (#1608767682). Our co-researchers in the study have examined GTAs' changing conceptions of genre over one semester (Tardy, Buck, Pawlowski, & Slinkard, 2018). Here, we explore how new GTAs responded to genre as a teaching concept while teaching a genre-informed writing course.

Institutional Context

This study took place at a large, public university categorized with high research activity. Like writing programs at comparable institutions, ours is housed in a department of English with graduate students in applied linguistics, creative writing, literature, and rhetoric and composition, all of whom teach composition courses. The writing program serves roughly 6,000 undergraduate students each semester, most of whom complete two semesters of FYW. Incoming graduate students with teaching assistantships are assigned to teach FYW for at least one year, during which time they are enrolled in the required practicum course. All first-year GTAs teach a standard sequence before they can apply to teach other courses in the writing program or Department of English. During the study, there were 173 instructors in the writing program, 131 of whom were GTAs. Thirty-six of

these GTAs were new to the program and enrolled in the required practicum (see table 1).

FYW shared curriculum: Genre-informed pedagogy. During the time of this study, new GTAs taught the second iteration of a genre-informed pilot curriculum of English 101. We use the term “genre-informed” to represent a curricular approach designed with genre in mind, but perhaps not as centrally focused on genre as genre-based pedagogies described elsewhere (Hyland, 2003; Hyon, 1996). Genre was a key term in both FYW and teacher preparation and played a central role in the 101 curriculum, including an in-depth analysis of a public or academic genre, but it was not consistently emphasized across the course. We are also aware that “genre-informed pedagogy” is a broad term, and distinct traditions of genre theory have influenced writing pedagogies. These three different approaches have been sufficiently explored elsewhere (Hyland, 2003; Hyon, 1996; Johns, 2011); however, the focus on genre awareness associated with rhetorical genre studies (RGS) has gained the strongest foothold in FYW contexts, including ours. The pilot curriculum taught during the study promoted a genre awareness approach, in which instructors aimed to bring conscious attention to genres through discovery and help students analyze their potential influences on communities (Devitt, 2009). The course was supported by a popular FYW textbook (Palmquist, 2014), as well as a custom-published textbook and a handbook.

GTA orientation and practicum. New GTAs participated in a six-day orientation prior to the start of the fall semester, during which WPAs overviewed writing program goals and student learning outcomes, the English 101 shared curriculum, sample lessons, and institutional policy. Some orientation sessions focused expressly on genre awareness and teaching genre analysis, and GTAs collaboratively analyzed lesson plans as a genre. During fall semester, these GTAs participated in a graduate practicum as embedded training. In addition to large group sessions with a practicum lead, GTAs also met in small mentoring groups of four to six students with one teacher educator, a non-tenure-eligible assistant professor. Accounting for one credit-hour of the practicum course, these weekly mentor meetings were opportunities for GTAs to workshop ideas, discuss concepts and strategies, and learn about program curriculum. It’s important to note that the teacher educators leading mentor groups may have had little experience teaching genre-informed pedagogy prior to the curricular redesign.

The GTAs were introduced to some basic principles for teaching genre awareness. Assigned readings included Dirk (2010) and Borg (2003), along with selections from Lockhart and Roberge (2015). Dirk’s (2010) overview of genre theory from an RGS perspective was also assigned to FYW stu-

dents. GTA understanding of genre was heavily influenced by the Dirk reading, the student textbooks, and the genre analysis assignment guidelines (Tardy et al., 2018).

Study Participants

In total, 33 of the 36 new GTAs participated in this study. Participants were diverse in terms of disciplinary orientation, professional experience, and previous exposure to genre theory and pedagogy (see table 1). It should be noted that only about 15% of the GTAs had previously taught writing at the college-level while approximately 18% had used genre in their classroom.

Data Collection

Participating GTAs completed three written reflections over the course of the semester, responding to the same prompt each time: “How do you define genre? Include some examples of genres. Explain whether and/or how you see genre to be relevant to teaching first year writing. Write as much as you can.” GTAs were given 15 minutes of practicum class time to write, and they submitted their responses online (see table 2). A member of the research team later anonymized the data set by assigning each GTA a number and a gender-neutral, mainstream Anglophone pseudonym. To protect participant privacy, we will refrain from using gender-specific pronouns in this paper.

As a means of triangulation, focus group interviews (FGIs) were conducted with 13 volunteers at the start of spring semester in order to elicit conversation about GTA experiences with genre as a concept and the curriculum.¹ To encourage dialogue during FGIs, we grouped participants into cohorts based on disciplinary orientation. The groups consisted of GTAs from applied linguistics ($n = 5$), literature and creative writing ($n = 4$), and rhetoric and composition ($n = 4$). The FGIs lasted approximately one hour each. After interviews were transcribed by the research team, the FGI transcripts were linked to participants’ reflections from the previous semester.

Table 1
GTA Teaching Experiences

Degree program		Participants who had taught FYW	Participants who had taken coursework on genre	Participants who had taught genre or used a genre-informed approach
Creative writing <i>n</i> = 10	MFA <i>n</i> = 10	0	6	1
	Literature <i>n</i> = 8			
	MA <i>n</i> = 3	0	2	0
	PhD <i>n</i> = 5	0	2	0
Rhetoric and composition <i>n</i> = 7	MA <i>n</i> = 2	0	0	0
	PhD <i>n</i> = 5	3	2	3
Applied linguistics <i>n</i> = 8	MA <i>n</i> = 5	0	0	0
	PhD <i>n</i> = 3	2	1	2
		5 (15%)	13 (40%)	6 (18%)

Table 2

Data Collection Timeline

Mid-August 2016	Reflection #1 (<i>n</i> = 33)	Pre-Semester Orientation <i>Introduction to genre and curriculum</i>
Mid-October 2016	Reflection #2 (<i>n</i> = 30)	Genre Analysis Unit <i>Class discussion of genre Genre analysis assignment</i>
Early December 2016	Reflection #3 (<i>n</i> = 33)	Preparation for English 102
Mid-January 2017	Focus Group Interviews (<i>n</i> = 13)	

Data Analysis

The research team—an associate and assistant director of the writing program and six doctoral students pursuing degrees in applied linguistics and rhetoric and composition—met regularly over the course of seven months to analyze the data. Following a constant-comparative method of double coding (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016), we reviewed participants' reflections, identified preliminary themes, and further refined research questions. Initial coding (Saldaña, 2016) identified data connected to benefits and challenges of genre in reflections and focus group transcripts. Subsequent coding identified subcodes for perceived benefits and challenges. Individual team members applied subcodes to a subset of the reflections to compare and contrast and further refine the coding scheme (see figure 1). To support inter-rater reliability, coding results were discussed and discrepancies addressed amongst each pair of raters, following a method of collaborative coding (Smagorinsky, 2008). Finally, individual codes were applied by two members of the research team in coding software in order to visualize application of codes and participant information and patterns of co-occurrence.

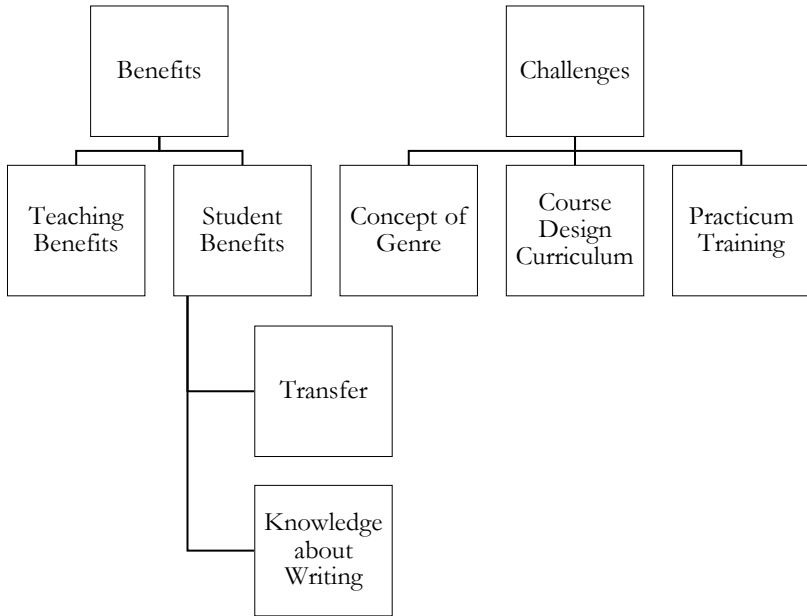


Figure 1. Coding Scheme Applied to GTA Responses

Limitations

Because the survey was administered during practicum meetings, a GTA who was absent would not have completed the reflection that day. In order to account for this limitation, we only included in our analysis the 33 respondents who submitted a survey response for the first reflection and at least one other. Of the 33 GTAs whose reflections were included in the data set, only six were missing either the second or third survey response. The survey was administered during practicum sessions, which also raises concerns about GTAs' comfort reflecting candidly about challenges while sitting in their teacher training class. However, challenges and uncertainty emerged in the reflections without prompting, which gives us confidence that the anonymity of responding was enough for GTAs to share their honest reflections. The FGI discussions were used to triangulate our findings across reflections and further illustrate patterns.

“DEVELOPING GENRE AS A THEORY IN THE CLASSROOM IS
A LOT HARDER”: AMBIVALENCE IN GTA RESPONSES

In general, there seemed to be a consensus among GTA reflections about the benefits of a genre-informed approach (see figure 2). GTAs’ perceptions of the relevance of teaching with genre sorted into three dominant themes: teaching benefits, knowledge about writing, and transfer. While the latter two themes refer to perceptions of benefits for student learning, some instructors noted how a genre approach benefited their own teaching. For example, Elliot, from rhetoric and composition, said the genre-informed approach “helped me express the idea that an author can be an expert in one genre, yet completely inept in another,” which “helped me break [students] of the idea that they were inherently good or bad writers.” Elliot seemed to value the genre-informed approach for their own teaching because it “helped” to convey important ideas and practices. Bailey in applied linguistics saw potential for a genre-informed approach to help students build *knowledge about writing*, explaining that genre could “help develop an awareness to the ‘formulas’ and ‘templates’ around them and understand why there are these conventions.” Almost half of the teachers saw potential for *transfer*, as the genre-informed curriculum could support students’ ability to apply writing knowledge and practices in other writing contexts. Cameron, from applied linguistics, wrote that genre “would help [students] figure out the writing situation that they are in and adapt to their context.”

However, upon closer analysis a more complex narrative of uncertainty developed for some GTAs, in which they articulated benefits of genre-informed pedagogy alongside stories about their struggle with its complexity and its teachability. Taylor, a GTA in rhetoric and composition who seemed familiar with RGS genre theory, predicted potential problems in their pre-semester reflection:

I think it is important for my students to get a sense of genre in order to start learning the language they can apply to their own writing, such as audience, purpose, syntax and to understand the rhetorical situations they find themselves in; however, developing genre as a theory in the classroom is a lot harder. (emphasis added)

The italicized phrases in Taylor’s reflection point to an instructor ambivalent about developing genre theory in the classroom context. They “think it is important,” but their use of the conjunction “however” indicates a question: *I think it’s important, but how does it work for me as a teacher?*

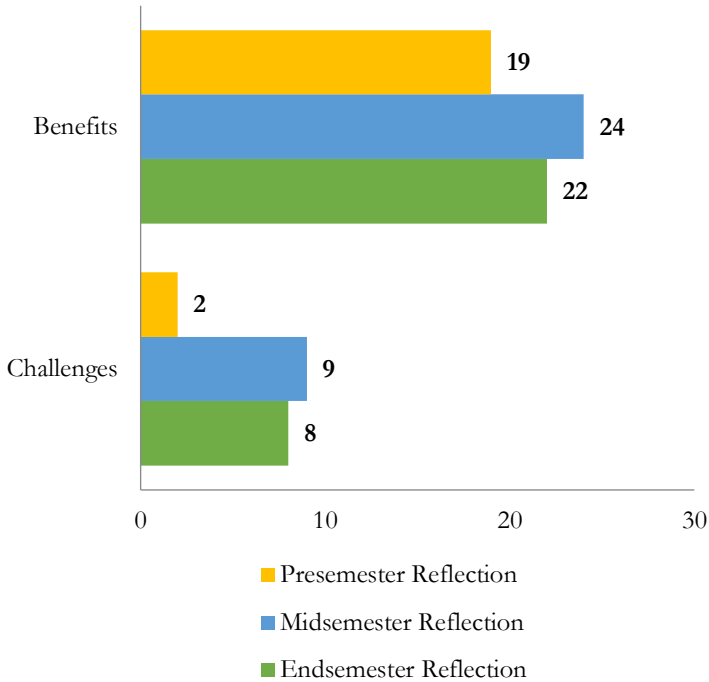


Figure 2. Number of GTAs Who Mention Benefits and Challenges of Genre

Some might argue that Taylor’s concerns are common. After all, teaching is difficult and all teachers face similar self-reflective questions throughout their development. However, Taylor seemed already familiar with RGS genre theory before starting their GTA training at our program and yet remained uncertain about managing its complexity as a teacher. The majority of the new teachers in this study—and most new FYW teachers—did not have this background knowledge and were learning genre theory while teaching it. Our co-researchers found that GTAs’ genre theories “became increasingly sophisticated or multidimensional” over time, but in some cases “this destabilization of their existing conceptions resulted in some confusion or even frustration,” especially as they tried to present genre to students (Tardy et al., 2018). It is this pattern of confusion, frustration, and, eventually, ambivalence we address in this study in order to engage deeper questions about the role of destabilized knowledge in supporting FYW GTAs.

In the next section, we examine GTA’s ambivalence to learning and teaching genre, a threshold concept of writing studies. Our exploration of

their responses will show a process of liminality in which GTAs feel they must simultaneously meet the demand to think newly about genre as at the same time they struggle with its teachability. These findings raise questions about whether and how threshold concepts instigate a double bind for new teachers in FYW.

Tensions with Teachability

Even though GTAs recognized the benefits of genre in teaching writing throughout the semester, we suggest there is a more nuanced, layered story of GTAs' tensions with the teachability of genre. In our data, about one-third of GTAs (12 of 33) identified a challenge related to teaching genre in the written reflections, with more instances of these challenges occurring later in the semester when genre took on a central role in instruction (see figure 2). This increase in challenges seems to align with literature on threshold concepts, which maintains that learning new knowledge instigates anxiety, uncertainty, and difficulty in the process of liminality (Land, 2016, p. 15). Often couched in remarks about the difficulty of genre as a concept or constraints of the curriculum, GTAs' voices reveal struggles with the teachability of genre.

In their written reflections, teachers displayed the challenges of teaching a concept they were still uncertain about. Darcy in applied linguistics wrote:

To be honest, I am still confused about genre. With my students, I use the definition in *JTC* that it is a “category of text”—but I explain that it is multimodal (emails, PowerPoints, movies, commercials, syllabus, D2L announcements, etc.). I focus on Dirk’s point that even if you know the “rules” (conventions), you might not reproduce a genre effectively, genres are socially created and reshaped, blended and renamed. I think my students are still confused.

Darcy demonstrates a rhetorical understanding of genre and indicates they have a central focus for teaching genre in the classroom, referred to as “Dirk’s point.” However, Darcy’s liminal state (“I am still confused”) seems to affect their teaching of students, who are also “still confused.” Such difficulty with genre seemed prominent when GTAs described teaching a unit focused on genre analysis. Teachers often questioned the utility of genre as concept, noting the troublesome process of understanding genre from an RGS perspective. For example, Jaime, a student in creative writing, elaborated on the difficulty:

I think it's really difficult to teach because it is the abstract idea that is as ubiquitous as oxygen in Writing Studies. It's right in front of our noses and students don't realize they engage with genre all the time. . . . Some students were able to connect with the idea that every piece of writing emerges from a template framework—that a résumé is a genre and the individual producing their own résumé is imbuing that genre with their individualized rhetorical situation. That a genre is activated by whatever rhetorical situation calls upon that genre to circulate into readership. I think it was hard to teach because genre is such a self-referential concept.

Jaime is able to define genre as “activated by whatever rhetorical situation,” yet they conclude that it was “hard to teach.” Kendall, also in creative writing, was a little more pointed, writing:

It's a complicated topic that doesn't seem to be helpful to actually teaching what good writing is. . . . I like the idea of showing that the way you write responds to your rhetorical situation, but I'm not sure why that needs to be framed in the language of genre theory when these students aren't planning to study that in the future.

While both Kendall and Jaime were able to identify potential benefits of teaching the curriculum, they still seemed ambivalent about—or, in Kendall's case, resistant to—the concept of genre itself as part of their teaching.

Discussion in focus group interviews (FGIs) deepened insights from the written reflections while contextualizing how these tensions played out for some GTAs. Similar to patterns in semester written reflections, GTAs in FGIs were generally able and willing to discuss benefits of a genre-informed approach to FYW. However, they often qualified their claims when describing their teaching. Logan, a GTA from the literature program, offers an illustrative example:

One of the best things that I thought was useful about teaching this [genre] is that it gave the students not just this kind of theoretical knowledge, which they may or may not need at this point, but thinking of communication acts as genres gave them kind of a set of more practical knowledge.

Here Logan seems attracted to the idea that students will gain the theoretical knowledge of genre and implies it will be useful, but also hedges that students “may not need” that knowledge. Logan further exhibited ambivalence when discussing the genre analysis unit. After presenting students with the more expansive definition of genre beyond “forms of artwork” and taking into account “syllabi and lesson plans and stuff like that,”

Logan found it difficult to help students identify boundaries of genre. They described class conversations as a “deconstructive loop” in which genres blend into each other, explaining it was “really hard when you get really unconventional genres or they’re trying to pitch you something as a genre and you have to negotiate with it.” Even as Logan seems to embrace a flexible definition of genre, they find tension in its application to the classroom. Logan explained:

Another really hard part of it was helping [students] figure out how to be concise enough about genre when I myself was struggling with this dialectic [laughter]. Like, “Yes, that’s a genre,” but then, you know, when they give me an interesting alternative idea, I’m like, “I can see how that’s a genre,” you know? And then you get to the point where you yourself are starting to just kind of question it.

Logan exemplifies the ways in which learning a threshold concept can be a dynamic space with feelings of uncertainty leading to both breakthroughs and regressions. As Adler-Kassner et al. (2012) explain, learning threshold concepts is iterative and recursive (see also Land, 2016; Meyer & Land, 2006). Logan recognizes the potential benefits of genre and seems to grasp a new, more expansive disciplinary understanding of the concept, but when placed into teaching praxis, they are “starting to just kind of question it.” Logan hints at how liminality within threshold concepts might impact their confidence or self-efficacy as a teacher, a topic we address in the next section.

Tensions with Self-Efficacy

Uncertainty, as detailed in the previous section, also provoked feelings of anxiety and lack of confidence in some GTAs. Rowan, an MFA student, illustrated how this anxiety may affect a new teacher’s sense of self-efficacy:

How does a not very good teacher think about genre? Well, not very well. I have a real problem with this new technical definition of the word. This technical definition says, Rowan, genre is any mode of communication in, and in some part defining, a community. For example: in-class notes. Students (the community) pass them to and fro (the communication) and, thereby, carve out a new fraction of themselves for themselves: the fraction that is misfit, malingering, monkeyshine mayhem. Hmm . . . But why call this a genre? The word genre comes from the French for gender, which suggests a kind of typology. Genre doesn’t seem to have a whole lot to do etymo-

logically with communication modes, though I suppose the type of thing you are communicating itself to others. I wonder what the type of thing that I am communicating to others.

While much of this reflection is witty, clever, and creative, the sentiment connects back to Rowan's identification as a "not very good teacher" who does not think about genre "very well," even though their example (in-class notes between students) indicates a flexible understanding of genre. Here we see a new teacher struggling with the concept of genre while struggling with their own self-efficacy as a teacher.

Other GTAs expressly connected low self-efficacy with the concept of genre itself, such as Parker, who wrote, "I'm not confident at all that any of them would be able to talk about 'genre' as a concept very intelligently (I barely can!)." Riley, a PhD student in rhetoric and composition, reflected on the benefits of genre as "useful to students' knowledge transfer" but concluded, "I think the word itself is detrimental to the overall unit for both freshmen and instructors." Riley's word choice, "detrimental," captured the trouble they found with genre as it harms both students and teachers. These GTAs voice their felt sense of being thrust into liminality.

Similar tensions with self-efficacy emerged in conversations among peers in focus groups. For instance, Dana, a GTA in rhetoric and composition, indicated that their lack of confidence as a teacher was initiated by how the practicum prepared them to teach. According to Dana, "The way [the practicum] affected my understanding of the concept of genre, it complicated it in an unnecessary way. I didn't find it to be productive, and my students struggled with it a lot." They continued, "It was a *struggle*. They [the students] were *struggling* with it. I was *struggling* with it as a new teacher" (emphasis added). As a representation of GTAs' sentiment, Dana's sense of "struggle" reflected anxiety and decreased self-efficacy provoked by the liminal understanding of genre that we noticed in GTA semester reflections.

"WE NEVER USED THE WORD GENRE LIKE THIS": PRIOR KNOWLEDGE MATTERS

Theories of threshold concepts establish that new knowledge often accompanies intense feelings of attachment to old knowledge and resistance to the new (Meyer & Land, 2006). At the same time, prior exposure to the concept can allow for a less tumultuous path toward "postliminal" transformation in which the learner is using the concept in the ways of the discourse community (Adler-Kassner et al., 2012). Though we are cautious to draw generalizations, prior experience with genre and with some language-related techniques for analyzing genres seemed to be a factor in GTA responses to

teaching genre-informed pedagogy, often along disciplinary lines. When we disaggregated data by disciplinary programs of study, graduate students in rhetoric and composition accounted for nearly half of all coded excerpts in teacher challenges yet represented only one-fifth of participants. On the other hand, the applied linguistics cohort had the fewest coded excerpts related to challenges, seeming to indicate less ambivalence about genre as a teaching concept. This pattern was also reflected in the FGI discussions, in which a number of applied linguistics GTAs talked about teaching genre as a process of sharpening their understanding of the concept, whereas the rhetoric and composition GTAs emphasized challenges. In what follows, we present two brief case studies to demonstrate the way prior knowledge can affect appropriation of a threshold concept like genre.

Jesse was a first-year teacher in the PhD applied linguistics program who had recently completed their MA in applied linguistics. During the focus group interview, Jesse spoke about having “a pretty firm grasp on the concept of genre” but also recognized that “it took me years to get to that conceptual understanding.” Even with prior knowledge, Jesse faced challenges and expressed reservations about the genre analysis assignment being a “really big project” that was “too much too soon.” However, Jesse found teaching genre ultimately valuable, explaining, “I can say conceptually I understood it, but after teaching it I feel like I know it, which was cool.” Prior experience with genre as a concept for language study may have helped Jesse transform their view of challenges when teaching it into an asset, a view shared by a few other applied linguistics GTAs who also discussed refining their own definition of genre through teaching in the FGI.

