

# The Quiet Revolution: How Newer WPAs Are Shifting the Profession

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## ABSTRACT

*Drawing from interviews with twenty-five WPAs categorized into two cohorts, Newer WPAs (N-WPAs) and Long-Term WPAs (LT-WPAs), this article compares and contrasts the expectations and varied approaches to self-care, self-preservation, and boundaries of LT- and N-WPAs during the pandemic (specifically the interview period, August 2021–July 2022) and the origins of their approaches. In addition to providing a snapshot of WPA life during the pandemic, the data suggest that while many LT-WPAs are still struggling with life-work balance, the conversations our field has been having regarding the affective dimensions of WPA work and the importance of boundaries and self-care have extended beyond field lore to become an important, intentional, and consistent consideration for N-WPAs as they negotiate and navigate their roles.*

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Throughout my career, I have reminded my colleagues and students that our jobs do not love us back. Over the past few years, these conversations went from being shared in the hallways and over coffee to being woven into the fabric of our scholarship and graduate courses. I now encourage students to recognize the emotions and emotional labor of our work, interrogate neoliberal rhetoric and myths about productivity, and examine the role of work and carework in their lives. However, I am still behind on implementing these recommendations in my own life. Since conducting this study, I have started to hypothesize that it is because I have so many habits to unlearn, disrupt, and break. These problematic habits became clearer to me during the pandemic when the lines between home and work blurred even further, so in January 2021, when I learned that I would be teaching a PhD seminar in WPA the following spring, 2022, I wondered, *What does the work of a WPA look like today? How can I best prepare future WPAs to develop sustainable and healthy habits from the start of their careers?*

In early fall 2021, I began informally interviewing WPAs to learn about what their positions look like in terms of tasks and workload since the beginning of the pandemic, the emotional labor of their work, the role carework was playing in their day-to-day jobs and lives, and how they were doing and feeling in their positions. I also asked them about their

relationship with work, its evolutions, and its origins. The conversations were surprisingly emotional and organic, and after just a few interviews, I opted to seek IRB approval and design a larger-scale qualitative study.<sup>1</sup> Though I certainly continued to consider how I could redesign and reimagine my WPA class, the utility and impact of the interviews with newer, more recently hired and more experienced WPAs extended far beyond my future class and helped me begin to reimagine a healthier, more sustainable future for myself and the field at large.

My first four interviews were with Long-Term WPAs (LT-WPAs) who had been working as WPAs at the same four-year institution for seven or more years at the time of our interview (though some may have been administrators but not WPAs and/or not in the same position the whole time). Having felt rather overwhelmed by the personal and professional challenges attributable to the pandemic—illness, isolation, fear, uncertainty, and concerns over university policies, to name just a few—we assumed Newer WPAs (N-WPAs), especially those hired in 2019 and 2020, must really be struggling. We had difficulty imagining how we would have negotiated the quickly changing and ever-evolving needs, processes, and protocols for nearly all aspects of WPA work that we experienced during the height of the pandemic if we had not already had ample experience managing them under more “normal” circumstances. Tasks like scheduling courses, allocating classrooms, supporting faculty members who were out sick, consulting with faculty about course attendance and assignment submission policies, and communicating university policies (such as shifting mask mandates) had become more complicated; additionally, for many of us, our duties had expanded to securing access to technology and Wi-Fi for students and faculty and providing expanded pedagogical support for online teaching. As one of the LT-WPAs mused, “I don’t think I would have made it through this past year if I didn’t know how these things [worked] unmi- red by crisis. I’ve been doing this work a long time and it was still so . . . it was just so much.”