In contrast, Riley in rhetoric and composition demonstrated how less prior exposure can contribute to confusion. Describing interactions with students about genre during the focus group discussion, Riley explained, “There is no concrete definition that I could give. I couldn’t find one. We couldn’t come up with one.” This confusion emerged again later in the discussion: “So our students are asking us these complicated complex questions and we’re trying our best to answer, but we’re not even sure what the goal of the assignment was.” In these comments we see how Riley’s uncertainty around the concept of genre seemed to weave its way into their sense of self-efficacy in the classroom. Returning to Riley’s second written reflection, we recognized this tension again:

I think the word itself is detrimental to the overall unit for both freshmen and instructors. We never really got a good grasp of solid understanding of genre, so it was very difficult to teach. Anticipat-

ing students' questions, misunderstandings, and informational needs for comprehending such an abstract idea was very challenging. I'd say about 50% or fewer of my students understand what a genre is.

Note how Riley invoked a collective "we" who didn't "grasp a solid understanding" of genre which made it "difficult to teach." While some uncertainty is to be expected and even necessary for new teachers, Riley's challenges in the classroom seemed exacerbated by teaching this "abstract idea" with which they were not fully comfortable. Unlike Jesse, who brought a prior theoretical foundation to expand through teaching, Riley did not yet feel these challenging moments in the classroom were useful for professional growth.

These two case studies reflect the tenor of FGI conversations; some GTAs were unsettled by the challenge of teaching an RGS approach to genre when it contradicted prior experience. Responses in FGI conversations confirmed a pattern we noted in semester reflections. For instance, in a mid-semester reflection, Kendall from creative writing expressed difficulty with genre as a concept in contrast to prior experience: "I don't find genre to be relevant to teaching first year writing. In my time in school, we never used the word genre like this, and I think it is overly confusing." Even though they were able to demonstrate a definition of genre aligned with the course outcomes for themselves, Kendall was still concerned that genre is "a complicated topic that doesn't seem to be helpful to actually teaching what good writing is" at the end of the semester. Genre as a threshold concept was especially troublesome for GTA training since learning a threshold concept unsettles not only what is known but what it is to make meaning of a new mental model (see Meyer & Land, 2006). It is this process of unsettling we see evident in the ambivalence many GTAs reported when teaching genre-informed pedagogy for the first time.

IMPLICATIONS FOR WRITING PEDAGOGY EDUCATION AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Our findings have raised questions for us about the ways writing pedagogy educators can support GTAs teaching a threshold concept like genre at the same time as they are in the liminal process of learning. While the GTAs in our program seemed inclined to see the relevance of genre to writing pedagogy and potential benefits for students, their responses also demonstrated a persistent ambivalence. In their written reflections, ambivalence surfaced as the tension between the benefits of genre to student learning and the challenges of its teachability in the classroom. Such sentiments were expressed as uncertainty and decreased confidence in the classroom. In short, we believe this study offers support for continued exploration of genre-informed

pedagogies in FYW while indicating a need for more conversation about the ways writing pedagogy educators acknowledge and ethically support ambivalence as part of teacher training.

According to Land (2016), threshold concepts can be experienced as being thrust into liminality because the process of learning leads to “a reformulation of the learner’s meaning frame and an accompanying shift in the learner’s subjectivity” (p. 188; see also, Meyer & Land, 2006). This step is troublesome and often felt as a force because it requires a conceptual shift. It requires ambivalence. It requires uncertainty. As teacher trainers, we must identify strategies for tolerating ambivalence as a necessary achievement when learning threshold concepts. Following Land (2016), we are interested in exploring WPE and structures that begin with “concepts such as fragility, uncertainty and instability” as part of teacher development (p. 17). Given the troublesome nature of threshold concepts, we wonder if more time to process a new concept—perhaps one semester of composition pedagogy and writing studies theory coursework before class instruction—might help new GTAs like Riley who struggled to feel confident teaching genre. However, such an approach may not be feasible at most institutions, including our own. In the absence of intense study scaffolding meta-awareness of genre, we find it imperative to address the uncertainty and the emotional needs instigated by ambivalence with threshold concepts in GTA training for those considering a genre-informed approach. As a beginning effort, we offer suggestions for supporting GTA development using genre-informed approaches that may also be applicable to other threshold concepts.

First, developing one’s own personal theory of genre is important.

While Riley, Kendall, and Rowan offered clear evidence of the challenges new GTAs faced with the term, the confidence seemingly shared by applied linguistics graduate students with prior knowledge of genre suggests there is value in forming a theoretical framework. As Brisk and Zisselberger (2013) demonstrated in their genre pedagogy research, simply introducing genre theory is not sufficient, and connections between theory and practice need to be drawn explicitly. For example, they found one-on-one sessions with trainers and teachers to be most helpful in this process. Such opportunities should be considered with new GTAs expected to teach this threshold concept at the same time as they are learning it themselves.

Indeed, rather than offering a single framework, like the RGS-centered approach in our training, it may be helpful to make various genre pedagogies visible to new teachers. Educating GTAs on goals and practices of different genre-informed approaches may support them to build a robust theoretical framework like Jesse’s. An instructor more inclined toward lan-

guage-based pedagogy, for example, may prefer the teaching-learning cycle of an SFL approach, while others may be excited by the critical cultural potential of RGS. More likely, instructors would draw from a variety of strategies, building their own approach. Regardless of the outcome, demonstrating that genre is an ongoing conversation in writing studies may provide strategies for reflecting on the role of uncertainty when learning threshold concepts like genre.

Along these lines, we need to find ways to engender a critically reflective stance that allows new teachers to see themselves as learners and developing teachers. Just as the WPA student learning outcomes treat writing as a developmental process that occurs over time, we should help new GTAs understand that teaching is similarly recursive and ever-evolving. As Adler-Kassner et al. (2012) explained, threshold concepts are initially “troublesome” because they tend to challenge existing beliefs, practices, or knowledge. For this reason, they suggest, it is important to work with threshold concepts consistently or else they might be disregarded, a particular concern for those of us in GTA training. From this perspective, we should not be surprised by GTA comments expressing doubts about genre after initial struggles in the classroom. It seems GTAs, like Dana, believed the practicum training was too abstract, further complicating teaching, which aligns with research about the challenge of theory in practicum (Michel, 2005). Rupiper Taggart and Lowry (2011) note that helping GTAs feel confident as teachers in the classroom is a perennial tension in GTA training, and we argue practicum must offer effective scaffolding that supports learning threshold concepts and helps GTAs feel confident when faced with uncertainty. As Land (2016) argues, the liminal space of learning threshold concepts requires a pedagogy for learning to live with uncertainty, although “such pedagogies cannot dispel anxiety, but seek to provide students with perspectives that will enable them to live with anxiety” (p. 17). We should be particularly aware of the potential for this uncertainty to push new teachers away from important concepts.

Finally, reflective teacher narratives could be a useful tool as shared readings, similar to the firsthand accounts about the difficulties of writing and writing as a process often assigned in FYW curricula. Selections from Restaino’s (2012) narratives of first-semester teachers or Barr Ebest’s (2005) work with GTA resistance may help new instructors to see themselves as part of a broader teaching and learning community. Opportunities for reflection and self-assessment can also help new GTAs take on a scholarly disposition towards teaching (Miller, Rodrigo, Pantejo, & Roen, 2005; Reid, 2009). Each of these strategies may attend productively and explicitly to the emotional demands of troublesome knowledge.

CONCLUSION

Genre has been recognized as a threshold concept of writing studies and as a potentially useful tool for transfer of knowledge in FYW pedagogies. Given the prevalence of genre in FYW-related publications like the *WPA Outcomes Statement*, textbooks, and TA training materials, our research attempted to learn more about how new GTAs respond to an imposed genre-informed FYW curriculum. Our findings suggest that GTA training should simultaneously support both the theoretical framing of a threshold concept like genre and the ambivalence felt by new teachers.

We are also left with questions that could be further explored in more research of local contexts, especially those implementing genre-informed pedagogy and utilizing other threshold concepts. Such a study might ask: How do GTAs experience threshold concepts of writing studies (like genre) as novice teachers and over time? Which threshold concepts seem to be most “troublesome” for new and experienced GTAs? What approaches might be most effective for introducing new teachers to threshold concepts? How can writing programs introduce other instructors on contingent contracts to the threshold concepts that guide curricula? The last few decades of composition scholarship have brought greater complexity to our understanding of writing development and introduced important threshold concepts for writing pedagogy. Answering some of the questions outlined here may better prepare teachers for implementing these concepts in the classroom, which should benefit future students and the discipline.

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NOTE

1. More detail about data collection protocols and a descriptive coding scheme can be viewed at <https://drive.google.com/open?id=1yr8JdONzvVEYN0JvEcGnOTddYaNJe0z7>.

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Challenging the Efficiency Model: Supporting Inclusive Pathways Toward Student Success

Cristine Busser

This article responds to higher education's increasing focus on graduating students efficiently. Building upon current WPA and composition scholarship, the author presents data gathered from focus groups and interviews with 21 first-year students attending a large, public university nationally recognized for efforts to retain students until graduation. Findings from this data suggest that when student support initiatives prioritize students graduating efficiently, they create challenges for students whose needs require different paths toward graduation, namely students who commute, are nontraditional, or come from low-income households. The article concludes by offering writing program administrators ways to advocate on behalf of students for more inclusive ways to support student success.

At the 2017 CCCC, Linda Adler-Kassner used her chair's address to confront the Educational Intelligence Complex (EIC), or the systemic consequences of neoliberal economics and its oversimplification of the learning experience. Adler-Kassner's talk expressed the need for WPAs and faculty to understand how politics and economics inform our daily practices and influence how we encourage students' success. If indeed the philosophy behind the EIC treats "time [as] the enemy" (Denley qtd. in Adler-Kassner 324), then WPAs will have to negotiate the complexities and nonlinearity of writing with initiatives intended to sort students through school at the most efficient rate possible. To advocate on behalf of our field's knowledge of how students learn to write, Adler-Kassner calls on WPAs to first "learn the values and principles" informed by the EIC and adopted by leaders in higher education, to then find ways to address the "issues" of most concern to our writing programs (334).

Adler-Kassner's message to WPAs is an urgent one, as organizations representative of the EIC continue to earn praise in major publications,

especially for their use of “predictive analytics” to inform decisions about supporting student retention (Hefling). With this praise, colleges and universities continue to sign on, implementing the strategies recommended by their new partners. These initiatives include incentivizing students to take 15 credits per semester, re-envisioning the structure of first-year math courses, ensuring students are provided extra support for gateway math and English courses, and appealing to years of data to inform student advising (“Strategies”). WPAs are uniquely implicated by this movement as they oversee one of the two first-year courses of most concern to retention leaders and represent a history of scholarship devoted to encouraging students’ success in the writing classroom. When pressed to implement changes that promote students’ swift progression towards graduation, however, WPAs have noted that “decontextualized” initiatives can “fail individual students” (Brunk-Chavez and Fredericksen 91) and have recommended improved collaboration between writing programs and their institution’s centers for academic and student support (Holmes and Busser).

As organizations devoted to student retention continue promoting changes to first-year courses, the following study takes up Adler-Kassner’s call to examine higher education’s interest in graduating more students efficiently. Specifically, this article reports on a case study conducted at one university famous for its early and expansive partnership with Complete College America, a nonprofit retention organization funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. Situated within WPA, composition, and retention scholarship, data is presented from focus groups and interviews with 21 first-year students, all of whom participated in multiple retention initiatives by the completion of their first semester. By taking a closer look at how initiatives aimed at streamlining students’ path towards graduation impact students’ educational experiences, WPAs can more confidently engage with retention leaders and advocate on behalf of writing research to further support students’ success.

In recent years, composition scholars have suggested that higher education’s increasing focus on student retention does not always align with students’ goals, needs, and lived experiences (McCurrie; Webb-Sunderhaus; Reichert Powell). Pegeen Reichert Powell’s groundbreaking text *Retention and Persistence: Writing Instruction and Students Who Leave* notes the inevitability of students dropping out or taking a break from school due to circumstances outside the control of their respective institutions. She then challenges writing programs to reconsider how student success gets defined, calling for a shift from equating success with staying in school to students achieving individual goals. Reichert Powell and others have argued that higher education’s rhetoric of retention risks framing students who leave

school as failures and have recommended more careful considerations of university retention efforts.

Though these scholars have sparked many new studies focusing on the intersections of retention and writing programs, students' perspectives on retention initiatives are still greatly underrepresented. Recent WPA research has begun giving students voice on the topic; however, students' perspectives are largely offered as a singular counter-narrative to challenge the rhetoric of retention, as is the case in *Retention and Persistence*, wherein Reichert Powell traces the narratives of three students alongside her discourse analysis of retention, but warns these narratives do not serve as a totalizing data. Published in *Retention, Persistence, and Writing Programs*, Sara Webb-Sunderhaus' likewise offers the case study of Roxie, a traditional-aged commuter student who worked full time, received no financial assistance from her parents, and eventually had a baby prior to graduating. The complexities of Roxie's life, which Webb-Sunderhaus appropriately points out are not uncommon among many college students, do well to show that our students' "needs are different, and as a result, the paths they must take to earn their degrees are different" ("Life Gets in the Way" 115). In other words, institutions employing initiatives to move Roxie toward graduation more quickly risk overlooking Roxie's needs as a student, mother, and financially independent young adult. While this argument is imperative when deciding how to support students' success in writing programs, case studies of individual students do not allow for data-driven conclusions to be drawn.

When WPA scholars have gathered multiple students' perspectives about retention, these projects have largely served to evaluate new initiatives implemented by writing programs (Buyserie, Plemons, and Ericsson; Chemishanova and Snead). At Washington State University, for example, Buyserie, Plemons, and Ericsson implemented the Critical Literacies Achievement and Success Program (CLASP), which requires students participating in the one-semester program to meet with their faculty regularly and engages faculty in a professional development series focused on critical pedagogy. Data gathered from surveys and focus groups with faculty and students suggests that interrupting the power dynamics between teachers and students through required, rather than suggested, meetings during office hours encourages students to be "actively engaged in their own education, rather than subjects of it" (163). Buyserie, Plemons, and Ericsson found that students involved in CLASP were more likely than other students to meet with faculty during subsequent semesters, while also noting a strong correlation between participating in CLASP and students' persisting in school. Similarly, Chemishanova and Snead report on their implementation of the PlusOne program, an initiative at the University of North Caro-

lina at Pembroke that serves to bring writing studio pedagogy to the first-year writing classroom. Linking a one-credit, small group lab to first-year composition classrooms, the PlusOne program allows students to receive greater assistance from their same writing instructors on a weekly basis. Data gathered from “student outcomes [and] a review of instructor and student evaluations” suggests that participating students are retained at significantly higher rates than students who do not participate in the program (173). In both studies, Buyserie, Plemons, and Ericsson and Chemishanova and Snead found a positive correlation between increased faculty-student interactions and students persisting in school.

These researchers offer useful, replicable advice for supporting student retention in first-year writing programs. This study seeks to extend their work by providing data that would support WPAs’ design and evaluation of multiple retention initiatives, as well as offer WPAs insight with which to advocate on behalf of students’ unique needs with campus leaders who communicate a preferred path for all students pursuing graduation. To construct a fuller picture of how higher education’s focus on efficiency can impact the process through which students might achieve their goals, the results from this study reveal a panoramic view of students’ experiences with multiple, intersecting retention initiatives.

METHODS

Offering one way to understand what Adler-Kassner dubs the Educational Industrial Complex and its impact on first-year students’ experiences, I conducted a case study at Georgia State University, a large, urban, public university nationally recognized for its many retention initiatives and swift increase in graduation rates over the past ten years. Georgia State University’s student population is diverse, with 42% of students identifying as African American, 26% Caucasian, 12% Asian, 10% Hispanic/Latino, and the remainder of ethnicities unknown or noted as other. The university maintains a higher-than-average enrollment of nontraditional students with approximately 30% of its student population 25 years or older (“Georgia State Student Population Stats”), and 77% of undergraduates qualify for need-based financial aid (“Georgia State University”). Though its *Strategic Plan 2011–2016/21* shows the university’s interest in becoming more residential, only 21% of students currently live on campus. Recognizing that students whose racial backgrounds have been historically marginalized and who have greater financial need struggle to persist in school at rates comparable to students from white, middle-class families (Thayer; Landry; Flowers), Georgia State has been devoted to promoting retention over the past

thirty years and has earned increased recognition from major news publications as its retention efforts have continued throughout and after the 2008 recession (Brownstein; Fausset; Hefling). A case study conducted at Georgia State, therefore, allows for gathering data on leading retention initiatives and their impact on students most considered at risk of dropping out.

Because it is widely known that most students who drop out do so their first year (Upcraft, Gardner, and Barefoot; Reichert Powell), scholars have advised universities to target their retention efforts toward students' first year of college. This advice is accepted at Georgia State, as the university employs many of the programs recommended in retention literature and promoted by Complete College America. These programs are informed by the pervasive idea, established by retention scholar Vincent Tinto and his student integration model, that if students can integrate early into the university community, by academic or social interests, they are more likely to persist for subsequent semesters ("Dropout from Higher Education"). Programs designed to support integration include freshman learning communities (FLCs) (Tinto, "Taking Retention Seriously"; Zhau and Kuh), summer bridge programs (Ackerman; Cabrera, Nora, and Castañeda), a first-year book (Benz, Comer, Juergensmeyer, and Lowry; Ferguson, Brown, and Piper), and first-year seminars (Williford, Chapman, and Kahrig). For the purposes of this study, students whose first academic semester intersected with one or more of these programs were selected to participate.

Recruiting participants for this study took place in the spring and summer of 2016, following the approval of Georgia State University's Internal Review Board (IRB number H16399). I requested permission from first-year writing instructors to visit their classes and invite students to participate in focus groups about their experiences in college thus far and the intersections of those experiences with their writing and success goals. Students enrolled in three kinds of FLCs were recruited: students placed in traditional FLCs, which structure students by majors into shared class schedules, students enrolled in Georgia State's summer bridge program, and students who persisted after one semester in Georgia State's fall-enrolled bridge program, referred to by students as "PEP" for Panther Excellence Program. Though all three groups are considered FLCs, the latter two programs are designed for students who enter college at risk of failing (determined by SAT/ACT scores and GPA) and thus come with extra support and requirements. Over 70% of Georgia State's freshmen belong to an FLC, which functions as an opt-out program for students, rather than opt-in.

In total, 21 students from all three FLCs agreed to participate. Representative of Georgia State's student population, most participants were students of color, with the majority identifying as African American. Par-

ticipants included commuters and residential students, and two students took at least one year off between high school and college. The participants belonged to ten different FLCs, bringing in experiences with varied instructors and schedules. Five focus groups were conducted, wherein students were asked 8–10 questions that ranged from general inquiries about their goals, needs, and expectations for college and composition to more specific questions regarding their experiences with Georgia State’s retention initiatives. At the end of each focus group, students were invited to participate in a one-on-one interview on a different day. Nine students, still representing the three types FLCs, agreed. Interview questions were based on the same topics addressed in focus groups but were tailored to individual experiences. Focus groups and interviews took no longer than 60 minutes. Following the recording and transcription stages of data collection, the data was coded for common themes. Because student voices are limited in current WPA and composition scholarship on the topic of retention, themes were developed organically rather than created prior to data analysis.

RESULTS

The findings from this study, presented in table 1, show that initiatives designed to move students toward graduation and at an efficient rate present benefits that retention scholars have long argued help students succeed, specifically offering extra academic support and social support (Tinto, “Dropout from Higher Education”; Zhou and Kuh). Participants especially highlighted the inclusive value of FLCs, which were said to help residential and commuter students alike cultivate relationships and hold themselves accountable academically. A third benefit of professional support was also reported of first-year seminar courses. Elements of those same initiatives, however, were identified for presenting challenges to how students manage their time and make plans. For example, George, a military veteran and commuter student, expressed frustration over his summer bridge program limiting how many credits students could take per semester because he wanted to graduate earlier than four years. A third challenge repeated by participants was the financial costs associated with some initiatives.

Discussing benefits of certain retention initiatives, such as students sharing schedules with their peers, revealed frustrations about those initiatives’ ancillary expectations. This was the case when participants elaborated on their summer bridge program’s out-of-of class requirements. These requirements include obtaining signatures from professors multiple times during a semester, attending study hall, meeting with peer coaches, and attending success workshops (e.g., “How to Meet with Your Professors” and “How

to Effectively Manage Stress”). Because individual initiatives can include beneficial and challenging attributes, certain components of initiatives are discussed separately (see table 1); for instance, though FLCs prove beneficial to students’ academic and social needs, the concept of fixed-schedules, or grouping students together by shared classes and credits, can also present noteworthy challenges. Likewise, out-of-class requirements collectively raised many concerns for students, but one of those requirements, supplemental instruction, was viewed by all participants as adding value to their education.

Table 1
Benefits and Challenges of Student Success Initiatives

Student Success Initiatives	Benefits		
	Academic Support	Social Support	Professional Support
Freshman Learning Communities	✓	✓	
Supplemental Instruction	✓		
Summer Bridge Programs	✓	✓	
First-Year Seminars			✓
Student Success Initiatives	Challenges		
	Time	Finances	Ability to Plan
Fixed-Schedules	✓	✓	✓
First-Year Seminars	✓	✓	
Out-of-Class Requirements	✓	✓	✓

The remainder of this section provides a broad view of first-year students’ experiences with Georgia State’s multiple retention initiatives. Examples will first be given to show the academic and social benefits offered by three different retention initiatives. Data is then presented to show how well-intended initiatives can hinder rather than support student success. What these findings reveal is that while some initiatives are designed to support students’ individual paths toward graduation, as diverse as those may be, others attempt to dictate how and when students can pursue grad-

uation, creating new challenges for students whose needs keep them from pursuing graduation on an institutionally-preferred timeline.

Benefits: Academic Support

A major benefit of Georgia State's retention initiatives is the academic support they provide. Originally prompted by Tinto's student integration model, institutions of higher education have looked internally to examine how they can better support students' classroom performance. Specifically, they have employed strategies that can assist in students' academic improvement, such as building student success centers, sorting students into learning communities, and offering supplemental instruction for courses that have proven difficult for students. This study has found that FLCs and supplemental instruction effectively position students to assess their individual academic needs and utilize the initiatives to improve their chances in school.

FLCs encourage students representing varied lifestyles and possessing a range of priorities to build academic support systems that work for them. As one example, many participants created with their peers a group messaging system by using the app GroupMe. A messaging app that can be downloaded to an iOS, Android, or Windows device, GroupMe allows users to send text and picture messages to as many people as they want in a single private conversation. For some students, like Destiny, a low-income, residential student who balanced participating in school clubs and job hunting with her first year of college, this app allowed her and her peers to work together on assignments and keep each other accountable, a practice she said continued following her first semester, when her and her cohort shared fewer classes. According to Destiny and other participants, the messaging app was used often to check in with peers about what they might have missed in class, set up study groups, and talk through assignments.

Providing similar opportunities for students to address their individual needs, supplemental instruction was repeatedly described by participants as a beneficial retention initiative. Optional for students in traditional FLCs and mandated for those enrolled in bridge programs, Georgia State's supplemental instruction program consists of free study groups for typically difficult courses led by current Georgia State students who have already excelled in that course. Supplemental instruction leaders attend course lectures and then prepare engaging lessons for their study groups to complement the lectures. Students in the summer bridge program are required to attend one of two supplemental instruction sessions offered per week during

the summer and fall bridge students are required to attend a set number of times throughout the semester.

All participants spoke highly of supplemental instruction because of its small group, student-centered dynamic. Illuminating the pedagogical style of one supplemental instruction leader for philosophy, Sydney describes why the mandatory tutoring worked for her: “[He] really summarizes it for us and gives us, kind of like, breaks us up and gives us a question and answer that’s the opposite of other groups and it really helps for the test.” Here, Sydney is referring to the practice of providing half the group with questions and the other half with answers so that students can work together to learn, not just what the solutions are, but how to achieve those solutions. Participants consistently talked about how the small group dynamic and their leaders’ different perspectives worked well to reinforce what they were learning in their courses.

Mandated supplemental instruction posed some time constraints for commuter students and prompted much confusion for students who repeatedly spoke of their institution’s poor communication regarding when sessions were available and how many times students needed to attend. Nonetheless, most students found the initiative useful because they were given space to address what they did not understand in their classes. Offering similar benefits to embedded tutoring programs (Severino and Knight), students realized with supplemental instruction the importance of speaking with someone else about their work, while also recognizing the value of support services more generally. Because, like FLCs, supplemental instruction gives room for students to address their academic needs, in this case through asking questions, students planned to or already were attending voluntarily following the semesters it was mandatory.

Benefits: Social Support

A second benefit of Georgia State’s retention initiatives, long aimed for by retention scholars, is their facilitation of students’ social connections. Scholars argue that the more students can feel connected to their school through relationships and identification with various social circles on campus, the more likely they will feel motivated to stay in school. Thus, universities have sought ways they can encourage students to make those connections, employing initiatives that range from requiring students to visit teachers’ office hours to offering lectures on joining student organizations. In some cases, students can find these efforts contrived and unhelpful, especially students who do not require membership into social circles or do not want to follow their university’s instructions for how to do so. According to this

study, FLCs and Georgia State's summer bridge program offer opportunities for all students to organically develop relationships in ways that serve their individual needs.

One example of how students were able to establish social connections that benefitted their success goals is the same strategy many employed within FLCs to support their academic needs: the GroupMe app. Beyond its academic benefits, students were able to use the app to better connect with their peers, especially since many mentioned that even though they were in cohorts, they did not always have time to talk with one another in classes. Eshan, a commuter student, explains how the GroupMe messaging system used within his cohort eased his experience feeling a part of the community at Georgia State:

Because I commute, I'm not exposed to everything that's going on, on campus, but with the group chat, they're talking about things that are going on. They're like hey, this is going on tonight. Y'all should come, and all this. And I'm more exposed to this stuff, so I'm more part of the clique I could say.

Recognizing his lifestyle did not allow him access to the same information as students living on campus, Eshan worked around that issue by appealing to the app. While using the app was an idea that came about organically from students, the social benefit may not have existed for everyone without the structure students were provided by FLCs, not unlike the friendships that often form from group work in composition classes.

Georgia State's summer bridge program was also credited for supporting students' social transition to the university community. Many participants, for example, commented on the opportunities provided for them by beginning school in the summer rather than fall; taken together, their comments suggest that an early start eases the transition into college because it lets them adjust to the university's environment and expectations. Brianna, a residential student, explains that the early start allowed her to reconsider her priorities before facing the backlash of carrying her partying mentality into the fall semester:

I feel like coming here in the summer versus fall made me mature because when I first got here, I was really excited, like, "yo, it's college, turn up!" Right? You know, I only have three classes, so it's okay for me to turn up a little bit, but now I'm realizing that you know, it's going to take more work. You can't just party every night. So little things that I would have to figure out in August, September, October and now it's late working toward finals, I figured out now, so in the fall I know how to say, nah I'm good.

Brianna alludes to a process of introspection. Because her acceptance to Georgia State was granted under the condition that she begin school in the summer, a condition that she and most summer bridge students felt grateful for, Brianna was positioned to address social pressures earlier and with less intensity than if she would have begun college in the fall.

In addition to learning lessons of work/life balance prior to managing a full-time class schedule, summer bridge students also mentioned the usefulness in establishing friendships and familiarizing themselves with the campus before the university would return to its standard, much higher number of attendees in the fall and spring semesters. While beginning in the summer was mandated for bridge students, the students took advantage of the early start to negotiate what kinds of lifestyles best served their goals; students also capitalized on the less populated campus to explore and become comfortable with the campus's urban setting. Regardless of whether students were traditional in age or nontraditional, commuter or resident, all were given time with the early start to acclimate themselves and accommodate their new lives within the university community.

Challenges: Ability to Plan

Though participants largely benefited from FLCs, supplemental instruction, and the summer bridge program, three popular retention initiatives, this case study has also revealed significant challenges faced by students, particularly those enrolled in bridge programs. These challenges, observed together, present the risks involved with universities encouraging all students to pursue graduation in the same way and underline the unique needs of students who commute, are nontraditional, or come from low-income households.

One challenge caused by retention initiatives involves students making short-term and long-term plans. The out-of-class requirements many students must fulfill, for example, often position students to rely on the communication and organization of administrators, a situation that makes students' daily schedules vulnerable to the priorities of others. Many participants described the program's communication about these requirements as "jumbled" and "hearsay" rather than organized in a manner that would help students get what they needed complete (Chris). Alicia elaborates on her experience managing the program's demands:

We were kind of just fish thrown into water having to fend for ourselves and I know that college kind of is, you know, you gotta do what you got to do, but whenever they explained this summer success to us at Incept [orientation], it was just kind of, yea you're going

to have required things that you're going to do, but it was just like "required things." So we're like, okay, I'm guessing that you know, when we get there, they're going to tell us these required things and they didn't tell us these required things. So, I think it was last week we just figured out at a workshop, um, last Friday we figured out that if you go to two SIs a week, you don't have to go the following week . . . which, we didn't know about that.

Alicia and many other participants discussed instances of not knowing exactly what they needed to complete, but also fearing that if they did not complete the requirements, they would risk their spot in the program. Beyond confusion about supplemental instruction, students also spoke about receiving notifications on their phones of meetings being rescheduled within a few minutes' notice and advising sessions being cancelled, but not rescheduled by the program's administrators. Thus, first-semester students were faced with having to figure out how to reschedule the sessions themselves to avoid getting into trouble. For commuter students, quick changes to their schedules were especially difficult to accommodate, but for all students, poor communication disrupted their ability to plan when they would devote time to different responsibilities each day. While summer bridge students are aware, prior to enrolling in the program, that they must be available between 9:30 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. during the week, students negotiating their multiple priorities with those expected of them from the program require to know ahead of time how their week will be structured. Not granting students this courtesy displays an institutional preference for students to integrate fully into the university community, an option not possible for all students.

Another obstacle found to impede long-term planning concerns the credit limits placed on summer bridge students' first three semesters, which can cause significant disruptions to their college trajectories. Although Georgia State's initiatives encourage students to graduate in four years, not every student enrolls in college with the same timeline. In a 2015 study of nontraditional students, for example, nontraditional female students were found to persist at higher rates if they attended school part-time and could maintain a balance among all their life roles. Furthermore, nontraditional students did not require social integration to perform well in college. Rather, their biggest priority was ensuring they could attend school while serving demands outside of the classroom (Markle). For George, a married commuter student with a part-time job, this meant graduating more quickly than what his summer bridge program had in mind for him:

I'm not trying to be here for four or five years; I'm trying to graduate in three, three and half because that's when the GI bill stops paying me. So I'm trying to get in, get out, and they're like oh yea, you know, you're only allowed to take 12 hours. It's like, what do you mean? I'm trying to take 14 or 15.

George was placed in the summer bridge program because, like others enrolled in the program, his freshman index score was below Georgia State's standards, a factor George attributes to taking the college entrance exam years after graduating high school. While he is grateful for being accepted, George does not require many of the same initiatives designed to support traditional students. Monitored study hall, weekly workshops, and credit limits, for example, are employed with the presumption that students need a university-designated time to do their homework, require formal discussions on stress management or financial literacy, and should pace themselves to avoid getting overwhelmed their first year. A 23-year-old who has already served four years in the military, George finds it difficult to study among a group of younger students: his definition of stress differs drastically from his peers; he lives on his own, sharing bills with his wife; and he does not view Georgia State's workshops as relevant to his needs. With many other responsibilities, George wants to finish school as quickly as possible, especially while he still qualifies for the GI bill. For George to fulfill his personal goals for success, therefore, he requires an institution that will allow him to construct his own path toward graduation, rather than engage in "hand-holding," as George often described his many out-of-class requirements.

Challenges: Finances

Data from this study has also presented disturbing financial challenges, particularly for students whose needs and lived experiences clash with pursuing success according to their institution's preferred timeline. This section will address two scenarios that speak to the unique position low-income students face should their schedules be restricted by credit limits.

Participating in the fall bridge program, or PEP, Destiny and Kennedy both knew they had not earned HOPE, the "merit-based award" given to students who graduate high school with a 3.0 GPA and go on to attend a public university in their state ("HOPE Scholarship"). If students earn HOPE, they receive tuition assistance to cover the costs of 30 credits per year along with student fees. Students must maintain a 3.0 GPA to continue receiving HOPE, and that GPA is reviewed every 30 credit hours until a degree is earned. If students do not earn HOPE coming out of high

school, their GPA will be reviewed after they earn 30 credits for reconsideration. This is an excellent opportunity for all students, but especially low-income students.

Destiny and Kennedy were very aware of the process for earning HOPE to avoid paying out of pocket for tuition after their first year. What they did not know was that PEP would not give them the opportunity to earn 30 credits between their fall and spring semesters. Destiny and Kennedy enrolled in PEP, in other words, without being informed they would have to pay for summer school and summer housing the following year. Destiny, who entered college with one AP credit, realized after she enrolled that she could not take 15 credits in the spring, and therefore, experienced stress during her school year to manage summer enrollment:

My mom has her own bills she has to pay and, you know, I don't like asking people for stuff. I've always wanted to get stuff done myself, so coming into fall, I paid half of what was due myself 'cause I didn't want to have to make my mom pay all of it because I didn't get the grades I should've got in high school. And doing step, she didn't want me to have to have a job. She wanted me to enjoy my freshman year. But doing step and stuff and then having to take a summer class, I had to stop stepping so I could get a job. And so, I could've still been stepping, but I'm stressing myself over a job because I have to now pay for summer school or else I will be behind because if I don't do summer school, I may not have the money to fully pay out the full amount for fall, and I won't be able to stay on campus and then I'll have to commute all the time, so it's just like, issue on top of issue . . . when I could've just went to the community college, so. If you don't have the funds for PEP, [it] creates a lot of complications.

The financial struggles Destiny faced managing her fall bridge program's restrictions and earning HOPE present tensions between a college lifestyle where students have time to integrate into the university community both academically and socially—as evidenced by Destiny's involvement with her school's step team—and the circumstances faced by low-income students. Destiny worked to experience college the way retention scholars suggest: she attended school full time, lived on campus, and got involved in a social community at the university. With the limitations placed on students enrolled in PEP, however, limitations employed because these students were deemed “at-risk,” Destiny was unable to afford the recommended lifestyle.

Offering “at-risk” students less coursework during their first semesters in college is well-intended. As discussed earlier, students enrolled in Georgia State's summer bridge program benefited greatly from beginning school

earlier, without the pressures of a full course load. However, dictating students' credit hours is also enforced with the presumption that all students can attend school on the university's preferred timeline, a presumption that favors the student who can afford to integrate completely into the university community, rather than those who must balance that time with earning money or juggling other responsibilities.

In another example that highlights the challenges retention initiatives can present to low-income students, Kennedy, who did not have any AP credits, offers an experience like Destiny's. In doing so, she gives insight to why some students must also pay for campus housing should they attend summer school:

Most college students take 15 credits their first semester, but PEP stopped it at 13 credits, so I mean, if I had taken 15 credits that last semester and this semester, I would automatically get HOPE in the fall and we wouldn't have this problem. But, since it was 13 and 13, I have 26 and now I have to somehow go to summer school, spend more money to make money in a way. So my parents have to try to come up with \$2,000 for me to go to summer school and they don't want me to stay at home since my home is in a bad condition, so they, you know, had to take out even more loans. So, my mom is trying to take out this parent plus loan to make sure I'm able to stay on campus. I mean she said if push comes to shove, then I'll have to stay home. It's not that big of a deal, but I mean, you know, we don't, I don't want to.

Kennedy's story is one that also includes the university reevaluating her GPA and explaining to her at the beginning of the fall semester that she did not have to enroll in PEP; however, Kennedy appreciated the free tutoring and support the program advertised and so opted to remain in it. At the time, Kennedy was not made aware of the program's limitations. As she does above, Kennedy spoke of the way her and her family strategized simply to raise the funds for her to attend Georgia State. Her father borrowed money from a friend, and Kennedy wrote a letter to someone she once worked for, asking for a donation. With greater transparency on how initiatives may impact the diverse circumstances of those enrolled, however, situations such as Kennedy's and Destiny's may have been avoided.

DISCUSSION: FACILITATING STUDENT SUCCESS IN WRITING PROGRAMS

The examples provided are just a few of many gathered for this study that show the ways in which initiatives representative of the EIC can benefit and challenge students' journeys toward graduation. Overall, the data on

first-year students' experiences with multiple retention initiatives reveals that those most beneficial to students' success are initiatives that help facilitate students' academic journeys, regardless of what those paths look like. Facilitative initiatives offer space for students to consider how best to use the support for their individual needs. FLCs, for example, bring students together through shared schedules and, therefore, facilitate students' regular interaction with each other. With this initiative, students of all incomes and ages, residents and commuters, are encouraged to leverage their eventual familiarity with peers to improve their chances of achieving academic success. Similarly, the most beneficial aspects of supplemental instruction and Georgia State's summer bridge program are the position they place students in to determine for themselves how the initiatives can best support their academic and social needs. Participants were required to attend supplemental instruction but spoke often of preparing questions for their instruction leaders that would assist with their personal understanding of the material; participants also overwhelmingly agreed they were more likely to make use of the resource in subsequent semesters because of their initial required sessions. Finally, while the summer bridge program can present obstacles for students, the program's most beneficial attribute was bringing students together for an early start. Students used the opportunity to reflect on who they wanted to be at State, developed friendships, and took advantage of the less populated campus environment to get acclimated. All these initiatives, then, appear crucial to facilitating students' individual pursuits of success because they create supportive spaces inclusive to the varied needs of Georgia State students.

Alternatively, the initiatives most challenging for students are those that try to dictate students' paths toward success. These initiatives, while well intended, control or restrict how students advance through school by presuming their needs and limiting how they might make use of support services. Assigning numerous out-of-class requirements for first-semester students, for example, intends to engage multiple practices suggested by scholars for supporting retention, such as giving students information through workshops, increasing faculty-student interactions through grade check-ins, and encouraging valued habits by sectioning off time for homework with monitored study halls. These initiatives can often cost students time, however, which is harder to come by for commuters and students who hold full- or part-time jobs. In George's case, these initiatives are also not designed with all students' needs in mind, decreasing the likelihood for every student to find the initiative worthy of sacrificing time outside of class. Finally, though credit limits seek to support at-risk students by not overwhelming them with heavy workloads their first year, they can

also create financial stresses and impede students' planned trajectories through school.

With a quick search on the WPA listserv, scholars can observe the increasing pressure faced by WPAs to improve success rates in first-year writing. Whether they are charged with designing in-house initiatives or implementing strategies recommended by external organizations, WPAs can work to ensure their programs support students' diverse pathways toward success by prioritizing initiatives that facilitate rather than dictate students' engagement with support. Ideally these initiatives would promote community, contextualize academic assistance, and give students greater agency through increased transparency.

The possibilities for how these traits may be employed are varied by institutional context and resources, but they are not far removed from the suggested practices of composition studies. To promote community aligns with composition's longstanding preferences for group work, peer review, and conferencing. Yet, situated in the conversation of retention, the benefits feeling a part of a community have on students' academic success bring renewed relevance to our field's fight for improved labor practices and employment stability (Horner). Contextualizing academic assistance, likewise, encourages the continued support of writing centers; yet, when prompted by greater institutional attention, WPAs may advocate for other methods, such as embedded tutoring and credit-bearing writing studio labs, to request further resources and expand their student outreach (Kim and Carpenter). Offering students' greater agency through transparency, finally, calls on WPAs to examine programmatic and institutional initiatives that presume students' needs, goals, and lived experiences. Doing so may encourage a reexamination of placement procedures (Brunk-Chavez and Fredericksen), an adoption of anti-racist assessment practices (Inoue), and greater scrutiny of initiatives that promote a single college lifestyle: inflexible class scheduling, credit limits, and out-of-class requirements.

The pressure from our political and economic moment encourages all who have a stake in higher education to invest in keeping students in school until graduation. The financial consequences of students dropping out are widely felt, from the individual and their family to the university and greater economy. Encouraging students to graduate efficiently, however, is not possible for everyone enrolled, and WPAs are well-positioned to ensure that the call from retention organizations to support students' success is met with initiatives that are inclusive to multiple pathways through school.

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WPAs as University Learning Space Managers: Theorizing and Guiding the Creation of Effective Writing Classrooms

Julia Voss

Despite the significant impact that the material conditions of classroom space exert on writing instruction, WPA scholarship has failed to attend to these learning spaces in a focused and systematic way. As a result, the classrooms where writing courses are taught lack a pedagogically motivated advocate, resulting in conditions that often obstruct innovative and even mainstream writing pedagogies. Positioning the infrastructural work of classroom management as critical to the effective and ethical delivery of writing courses and writing programs, this article (1) frames learning space management as part of WPAs' pedagogical and administrative mandate and (2) offers strategies for classroom management at the programmatic and institutional levels that allow WPAs to situate writing programs and administrators as leaders of learning space design on college campuses.

One of the most ubiquitous elements of writing pedagogy has been the least visible in our scholarship: the physical classrooms in which our classes are taught. Although online writing instruction is thriving, the typical writing class still takes place in a brick-and-mortar classroom. As a result, classroom design and maintenance significantly impact the instruction writing programs provide. However, our literature overlooks these aspects of WPA work. This failure to consider classroom space is especially troubling given its significance at turning points in our field's history. Edwin M. Hopkins noted in the inaugural 1910 issue of *English Journal* that composition's use of a laboratory-style method of interactive, applied instruction without requiring a physical laboratory allowed administrators to increase class sizes and course loads to the inhumane levels still seen today. Donald Murray detailed the material requirements for the 1970s process classroom, which

emphasized students' textual production rather than reception of canonical texts. The increasing availability of microcomputers prompted a burst of scholarship in the 1990s on technology-rich writing environments that invited students to compose digitally. And in the decades since, changes in writing studies and higher education—emphasizing active learning, differentiating face-to-face and online instruction, diversifying the modes and genres in which students compose, and attending to the social, embodied nature of composing—have promoted the creation of specialized writing centers, writing studios, and technology-rich writing classrooms.

Unfortunately, attention to spaces for writing instruction has typically been restricted to these “special” spaces, of which most writing programs have few or none. Respondents to a recent nationwide survey of WPAs at two- and four-year institutions reported that sixty-five percent of the writing courses in their programs are taught in what Thomas T. Barker and Fred O. Kemp call proscenium classrooms, designed to focus attention on a single speaker (the teacher) addressing a silent audience (the students).¹ Of course, design isn't destiny: a classroom designed for banking-style education doesn't necessarily prevent liberatory pedagogy. The trouble, however, is that the design and maintenance of general-purpose proscenium classrooms—used by all departments, owned by none—tend to fall to facilities, IT, and other institutional stakeholders not typically invested in pedagogy, especially writing pedagogy. Reflecting their priorities, these stakeholders' designs often emphasize economy, uniformity, and durability rather than pedagogical research from writing studies or the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL).

In light of this vacuum around pedagogical leadership of learning space, WPAs should attend to classroom space as a matter of systematic pedagogical concern. This call echoes recommendations made by computers and composition specialists (see Knight; Walls, Schopieray, and DeVoss), but goes beyond their specific focus on technology-rich writing spaces to include all classrooms used for writing instruction, reflecting our field's laboratory instruction methods and infrastructural needs. Drawing on subfields of writing studies that have attended to “special” spaces—writing labs, centers, and studios—and on SoTL research on learning space design, I identify tools and approaches WPAs can use to manage classroom space, offering concrete, strategic steps WPAs can take to inscribe pedagogical best practices into the physical infrastructure of writing classrooms. This argument (1) extends Dana Gierdowski's case for attending to research in our own and adjacent higher education fields on space-conscious pedagogy (“Studying,” “Flexible”) and (2) addresses the aversion WPA scholarship has often shown to managerial work, a tendency which harms our peda-

gogical and intellectual mission. It positions WPAs to use the slow pace of infrastructural change to promote the accessible, active learning that writing studies advocates.

THE NEED FOR WRITING CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT: WHY CLASSROOM DESIGN MATTERS FOR WRITING PROGRAMS

Physical writing classrooms have largely been ignored by WPAs, who have historically ceded the ground of learning space to Fordist models of design and management dictated by higher education's non-pedagogical stakeholders. Ruth Mirtz describes how the resulting proscenium classrooms encourage an authoritarian, one-to-many, passive form of learning that clashes both with best practices in writing pedagogy and with the information-saturated, multivocal communicative reality of the twenty-first century. Mirtz's critique reflects an individual approach to classroom management, the kind of "hacking" tactics described by Douglas M. Walls, Scott Schopieray, and Dànielle Nicole DeVoss, which focus on individual spaces and cultivate personal relationships to sidestep restrictive institutional procedures and infrastructures. Approaching an administrative issue like classroom management at the individual level, however, can't address the effects learning environments have on writing instruction at the programmatic level. As Tim Peebles warns, this type of tactical, lone-wolf administrative style relies heavily on personal initiative and connections, concentrating agency in a single individual without whose energy and network initiatives tend to collapse. This sustainability concern is especially serious given the slow pace of infrastructural change.

The systematic management of general-purpose classroom space offers an as yet unrealized opportunity for WPAs to shape the writing instruction students receive. When space and materiality have been discussed in WPA scholarship, the terms are often used metaphorically to describe abstract institutional structure (see Haviland and White) or funding (see Reiff et al.; Finer and White-Farnham). The WPA research that has addressed classroom space and infrastructure has typically done so in response to changes in instructional delivery imposed by external forces (see Bodmer, Rickly, and Neff). Classroom space comes up incidentally in this WPA research, which tends to focus on the development of curricular and administrative structures while ignoring the material learning spaces required to enact them. For example, after spending thirteen pages detailing the history of Purdue University's composition program and the process of developing its new curriculum, Irwin Weiser spends one paragraph describing how the computer labs and conferencing spaces that made this curriculum possible were procured,

designed, and built, despite the fact that without them—program directors and upper administrators agreed—the curriculum would fail. Positioning classroom infrastructure as peripheral to WPA work creates the erroneous impression that instructional delivery can be separated from classroom space.

WPA scholars tend to ignore classroom administration because of its managerial nature, which doesn't align with the ways WPA work has been theorized and accounted for in recent decades. Donna Strickland observes that although scholars publishing in the early issues of *WPA* asked managerial questions, since then, these questions have been strategically reconceptualized as teaching concerns to make the work more palatable and familiar to humanistically trained WPAs and the English departments that typically employ them. Against this tradition, Louise Wetherbee Phelps's theorizing of WPA work as a design art asserts the scope and intellectual significance of WPAs' managerial work, providing relevant frames for its application to the systematic management of classroom space (see figure 1).