However, despite our initial hypothesis leading into the study that N-WPAs—more specifically WPAs who started working in WPA positions between fall 2019 and fall 2021—must be overwhelmed and maybe heading toward burnout, the N-WPAs I interviewed were composed and even optimistic (for example, fourteen of sixteen N-WPAs used a positive word to describe their outlook at the time of the interview).<sup>2</sup> Though this data represents just a snapshot into WPA life during the pandemic and, as such, cannot be used to make a generalizable claim about workload or approaches before or after this period, I do think they point to an inductive argument I feel comfortable making: The conversations our field has been

having regarding emotional labor, the importance of boundaries and self-care, and the affective dimensions of WPA work have officially extended beyond field lore to become an important and consistent consideration for N-WPAs as they negotiate their roles as WPAs. The data further suggest that while LT-WPAs may still be struggling to enact our own meaningful steps toward self-care and self-preservation, many of us are embedding these concepts into our mentorship of newer and prospective WPAs, the graduate courses we teach, and the trainings we lead, and it is making a difference. That is not to say that these N-WPAs have achieved ideal life-work balance but rather that they are actively working to develop healthy habits and thinking frequently and intentionally about how emotional labor and carework factor into their positions.<sup>3</sup>

#### ABOUT THE STUDY

At present, this study consists of interviews with thirty-one WPAs at various ranks and levels of experience from a range of institution sizes and types, including public and private schools, a religious-affiliated school, three minority-majority serving institutions, a historically black college, a military school, and one for-profit institution. For the purpose of this article, I will be focusing on twenty-five of the thirty-one participants broken into two distinct cohorts because of the consistent commonalities among those included in each cohort and the differences between the two cohorts. Nine were WPAs who had been WPAs or faculty administrators at the same four-year institution for seven or more years at the time of the interview (LT-WPAs), and sixteen were WPAs hired at four-year institutions since 2019 who were nearly all recent graduates in their first full-time WPA position (N-WPAs).<sup>4</sup>

The interviews were each scheduled for one hour (though interestingly, many participants offered to speak for longer than the allotted time) and conducted over Zoom. Interviewees chose a pseudonym to protect their identities and self-disclosed the identity factors and cultural locations that they felt impacted their work. I urged them to only share what they felt comfortable sharing, recognizing two factors: (1) standard demographic questions can be constraining and intrusive and (2) our colleagues who occupy multiple historically marginalized identities and cultural locations, particularly BIPOC, are vulnerable to having their identity recognized due to the current and consistent homogeneity of the WPA field, especially when combined with other data such as institution size and location. I shared the interview questions in advance, including a model for the identity question (e.g., “I identify as a queer cis white woman and a first-generation college student with a medical disability”). A full list of the demographic questions can be found in the appendix.

The interviewees’ positions during the interview period included directors and coordinators of composition, first-year writing, writing and

communication centers, and WAC/WID. Some positions included overseeing departments, programs, or other university writing-related initiatives, including upper-level or graduate writing, dual enrollment, general tutoring centers, and general education programs. Three of the participants included in this study were serving as co-directors, associate directors, or assistant directors. Though I will provide some additional detail about the two cohorts, I will not connect and combine university context, position information, and demographic data in order to respect the anonymity of study participants. Please note that the identity markers participants used to describe themselves are not mutually exclusive.

Of the twenty-five participants, one identified as Asian, four identified as Black and/or African American, two identified as Latino/a/Hispanic, fourteen identified as White, and four identified as multiracial, with all four respondents who referred to themselves as multiracial noting concerns that their responses could be traced by colleagues at their institutions and in the field. Fourteen of the interviewees identified as women, seven identified as men, and two identified as nonbinary. Four identified as part of the LGBTQIA+ community, and two identified as being disabled. Lastly, approximately 90% of interviewees had completed all requirements for a PhD in writing studies or a related field or a doctorate in education at the time of the interview. The nine LT-WPAs had all been WPAs or faculty administrators at the same four-year institution for seven or more years at the time of the interview except for sabbatical or leave under the Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993 (FMLA), though their particular administrative positions may have changed through the time period. The sixteen N-WPAs had each been hired at four-year institutions since 2019 and were nearly all (thirteen of sixteen) recent graduates in their first full-time WPA position (see the appendix for the full list of demographic questions).

Except for one LT-WPA who identified as a poet and another who preceded their gender with the adjective “old,” the LT-WPA cohort shared no additional identity markers. As a group, the N-WPAs shared much more detailed identity and cultural location information than their LT-WPA counterparts. For example, participants in the N-WPA cohort included a range of markers, such as: “queer anarchist queen,” “pregnant,” “blue collar,” “middle class,” “first-generation college student” (two), “raising feminist sons,” “South Asian-American child of immigrants,” and “grew up poor in a small town.” The increased diversity of this cohort is hopefully a sign of growing diversity in WPA as a field and an increased understanding of the myriad ways our identities and cultures shape how we view and experience the world. Likewise, the homogeneity of the LT-WPA cohort is surely a limitation in both my study and WPA as a field. If I continue this research

or further explore generational field differences among WPAs, I will need to further address this gap and increase the diversity of participants.