Phelps argues that important system-wide levels of organization (services, skin, structure, and site) are often ignored by simplistic approaches to WPA work. I argue that classroom management pushes WPAs beyond the lower institutional levels to which they often restrict their work. This example of a “vertical,” institutionally involved approach to WPA work performs the intellectual work of management Strickland describes, offering a way to engage in the design art approach to WPA work that Phelps advocates. James E. Porter et al. further theorize this kind administrative work, arguing that careful empirical research allows WPAs to enact (not just articulate) institutional critique by creating policies that shape material and political conditions. One of the few examples of such scholarship is DeVoss, Ellen Cushman, and Jeffrey T. Grabill's research on the impact infrastructure has on writing instruction, which considers the policies and standards that regulate the use of learning spaces (such as budget, support, access permissions, and envisioned purpose) as well as their material features. This scholarship lays the theoretical groundwork for WPA management of classroom space, asserting its alignment with our disciplinary mission.

<p style="text-align: center;">Stuff</p> <p>Program details (e.g. individual course sections offered by program)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">WHERE WPAs TYPICALLY OPERATE</p> <p style="text-align: center;">—</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Phelps’ critique</i></p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Space Plan</p> <p>Program’s activity seen from insider perspective (e.g. program curriculum)</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">Services</p> <p>Labor that supports program’s work (e.g. teaching, research, outreach, et cetera)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">WHERE CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT OCCURS</p> <p style="text-align: center;">—</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>My assertion of classroom management as a component of WPA design art</i></p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Skin</p> <p>Program seen from the outside (texts that make it visible from the outside, e.g. rules, general education requirements, vision statements, et cetera)</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">Structure</p> <p>Wider institutional systems of time, space, relationship (e.g. credit/grades, tenure, shared governance systems, institutional budgeting systems)</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">Site</p> <p>Entire institution itself, which is part of the larger system of higher education</p>	

Figure 1. Application of Phelps’s organizational diagram of higher education institutions through the lens of design thinking, illustrating (1) Phelps’ argument for how WPA work (should) extend throughout all levels of the (rows in left column), (2) her critique of the limited scope to which many WPAs restrict their action (black box) and (3) my argument for the comprehensive design work involved in classroom management (column on right).²

TOOLS AND IDEAS FOR MANAGING WRITING CLASSROOMS FROM “SPECIAL” WRITING SPACES AND LEARNING SPACE DESIGNERS

Ignoring infrastructure limits the impact and longevity of the field-defining pedagogies that writing programs strive to implement. Subfields of writing studies and the higher education field of learning space design address this gap in WPA scholarship and can guide program directors in the intra-institutional work of managing classroom space. Taken together, these research traditions suggest interventions WPAs can make in classroom management at the programmatic and institutional levels. In the sections that follow, I

draw on these research areas to develop recommendations for classroom management strategies WPAs can use to

- document conditions in writing classrooms and mobilize this information,
- develop proposals for external stakeholders to develop/improve writing classrooms, and
- leverage this knowledge and experience to place the WPA in a leadership role in decisions about campus learning space.

These recommendations (including “starter lists” of references to further research on learning space to facilitate programming and proposal writing) can be used either in part as individual initiatives or in full as phases of a long-term plan for comprehensive learning space management, allowing WPAs to adapt these strategies to their programs’ needs and institutional contexts.

PROGRAM-LEVEL INTERVENTIONS: USING DATA TO DOCUMENT AND MANAGE WRITING CLASSROOM SPACE

As a first step, with or without support from other stakeholders, WPAs can shape the delivery of writing instruction in their programs through active management of their program’s classrooms. This is especially important for the general-purpose classrooms writing programs typically rely on, which are spread across campus and vary considerably in design and condition. In order to assess the effects of classroom space and make cases not only for flashy new construction but also for essential, mundane administrative concerns affecting pedagogy (like equipment replacement, course caps, and room scheduling), WPAs need data on classrooms to understand the material conditions of writing instruction in their programs and work to improve them.

Turning to the history of writing labs, Cynthia L. Selfe, Benjamin Lauren, and Susan Miller-Cochran and Gierdowski draw on their experience managing technology-rich writing environments to demonstrate program directors’ need for data documenting how infrastructure relates to instructional efficiency, student learning, retention, and other concerns. One limitation of this writing studies scholarship, however, is its focus on case studies of individual learning spaces which are themselves atypical for their institutional contexts. However, learning space design builds on writing studies arguments for collecting data on learning spaces, offering tools specially tailored to documenting the conditions of learning spaces and their impact, designed for large scale use. Informed by SoTL research

on instructional effectiveness, Malcolm Brown et al. of the EDUCAUSE Learning Initiative offer the Learning Space Rating System (LSRS). The LSRS assesses individual learning spaces according to

- environmental quality (lighting, temperature, acoustics, accessibility);
- layout and furnishings (navigability of the space, seating density, furniture flexibility, writable surfaces); and
- technology and tools (networked connectivity, A/V interface and control, distributed interactivity).

These attributes are used to assign each space a score that quickly identifies rooms with the most severe issues and those that can serve as models.

Once problematic classrooms have been identified, additional research on technology-rich writing classrooms and higher education learning spaces can help address these challenging classrooms. Scholarship on technology-rich writing spaces from the 1990s through the 2010s (see Selfe; Handa; Myers; Bemer, Moeller, and Ball; Gierdowski, Carpenter et al., and Purdy and DeVoss) suggests a general consensus on desirable features for writing instruction:

- preference for “pod” seating that encourages interaction between students to highlight the social nature of rhetoric and composing;
- classroom layouts that support a variety of different solo, small group, and large group activities facilitated either by differently-designed areas of the classroom or by mobile furniture that allows for reconfiguration; and
- multiple display surfaces/technologies throughout the classroom that allow both students and instructors to publicly compose/share ideas, display and comment on texts, etc.

Given the lack of WPA managerial training Strickland describes and the literature’s minimal attention to classroom space, another learning space management tool also developed by the EDUCAUSE Learning Initiative can help WPAs advocate for the classroom features described above. The Flexible Learning Environments Exchange (FLEXspace)—a collaborative, searchable database indexing learning space design projects at universities around the world, including photos, floor plans, spec sheets, case studies, and other resources documenting existing spaces—can guide WPAs venturing into (re)designing writing classrooms. Informed by data on local learning spaces, WPAs can use FLEXspace to generate ideas for classroom renovation and building projects based on what they’ve learned about their program’s learning space needs.

Recommendations

Recommendations for program-level classroom management interventions fall into four areas: (1) making writing instruction environments a program priority, (2) gathering data on classroom conditions and their effects, (3) developing data-supported proposals for classroom (re)design, and (4) planning and assessing infrastructural change in stages.

Recommendation 1. Adjust existing writing program practices to bring learning space into the purview of the WPA:

- Emphasize the importance of learning space in faculty development for writing instructors, informed by research on active, space-conscious writing instruction by Kim and Carpenter, Carpenter (“Flipping”), Charlton, Gierdowski (Geographies), and others.
- Provide instructors with accessible contact information to troubleshoot classroom infrastructure issues on the spot: IT help-desk for issues with projectors/wifi, facilities for broken/inaccessible desks, et cetera.
- Supported by the groundwork laid by the first two suggestions, designate the WPA as the point-person to whom instructors should report both immediate and long-term/cumulative classroom infrastructure issues to give the WPA a comprehensive sense of the state of writing classrooms, developing a more informed sense of the conditions of the classrooms where writing is taught and their impact on instruction.
- Take advantage of teaching observations to record details about classroom conditions, paying special attention to any infrastructure that inhibits or supports writing instruction. When debriefing with the instructor, ask about how the classroom challenges and/or facilitates their pedagogy.

These shifts in emphasis make the classroom more visible at the level of the individual course, (1) raising instructors’ awareness about classrooms’ affordances and constraints and (2) clearly stating that the program is interested in these issues. The information thus gathered about general-purpose writing classrooms can also be used immediately to generate lists of preferred/undesirable rooms for writing instruction, which the WPA can use when scheduling classes, either independently (if the program schedules its own classrooms) or in concert with a central scheduling office.

Recommendation 2. To more systematically document classroom conditions, use the LSRS (or a modification of it) to evaluate classrooms where writing is taught. One advantage of this tool is the formatted spreadsheet the LSRS provides (see Brandt et al.) which provides an automatically gen-

erated quantitative snapshot of conditions across classrooms that can help WPAs zero in quickly on the most problematic and most effective classrooms to prioritize redesign work and provide in-house models. Quantified measurements also provide data and visuals that can be rhetorically effective when persuading internal and external audiences of learning space (re) design proposals (see below).

Recommendation 3. Use FLEXspace (Flexible Learning Environments Exchange) to develop (re)designs for writing classrooms, tailored to the needs demonstrated by local data. Some of the classroom issues identified may involve maintenance, capacity, and accessibility: use these basic upgrade mandates as opportunities to deliberately shape learning spaces on campus by drawing on fleshed-out models that address basic functionality while advancing writing pedagogy.

Recommendation 4. Plan change in stages through pilot projects with the deliberate intention to iteratively shape classroom space to support writing instruction. The process of designing and overseeing classroom renovation and construction will provide ample opportunities to learn about university operations, vendors, quality of materials, receptivity of students and instructors to design changes, anticipated versus actual impact on writing instruction, etc. Innovate slowly, in increments of one or a few classrooms at a time, beginning with classrooms whose conditions most impede writing instruction, and monitor the impact of those changes using focus groups with instructors and students, assessment of student artifacts, targeted course evaluation questions, and other tools. Use the information collected to inform each successive renovation project to improve design ideas and methods over time and to demonstrate to stakeholders the value added by (re)design. This iterative, small project approach also has the benefits of (1) producing less expensive proposals, which can make funding easier, and (2) scaffolding WPAs' learning about classroom design as they add this responsibility to their already-burgeoning portfolio.

WORKING WITH INSTITUTIONAL MISSION TO (RE) DESIGN WRITING CLASSROOM SPACE

As Porter et al. note, prominent institutional texts like mission statements, strategic plans, and other institution-level rhetoric outline institutions' distinctive traditions, ambitions, and characteristics, articulating their identity and guiding their actions. Working with these institutional texts can allow WPAs to advocate for infrastructural change based on the teaching and learning experiences the institution commits to providing and what scholars of (writing) pedagogy know about how to facilitate them, pro-

viding powerful warrants for arguments about classroom space ranging from basics like maintenance to infrastructural improvements like upgrading built-in technology to spatially inflected pedagogical issues like room scheduling and class size. To ensure that writing instruction aligns with institutional mission, Elizabeth Vander Lei and Melody Pugh recommend that WPAs both link writing program goals to institutional mission and work to shape institutional mission. However, they don't detail how to do this, especially in the unfamiliar and slow-moving domain of institutional infrastructure.

Research on writing/multiliteracy centers addresses this challenge, illustrated when mission documents from the Noel Studio for Academic Creativity at Eastern Kentucky University are compared with institutional mission documents (see table 1).

Executive Director Russell Carpenter (Review of *Peripheral Visions*) describes the benefits of such alignment, which have made the Noel Studio a showpiece used by administrators to demonstrate ECU's commitment to revitalizing the campus. Its vanguard status has placed the staff at the center of this major university initiative, such that the Noel Studio became part of the Quality Enhancement Plan submitted to ECU's regional accreditor (Carpenter and Apostel). Carpenter ("Shaping") also theorizes the Noel Studio's physical design in terms of its support for rhetorical composing across modes, citing the professional standards of the Council of Writing Program Administrators and the International Writing Centers Association (Noel Studio, "About") to add the imprimatur of disciplinary expertise to the Noel Studio's implementation of ECU's institutional mission. In this way, the leadership role Carpenter and the Noel Studio assert in ECU's campus revitalization has integrated writing studies expertise and traditions into the design of technology-rich creative learning spaces at the institutional level.

EDUCAUSE's LSRS can also help link classroom space and institutional mission as Carpenter and the Noel Studio have done. While part B of the LSRS (described above) assesses individual classrooms, part A focuses on classrooms' alignment with institutional mission, policies, and initiatives relating to teaching and learning.³ LSRS part A interrogates how closely each space corresponds to the campus's overall academic goals, learning space master plan (if such a plan exists), and campus-wide technology infrastructure plan. Reaching outside the institution into the scholarship of teaching and learning, LSRS part A also considers how well the space facilitates best practices in pedagogy (as defined by SoTL research). This research-based framework provides another warrant for expending resources on classroom (re)design.

Table 1

Illustration of parallels between ECU strategic plan and Noel Studio mission

Noel Studio “Vision and Mission” statement	EQU 2020 strategic plan
Name identifies the center with “academic creativity” and shifts disciplinary “multiliteracy center” terminology to “studio” to align with ECU’s institutional values	Values “intellectual vitality, which is characterized which is characterized by knowledge, scholarly inquiry, creativity, critical thinking, and curiosity” (EQU 1)
Goal is to “create innovative support for communication, research, and teaching and learning initiatives that enhance deep learning at ECU”	Ongoing commitment to “critical/creative thinking and communication skills” (EQU 3) and new initiatives to invest in students’ success, especially through “collaborative and innovative student engagement in and out of the classroom” (EQU 7)
Envisions itself as a “transformational physical and virtual hub for innovation in pedagogy, critical and creative thinking, research, and communication”	‘Invest in the physical infrastructure of our campus, improving technology [and] creating creative spaces’ (EQU 11)
Commitment to serving the ECU community, the region, and the nation	“[B]ecome the 1st choice partner in regional educational, economic, cultural, and social development” and “Become nationally prominent in fields with regional relevance’ (EQU 12)

Recommendations

Use the models and tools described above to frame data supported proposals for classroom (re)design in terms of institutional mission in order to leverage institutional values, initiatives, and goals as warrants for requests.

- With data-identified classroom issues in mind, review the institution’s mission statement, vision and values statements, strategic plans, and learning outcomes, using part A of the LSRS as a lens to identify values and initiatives that speak to teaching and learning.

- Consider where these commitments align with best practices in writing instruction and the program's infrastructural needs, such as updated technology, furniture supporting collaboration and active learning, reduced class sizes, etc., supported by the writing studies expertise captured in documents like CWPA resolutions, CCCC position statements, and Linda Adler-Kassner and Elizabeth Wardle's *Naming What We Know*.
- Incorporate SoTL research on active, emplaced learning (such as Carpenter, *Cases*; Chism and Bickford; Oblinger; and the *Journal of Learning Spaces*) to add multidisciplinary research support for learning space proposals.

Use concerns shared by the institution and pedagogical research—supported by data gathered within the writing program—to frame proposals for improvements to writing classrooms.

SHAPING WRITING CLASSROOM SPACE AT THE INSTITUTIONAL LEVEL

Managing classroom space (especially general-purpose classroom space) involves dealing with the multiple layers of institutional structure Phelps outlines. Due to their experience with “special” learning spaces that operate outside of the general classroom inventory, researchers designing and studying writing centers, labs, and studios provide valuable guidance on such cross-institutional collaboration. However, these are typically individual spaces, usually managed by a single department or program. To scale up such collaborations—integrating them into institutional systems of classroom management to encompass the large number of general-purpose classrooms used by an entire writing program—scholarship on learning space design at the institutional level is instructive.

Rebecca Burnett et al.'s description of the overhaul of the writing and communication program at Georgia Tech illustrates the possibilities of considering pedagogy and infrastructure in tandem, treating learning space as a programmatic pedagogical issue. When the program revamped its learning outcomes to emphasize studio-style digital composing, it was able to capitalize on concurrent building projects at Georgia Tech to construct new classrooms specifically designed to support the new curriculum's learning outcomes by including features like mobile furniture and multiple whiteboards, digital projectors, and digital screens allowing students to access, produce, share, and critique multimodal digital texts. Significantly, this faculty-led building project included the program's “regular” classrooms, rather than only a handful of demonstration classrooms used for specialized elective courses.⁴ However, while the process Burnett et al. describe of

working with multiple external stakeholders from Georgia Tech's Office of Capital Planning and Facilities, architects, building designers, and IT professionals to design classrooms specifically for writing instruction shows what's possible when writing programs design their own classrooms, this situation is atypical.

Aimée Knight's account of the often opaque year-long negotiation between the communication department at St. Joseph's University, the college's associate dean, the associate vice president of information technology, and engineers from campus media services over the design of a new multimodal composition classroom shows describes the more common case, where administrators and non-academic units like facilities and IT play leading roles in learning space design. While Knight's department was able to work through the process's long silences and delayed/missing information to create a space that met their needs, the black box nature of the typical learning space design process can have serious consequences for writing instruction. Sara Littlejohn and Kimberly M. Cuny's account of the creation of the Digital Literacy Center at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro highlights the costs of limiting program directors' access to the design process. Although the directors wanted a light-filled, open space reflecting the social process of multimodal composing advocated by the center's pedagogy, they were allocated a windowless, low-ceilinged basement space, broken up by many load-bearing pillars. Decisions about funding and where to locate the center were made before the directors became involved and limited the scope of the center's design to modifications of the allotted space. The levels of institutional bureaucracy involved in learning space management that Knight and Littlejohn and Cuny describe constitute another challenge for WPAs seeking to attend to classroom space as a component of writing instruction. As Walls, Schopieray, and DeVoss note in their MSU-based recommendations for hacking individual classrooms, responsibility for infrastructure tends to be highly diffused, which complicates the management of classroom space considerably by requiring substantial knowledge of the institution and political capital to negotiate with numerous stakeholders.⁵

Learning space researcher Deborah J. Bickford sums up these problems in terms of where leadership in learning space design is located: faculty (primary users concerned with classrooms' support for learning) often play a limited role, while facilities managers (who don't use the spaces regularly and tend to prioritize economy and durability) typically lead the process. To reverse this tendency and promote the kind of pedagogically driven design experience Burnett et al. experienced, Bickford recommends restructuring the process of learning space design: faculty should be centrally involved

from the outset as “project shepherds” (49) to ensure that learning remains a primary focus, and facilities managers should be held accountable for how well new spaces support learning (rather than evaluated primarily on the building project’s efficiency and economy). However, Bickford fails to address two critical issues: (1) tasking faculty project shepherds with leading the occasional classroom building project entails considerable work, which is likely to fall into the minimally rewarded “service” category (when not connected to a research agenda) and (2) the implication that input from pedagogically focused stakeholders is needed when classrooms are built, but not throughout their long lives—as physical infrastructure deteriorates, curriculum and pedagogy evolve, instructional technology changes, and student population shifts—overlooks the need to attend to classroom space as an ongoing pedagogical responsibility.

Rather than attending to classroom space using a one-and-done approach concerned only with design, Beth Ingram et al. describe the benefits of systematic learning space management by standing committee at the University of Iowa. Acknowledging the need for widespread input and ongoing management of learning space, Iowa’s Learning Spaces Advisory Committee (LSAC) includes faculty, administrative, and staff members and addresses the pedagogical, financial, and logistical issues involved in learning space management, guiding new building projects and renovations of existing facilities. Increasing numbers of universities are forming learning space committees like the LSAC, tasked with:⁶

- Drafting/advising the institution’s strategic plan for learning space
- Creating long-range campus building/renovation plans, informed by systematic evaluation of learning spaces
- Approving and/or guiding proposals for new/renovated learning spaces
- Developing campus-wide standards for different classroom types
- Recommending classroom type ratios and optimizing classroom use

Notably, WPAs aren’t included as standing members of the LSAC or similar committees at other institutions. I argue that because of the relative size of writing programs and their commitment to pedagogy, WPAs should participate *ex officio* in this kind of institution-level learning space management work, shaping infrastructural policy through the attention to pedagogy, research, and administration that defines our field.

Recommendations

Recommendations from previous sections focus on crafting proposals at the program level, focused on individual projects, which will necessarily appeal to other campus units and funding sources. The recommendations in this section suggest actions WPAs can take to get involved in managing classroom space at the institutional level, advocating especially for the general-purpose classrooms used for writing instruction and ensuring that writing studies pedagogical expertise shapes campus infrastructure.

Recommendation 1. If a campus learning space committee exists, request that the WPA become an *ex officio* standing member. This may take some detective work, as the committee name (such as the Instructional Spaces Advisory Committee, Campus Space Planning Committee, Innovative Learning Building Committee, etc.) and its organizational location/reporting line (faculty senate, provost's office, center for teaching, etc.) can vary. Taking on this work may also require the additional approval of department chairs, deans, and other administrators to whom the WPA reports. Support the request by highlighting the writing program's reach across campus learning spaces and the valuable data on classroom conditions this generates, the tools and systems the program has implemented to manage classroom space, and any successful classroom (re)design projects the program has completed (described above).

As an institutional citizen rooted firmly in teaching, scholarship, and administration, the WPA is an ideal learning space committee advocate for the pedagogical elements of institutional mission, an important counterweight to the tendency of other stakeholders (such as facilities, IT, and upper administration) to focus on cost, efficiency, and untested flashy technology rather than the spaces' contributions to learning. The writing program's extensive use of general-purpose classrooms and program-level design projects also helps the WPA to (1) draw the committee's attention to maintaining/upgrading existing classrooms and (2) work through small, targeted interventions (as well as big, high-profile projects).

Recommendation 2. If the campus has no learning space committee, propose that one be formed, with the WPA as an *ex officio* member. Some strategies to consider when making this proposal:

- Draw on higher education research (such as Temple and Barnett; Haggans; Milliron, Plinske, and Noonan-Terry) demonstrating the integral role learning space plays in delivering on commitments to learning-focused aspects of institutional mission (like learning outcomes, instructional quality/innovation, providing access to higher

education, et cetera to learning space) to assert the need for a learning space committee.

- Position the WPA as a natural fit for and leader of this committee based on program-level writing classroom assessment and (re)design work, capitalizing on the organic learning space design leadership Knight and Carpenter (Review of *Peripheral Visions*) describe growing out of their programmatic learning space (re)design and assessment.
- Draw on knowledge of institutional policies and politics to identify other learning infrastructure stakeholders to include on the learning space committee, such as facilities, IT, the registrar, librarians, the teaching center, faculty representatives, etc.
- Negotiate compensation for the WPAs' leadership role on the learning space committee in the form of program resources, course releases, administrative support, stipends, etc. to reflect the magnitude of the task, its addition to the WPAs' traditional responsibilities, and its significant contribution to the institution's teaching mission.

Joining or forming a learning space committee is an institution-level move that formalizes the infrastructural leadership WPAs engage in when they assess and (re)design classrooms at the programmatic level, giving WPAs a voice at the table where decisions about classroom management are made.

SUPPORTING WRITING AND RAISING ITS PROFILE THROUGH WPA CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

Managing writing classroom space is significant work, in the sense that it (1) deeply affects writing instruction and (2) demands considerable work beyond the “low” institutional levels to which WPAs often restrict their work. Reflecting DeVoss, Cushman, and Grabill's capacious understanding of infrastructure as both policies and material features that structure activity, managing writing classrooms entails not only changing the spaces in which writing is taught, but also changing writing programs' practices of assessment and professional development and their involvement with university administration. This work extends from writing programs' pedagogical mandate, but hasn't yet been systematically recognized as a WPA managerial responsibility with significant implications for teaching, research, and institutional status. The latest version of the CWPA's guidelines for self-study for writing programs preparing for visits by the CWPA Consultant-Evaluator Service begins to move in this direction with questions about the offices and labs the writing program occupies and the accessibility of classrooms for faculty and students with disabilities, which is an important step. However, adding questions that ask programs to document

their classrooms (as described above) would provide consultant-evaluators with more of the information needed to address classroom space in their recommendations as a vital part of instructional delivery.