I went into each interview having shared with the participants ahead of time a series of fourteen questions that asked them about their training in and experience with WPA work, the tasks they feel they spend the bulk of their time doing, the priorities and expectations of their positions and who sets them, and the extent to which they engage in self-care and direct carework in their positions (see the appendix for full list of interview questions). Based on their responses, I added some basic follow-up questions and omitted others; as the interviews progressed, I found that some participants anticipated or responded to not-yet-asked questions, negating the need for me to ask them. Also, because responses for some questions took more time than I had anticipated, some questions were not asked due to time constraints.

As the interviews were in progress, I took notes and time-stamped quotes of interest in the live transcript to return to. These actions increased and became more intentional as I conducted and transcribed more interviews because I started recognizing more connections among the interviewees, particularly those shared by participants of relative experience. When I completed the interviews, I saved the transcripts under the respondents' chosen pseudonyms to maintain confidentiality and deleted the videos. Then, I engaged in open and axial coding informed by grounded theory methods (Charmaz) and used descriptive codes (Saldaña). In this article, I will explore findings derived from the following coding clusters: "Preparation and Experience;" "The Work and the Workload;" "Expectations and Perceptions of the Work;" "Carework;" "Emotional Labor, and Life-Work Balance;" and "Reflections."

## FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Though there are several avenues yet to explore based on this data, in this article, I will discuss LT-WPAs' and N-WPAs' varied approaches to self-care, self-preservation, and boundaries and their origins as well as the differences in the tasks expected—or at least perceived to be expected—of LT- and N-WPAs during the pandemic (specifically during the interview period, August 2021-July 2022).

### *Great Expectations: Pandemic Expectations for Newer and Long-Term WPAs*

While one of the LT-WPAs who was interviewed late in the study has recently moved into a new role at their institution and described themselves as having been previously worn out but recently "rejuvenated," their eight

LT-WPA counterparts all shared that they were some version of tired, ranging from “feeling meh” to “utterly exhausted.” Five of the nine LT-WPAs referred to themselves as “burnt out,” with two of them inserting colorful expletives in between. Two of the others characterized themselves as approaching burnout. As Jacob Babb points out in “Seeing the Forest and the Trees: A Rhizomatic Metaphor for Writing Program Administration,” “According to the National Census on Writing, the vast majority of WPAs do not maintain their roles for more than ten years, with most serving in those roles for five years or fewer” (37), so perhaps these feelings are typical at this stage in a WPA’s career. In fact, maybe some of the LT-WPAs even stayed for longer than they had intended because of the pandemic, which might also play into these feelings.

Interviews illustrated that the positions of LT-WPAs became far more complicated by the pandemic, which could be contributing to LT-WPA burnout. It could also be argued that many of the N-WPAs’ positions—or at least the expectations of them in their positions—had been somewhat simplified due to their newness to the position and the pandemic. All the LT-WPAs mentioned at least one entirely new routine task or role that had been added to their proverbial already-full plate since spring 2020 due to pandemic conditions; many shared several examples, such as reverting to manual scheduling rather than central scheduling, moving from committee or peer evaluations back to WPA-centered evaluations of faculty performance, and subbing for ill tutors and colleagues. Several also noted the heavy labors—emotional and workload—of increased austerity measures, such as taking on an additional role because of a vacated position or taking on an extra class. This might also shed light on why eight of the sixteen N-WPAs stepped into their positions due to the departure of the previous WPA; two others stepped into assistant or associate WPA positions during the height of the pandemic, with one noting that their stepping in was to “keep the [WPA] from walking.”