Advocating for the spatial needs of writing instruction has important programmatic implications. Echoing the relationship between composition's spatial demands and the exploitative delivery systems Hopkins described a century ago, Christopher Scott Wyatt notes that in the twenty-first century, writing's presumed immateriality has made writing courses a target for movement online for fiscal—rather than pedagogical—reasons.⁷ Material classroom conditions continue to be a fundamental part of both how writing instruction is delivered and how writing programs are positioned physically and politically. The recommendations offered here for documenting writing programs' spatial needs and intervening to advocate for them position WPAs to become learning space experts on their campuses. Their expertise sets WPAs up not only to advocate for occupying and/or creating classrooms that facilitate twenty-first century writing pedagogies, but also situates them up to assume a leadership role in the institution's planning for and management of learning spaces across campus. This reflects the design art approach to WPA work Phelps advocates, an additional form of administrative power and labor with strong pedagogical and research underpinnings, embodying the kind of applied expertise of WPA work that is coming to define the discipline in the twenty-first century (see Serviss and Voss). The emphasis the recommendations offered here place on documenting classroom conditions and their impact in the form of assessments and proposals underscores the empirical, data-driven approach to WPA work that Chris M. Anson argues for, providing concrete levels of intervention at the programmatic and institutional levels that individual WPAs can adapt to their institutional contexts and apply at varying institutional scales.

Where Strickland outlines how managerial labor has been excluded from the disciplinary and intellectual identity of the WPA and Porter et al. theorize the connections between the managerial and the intellectual, attending to the spatial needs of writing instruction offers a path for WPAs to engage in this work in ways that will benefit writing instruction while raising the program's institutional profile by positioning it as a campus leader in spatial design and assessment. Performing this leadership role will involve WPAs in conversations where the kinds of decisions that Hopkins and Wyatt decry are made, giving WPAs a voice in institution-level, infrastructure-focused discussions that deeply shape writing instruction but which—as Knight and Cuny and Littlejohn warn—often exclude those who direct and teach in writing programs. The approach to WPA work

advocated here resonates with the applied, expertise-driven, locally responsive Doug Hesse offers as a 21st century disciplinary paradigm for writing studies and offers our field a way to engage with other institutional stakeholders on stronger footing than was possible in previous eras of the field's history. Both the benefits to writing instruction and the new opportunities for influence and collaboration offered by managing writing classrooms make this work valuable to WPAs as program directors, institutional citizens, and disciplinary members.

NOTES

1. This survey was conducted by the author 2017–18 under IRB Protocol #17-09-1006 at Santa Clara University.

2. Figure 1 remediates a figure Phelps borrows from architect Stewart Brand to illustrate the layers of structure that comprise built environments by adding Phelps' description of how these layers map onto WPA work to the concepts depicted in her original visual (represented by the white column on the left side of figure 3). My addition is the gray column on the right, arguing that the administrative work of classroom management extends throughout all these layers of institutional structure.

3. Beyond what's described here, LSRS part A also examines learning space planning processes (stakeholder involvement, evidence-based design, assessment) and support and operations (faculty development, financial sustainability, scheduling systems), which may be useful for diagnosing the causes of problematic classroom conditions and developing institution-specific proposals to address them.

4. The opportunity the Georgia Tech Writing and Communication Program had to design new classrooms was made possible by the planned remodeling of the Skiles Classroom Building housing the program's laptop classroom, the planned construction of the new Clough Undergraduate Learning Commons housing the program's new multiliteracy communication center and postdoctoral fellows, and the donor-funded complete rebuilding of the Stephen C. Hall Building housing the program's "home" classrooms, studios, and offices.

5. For example, Walls, Shopieray, and DeVoss report that MSU has ten different university-level committees working on space planning and facilities maintenance (275). As a result, infrastructural issues like maintenance of furniture, digital projectors, computers, and ethernet/electrical systems are handled by four different MSU units with different physical locations, personnel, and reporting procedures (279–81), creating considerable logistical difficulties for an administrator trying to manage classroom infrastructure at the program level.

6. This summary of the typical responsibilities of learning space committees draws on the charges of a sampling of committees at US colleges and universities,

including University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, Loyola Marymount University, Washington and Lee University, University of California, Los Angeles, Pace University, University of Illinois, University of San Diego, University of Iowa, Trinity College, and Pacific Lutheran University.

7. Wyatt describes how, to satisfy a Minnesota state government cost-cutting mandate that 25% of all undergraduate credits earned at public colleges be completed online by 2009, university administrators identified writing courses as ideal for fulfilling this requirement, because they “do not require laboratories, studios, or other physical spaces.”

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A Return to Portland: Making Work Visible through the Ecologies of Writing Program Administration

Leigh Graziano, Kay Halasek, Susan Miller-Cochran, Frank Napolitano, and Natalie Szymanski

Five writing program administrators at separate institutions report on data collected about their work as WPAs for a full semester to make that work quantitatively visible and gain a current and nuanced understanding of WPAs' lived labor experiences. Using the Portland Resolution as a coding mechanism for their administrative data, the authors quantify kinds of labor that are often invisible, demonstrate how administrative labor for WPAs varies at different types of institutions, and argue that the daily work of individual WPAs both exemplifies and complicates the intellectual and theoretical framework of the Portland Resolution. The authors call for more data-driven studies of WPA labor to capture its rich variety. They also call for reconceptualizing the Portland Resolution and the statement on Evaluating the Intellectual Work of Writing Administration to account for labor that is often invisible and varies with institutional context.

INTRODUCTION

Our study began during Casely Coan, Madison Bertenshaw, and Erin Whittig's 2016 CWPA session, "Making Mentorship Meaningful: Graduate WPAs and Professional Development." The five of us began discussing the nature of our work as WPAs, speculating about whether qualitative and quantitative data could make visible various aspects of WPA work that remain invisible—even to ourselves.

We aren't alone in raising questions of labor in academic settings. A quick glance at higher education publications illustrates the obsession faculty and administrators have with time, counting, and differentiating among the various elements of our academic labor. Scholars have established that faculty redirect far more time to teaching and administrative

obligations than to research (Jackson et al.; Ziker). The evidence from these studies won't surprise most faculty. We spend much of our time teaching; increasingly, our scholarly work is done "on our own time," alone, and under pressure to quantify our accomplishments (Flaherty).

The underlying goal of this project has been to make the work we do as WPAs quantitatively visible and to gain a more nuanced understanding of the range of WPAs' lived labor experiences. Rather than exclusively offering program narratives as the means through which we reported our work, we elected to track quantitatively the specific tasks that constituted our workloads as WPAs. Our project was, like Ziker's to some extent, a self-reporting time allocation study (although we used an in-progress method rather than a 24-hour recall reporting method). We documented our activities in real time through Toggl, a web-based application designed for tracking time.¹

Our data highlighted the mutable and kairotic nature of WPA administrative work: the prevalence of articulation-based labor, conflation of teaching and faculty development activities, ubiquity of WPA emotional labor, tension surrounding WPAs' administrative scholarship, labor experiences that were underrepresented in the *Portland Resolution*, and fundamental tension between our administrative labor activities and the evaluation of specific work output. We discuss these findings in detail by sharing our individual experiences and reflecting on what we learned by examining them collectively.

METHODS

Beginning in August 2016 and ending when grades were due in December, we each systematically recorded all of our professional activity in Toggl. Rather than identify and adopt predetermined categories for our activities, we labeled activities descriptively as we tracked them. Periodically during the semester, we shared our Toggl data in a Google Drive folder to discuss emerging patterns and determine whether we needed to refine the ways we were tracking. On spreadsheets we recorded the Toggl data, task, and time as well as materials produced, people involved, technologies or media used, and location of work (if not on campus).

During periodic discussions throughout the fall and early spring semesters, we discussed the data sets and talked through possible coding schemes. As we worked to define a framework for coding, we adhered to a collaborative coding model for reliability as described by Smagorinsky. Through our discussions, we determined that our codes needed to convey a connection between our efforts and those of scholars who have articulated the work of

WPAs to stakeholders within and beyond our immediate community (Fox; George; Gillam; Ianetta).

At a meeting during CCCC in Portland, Oregon in 2017, we determined that using the list of eight categories of WPA duties articulated in *The Portland Resolution: Council of Writing Program Administrators Guidelines for Writing Program Administrator (WPA) Positions* would provide the disciplinary grounding we needed while also providing an opportunity to test the categories of the *Portland Resolution* against our lived experiences. The *Portland Resolution* has served as the foundational labor document for our field since its adoption by the CWPA in 1992. The resolution stands as a “statement of professional standards,” articulating “prerequisites for effective administration of writing programs as well as equitable treatment of WPAs” (Hult et al. 88). In addition to outlining expectations for the working conditions, qualifications, and preparation of individuals hired to serve as WPAs (89–94), the resolution outlines eight categories of activities to which WPAs might turn in negotiating their job responsibilities, which we summarize as follows:

- **Scholarship of Administration.** Maintaining familiarity with/contributing to current research, scholarship, and pedagogy in the field.
- **Faculty Development and Other Teaching.** Teaching undergraduate/graduate courses; training, supervising, and evaluating instructors/tutors; designing/leading workshops.
- **Writing Program Development.** Developing, designing, and overseeing program curricula, course content, syllabi and resources; selecting textbooks; chairing committees related to the program; overseeing related programs; hiring instructors.
- **Writing Assessment, Writing Program Assessment, and Accountability.** Coordinating/administering student assessment/placement, maintaining program and assessment databases, administering student evaluation of instruction, analyzing/evaluating student and program data, conducting program reviews, and reporting to supervisors.
- **Registration and Scheduling.** Determining course schedules, staffing courses, overseeing enrollment patterns, and monitoring registration.
- **Office Management.** Supervising program office staff, maintaining equipment, and overseeing purchasing and supplies.
- **Counseling and Advising.** Mediating grade disputes, responding to instructor/student inquiries and concerns, managing matters related to academic integrity, liaising with relevant offices, and writing letters of recommendation for program staff/instructors.

- **Articulation.** Coordinating program activities/initiatives with other offices; updating program publications; and representing the program at meetings external to the program/department.

Using a collaborative model of coding (Smagorinsky) allowed us to understand our own work through the lens of the *Portland Resolution* while also testing its relevance to WPA work nearly a quarter of a century after its adoption.

Our goal in using this coding scheme was to explore the kind of labor being reflected, emphasized, misrepresented, deflected, or missing in a resolution intended to represent our work as WPAs and developed through the collaboration of multiple, respected scholar-administrators (Hult et al. 88). As we asked ourselves in our meeting notes in March 2017, “Can this lead us to a *Portland 2.0*? How do we define our goals? Working within, through, and against (?) the current *Portland Resolution*?” Our reflections confirmed our decision to frame our work as “A Return to Portland.”

PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

In what follows, we articulate our preliminary findings and lay the methodological groundwork for future studies. We present our effort as a preliminary response to Richard Haswell’s and Chris Anson’s calls for more data-driven evidence about the work we do. Although such data “are nonexistent or scanty at best” (Haswell 186), they enable WPAs to speak persuasively to stakeholders outside of our discipline (Broad 207). Our pilot study offers little generalizable data; however, it provides an exigence for larger efforts that could help WPAs, non-WPA administrators, and departmental colleagues understand the scope and complexity of WPA work. Below we provide individually authored overviews of our data followed by combined analysis and conclusions.

Susan Miller-Cochran

Institution: University of Arizona

Program: Writing Program

Support Staff: 2 full-time staff, 3 associate directors (tenured or continuing status), 6 assistant directors (multi-year contracts), and 1 graduate assistant director

Release Time: Released from 3 courses of a 2/2 load

As figure 1 shows, I spent the greatest share of my time (29%) on articulation, followed closely by faculty development and teaching. Nearly all of my email and many of my meetings have to do with articulation in unex-

pected ways. I was surprised to find that much of my work deals with articulation in a wide range of forms. This result might be explained because of the size of the program I direct (roughly 6,000 students, 330 sections, and over 150 instructors per semester) and the number of initiatives that are connected to other efforts on campus and in the department.

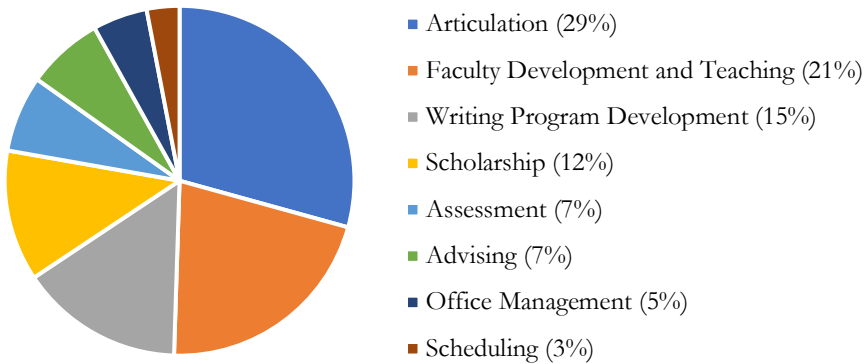


Figure 1. The allocation of Miller-Cochran's time to various professional duties during fall 2016.

I also realized that this representation of my administrative workload, from fall 2016, is merely a snapshot. I found myself wondering how different another semester would look. For example, we conducted a CWPA consultant-evaluator visit in our writing program during the semester I was collecting data, so I probably spent more time on assessment than I would have in another semester. I also spent more time on inter-institutional articulation because a surprising (to me) article came out in *Inside Higher Ed* early in the semester about the use of data analytics related to writing and retention at our university (Baldasare, Vito, and Del Casino). I spent a great deal of time during the semester working on articulation with people and units at my institution that I had not been working with prior to that publication. These relationships have been beneficial, but I was prompted to develop them in response to the article.

Other distinctions include the fact that I do not teach every semester and I collected data during a teaching semester. The allocation of my time to teaching would be different in a non-teaching semester. Complicating this matter further is the fact that I was teaching a graduate course in writing program administration. Some of the preparation for the course, mentoring graduate students taking it, preparing lessons, and responding to their reflections and work, overlapped significantly with other work I was doing as a WPA. Teaching this graduate seminar gave me space to work

on my own professional development and read new work on our field, and the *Portland Resolution* doesn't provide space (as Graziano notes below) for accounting for our own professional growth.

I also was surprised to find that I spent more time on scholarship than I realized. One complication that arose through coding, however, was that I included all of the professional service that I do within the discipline as part of my scholarship. There is no other space for such service in the *Portland Resolution*, although I likely would not have labeled that work as scholarship otherwise. Given that my professional service obligations were significant during fall 2016 (I was serving as president of the CWPA), I wanted to be able to acknowledge that work separately.

I also found that the code of articulation was problematic for me. Based on the use of the term in the *Portland Resolution*, I could not determine how to account for the work that I do as articulation within a program. The frequent meetings with graduate students, career-track faculty, administrators in the department, graduate program directors, and others are not accounted for in the *Portland Resolution* definition of articulation. The percentage of my work that is considered articulation is quite high because it includes a lot of outward-facing work for the program that is part of my job because of the size of the program and administrative staff.

Kay Halasek

Institution: Ohio State University

Program: Second-Year Writing

Support Staff: 1 three-quarter-time administrative assistant

Release Time: Released from 2 courses of a 2/2 load

I am struck—as Miller-Cochran was—by how different the semester might look if I had completed the timekeeping and coding during a spring term. In the second-year writing program (SYWP), for example, we conduct assessment each spring, which accounts for its absence in autumn 2016 (see figure 2). I was also struck by the limited amount of time dedicated to articulation (5%)—both in time and scope. I had anticipated greater time commitment and reach. If I were to have captured the spring 2017 term, for example, the articulation slice of my pie would have looked much different as Ohio State was undertaking a general education review.

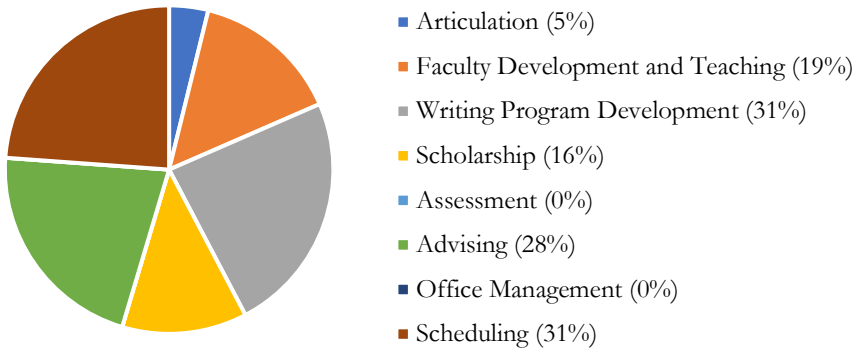


Figure 2. The allocation of Halasek's time to various professional duties during fall 2016.

At the same time, given our goal of capturing our work and its distribution across the *Portland Resolution* categories, the chart is representative. As director, I led a team of 30 to 40 instructors teaching 60 sections of second-year writing (1,400 students) each academic year, and autumn term work generally focuses on orienting and supporting GTAs and lecturers (e.g., counseling and advising at 28%, faculty development and teaching at 19%, and attending to program development at 31%). These responsibilities are clearly represented in the chart.

Even with these caveats in mind, I found two critical complications as I reviewed the codes, namely the difficulty of

- capturing and characterizing institutional challenges, scope, and impact and
- distinguishing between program and professional labor.

In coding articulation, I found that the scope of my work was exclusively internal to the department—coordinating with the other writing programs through our writing program directors' meetings and representing the SYWP at departmental meetings and through proposals for curriculum development and innovation. Also absent in the calculation of time devoted to articulation is the near constant work of naming and addressing the vast chasm between our own and the perceptions of our colleagues across the university about writing courses and writing program administration—an ongoing issue Tom Fox has raised.

With respect to scholarship (and the challenge of and call to distinguish between program and professional labor), I struggled with the question of whether a given project on peer response should be coded as WPA scholar-

ship (or not coded at all as it represented professorial scholarship). Nancy Welch’s comments in the opening plenary session of the 2017 CWPA National Conference in Knoxville, TN certainly speak to this matter and suggest that (as Miller-Cochran and Graziano noted in our discussions over email) scholarly work counts as part of WPA work. In other words, I began to erase some of the lines I’d drawn—and had been encouraged by my department to draw—between my professorial and administrative responsibilities.

As I reflect now, I recognize that my Toggl tracking did not take into account self-care and personal and professional reflection, rendering invisible both the emotional challenges of and intrinsic motivations for my work-absences that contribute to what Tokumitsu refers to as an “anti-worker ideology” in which adhering to the “do what you love” ideology actually devalues the work that we do.

Numerous times during our conversations, the five of us remarked about (1) the importance of self-care, (2) the ways we engaged in self-care, and (3) our limited attention to self-care, and we admitted that although fundamentally critical to our work and quality of life, self-care is not present in our data.

Leigh Graziano

Institution: University of Arkansas at Monticello (open admissions)

Program: First-Year Writing Coordinator, English Department

Support Staff: None

Release Time: Released from 0 courses of a 4/4 load

Given my institutional context and lack of release time, the distribution of my time isn’t exactly surprising (see figure 3). Obviously, faculty development and other teaching is my largest category, occupying 78% of my time. This time includes course preparation, grading, conferencing, and teaching classes. Problematically, though, in combining faculty development with teaching, the *Portland Resolution* asserts that teaching is a significant part of our identities. In fact, the large amount of time I spend in the first-year writing class greatly impacts the work I do as a WPA. For example, our population of first-generation, nontraditional students struggles to obtain the required textbooks in our classrooms because of high cost. In response, I compiled a list of Open Educational Resources (OER) materials for faculty and encouraged them to avoid costly texts because it was creating issues of equity and access in our courses. However, the category as outlined within the *Portland Resolution* was consistently problematic for me as I tried to make these sorts of connections between my teaching and my evolving

sense of how I could best serve my students and program. This wasn't the only work that was invisible or missing from the *Portland Resolution*.

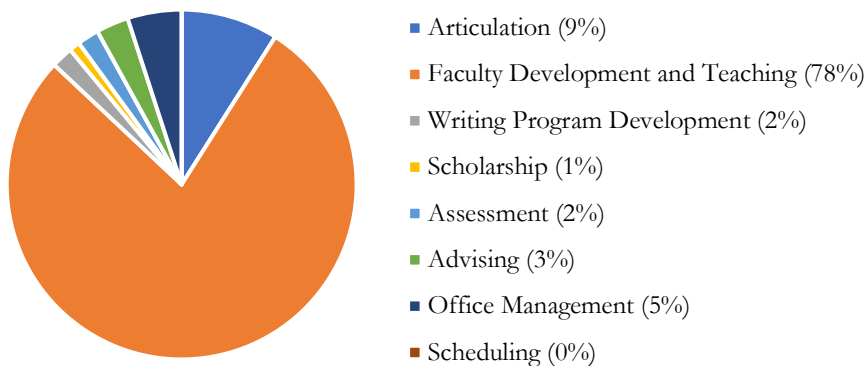


Figure 3. The allocation of Graziano's time to various professional duties during fall 2016.

My next two largest categories, articulation and office management, occupied 14% of my time collectively. I think of them collectively because most of what I coded as office management had to do with “checking in” with the director of the writing center, which also felt a bit like articulation to me, as the director and I frequently discussed aspects of the writing program and had an ongoing scholarly project together. The only distinction between that time is that it was inward-facing within the department as opposed to the outward-facing work I did with other units on campus, work that was more focused on efforts to collaborate and build allies.

Coding articulation at all became challenging for me because much of what I felt I was doing could also be considered emotional labor. How do I log passing conversations in the hall where I try to cultivate shared values about writing? How do I log advocating for my own existence when faculty ask me what it is that I do? Or, worse, when an email circulates inquiring whether a coordinator is even needed for first-year writing? Without a rhetoric and composition presence in the English department and with no prior history of a WPA at my institution, my isolation within the department necessitated constantly arguing and demonstrating the value of my disciplinary knowledge. As Alice Gillam notes, the *Portland Resolution* “reifies the distinction between intellectual and emotional labor and ignores the less visible and commodifiable aspects of our work” (123). I would add that while it reifies the distinction between these two types of labor, it certainly privileges the intellectual.

Regarding my own context, the distribution of the *Portland Resolution* codes reveals some of the inconsistency that can be expected from the creation of a WPA position without clear boundaries or institutional power and support. But as a new WPA, I found it troubling that the kind and amount of work I engaged in was so poorly represented in one of the governing documents of our field.

Frank Napolitano

Institution: Radford University
Program: Graduate Teaching Fellows Mentoring Program
Support Staff: None
Release Time: Released from 4 courses of a 4/4 load.

I was surprised to learn that I devote so much time teaching and working with faculty (72%) because I spend much of my day sequestered in my office, responding to emails, reviewing syllabi, planning and running teaching development seminars, observing graduate students' classes, and meeting individually with program members (see figure 4.) In other words, I tend not to notice how much I teach because I spend so much of my day doing isolated "office work." Although this work still focuses on new teachers' professional development, it doesn't always feel important. Our study has helped me see my work with different eyes and recognize its pedagogical value.

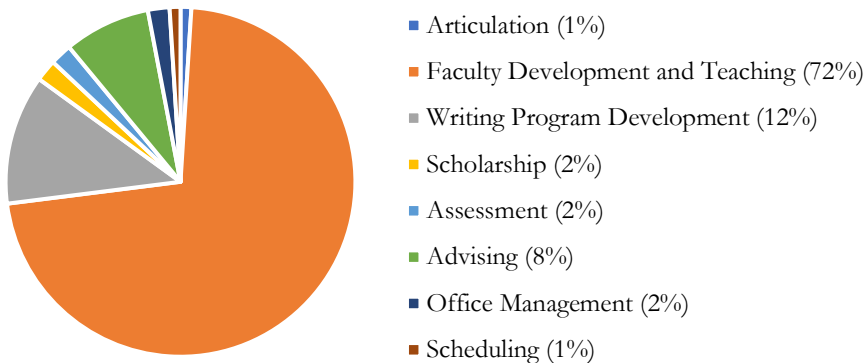


Figure 4. The allocation of Napolitano's time to various professional duties during fall 2016.

While this attention to pedagogy certainly is gratifying, it's clear that the 2% I spent on scholarship of administration didn't allow me to engage with research that would prompt me to reflect upon and reinvigorate our

mentoring program. While I am pleased with the progress the program has made during my tenure, I would also like to be more forward-thinking about ways to improve it. Engaging with the scholarship of administration is a key factor in doing so.

This observation about scholarship led me to realize a complication in our coding scheme, specifically that scholarship of administration is inseparable from several of my other duties. The *Portland Resolution* describes it as being “cognizant of current developments in teaching, research, and scholarship in rhetoric, composition, and program administration” and claims undertaking “scholarship of teaching and curriculum design as part of the essential work of the WPA” (Hult et al. 92). My preparation for teaching a graduate pedagogy course certainly falls within this category, but because I was reading this scholarship to prepare for a “for-credit graduate course in the teaching of writing,” the first activity listed under faculty development and other teaching (92), I included the activity under that code. Clearly, a good percentage of this time was devoted to scholarship, but it would be impossible to distinguish between my class preparation and my efforts to read current research.

Writing program development, nearly 14% of my work, also siphoned time from the scholarship of administration. In fall 2016, I collaborated on a US Department of Education Title III grant application to fund a WAC program. My primary responsibilities were to research and demonstrate the connection between interdisciplinary writing instruction and student success and articulate the relationship between a WAC program and a writing center. This work fits comfortably into the *Portland Resolution* definition of scholarship, but because the work product of the grant remained my main consideration for coding, I categorized these efforts as program development.

Another complication I encountered reflects the changing nature of graduate programs in the 21st century. In 2016, I devoted a significant amount of time to marketing my program: designing pamphlets, intake cards, and electronic advertisements appearing on screens throughout our college; bidding on search terms through Google AdWords; posting to Facebook and Twitter; and reaching out—via email or in person—to contacts at other institutions. Published in 1992, the *Portland Resolution* could not have anticipated writing program reliance on social media, and thus it does not provide any categories to accommodate much of this work. Given recruitment pressures placed on WPA positions tied to graduate programs, future articulations of our work should consider marketing for programs as another essential aspect of our jobs.

Natalie Szymanski

Institution: University of Hawai‘i–West O‘ahu

Program: First-Year Composition

Support Staff: None

Release Time: Released from 1 course of a 3/3 load

As figure 4 shows, I spent the majority of my time, 56%, on faculty development and teaching-related tasks. In retrospect, I wish teaching were a separate category in the *Portland Resolution* since the practices of teaching are related to but essentially different from the labor of faculty development. Specifically, I would have liked to have known which I spent more time on given the drastically different weight these two categories carry in my tenure and promotion materials. My next largest labor categories were articulation (17%), followed by writing program development (15%), both of which I think reflect the influence of ecology theory in my administrative philosophy and approach. It was not surprising that internal program development tasks such as the creation of a program website, adjunct contract memos, and pedagogical resources for FYC instructors (among others) occupied a large part of my time. Alternatively, the articulation portion of my data reflects the external-facing relationship building and collaborative work I did with support staff, grant directors, and administrative stakeholders on campus and in the community to develop and sustain my program.

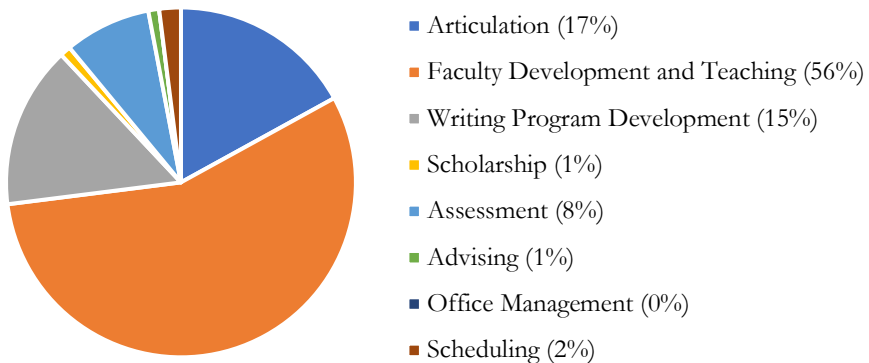


Figure 5. The allocation of Szymanski's time to various professional duties during fall 2016.

My data and the process of their collection also highlighted two troubling labor patterns. First, I spent only 1% of my overall work time during this semester furthering my own scholarship. This data point is particularly worrisome since it demonstrates quantitatively that the breakdown of

my workload in no way aligns with the percentages outlined and valued in my contract renewal and tenure and promotion materials. The way my labor is divided ensures that my FYC program is successful and sustainable while I—as an individual scholar and faculty member—am simultaneously unsuccessful (at least according to my university’s tenure and promotion guidelines) and the work distribution professionally unsustainable. Second, the process of collecting these data during the semester of my maternity leave brought to light another troubling realization concerning professional accommodation. Although I was on full leave for two weeks—an infuriatingly short amount of time due to the lack of paid leave in my institutional system—I found myself answering multiple emails from my hospital bed and participating in conference calls while nursing my son during our first days home because there was no one else to solve the “emergency” with our placement testing transition. During my multi-day labor my inbox filled with emails asking me to clarify my recommendations despite my “out of office/having a baby” email auto-reply, and when the messages went unanswered support staff and eventually upper administration called a meeting with the “accommodation” that I phone in from home to resolve the issue. My (lack of) maternity leave highlighted a significant concern: When I am gone, there is no one to maintain the internal and external ecologies of my program, and thus my own professional accommodations are not only complicated but nonexistent.

Overall, I see one large takeaway from my data: I would like to see (read: need) a more meaningful and articulated connection between the *Portland Resolution* and *Evaluating the Intellectual Work of Writing Administration*. If more and more GenAdmin are entering WPA positions (as Cristyn Elder et al.’s research argues) and facing promotion processes defined by traditional divisions and valuations of scholarship and teaching, our professional organization needs to bridge the cognitive and lived labor gap between these two foundational labor documents.

SHARED FINDINGS

A number of common patterns run through our data sets that speak to the utility (and limits) of the *Portland Resolution* in capturing our lived experiences as WPAs (see figure 6). Most of us noted that our data sets were *kairotic snapshots* that had the potential to change drastically from one semester to the next. For example, Miller-Cochran conducted a CWPA consultant-evaluator visit in her writing program during the semester she was collecting data, so she likely spent more time on assessment than she would have in another semester (7%). Halasek noted that her time spent on assessment

and articulation would have looked quite different if it had been collected in the spring semester due to the timing of departmental assessment initiatives and institutional general education curriculum review schedule.

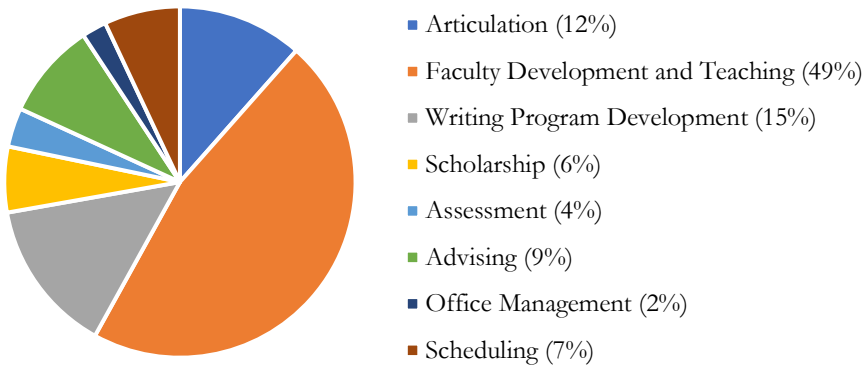


Figure 6. Percentage of time allocated by all participants to the *Portland Resolution* categories of labor.

The labor category of articulation had interesting implications for us, even though it accounted for anywhere from 1–29% of our total data. Miller-Cochran coded it most frequently and attributed that to the size of the program she directs and its connections to other efforts within the department and across campus. Szymanski attributes its presence in 17% of her data to the influence of ecology theory in her administrative philosophy and approach. In reflecting on her data, she makes an important point about the nature of the articulation category as focused on the external-facing relationship building and collaborative work we do with support staff, grant directors, and other administrative stakeholders on campus and in the community.

The *Portland Resolution* category for faculty development and teaching accounted for a large amount of time, ranging from 56 to 78%, for the three authors (Graziano, Naplitano, and Szymanski) located in small institutional settings. All five authors felt that the description of this category in the *Portland Resolution* was problematic. Only two of the items within the category, as it is defined in the *Portland Resolution*, address teaching specifically. The remaining five characteristics are focused more on faculty development or evaluating teachers within a writing program. This suggests that teaching is not a primary duty of the WPA, which does not align with our lived experiences. Teaching is a named and valued category in tenure and promotion, and much of the administrative work we do is connected

to the classroom. Further, the category itself obfuscates the data as we were unable to distinguish between the time we spent on faculty development and teaching.

Scholarship manifested as a contested category of labor in many of our data sets. On average, we fell far short of the 16.67 hours per week devoted to research reported by Jackson et al. (2). It is worth noting that Jackson et al. surveyed only “tenured faculty members at research universities,” so it is unsurprising that Miller-Cochran and Halasek, WPAs at large R1 PhD-granting institutions, spent a comparable amount of time (12% and 16% respectively) on scholarship. The tenure guidelines at these institutions often place increased value on scholarly production, but they represent the labor conditions of a very small portion of the professoriate.² The data from Graziano, Napolitano, and Szymanski quantitatively emphasize the struggle that WPAs at small institutions experience when attempting to balance and find time for scholarship (1–2% of their total time) amid heavy service loads, lack of support, or lack of course release time.

Our online and offline coding discussions repeatedly noted that the category of counseling and advising was insufficient and potentially inaccurate for describing the nuanced tasks of mentorship we found ourselves engaged in with faculty, graduate students, and administrators. The five of us spent anywhere from 1–28% on advising. These data also speak to institutional context and the particular semester that we were collecting data. Halasek and Napolitano are both responsible for GTA programs. Miller-Cochran, in contrast, only coded 7% of her time on advising but noted that she found some of this mentoring work was conflated with her teaching of a graduate course focused on writing program administration. However, that work was absorbed into the faculty development and other teaching category.

As a group, we also noted that the two categories of office management and registration and scheduling took up very little time for any of us. Although we do not intend to say that work is unimportant, we found that the two categories combined occupied no more than 10% of our time, regardless of the size of the institution. Almost all the other categories from the *Portland Resolution* show considerable variation in ways that are dependent upon either the particular semester of data collection or on the size or type of institution, but these two categories were stable despite that variation. Perhaps the focus on tasks like these has changed over time (given online scheduling tools, more centralized models of support staff or administration, etc.); perhaps WPAs in other institutional contexts would report different percentages; or perhaps WPAs who have been in their positions for many years have seen substantive changes in time spent on these tasks.

Finally, Napolitano provided anecdotal data about a fundamental tension on which we need to reflect as a field: Currently *the distinguishing factor of much of our labor is the work product created*. For Napolitano, this tension obfuscated whether a specific grant-related labor task should be understood as scholarship or program development, pointing to another reason the *Portland Resolution* (representing our field's definition of WPA work) needs to be aligned more clearly with *Evaluating the Intellectual Work of Writing Administration* (a point Szymanski makes). This small categorization repeated and magnified over time can have real ramifications in a WPA's tenure and promotion process. Melissa Ianetta, in her 2015 CWPA Conference plenary address, argues that

if we render our work only in those categories used by our faculty colleagues, whose professional identities and thus valuation systems are comprised almost entirely of teaching, research, and the zest of service, then we should expect that our colleagues will . . . presume our administrative roles fit whatever parameters suit their understandings. (146)

It is incumbent upon WPAs to claim agency in categorizing our work.

LIMITATIONS

Given the multivalent nature of WPA work, we realize that our data collection methods have limitations. First, our data do not speak to the full range of contexts that WPA work encompasses or with which it intersects. We work in writing programs that offer first-year, second-year, or other foundational writing classes at four-year institutions of various types and sizes. We are also either tenured or tenurable, so our data don't speak to the experiences of those in tenure-free lines (to use the language of the CWPA caucus), or staff or instructor positions. The institutional power embedded in the WPA role shapes the work of the WPA, so data that address the administrative work of WPAs who are not in tenurable faculty positions is essential to understanding fully the range of work WPAs perform. Our data also say nothing about the experiences of WPAs at other types of institutions, specifically at two-year colleges (Klausman; Taylor). Therefore, while we hope that our data are suggestive of experiences that WPAs share, we do not intend to offer generalizable conclusions about WPA labor. Instead, we offer our experiences and trace their common threads, knowing that the particulars are part of what we have been missing in conversations about WPA work.

Additionally, we are four white women and one white man, and our study does not include the work of WPAs of diverse race, gender, and other identities. Graziano and Szymanski highlight the importance of promoting productive mentoring relationships and acknowledging the emotional

labor we engage in (George; Micciche), but we are missing data that include the additional mentoring and emotional labor that people of color are often called upon to undertake in academic settings, especially when they are in leadership roles (Craig and Perryman-Clark; Adler-Kassner). White and cis-gender privilege allows us to conceive of our labor and identities as WPAs with little consideration for the role of race and gender identity, and these issues need to be examined more fully by gathering additional data from WPAs in other contexts.

Studying ourselves also impacted our behaviors and awareness of our work and may have influenced the data we included and the way we coded. We each felt the weight of the observer's paradox as we carefully examined our own work. Yet we also felt that it was important to examine our own data and contexts because we understand the nuances of the work we do. By talking with each other throughout the data collection and coding processes, we were able to refine each other's analyses of our work (drawing on Smagorinsky) and maintain stronger shared understandings of our coding scheme, specifically how we were interpreting the categories of the *Portland Resolution*.

Finally, it seems reasonable to ask why we kept working with the *Portland Resolution's* categories. Rather than viewing these coding difficulties as an indication that we should rethink our taxonomy, we see them as indications that our institutional documents themselves need to be revised. Our goal was to understand the possibilities and limitations of how our field defines WPA work. Our conclusions include several proposals for future inquiry and possibilities for revising the *Portland Resolution*.

CONCLUSIONS

Our study both affirmed the enduring value of the *Portland Resolution* and led us to question whether our profession has reached a point at which we need to reconceptualize much of our labor. In some ways, our findings revealed the flexibility of the *Portland Resolution*: Despite our employment at different types of institutions, we found that the document represented much of our work in all its variety, serving as a valuable touchstone for our shifting responsibilities. As our data accumulated, however, we noticed that much of our labor strained against the *Portland Resolution* classifications which, a quarter of a century earlier, were considered "comprehensive" (92). Many of us found that our work often intersected with multiple codes, which is unsurprising given recent work on the ecological nature of writing programs and "the networked agency at play in WPA work" (Reiff, Bawarshi, Ballif, and Weisser 5). However, there remains a dearth of scholarship that illustrates how acknowledging WPA work as a complex network of activities might impact how we define and evaluate our labor practices.

Our shared findings suggest a number of features of WPA labor that need to be considered as the field revisits and revises the *Portland Resolutions* and *Evaluating the Intellectual Work of Writing Administration*:

- Validating the flexibility and mutability in workloads and lived experiences
- Clarifying the articulation category to include internal and external facing tasks
- Separating faculty development and teaching into two separate categories
- Acknowledging emotional labor
- Defining scholarship and its connection to *Evaluating the Intellectual Work of Writing Administration*
- Including national and local service to professional organizations
- Recognizing professional development for its own sake
- Acknowledging the value placed on (visible) work products
- Advocating for labor sustainability and maternity leave accommodations
- Recognizing the increased demands to promote our programs in on-line spaces

While our data highlight these areas of revision, the field needs more studies that include quantitative data to fill the gaps that remain. Our labor documents ought to reflect more effectively a range of employment situations, institutions, and programs. Revisions to the document should also address explicitly the multiple sites of writing program administration within a university, such as online writing programs, GTA mentoring programs, writing centers, and WAC/WID programs. Similarly, scholarship about the work of writing center directors (Caswell, McKinney, and Jackson) and WPAs overseeing WAC/WID programs (Thaiss and Porter; Condon and Rutz) could make the *Portland Resolution* more relevant to a range of WPA work. Overall, additional studies that examine the work of WPAs at a far broader range of contexts could build better understanding of the lived labor experiences of WPAs.

As a profession, WPAs need to heed the calls of scholars such as Chris Anson for more data-driven scholarship that accounts for the full range of our work. Such research would yield necessary rethinking and revision to our professional statements. The *Portland Resolution* does not account for the diversity of positions and activities we have discovered in our own analyses, let alone the full range of possibilities that we have yet to discover. The time may come for a new resolution. When it does, we will need a more complete picture of the current state of the profession, and that picture

must be built upon broad understanding of the range of WPA positions and the people who serve in those roles.

NOTES

1. Unlike much valuable research on the rise of the managerial class (Deem, Hillyard, and Reed; Kolsaker); workload allocation; or gender, race, and academic rank equity in workloads and salary (Barrett and Barrett; Bellas and Toutkoushian; Jackson et al.; Link, Swann, and Bozeman; Winslow), our study did not set out to examine (in)equities across gender and rank or create benchmarks against which WPA work might be measured. Instead, we were motivated by the prospects of making our work visible and improving the conditions and expectations under which we—and others—work as WPAs. We were less interested in the amount of time we spent (in terms of raw hours per week) than in how we spent that time. Nonetheless, it might be of interest to readers that we spent, on average, 30 hours per week on WPA activities.

2. The Center for Postsecondary Research at Indiana University reports that only 6.1% of institutions are characterized as having very high (3.0%) or high (3.1%) amounts of research activity.

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Review Essay

Reaching (for) the Future: Writing Center Studies Expands

Jackie Grutsch McKinney

Denny, Harry C., Robert Mundy, Liliana M. Naydan, Richard Severe, and Anna Sicari, editors. *Out in the Center: Public Controversies and Private Struggles*. Utah State UP, 2019. 280 pages.

Greenfield, Laura. *Radical Writing Center Praxis: A Paradigm for Ethical Political Engagement*. UP of Colorado, 2019. 181 pages.

Lawrence, Susan, and Terry Myers Zawacki, editors. *Re/Writing the Center: Approaches to Supporting Graduate Students in the Writing Center*. Utah State UP, 2019. 288 pages.

Sabatino, Lindsay A., and Brian Fallon, editors. *Multimodal Composing: Strategies for Twenty-First-Century Writing Consultations*. UP of Colorado, 2019. 238 pages.

I once read *How the Universe Got its Spots*, a book about the big questions about the universe by cosmologist Jenna Levin. It was a fascinating read—though trying to wrap my head around string theory was a bit rough—I do remember learning though that the universe was expanding in all directions at roughly the same pace. The same is not true, of course, for academic disciplines. Disciplines expand, contract, merge, fade, and explode in no coherent or entirely predictable way. At one point, writing center studies was a quaint little blip on the map of composition studies. At that time, writing center scholars were expected to know all about composition studies, but the reverse wasn't true. To wit, not one of 103 chapters and 1,750 pages in the *Norton Guide to Composition Studies* is on writing centers.

Yet now, both composition studies and writing center studies exist under a larger disciplinary umbrella of writing studies, and suddenly there's all this space for writing center studies. Composition studies focused on undergraduate students in particular courses, but writing studies is more broadly concerned with writing in all its forms, processes, locations, technologies, mediums, and contexts. Whereas writing centers were once imagined to be a small, contained way to support composition students, writing center professionals now have a vantage point to understand writing much more broadly as many writers use writing centers across K–12 schools, colleges in the US and abroad, graduate schools, and within community writing centers. Writing center professionals see writers in process, dealing with complex writing tasks in environments with and without good instruction and feedback. They see day in and day out how talk about writing and writing technologies influence the writing and the writer. Writing center professionals cannot go to composition studies to find all the answers to the questions that now emerge for them in their new expanding roles. In fact, composition scholars may now increasingly turn to writing center scholarship to understand writers and writing outside of their classrooms.

However, fundamental writing center pedagogies and ideologies were shaped during the former period, when the discipline occupied a small area within composition studies and in a time when composition studies largely promoted process and expressivist pedagogies. When writing centers boomed in the 1980s, populations of college students and professors were even more homogenous than today: mostly white, mostly middle-class, mostly monolingual. Students used typewriters, sometimes, or wrote by hand. So much about writing, writing in college even, has radically changed since the 1980s. The question facing writing center scholars now is how loyal do we stay to the original conception of a writing center? Given the disciplinary space which has opened up and the desire to answer new questions related to our new roles, should our current centers function as they did forty or fifty years ago? As I write this, I'm picturing a person with one foot on "writing center of yore" and stretching as if playing Twister to reach a distant spot. Outside of the game of Twister, obviously, it doesn't always make sense to stretch to the point of falling.

In the last decade or so, writing center scholarship has expanded as scholars embrace different methodologies and push for different ways of doing writing center work that are more in line with contemporary social and learning theories and support the writers in our current contexts. Much of the scholarship has moved away even if just marginally from the original conceptions of writing centers found in the early writing center scholarship. Four recently published writing center books are adding to this new

tradition. Two of these, *Re/Writing the Center* edited by Susan Lawrence and Terry Myers Zawacki and *Multimodal Composing* edited by Lindsay A. Sabatino and Brian Fallon, outline strategies of updating the writing center for present realities. *Re/Writing the Center* addresses the gap in writing center studies related to supporting graduate student writers, with some contributors noting that graduate student writers might need something different than (peer) tutoring. The contributors to *Multimodal Composing* outline strategies for giving feedback on multimodal texts, different genres, and in mediums that mostly didn't exist when writing centers were formalized. The other two books move further from the original conception of writing centers. *Out of the Center*, edited by Harry C. Denny, Robert Mundy, Liliانا M. Naydan, Richard Severe, and Anna Sicari, contains stories by contributors working in writing centers who reveal how their (public) identities are of consequence to their work, and in *Radical Writing Center Praxis*, Laura Greenfield suggests letting go completely of the traditional approach and rebuilding the writing center from the ground up to decisively part with the conservative and liberal foundations in writing center practices.