To the contrary, many of the N-WPAs interviewed (nine of sixteen) were told by their supervisors upon entering their positions that their primary role was some version of “keeping the lights on.” Though these N-WPAs shared excitement about improving their programs by taking on curriculum revisions—particularly revisions aimed at making curricula, policies, and spaces more inclusive, accessible, and antiracist—building communities of practice and collegiality, and developing more robust trainings and campus partnerships, most of them also shared that they were not given explicit priorities from their supervisors or upper administrators beyond maintaining the status quo, which may have allowed them more freedom to assess for themselves what needed to be done first and more autonomy

in setting their own priorities and timelines. One N-WPA said the message they got from upper administration was simply “we need better writing support” but felt that her “top priority was kind of—do whatever you want; we’re just so happy you’re here.” Another N-WPA shared, “Everyone [had] their ideas, but none of them tried to pressure or push priorities.”

Of course, this was not the case for everyone. One N-WPA discussed that her institution “kept pushing the curriculum [work] because it was a massive overhaul.” She explained to her supervisors that such work would take time and gave them a schedule and timeline with benchmarks, and she said it went over well. One of the more experienced N-WPAs who had already begun a course redesign initiative when the pandemic hit the U.S. felt that “the pandemic accelerated everything . . . led us to make two years of progress in a semester and a half,” which they characterized as “both great and challenging.” This was somewhat of an anomaly, though; many of the N-WPAs talked about the pandemic slowing down their initial plans. Like their LT-WPA colleagues, N-WPAs noted keeping up with email and attending virtual meetings as the sorts of tasks that took up much of their time and wished they could spend more time doing more visionary work. However, all of them seemed to be making progress on at least one tangible program priority that was important to them, which was not the case for most of their LT-WPA colleagues.

Readers may note the lack of conversation about the conflicts many WPAs experienced as our duties and values clashed with the priorities of university officials during the pandemic, especially as universities reopened and sought to demonstrate a return to business as usual. WPAs encountered resistance as they worked to keep faculty members, graduate tutors, TAs, students, and themselves safe. While these experiences and concerns came up in many of the interviews, it was not a focus of my questions or a topic covered extensively in any of the interviews. Perhaps unsurprisingly, data illustrated that WPAs of all types and with varied years of experience encountered similar kinds and levels of frustration with university approaches and directives during the interview period, particularly during points of policy-related and logistical transitions.

### *Saving Space and Showing Grace: Life-Work Balance for Newer and Long-Term WPAs*

The N-WPAs showed inspiring intentionality when it came to considering their well-being and setting boundaries, and all of them shared concrete steps they take toward life-work balance. Just one N-WPA shared significantly fewer steps than their peers and was also the only N-WPA who did

not mention having instituted specific, intentional email boundaries, even though they acknowledged needing and intending to. Fourteen of the sixteen N-WPAs have set quiet hours for email and, of those fourteen, nearly all of them said that they rarely read or respond to emails over the weekends. Several of them have developed set schedules, which include at least one day of working from home, and only work within their scheduled hours, and nearly all of them leave early at least one day a week for something personal. One N-WPA said, “on Fridays I work from home doing whatever needs to be done and let the naps come if they need to;” a few of the other N-WPAs noted having a similar system. One N-WPA holds an office hour during her lunch in her campus cafeteria as a way of engaging socially and professionally on her own terms, so she feels more comfortable closing her door at other times. The same N-WPA also shared about her journey learning how not to think about work when she is not working. She said that the physical part—leaving work and going home—was simple, but “leaving work at work,” or what she referred to as “the mental part,” was far more difficult and took practice. Another interviewee shared, “Don’t let [WPA work] bleed into your other work and your life. This might mean not doing as much. This might mean taking shortcuts. Saying no to things. This means I went into the job with the intent of keeping it small.” This sentiment about intentionally keeping the workload manageable from the start was shared by several of the N-WPAs.

However, what I was most impressed by was the way that the N-WPAs have taken actions to address the simple but difficult realities of WPA life that so many of us experience: managing the ebb and flow of the work and expecting the unexpected. Several of the N-WPAs talked about the ways they save space for the “fire of the day” through not overscheduling themselves, limiting the number of meetings they will schedule in a day, scheduling extra “empty” office hours (or what one N-WPA called their “study hall”), and considering “unexpected” labor as they develop their strategic plans. One N-WPA discussed how her role as a WPA and her gender played into this approach, saying that as a woman, “if a student has to cry, they’ll cry to us. They don’t go talk to the chair [in this case, a man]. They come to us, and so I make time for that.” The same N-WPA talked about how she “works a little bit all the time” and spreads out larger projects, so typically busy times of the year do not feel as busy. Several of the N-WPAs discussed taking advantage of slower weeks and using them to “fill [their] reserves.” Though I expect that it will only increase with the release of the recent collection, Graziano et al.’s *Making Administration Visible: Data-Driven Advocacy for Understanding the Labor of Writing Program Administration*, I was also thrilled to see how many of them are not only documenting their