Re/Writing the Center: Approaches to Supporting Graduate Students in the Writing Center brings much needed attention to working with graduate student writers in the writing center. Though traditional composition studies scholarship often gave attention to graduate students, it was almost always in their roles as teaching assistants and not as writers. Yet, obviously, what typically stands between a graduate student completing a degree is a long, high stakes writing task. Writing is important and central to graduate students' work. Lawrence and Zawacki acknowledge that writing center practitioners have had to evolve on this; most writing centers began with the intention to serve undergraduates and many of the key practices and programming common to writing centers were shaped with undergraduate writers and writing tasks in mind. They ask in their introduction, "How would these resources need to be reconfigured, reinvented, or augmented to better meet the [graduate] students' needs?" (8).

The tension throughout the collection rests on this premise. Are graduate student writers that different from undergraduate writers? Does the typical feedback session offered in writing centers help graduate students? Overall, the contributors to the collection think "no" or "not exactly." The editors state:

Collectively, the chapters in this volume suggest that advanced graduate student writers present an exigence for writing centers that differs from that presented by undergraduate writers, and that responding to this exigence has given writing centers the occasion to reconsider many of the principles and practices that have emerged from

our work with undergraduate writers. This kind of reconsideration, we propose, not only benefits graduate writers but also writing centers as we identify and pursue new possibilities for inquiry and practice. (22–23)

The exigency here is packed with an assumption that the writing center is the natural site for helping graduate student writers; I suspect that is because on many of our campuses, the message that the writing center is the hub of all things writing has landed. There is a smidgen of attention in this collection given to graduate faculty advisors and how they might better help graduate writers, but otherwise the onus falls squarely on writing centers.

The collection has a preface by Paula Gillespie, an introduction by the editors, and an epilogue from Sherry Wynn Perdue. The remaining twelve chapters, largely written by former and current writing center directors, are organized into three parts: revising our core assumptions, reshaping our pedagogies and practices, and expanding the center. However, the division between sections is not precise, as most chapters could fit under two or three of these headings, which seems to be common in edited collections.

If the central question of the collection is how do writing centers “recenter” for graduate student writers?, the contributors’ answers vary. Suggestions include: separate writing centers for graduate students (Summers), intake consultations (Lawrence, Tetreault, and Deans), teaching signposting and noticing (Cox), staffing “expert” tutors for disciplinary enculturation (Pemberton), hybrid consultations where graduate students send a draft in advance and meet in person (Kallestinova), teaching comparative genre analysis (Reineke, Glaven, Phillips, and Wolfe), using genre-specific heuristics during tutoring sessions (Brady, Singh-Cocoran, and Holsinger), and hosting writing retreats (Smith, Lamsal, Robinson, and Williams; Gray). A few chapters were more focused on what writing center professionals ought not do: do not concede to the demand from students and faculty for proofreading or “cultural sanitization” (Turner 101), and do not participate in the neoliberal fantasy (my words) of rapid productivity by making the writing center a site of production over a site of practice (Lenaghan).

As the first edited collection focused on support and programming for graduate student writers, this book is an important contribution to an emerging conversation. Though the different chapters all outline different issues and solutions, as a whole, the collection doesn’t feel like it’s asking too much from readers. Most of the authors described the problems they faced, the solution they arrived at, named what resources and collaborations they had to secure, and gave some evidence of the effectiveness of their approach. (In this way, it reminds me of Anne Ellen Geller and Michele

Eodice's *Working with Faculty Writers*.) Most of the solutions to “recenter” were the size of tweaks not revolutions, and as I read the book, I thought about which of these ideas I might want to add to the repertoire at the writing center I direct. I also thought about what chapters I might want to share with other folks on campus who are interested in supporting graduate student writers; the collection is not too insider-y, so it seems absolutely readable by folks who do not have a writing studies background.

Additionally, as I read, I couldn't help but think about the ideas through the lens of universal design for learning. Many of the ideas suggested for solutions for graduate students would actually seem like they might be good for undergraduates, faculty, and whoever else the center supports. After all, the line between undergraduate and graduate students, and graduate students and faculty is quite thin and permeable. I'm not sure there were any ideas for “recentering” that would be wholly inappropriate to offer to all writers (though I concede allowing undergraduates or faculty to use a graduate student writing center would be silly). Chapters 8 and 9, in particular, with their focus on using comparative genre analysis and genre-specific heuristics struck me as the type of tools I'd like to see used in any feedback session as all writing is bound by genre conventions and expectations.

However, what this collection doesn't offer is a deep exploration of how “graduate students” and “graduate student writing” aren't homogenous. Most of the discussion circles around theses and dissertations, which are not requirements for every graduate student or the only kind of writing that graduate students face. Further, with the exception of discussion of L2 writers, there is almost no attention on issues of identity (e.g., race, class, gender, sexuality, religion, culture, or ability), the mental health crisis (Gray is an exception here), the financial pressures of graduate school, or graduate students in online programs. Such attention would be necessary as directors name problems and assess effectiveness: are we really identifying the needs of all of our graduate student writers? For these reasons, it might be best to read *Re/Writing the Center* alongside the 2016 special issue of *Praxis* on access and equity in graduate writing support edited by Shannon Madden and Michele Eodice.

Unlike the other three books, Sabatino and Fallon crafted their edited collection, *Multimodal Composing: Strategies for Twenty-First Century Writing Consultations*, primarily for writing tutors. They point to two other tutoring guides, Ben Rafoth's *A Tutor's Guide* and Lauren Fitzgerald and Melissa Ianetta's *The Oxford Guide for Writing Tutors*, as texts that they had in mind when they began. I can see similarities between *Multimodal Composing* and the aforementioned tutoring guides; however, what's different

about Sabatino and Fallon's text is that it is more narrowly focused only on multimodal tutoring, and it is an edited collection.

Sabatino and Fallon note that "Writing centers are increasingly becoming sites for feedback on multimodal projects" (3), but there has been little to help train consultants to work with specific genres. So, they craft the collection to achieve three aims: to "(1) build on and evolve tutoring practices and strategies for multimodal texts, (2) introduce consultants to important features and practices in a variety of multimodal texts, and (3) start a conversation about the relationship among rhetorical choices, design thinking, and technological awareness in the writing center" (x). Overall, they want the collection to be "instructive and practical," an aim the collection achieves.

The collection is optimistic and approachable, and readers looking for how to give feedback on multimodal texts will find answers here. (If you've read Cynthia Selfe's *Multimodal Composition*, you'll find *Multimodal Composing* to be similar and a nice update to Selfe's guide which was written for writing instructors.) However, if you're looking for why writing centers should offer feedback on multimodal texts or what multimodality or multi-literacies are, you'll want to look elsewhere (try Sheridan and Inman or Lee and Carpenter) as this collection takes as a starting point that readers will be convinced of the necessity of training tutors to give feedback on multimodal texts. I, for one, am glad of this as it signals a departure in writing center scholarship away from handwriting (e.g. should we work with multimodal texts?) and towards actual practice.

After the preface (written by both editors) and introduction (written by Sabatino) on design principles, each of the remaining thirteen chapters have the same parts, yet different authors. Each chapter has an illustrative example, background information, consultation strategies, an activity, a conclusion, resources, research terms, and references. There are chapters on storyboards, artist statements, brochures, academic posters, presentations, infographics, eportfolios, websites, podcasts, video, public service announcements, and personal branding. The final chapter, though, differs a little as it is focused more broadly on copyright and citation issues for multimodal texts. As to be expected, this structure helps each chapter feel parallel, though sometimes parts in particular chapters feel forced or seem to hamstring the authors. That said, each chapter typically has illustrations or photos and many additional parts, so the authors expand and contract sections to fit their topics.

While reading, I could imagine using chapters or the whole book in a tutor education course or in ongoing staff development. (In fact, I already have.) The activity section of each chapter seems to imagine readers engag-

ing this text in one of those settings. The keywords and resources sections serve as a reminder to readers to look for more information beyond the chapters, which is also important for this audience. The tone, throughout, is neither phony nor pedantic, which can be difficult when writing for students. I suspect the editors organized the book by multimodal text rather than by multimodal element/principle in order to make each chapter viable on its own. If a director notices that a lot of students are bringing in podcasts, for instance, I can assign the team to read the chapter on podcasts. However, this organizing strategy is not without drawbacks. For one, there was some redundancy that surfaced from chapter to chapter as many multimodal texts rely on the same rhetorical, design, or multimodal principle. For another, the focus on specific multimodal texts might reify the idea that texts fall into a tidy binary: multimodal and not multimodal when, as many have said before, most texts today—even traditional essays and papers—have multimodal elements like figures, images, charts, and so forth. Of course, specific texts can move out of popularity quite quickly as well (e.g., the focus on Prezi in the presentation chapter already feels like its moment has passed).

As previously mentioned, early writing center scholarship and practices were built around handwritten or typewritten texts. It is certainly time that scholars in writing center studies produce a tutoring guide that deals specifically and in concrete details about how writing and feedback practices must evolve to address current-day writing practices. In that way, *Multimodal Composing* offers an important expansion of conceptions of writing center work. That said, it does suffer from the same oversight of *Re/Writing the Center* in that nearly no consideration was given to issues of identity or even politics. Of course, this is problematic when, among other things, composing platforms might reinforce cultural, gender, and racial stereotypes by design of available icons and artwork; accessibility can both be a challenge of some technologies for composing and an affordance of others; and representation functions differently in multimodal and text-only compositions. In addition, I was worried about how “academic” was used in a generic sense to discuss writing, often without discussion of how different academic disciplines have different conventions and expectations about (multimodal) texts. For instance, poster presentations in one field will look and do different things than poster presentations in another. Despite these shortcomings, this text will surely be an often-adopted text for many writing center courses at both the undergraduate and graduate level.

Out in the Center: Public Controversies and Private Struggles, in stark contrast to the first two books, is written under the premise that identity matters and isn’t something that can be kept “out” of the center. The editors

shaped the collection to show how there is no writing center work separate from public lives and controversies. The title is to remind readers of this: writing center professionals are not “in the center” or “out in the world”; they are instead, “out in the center,” which is also a double entendre on being “out” in terms of sexual identity. In a sense, *Out in the Center* feels a bit like an update to an older writing center edited collection *Stories from the Center* or a sequel to Harry Denny’s monograph, *Facing the Center*. In the latter, Denny looked at the writing center through a personal and cultural studies lens. Here, in *Out in the Center*, the ideas from *Facing the Center* are stretched to more authors with different experiences in writing centers and different identities. The variety of perspectives, the editors believe, will help readers engage in “critical dialogue” and, consequently, reimagine writing centers and tutor education by what they hear in the dialogue.

The collection begins with an introduction written by the editors and then is organized into six parts by identity focus: race, multilingualism, gender/sexuality, religion, class, and ability. There are one to five contributor chapters in each part followed by a summary note from the editors in each section. The collection closes with a conclusion written by the editors and an epilogue by Michele Eodice. The contributors have all worked in writing centers—many with Denny at St. John’s University or at Purdue—in either tutor and/or administrative roles. Each contributor focuses on how their identities intersect and affect their writing center work; each chapter is expressly a personal narrative though many also make connections to theories and cite other scholarly works.

Overall, the contributors’ chapters, focused as they are on identity, together offer a meditation on the theme of isolation and disillusion, with small moments of connection. Each author feels frustration in the ways that the norms shaped for writing center work did not envision them. In that sense, the contributors write back to a tradition, showing the reader the distance between conceptions and lived realities for tutors and administrators. When Nancy Alvarez writes of a writing center where she worked, “I couldn’t stand being in that place” (85), readers understand that the contributors are not going to tiptoe around their frustrations. To this point, the chapters in part one on race are written by Black authors about their experiences working at primarily white institutions. Morrison writes of a session where an Asian international student writer brought a proposal to make money off of Black women’s haircare and the anger that surfaces for her as a Black woman. She couldn’t opt to keep her race out of the ensuing conversation as she writes, “my very personal self is part of the session, and not really on my terms” (26). Likewise, Richard Severe writes of the ways he felt obliged to control all emotions, so as not to have the writers he

works with perceive him as an “angry black man” (47). Abdullah-Matta, too, notes that white and immigrant students were not used to “having a Black person *teach* them something” (59, emphasis in original). These chapters call to mind Neisha-Anne Green’s 2017 IWCA keynote address, where she explores similar emotions.

Contributors in other sections echo the isolation and frustrations felt by authors in part one. Among these are Conard-Salvo who notes that writing center scholarship and practice gives a lot of lip service to race and multilingualism, but hardly any thought to multiracial, multicultural writing center professionals or writers. Sicari writes about misogyny she faces as a writing center administrator (from both men and women), and Mundy considers how his performance of masculinity cuts both ways as it protects him from the questioning of his decisions. Banat describes how his Muslim identity as a tutor is perceived differently in different countries where he works. Naydan writes astutely of the crisis of contingent labor conditions, which means those who are hired into roles only partially, loosely belong to their institutions and centers. In all, contributors present a much more nuanced and complex representation of writing center professionals’ identities than previously published in writing center scholarship.

A few of the editors’ decisions surprised me. For one, organizing the book by identity worked in opposition to the desired outcome to use intersectionality as theoretical frame. Related, having only Black authors in the race section plays into the trope that Romeo García has pointed out where race so often is used as shorthand for Black or that only people of color have a race. Additionally, the section conclusions written by the editors did the work of drawing theoretical and scholarly connections, which seemed, at times, heavy-handed or simply repetitive. I think I would have preferred the contributors to make these connections or not.

Still, as a whole, the book met its ends, including “to exchange uncomfortable stories about everyday struggles involving identity politics that might otherwise go unspoken” (239). None of the criticisms reduced the profoundness of the narratives within. Readers will hear from authors how being out while working in a writing center is complicated and not universally or invariably positive. The stories do the work of counternarratives—saying to fellow practitioners and scholars: Not so fast. Listen. The usefulness of these stories is in their ability to disrupt claims that the original conceptions of writing centers were neutral, good, fair, and just and thus worth maintaining. This collection is what you’ll hand to tutors who tell you they just want to focus on the tutoring.

Greenfield’s *Radical Writing Center Praxis: A Paradigm for Ethical Political Engagement* is my favorite among these titles and the book that

reaches the furthest. Greenfield uses a political frame, by which she means “the ways people interpret, exercise, and value power” (30), to reframe writing center practice and scholarship. Greenfield identifies three political ideologies functioning within writing centers—conservative, liberal, and radical—and makes the case for a radical political orientation to the work. What’s at stake, she argues, is not just writing center work, but really “the future of life on the planet” (9). In this vein, Greenfield’s book reminded me in message and mission of the work of Mary Rose O’Reilly, particularly *The Peaceable Classroom*, in which O’Reilly takes up Ihab Hassan’s question: how can we teach English to get people to stop killing one another? In more ways than one, *Radical Writing Center Praxis* also brings to mind Nancy Grimm’s writing in *Good Intentions* and elsewhere. Like Grimm, Greenfield writes beautifully, with prose that effortlessly delivers complicated and controversial ideas as if they weren’t. Also, like Grimm, it is clear that Greenfield critiques writing center practices and scholarship because she wants it to be better and believes that it can be transformed.

Greenfield’s book is arranged from more theoretical to more practical, though anyone looking for a quick and direct radical praxis to do list will not find one in any of the five chapters. The introduction establishes the historic tension in writing center work between liberation and regulation. Greenfield asserts that we cannot change unless we understand and name our collective (writing center) paradigm and understand how it is operating. This chapter includes, in very plain and very astute language, a must-read section she calls “Oppression 101,” which sets up key terms used in the other chapters: prejudice, discrimination, oppression, institutional oppression, and systemic oppression. (I refrained from annotating this section in my copy because I knew right away I would want to share it with others.)

The first chapter describes and critiques conservative and liberal ideologies and practices in writing center work. She’s clear here that she’s addressing both conscious and subconscious beliefs and that she’s concentrating on the collective politics of the field, not individual leanings. She sees a liberal political framework as dominant, but notes that there are conservative elements at work, too: “When writing center tutors are not empowered to work with students to question the institution, question the teacher, question the assignment, or have agency over their own educational progress, such centers are engaged in conservative politics” (42). And, to be sure, that a liberal political framework is dominant gives Greenfield no peace of mind. She offers a scathing critique of a liberal writing center as relativistic, unable to stand in authority, building faux “safe spaces,” and unable to articulate and act on its values.

In chapter 2, Greenfield introduces a radical politics as an alternative worldview for writing center practitioners and scholars. Radicalism, she asserts, is a belief that “truth is a human construction,” “power is not possessed but exercised,” and that authority resides in “ethically engaged praxis” (59). The core value in radicalism is love, which Greenfield sees as “a recognition of the oneness or interconnectedness of all beings, the reconciliation of false beliefs in a self and an Other, and an honoring of and promotion of life and well-being” (59). Radicalism can function as a beacon—as something we work towards even though we’ll inevitably fail to enact perfectly or completely (61). One refrain throughout the book is that radicalism is hopeful: “change is possible and justice is a righteous endeavor” through resistance, dialogue, and doubt (62). However, Greenfield is also quick to note that radicalism “does not try to make anyone do anything against their will, and it doesn’t prescribe the methods of resistance” (73).

The first two chapters make the case for rebuilding a radical writing center field and the final three chapters address three questions: “Why should we do radical writing center work? What is radical writing center work? How should we do radical writing center work?” (85). Greenfield answers these questions through argument and narrative—sharing her successes and failures in enacting radical writing center practices. Among other things, she suggests in these chapters that we make justice and peace everyday terms (88), consider the degree to which a writing center can be contained by a space (113), stop fetishizing multilingual writers (122), and that we learn from one another by telling stories and listening for resonance (144, 160). Greenfield gives readers a lot to think on—most readers will likely feel the prick of shame (13) in her take of established writing center practices. However, I don’t think readers will feel defeated. I, for one, felt my sense of hopefulness re-awaken.

Some readers are going to find Greenfield’s ideas too hippy-dippy: what does peace, love, and understanding have to do with it?! No matter. This same critique has been lobbed at hooks, Freire, O’Reilly, and other liberatory educators and that complaint has never halted the movement. Others, who are unable to sit with the message, are going to assert that Greenfield is inserting politics into the benign work of writing centers. Those readers might not be reached at first, but I suspect there will be a moment if they stay involved in writing center work that calls them back to this text to reconsider their first reaction. My greatest fear, actually, for this book is that scholars and practitioners will take a quick quote from Greenfield’s text and claim they are enacting this new paradigm. What Greenfield is proposing here is radical in all senses of the word: revolutionary, absolute, and cool.

I'm going to be suspicious of anyone who claims to have done this work quickly, easily, completely, or painlessly.

In addition to the way in which each of these books expands notions of writing center work, the thing that connects each of these four books is that personal narrative and experience is used as a light, to illuminate what had been hidden from view. So much can be said about the power of narrative in contemporary writing studies scholarship, but for now I'll point out how it brings to mind what Janna Levin writes in the very first paragraph of *How the Universe Got Its Spots*. She is speculating why great mathematicians have died by suicide, and she writes,

The lore is that their theories drove them mad, though I suspect they were just lonely, isolated by what they knew. Sometimes I feel the isolation. I'd like to describe what I can see from here, so you can look with me and ease the solitude. (3)

Take a look.

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Book Review

Composing Feminist Interventions: Activism, Engagement, Praxis

Kimberly A. Turner

Blair, Kristine, and Lee Nickoson, editors. *Composing Feminist Interventions: Activism, Engagement, Praxis*. WAC Clearinghouse, 2018, wac.colostate.edu/books/perspectives/feminist. 511 pages.

In *Feminist Rhetorical Practices: New Horizons for Rhetoric, Composition, and Literacy Studies*, Jacqueline Jones Royster and Gesa Kirsch called out to feminist writing studies scholars to “ask new and different questions and to find more and better ways to listen to the multidimensional voices that are speaking from within and across the many lines that might divide us as language users” (4). Royster and Kirsch urged feminist researchers to pursue new avenues that will increasingly diversify and expand the field of writing scholarship (4). *Composing Feminist Interventions: Activism, Engagement, Praxis* answers their call. With a focus on social activism, Kristine Blair and Lee Nickoson assemble twenty-six generative chapters in this collection which enact the changes that Royster and Kirsch advocate in their seminal text. Though Blair and Nickoson speak specifically to feminist researchers, their notion that writing can and should intervene in communities within and outside of academia offers writing program administrators a practical way to approach feminist interventions which may, at first glance, seem extraneous to writing researchers at large.

Positioned at the intersection of community-based research, feminist research methodologies, and pedagogy, *Composing Feminist Interventions: Activism, Engagement, Praxis* ultimately culminates with five course designs that put feminist interventions into practice. However, Blair and Nickoson are careful to point out that they consider each of the text’s five sections—methodology, partnerships, activism, praxis, and course designs—“co-

equal points of entry” for readers (6). As such, readers should understand each chapter as intersectional, or, as Blair and Nickoson contend, “work that is multiply situated and that involves multiple lived experiences” (6). Dividing the text into equal sections while still honoring the intersectionality of the works thus affords readers and future writing researchers a look at (a) why intervention is critical to producing feminist writing scholarship and (b) how writing program administrators might engage these interventions to produce research, design writing programs, and create work spaces which reflect communities both in and outside of academia in more diverse contexts.

In the first section, “Methodology,” Blair and Nickoson have collected chapters which aim to engage—and more importantly, to expand—conceptualizations of feminist research methodology. The first two chapters specifically reflect on how reciprocity functions within the framework of empirical writing research. In “Post-Research Engagement: An Argument for Critical Examination of Researcher Roles After Research Ends,” Megan Adams examines what happens when a research project concludes. Adams argues feminist scholars must begin to consider the relationships between themselves and their subjects if they wish to help build community projects that can be sustained post-research. To truly participate in meaningful community building, Adams suggests, feminist researchers are obligated to look inward, to engage in “critical reflection of the nature of relationship building and the evolution of collaboration” in order to truly learn from community work (31). Mariana Grohowski also builds on the notion of reciprocity in her chapter. Specifically, Grohowski discusses the research methodology she utilized while examining the rhetorical practices of two female veterans, both of whom were disabled. For Grohowski, a methodology centered on reciprocity is inherently activist because it demands that the researcher practice listening and “strategic disclosure” in order to strengthen partnerships with research subjects, especially those in minority communities (44–49).

In her chapter, “Methodology and Accountability: Tracking Our Movements as Feminist Pedagogues,” Emily Ronay Johnston continues the work of expanding “ethical practice” by reconceiving “ethical” as “accountable” (59–60); for Johnston, this takes the form of pushing boundaries—e.g., requiring her students to read in different genres—to participate in listening-based discussions, and to conduct primary research which facilitates community involvement. Lauren Rosenberg and Emma Howes similarly advocate enacting listening practices and tending to relationship building as way in which to embody “a feminist ethos,” or, as they understand it, paying particular attention to the ideologies they bring to their own

research (77). Finally, Liz Rohan invites feminist researchers to build community and demonstrate embodied feminist practice by researching case studies using archival methods which recognize the work of feminist actors who “created, occupied, and shaped space” (109). For writing program administrators conducting research into student writing or even evaluating the efficacy of their own writing programs, this section will prove especially helpful. The articles collected in the first section on methodology not only provide a roadmap for re-envisioning how our research into writing can impact both our students and the work they produce, but they also ask writing program administrators to rethink the nature of the relationships we forge with our student-subjects in the interim.