task-based labors—meetings attended, classes observed, evaluation letters written, trainings conducted, disputes mediated, etc.—but also their emotional labor, which I hope to detail further in a future publication.

A recurring theme that came up in N-WPA interviews but only once in LT-WPA interviews was grace. The N-WPAs showed kindness to themselves and a willingness to cut themselves some slack. One respondent shared, “It’s okay to mess up. In fact, you will mess up. Like repeatedly. And life will go on. Be kind to others when they mess up too.” Another participant said, “I usually get it done, but sometimes I don’t . . . There was a time I’d lose sleep over it but not anymore. I like what I do, but I love myself.” Five of the sixteen N-WPAs specifically mentioned giving themselves some version of “a pass” when it comes to writing by taking more time to complete their dissertation, revise their dissertation for publication, or write original scholarly work, with three of these WPAs having made an active decision to give themselves this space before officially beginning the job. One of the N-WPAs said that the year of our interview was her “Year of Nope.” Additionally, several N-WPAs discussed integrating walking, yoga, boxing, running, and other activities into their workday, and almost every one of them mentioned activities they engage in outside work, such as hiking, dancing, performing music, and playing indoor soccer. Many of the N-WPAs also discussed experiencing joy and relaxation through play and making; participants mentioned video games, board games, trivia nights, knitting, crocheting, creating costumes, painting, reupholstering and repurposing furniture, and baking.

Even though the questions were the same, the interviews with LT-WPAs included few mentions of activities that bring them joy, and their mentions of self-care and life-work balance were more passive and aspirational than active and concrete. Though seven of the nine LT-WPAs shared that they are currently working on “work-life balance” and setting better boundaries with work, only four of them were able to detail any steps they had taken toward doing so. All four of these LT-WPAs noted not working *as many* evenings or weekends as steps they had taken, but only two responded with additional specific strategies used, which included adding a proxy to email when out of the office to decrease the pressure to read and respond and delegating more duties to an assistant.

Discussions with the LT-WPAs quickly evolved into things they *could* do and *hoped* to do the next semester or after an event or milestone like promotion to full professor or leaving their current position, such as taking off work more often for non-emergencies, taking up hobbies, eating dinner each night with their families, leaving the university by a certain time, saying no more often, and reading more for pleasure. As I reflect on their

responses, which, in the interest of full disclosure, I expected would not be so different from my own, it occurs to me that most of the aspirations they noted are not actually self-care but basic boundaries that most workers should be able to expect and feel comfortable setting in the workplace.

*Causality & Cautionary Tales: Tracing the Origins of Newer and Long-Term WPAs' Approaches*

Some LT-WPA interviewees shared that the strategies they aspire to enact are things they frequently encourage their graduate students to do. This tracks with what the N-WPAs, who were mostly recent graduates, had to say, which leads to potentially the most exciting finding of this study: Interviews with N-WPAs revealed that *all* the N-WPAs had discussed some combination of self-care, burnout, emotional labor, and the affective nature of teaching and WPA work during their graduate experience through mentoring and/or in their coursework. Interestingly, the LT-WPAs I interviewed had not discussed similar concepts during their training and mentorship. After I asked, “Were concepts like burnout and self-care a part of your formal training?” one participant laughed for nearly fifteen seconds. In Laura R. Micciche’s 2007 chapter “More than a Feeling: Disappointment and WPA Work,” she called for recognition of the materialist conditions of emotional labor in WPA and the importance of mentoring of prospective WPAs. Maybe, together, LT-WPAs and N-WPAs are answering that call. Though none of us were prepared for the pandemic, interviews with N-WPAs indicate that they have been well prepared for the day-to-day realities and affective dimensions of the profession in ways their predecessors were not, which feels like a win.