In the second section, “Partnerships,” each of the six chapters details the researchers’ individual community partnerships and offers *WPA: Writing Program Administration* readers insight into how to actualize the process of community building outlined in the first section. Keri E. Mathis and Beth A. Boehm begin this section discussing the University of Louisville’s implementation of Ideas-to-Action, an “enhancement plan that holds community engagement as one of its core principles” (115); here, they address the reality that many graduate students are left out of university engagement projects and draw attention to the need to reconceptualize doctoral education, much like Mary P. Sheridan does in the section’s closing chapter. In Chapter 7, Jenn Brandt and Cara Kozma also relate their experiences at their institution, High Point University, as it advances “learning together” approaches to facilitate student-community engagement. Likewise, in “Crafting Partnerships: Exploring Student-Led Feminist Strategies for Community Literacy Projects,” Kelly Concannon and four former students argue that multilayered partnerships, such as the one they put into practice, lay the groundwork for assessing work done in the community because the approach focuses on “mentorship and reflexivity” (157). Interestingly, in this article, each student includes his/her own narrative of the experience in an attempt to preserve student representation and put into practice the philosophy of the multilayered partnership. Christine Denecker and Sarah Sisser then present a collection of Ohio farm stories that combines ethnographic features which narrate the tenets of feminist research methodology outlined in the first section. Finally, in chapter 10, Kathryn Perry studies Louisville’s Family Scholar House utilizing the actor-network theory notion of translation, which she argues is a feminist intervention because she uses the theory to “follow the ‘traces’ of literacy sponsorship that are manifested through the shifting *relationship* surrounding a particular moment of translation” (197). Although the realities of investing in community partnerships may not be suited for writing program administrators of all stripes, the task

of forging community partnerships is a certainly noble undertaking, one which encourages WPAs to locate writing outside of academia and reconsider the role of university writing with a greater sense of community.

Much like the second section focuses on community-based partnerships as a method of enacting lived feminist ideology, the third section, “Activism,” spotlights how community-based research can be, and is, decidedly activist, while the fourth section, “Praxis,” concerns itself with intersectionality. However, because they chronicle how feminist interventions are ultimately not bound by academia or proximity, the chapters which comprise these two sections are especially compelling for those working in writing program administration. Take, for example, “Literacy, Praxis, and Participation in Environmental Deliberation,” in which Barbara George draws attention to the energy production policies of New York, Pennsylvania, and Ohio and the literacies affecting environmental risk representation, or “A Peek Inside the Master’s House: The Tale of Feminist Rhetorician as Candidate for U.S. House of Representatives,” in which Angela Zimmann recounts her campaign for a seat in Congress. The subjects of these studies are, of course, especially situated, but both authors point to a larger implication: the praxis-oriented initiatives that influence feminist research methodology offer a way for writing program administrators to implement course designs which emphasize the fact that writing and literacy have a very real, lived impact on the world.

The same is true of chapter nineteen, “Coming Out as Other in the Graduate Writing Classroom: Feminist Pedagogical Moves for Mentoring Community Activists.” In their chapter, Jessica Tess, Katie Manthey, and Trixie Smith examine “coming out moments” among graduate students, which they argue are not exclusive to homosexuality (376). Instead, the act of othering oneself, of making oneself exist in discomfort, is a kind of feminist rhetorical act. They ultimately argue that writing for the other functions as an exercise in social justice. Here, Tess, Manthey, and Smith offer insight on how writing teachers might mentor their graduate students and model feminist rhetorical pedagogy within the writing classroom. Again, while they do not speak directly to writing program administrators here, Tess, Manthey, and Smith do suggest that when writing instructors acknowledge the feelings of otherness a number of their own undergraduate writing students feel in their writing classrooms, they generate opportunities for students to reconceive writing and its intersection with identity and place. The conversation the authors chart in “Coming Out” is, I contend, especially significant; they echo existing calls to expand the roles of WPAs within graduate schools. Indeed, the recently published edited collection *Supporting Graduate Student Writers: Research, Curriculum and Program*

Design covers an array of subjects regarding graduate student writers, most notably the fact that a graduate student's writing education is very often fragmented and completed in insolation. In this article, Tess, Manthey, and Smith advance a view of graduate writing which places community at the center and offers WPAs a way to reconceive graduate writing in the future.

Finally, in what is perhaps the most practically useful section for writing program administrators, the fifth and final section, "Course Designs," outlines the ways in which feminist interventions can be put into practice. Split into five chapters, this section begins with Florence Bacabac's call to establish campus-community partnerships while upper-level students are still enrolled in coursework so that they may foreground beneficial relationships before leaving school. Bacabac concludes that her course, a service learning grant writing course, not only helps students hone critical thinking skills but also genre knowledge of grant writing which they may then use to benefit their communities; this, she argues, creates students who "act as feminist rhetorical agents" capable of "sustainable, social change even after they exist the course" (435).

The second of the course designs, "Making the Political Personal Again: Strategies for Addressing Student Resistance to Feminist Interventions," finds Julie Myatt making a case for her course *Feminist Interventions*, during which she dispels student misunderstandings of feminism. Students are instead asked to put feminist inventions into practice through a series of assignments which detail the lived experiences of women who have been systematically shut out of the power structures that shape their lives. Katherine Fredlund, too, argues that writing instructors must challenge students' resistance to feminism and activism in chapter twenty-five, "Feminist Activism in the Core: Student Activism in Theory and Practice." Like both Bacabac and Myatt, Fredlund directed her general education students to community partners with whom they organized their university's annual Take Back the Night march; doing so, Fredlund contends, undermines the stigma associated with the notions of feminism and activism.

Finally, in chapters twenty-four and twenty-six respectively, Stephanie Bower and Julie Nelson share their personal experiences putting feminist interventions into practice in the writing classroom using multimodal approaches. In "Because Your Heart Breaks and It Moves To Action: Digital Storytelling Beyond the Gate," Bower recounts her time teaching an upper-level composition course on visual storytelling in which students were required to construct the digital stories of members of marginalized groups. Drawing on the scholarship of Adrienne Rich, Bower acknowledges that the goal of the course is to "disrupt hierarchies of knowledge" and advance the stories of those most often ignored. Nelson, too, interrogates

ways of knowing by making *Wikipedia* writing the center of a sequence of assignments in her course, *Writing for Social Change*. In “Rhetorical Interventions: A Project Design for Composing and Editing Wikipedia Articles,” Nelson offers an account of her assignment wherein she asked students to interrogate the racial and gender disparities surrounding the subjects of *Wikipedia* articles and who actually writes the widely used articles. Nelson contends that this particular project is an example of feminist intervention at work because not only does it invite students to examine the rhetorical features of *Wikipedia* as a discourse community, but it also challenges students to consider who makes knowledge, how it is culturally situated, and who benefits from knowledge structures. Obviously, the chapters in this section are most useful for WPAs, particularly those who direct writing programs, because they present course designs which WPAs may integrate into their own programs or share with WAC/WID faculty in other departments, but I also find these chapters generative because the authors demand that WPAs reevaluate the structures of discourse, genre and knowledge-making which inform their own pedagogies – pedagogies which will ultimately determine how they design writing courses and programs.

Taken as a whole, *Composing Feminist Interventions* questions how writing scholars conceptualize writing research and teaching and, like its forerunners *Feminism and Composition Studies: In Other Words* and *Rhetorica in Motion: Feminist Rhetorical Methods and Methodologies*, demands that we, as scholars of the written word, prioritize collaboration and inclusivity in our research and teaching practices. The collection also speaks to the many contexts in which WPAs work and compels us to ask questions of our own research, programs, and institutions: are we investing in listening as a tool to engender reciprocity with our students? How are we fostering mutually beneficial, community-based research in our own writing programs? Are we considering the lived experiences of our student writers as we design writing courses and programs? For many of us, the answers are unclear and not every article in this text will be applicable to every WPA, but Blair and Nickson’s edited collection offers insightful feminist intervention strategies which can serve as a place for writing program administrators to expand the work we do.

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Book Review

Resilient, Proactive, and Visible: Lean Programmatic Development and Better Writing Programs

Amelia Chesley

Johnson, Meredith A., Michele Simmons, and Patricia Sullivan. *Lean Technical Communication: Toward Sustainable Program Innovation*. Routledge, 2018. 155 pages.

Lean Technical Communication offers an empirically grounded model for growing and stewarding an academic writing program. The book's main contribution is a definition of lean programmatic work and point-by-point breakdown of its tenets. Three on-the-ground cases then illustrate what those tenets can look like within a writing program. While the book focuses on professional and technical writing programs, its principles of lean technical communication can be equally useful for any WPA working to balance the priorities of several institutional and public stakeholders. The authors encouragingly present a flexible set of principles and techniques helpful for meeting the challenges involved in preparing academic programs that will benefit students, the academy, and—more expansively—professional relationships, civic communities, and even the physical environment in meaningful and sustainable ways.

The realities of WPA and all its attendant work within any given institutional context will vary, and this variety is part of why the book is needed and why it takes the approach it does. The book's purpose is to inspire better writing programs (p. xx). This means, as the authors indicate throughout, better for *everyone* those programs might impact: students, faculty, administrators, universities, communities, governments, and workplaces. Perhaps most crucially, better writing programs should also be better for our planet and environment. The authors' specializations in technical communication (their chosen term for encapsulating the variety of titles across

the field—see p. 5) circumscribe the focus of this book accordingly. It is a book for anyone “involved in the development of professional and technical communication undergrad and graduate programs in the US” (p. xix). However, the authors also acknowledge a wide range of secondary audiences, including writing program administrators, graduate students learning the basics of curriculum development, e-learning product developers, and human resource specialists who teach or train employees. Principles of lean programmatic work can be applied for any writing program (and perhaps any academic program). After all, embracing and enacting principles of lean, sustainable, enduring institutional innovation should be relevant for higher education as a whole.

LEAN PROGRAMS FOR EVERYONE

Lean Technical Communication is relatively compact. The book’s preface articulates and situates its practical contributions to programmatic innovation. Early chapters describe seven tenets that constitute lean programs and explore what it means to be innovative, providing heuristics relevant for measuring programmatic leanness. Part two of the book presents three distinct and detailed cases that show how the tenets of lean technical communication are (or should be) relevant to the labor and processes involved in particular institutional scenarios. Each case provides examples of where, when, how, and why one might apply or adapt the ideas, values, strategies of lean technical communication to writing programs.

As I read *Lean Technical Communication*, I recalled being present at Meredith Johnson’s 2016 CCCC talk on the topics that became this book. My notes from that conference panel remind me that I didn’t immediately follow Johnson’s use of the term “lean.” At the time, I was unfamiliar with the term’s use in business and manufacturing, and I found my mind caught up with its physical connotations: *low-fat, trimmed, toned, sinewy*. I’ve since become more aware of lean as an ideal for systems and organizations: lean systems are those that do more with less, that minimize or eliminate wasted resources, wasted time, or wasted labor. Johnson, Simmons, and Sullivan intentionally note others’ valid critiques of lean business approaches and express their goal to contribute to a version of lean that “prioritizes disruption, resilience, sustainability, and innovation” more than merely cutting corners or “profit-maximizing” (p. 4–5). Thoughtfully building visible, flexible, and ethical paths to higher value and sustained support are crucial aspects of their lean programmatic model. This book adapts the term further into a context of academic stewardship, embracing the motivations underlying leanness (to do more with less, etc.) and demonstrating how

program administrators can enact principles of lean, sustainable, long-term and forward-thinking program development. *Lean Technical Communication* somewhat takes for granted readers' background understandings of *lean* more generally and the benefits of leanness more broadly. The book elides the deeper origins and histories of *lean* as a concept, since other scholars engage with that background elsewhere (p. 5). Readers wanting a more well-rounded or comprehensive understanding of lean will need to go elsewhere. A few helpful contextualizing citations point readers to other relevant work on lean, agile technical and professional communication programs. The book particularly recommends three edited collections (Tilery & Nagelhout 2015; Bridgeford, Saari Kitalong, & Williamson 2014; Franke, Reid, & DiRenzo 2010) while also promising a more unified approach than these collections provide (p. xix).

TOWARD LEAN, SUSTAINABLE, ENDURING INNOVATIONS

Part one's chapters lay the groundwork needed for readers to engage fully with the cases detailed later in part two. Together, the first three chapters define key terms, carefully unpack the seven tenets of lean technical communication, and engage with four central tensions that intersect with the model's tenets. Important to the first part of the book is an acknowledgement that the field of technical communication is not static, but fluid based on changing technologies, workplace norms, genres, and pedagogies. Rather than focusing on objects, the book asks "what sorts of *practices* must happen to keep [a] program going? That is, if a program is understood as a collection of practices, what do named programs keep doing, start doing, and stop doing that makes it seem like they are doing programmatic work?" (p. 17). Navigating the push and pull of institutional and departmental priorities matters whether a program's goals include teaching technical communication or any other subject.

Chapter one begins reflexively, positioning writing programs themselves as rich and available research sites analogous to the many various types of workplaces and corporate organizations that technical communication scholars often study. This chapter also continues the work of defining key terms (and recognizes the challenge involved in all definitions). Attention to the meanings and resonances of *lean*, *disruption*, *resilience*, *sustainability*, and *innovation* in this chapter sets the stage for how the remainder of the book will build on and apply those concepts, asking readers to begin taking these terms and their attendant stances seriously, to challenge the status quo through disruption.

Then, in chapter two, the authors present the nuts and bolts of the lean technical communication model. Seven tenets outline what it means for a program to be *lean*:

1. **Recognize value, not deficits.** Recognize that values are prerequisite to action. Account for what is valued by the institutions we work within, rather than only looking for what is missing.
2. **Innovate and disrupt.** Attend to the structure that exists, improvise or embellish on an appropriate scale, continually gauging risks versus rewards.
3. **Remain rooted in local needs.** Carefully and conscientiously take socially responsible actions, building realistic, inclusive, and affordable essentials without oppression.
4. **Regulate cost.** Leverage the low-cost possibilities of free and open source software and other tools built on principles of freedom and collaboration.
5. **Engage with sustainability.** Make future-focused, planet-friendly, user-centered, equitable decisions, advocating beyond mere efficiency for its own sake.
6. **Promote efficiency.** Avoid wastefulness. Take responsibility for the acquisition, use, and management of material resources.
7. **Enhance visibility.** Clearly document and demonstrate the value of programmatic work; follow examples of WPA scholars and take program development seriously as a form of scholarship.

A lean approach takes a proactive, iterative, engaged role in balancing stakeholders' needs, not merely working in reactive "crisis mode" or, conversely, a "waiting for the perfect moment." Lean programs work to foster short- and long-term resilience by embracing procedures and technologies that lead to more sustainability (financial and ecological).

Two particularly useful concepts have stayed with me from this chapter: the Weick continuum and the Improvisation Quotient. Both support the idea that innovation and disruption (of the kind encouraged by tenet 2, above) can occur in many modes along a spectrum. Innovation might range from relatively small interpretations or minor embellishments, all the way up to bold variations and wholly new improvisations (pp. 20–21). Along with this continuum the authors offer the Improvisation Quotient. To calculate the Improvisation Quotient of a program or organization, divide its

number of innovations by the total number of day-to-day actions. An innovation quotient of 0.5 means a program is taking active but measured steps to grow and develop in innovative, lean directions.

In transition from these introductory foundations, chapter three presents specific guidelines for assessing programmatic leanness and innovation. Change, for better and for worse, will always be a part of programmatic work. Program visibility can go up and down. Building and maintaining a program must be an iterative process. Given this dynamic context, two heuristic tables provide steps and questions useful for addressing those challenges and enacting lean change with the support of solid metrics and evidence (pp. 49–52). The first of these focuses on the processes of enacting lean change through identifying the spaces, boundaries, and resources available for such work (p. 50). The second heuristic explains ways of capturing metrics for purposes of raising visibility, arguing for the value of new innovations, and conducting assessment (pp. 51–52).

CLASSIFICATIONS, COMPUTING INFRASTRUCTURES, AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The book's second half presents three on-the-ground cases followed by a short concluding chapter. Leading us through the details of institutional, departmental, and programmatic concerns at the University of South Florida and at Miami University, this section applies the principles from part one to real world complexities, including: program classifications, standards, and funding models; material program facilities and computing infrastructure; and community-based technical communication pedagogy. Each case illuminates a set of intersections among the seven tenets of lean technical communication.

Chapter four discusses the implications of course classifications and categorization standards, offering strategies for how program administrators can effectively respond to the imbalances and constraints of institutional funding decisions. Funding decisions can affect program visibility and negatively impact program development and growth. This chapter's example involves the Performance Based Funding opportunities offered by the state of Florida and its Board of Governors to public sites of higher education. The metric ratings used to determine funding streams seem to favor some institutions more readily than they do others. In response to such institutional logic, the authors would have program administrators interrogate them carefully, saying: "Rather than bolstering or dismissing metrics, this chapter attends to them as boundary objects that can function as a means to forward lean technical communication's goals" (p. 59).

Among the boundaries or gaps between on-paper definitions and real-world practices, there is space for disruption.

However, to negotiate and translate value across boundary objects may involve a great deal of hidden labor. Unpacking an example—Florida’s statewide course numbering system and the Federal Department of Education Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) codes—the chapter maps out various possibilities and what they would take in terms of innovative risk, use of resources, cooperation across institutions, programs, etc., also noting which tenets each move would align with. The chapter suggests productive moves to make when facing top-down budget constraints that seem to call on—or call for—different potentially conflicting priorities across “federal, state, institutional, departmental, and programmatic levels” (p. 60). As a junior faculty member, I found the critical, grounded discussion in this chapter particularly eye-opening and thought provoking, and I came away inspired to investigate possibilities for intervention within my own institution.

Chapter five explores the potential for writing programs to foster sustainability and leanness in the physical spaces they control. In particular, this chapter’s University of South Florida case centers on “one of the field’s bedrock landscapes: a standard-issue, 26 station, computer classroom” (p. 79). In its consideration of campus spaces, computing hardware, and power usage, this case takes a serious look at the many intersections of materiality and sustainability within any given writing program. The complexities of balancing costs (not only of purchasing but of maintaining computer facilities) against various affordances and other long-term consequences may involve quantitative assessments (measuring energy, carbon, amounts of e-waste) and qualitative comparisons of features within the context of other priorities. The chapter applies a four-part heuristic, which lists metrics related to the computer classroom overhaul, along with evidence that could be used to support the program’s claims of lean-ness and arguments for additional changes or future purchasing decisions. Given what we know about the amounts of e-waste involved in producing, consuming, and managing our many electronic devices, adapting or even fully replacing classroom or other campus infrastructure as part of meeting lean and sustainability goals is a worthwhile endeavor (for programs and for the environment). The detail covered in discussion of this case exemplifies what it looks like to think carefully and pragmatically toward sustainable futures.

Chapter six provides examples of projects that engage students with communities beyond their classrooms. In their discussion in this chapter, the authors argue that pedagogy and research around community-based writing work needs to be intersectional and consider a full range of sus-

tainability indicators. Within the intersections of pedagogy, community, and research are powerful possibilities for making visible our expertise and more fully preparing students to be citizens and advocates (not just workers or employees). Two detailed examples from Miami University may inspire readers to look for similar opportunities to partner on projects outside the classroom. Students in technical and professional writing courses at Miami have had opportunities to write for the public, explore usability and user experience in real-world contexts, develop personas and heuristics, conduct and interpret user research, propose change, and reflect on the skills and work involved in all of it.

Such community engagement projects can have fluid outcomes and assessment can be tricky. *Lean Technical Communication* asks specific questions helpful for assessing how well community engagement pedagogy serves students, communities, and programs (pp. 113–114). Moreover, assessment is not the only challenge involved with community engagement projects. Partnering students with campus or community participants involves increased resources from instructors (whether time, materials, social connections/obligations, or money). There are also the ethical considerations of student labor and privacy to account for. No single community engagement plan or approach will be tenable or practical for all situations, which is why principles of lean technical communication—or lean program administration—emphasize flexibility and adaptation in leveraging available opportunities.

These final two cases present arenas where first-year writing and other writing courses could benefit from innovative action. Writing and composition programs are rarely siloed away from technical and professional communication programs, after all, nor should they be. Johnson, Simmons, and Sullivan acknowledge that both types of program are very rooted in critical writing and composition as practices (p. 5). Importantly, the book's conclusion reiterates a need for thinking critically about programmatic infrastructures in terms of greater access, justice, inclusion, and equity even in the face of significant constraints. This book is an optimistic treatise on what it means to actively, productively, and conscientiously steward a writing program for the benefit of all. The seven tenets defined and discussed in this book can stand as guiding principles beyond the context of a technical and professional communication program. All program administrators should accept the importance of both present and future needs and recognize that sustainable resilience cannot be a passive practice. The practices of programmatic development should be active, thoughtful, ethical processes that help us reinforce efforts that are efficient, flexible, and, perhaps most importantly, visible.

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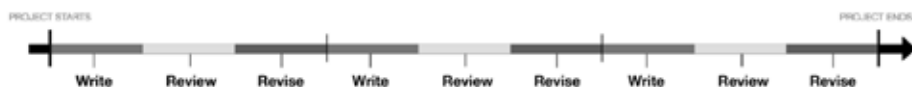
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Classmate #26's Rating: ★☆☆☆☆ [revision plan](#)

Add a thesis statement or make your thesis statement more clear so the audience can know what you're going to be talking about throughout the essay.
Classmate #26's Rating: ★☆☆☆☆ [revision plan](#)

Comments for Classmate #26 from Classmate #28 (4)

In the introduction says if you ask someone today if they are happy they are most likely to tell you yes or no and the reason will be because of someone or something. I think they aiming at what the causes of people happiness. I think they should start the paper off with a better question.
Classmate #26's Rating: ★☆☆☆☆

The writer says a big part of happiness is found in relationships. The writer is aiming at is that happiness comes from relationships. I think they should improve it by saying that most of the happiness portion comes from healthy relationships.
Classmate #26's Rating: ★☆☆☆☆

The writer says being in a happy relationship can determine how our health is going to be in the future and if we are unhappy in relationships our health will decline. They aiming for that the healthy relationships keep the bodies up. I think that they should give more details about this point. [View in Context]
Classmate #26's Rating: ★☆☆☆☆

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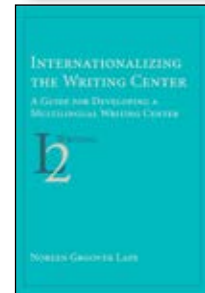
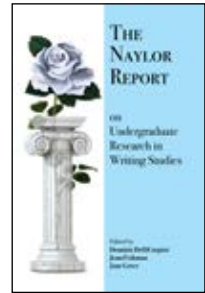
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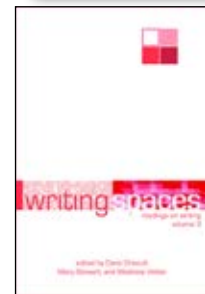
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