There was a secondary contributor to N-WPAs’ understanding of these concepts. In addition to learning from what their WPA predecessors and mentors had to say about self-care, burnout, and the like, they also watched many of us do the opposite. Though N-WPA respondents, by and large, spoke very highly of their WPA mentors and their influence on them as students, scholars, and administrators, in response to, “Where did your approach to work-life balance come from?” nearly all the respondents in this group of sixteen referenced their mentors’ lack of life-work balance as a key motivating factor in their current approaches to self-care and self-preservation. One N-WPA shared, “I saw these people who never left the office or saw their kids. I thought, *I love what I do, but I don’t want to be you.* I ended one of my emails to my profs, ‘have a great weekend.’ and she said, ‘I won’t, I will be researching all weekend. What is that?’” Others said, “I don’t want to be the mad person in the basement,” and “This middle-class

position is not worth dying for.” The latter N-WPA described, just as several others had, the toll WPA work had on their WPA mentor’s body, well-being, mental health, and relationships, but then he shared his gratitude as well: “We’re not building these programs. We’re retrofitting. Revising. We’re coming in later. We’re not staying late because [previous WPAs] did this for us and we saw what it did to them. I appreciate them.” The subtext behind each of these statements is the same: It is time for mid- and later-career WPAs to be kinder to ourselves

*Push Boundaries by Setting Boundaries: Concluding Thoughts and Future Directions*

Despite having entered the profession during an unprecedentedly complicated time, the sixteen N-WPAs illustrated through these interviews that not only had they not been “irreparably broken by the pandemic,” as one LT-WPA feared, but most of them appeared to be thriving during the interview period, even though they may not necessarily have characterized themselves as such. The N-WPAs are setting boundaries, practicing self-care, and engaging in thoughtful strategic planning with consideration for their own goals, such as tenure, and their ability to achieve these goals while maintaining sustainable program growth factoring in their time, energy, and bandwidth. It seems these approaches come from two main sources: discussions of self-care, emotional labor, burnout, and boundaries in the field with their mentors and in their graduate courses and as a result of seeing the toll the profession has taken on the generation(s) of WPAs before them.

The interviews in this study also illustrate a clear paradigm shift in the field: The unequivocal recognition that our work is emotional and WPAs experience emotional labor based on our identities and cultural locations, institutional contexts, and the profession. As we move forward as a field, I hope we will continue to discuss and be transparent with our students, colleagues, and ourselves about the affective dimensions of WPA work and encourage WPAs to “resist WPA happiness scripts predicated on high workload, constant navigation of political relationships on campus, and the sacrifice of personal relationships off campus” (Adams Wooten 317). We must continue to push back together against the messages that successful WPAs need to be always accessible, always visible, and always at work. This leads to another point illustrated through the interviews—the need for more inter-WPA communication. In the “Reflections” portion of the interview, I asked participants if there was anything they would like to add or share before the interview concluded. Several of them noted at this

time or in an unsolicited email post-interview that the interviews had been “connective” or “connecting” (two participants), more emotional than they had anticipated (three participants), and therapeutic (eleven participants). Though the pandemic was a time of pervasive isolation, even in non-pandemic times, WPA positions can be incredibly isolating. Given the affective nature of our work and the emotional labor we experience, I call on us to create more space(s) to meaningfully connect with one another.

As I mentioned earlier in this article, this data represents a snapshot and a future window to the strange and uncertain times of the pandemic, specifically during the interview period (August 2021–July 2022). Currently, we do not know whether these WPAs’ circumstances or the conclusions reached in this study will hold. Therefore, I hope to re-interview at least the sixteen N-WPAs three to five years after their initial interview to see (1) if they are continuing to consider and engage in strategic and sustainable program planning, boundary setting, self-care, and self-preservation; (2) if their interviews change in tone and content to be more like those of the LT-WPAs interviewed in this study; and (3) how and to what extent they embed concepts and conversations about the affective dimensions of our field and professions, self-care, self-preservation, and emotional labor into their training and mentoring of graduate students, colleagues, and prospective WPAs. As I continue working with this rich data, I intend to explore further conceptualizations of identity and WPAs, other potential generational and longitudinal patterns and differences, the roles of gender, sexuality, and age in the emotional labor and carework expectations of WPAs, and how the findings of this and other recent studies can improve graduate-WPA student preparation, support, and mentorship. As a field, I hope these conversations will continue to explore how threats and attacks to BIPOC and LGBTQIA+ lives, same sex marriage, trans rights, reproductive rights, critical race theory, and education directly impact the work and wellbeing of WPAs and contribute to the labors—emotional and otherwise—and realities of their positions.

Increasingly over the past decade, the WPA field has been acknowledging the tolls our work can have on our bodies, relationships, and lives. While LT-WPAs might still be struggling to enact our own meaningful steps toward self-care and self-preservation and are far less likely than our N-WPA colleagues to have had discussions about the affective dimensions of WPA work and how to navigate them when we were students, many of us have been intentionally embedding these concepts into our mentorship of newer and prospective WPAs, the graduate courses we teach, and the trainings we lead. The interview responses of N-WPAs are evidence of the positive impact of these choices and suggest that this recent generation

of WPAs were not only listening but have been reimagining and planning strategies for a better, more sustainable future for themselves and the field that they are now putting into action.

## NOTES

1. This research was characterized as exempt under Category 2 (reference # 1802960-1).

2. Due to space limitations, I intend to explore data about participants' outlooks entering their positions and at the time of interview elsewhere.

3. During the interviews, a few of the respondents explained that they have reversed this term to better indicate the relative importance of the two. As such, I am trying to use this term in my own life as well, but I will revert to using "work-life balance" when referring to the interview questions since that is the term used during the interview.

4. The remaining six study participants included a graduate assistant director who is not actively doing WPA work, two-year college WPAs who face a host of additional liminalities and challenges, and long-term WPAs who had recently started WPA positions at new institutions.

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APPENDIX: DEMOGRAPHIC AND INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

*Demographic Questions*

- Name/pseudonym and preferred pronouns
- Age/highest degree earned/in-progress
- Self-disclosed identity/cultural locations that impact your work
- Job/Professional details:
  - Institution size (small, <10,000; medium, 10,000–20,000; large, 20,000+; extra-large, 30,000+)
  - Institution Type:
    - 2-year, 4-year
    - Public, Private
  - Course load
  - Title (director, coordinator, associate director, etc.) and scope of position (what do you oversee?):
  - Length of time in position:
  - Length of time in field:

*Interview Questions*

1. Briefly describe your training in and experience with WPA work.
2. To what extent has your training/experience prepared you for the position you have? Is there anything you wish you had learned through mentoring or graduate school to better prepare you for your work as a WPA?
3. What task or tasks do you feel like you spend the bulk of your time doing? Is this what you expected coming into the position or has this changed?
4. Upon entering your position, what do you think your supervisors/upper administration thought should be your top priorities? Have those priorities shifted and, if so, why and how? How do you feel about this?
5. Upon entering your position, what do you think your peers/colleagues/employees/staff thought should be your top priorities? Do you think those priorities shifted and, if so, why and how? How do you feel about this?
6. Upon entering your position, what did you isolate as your top priorities? Have those priorities shifted and, if so, why and how? How do you feel about this?
7. Is there anything you feel like you are doing well in your position? Is there anything you feel that you are not doing well?

8. Which parts of the job are you most excited about right now? What is your biggest obstacle or concern right now? What are you looking forward to? What do you expect will be your biggest projects/hurdle/s next semester?
9. What word would you use to describe your outlook coming into your position? What word would you use to describe your outlook now? Are there any particular factors that you feel have factored into/shaped your outlook?
10. Do you engage in direct care work in your position? What does this look like? What percentage of your work would you estimate is direct care work? Where does your approach to care-work come from? How does care work impact you and your work?
11. How is your work-life balance right now? Do you feel adequately supported and cared for (spiritually, physically, and emotionally)? What would help you feel better supported and cared for? How do you preserve and care for yourself? Where do your approaches to work-life balance come from?
12. You described your identity/cultural location as \_\_\_\_\_. How do you feel your identity/cultural location has impacted your experience in your position?
13. I am teaching a WPA course this spring. What is one suggestion you have for me? Do you have any advice for new WPAs or have you learned anything recently about what it means to be a WPA?
14. Is there anything else you would like to share?

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