CHAPTER 11

TRAVELING ON THE ASSESSMENT LOOP: THE ROLE OF CONTINGENT LABOR IN CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

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Threads: Professionalizing and Developing in Complex Contexts

Despite contentious debates over the role of tenure-stream faculty and contingent faculty working in writing programs,[1] we assert the need to establish a middle ground that centers on the benefits to contingent faculty when their voices are included in curricular development. Such benefits include not only monetary compensation, even if nominal, but more importantly a curriculum that is built around the merged expertise of WPAs and contingent faculty, allowing for contingent faculty to participate in a writing program attuned to their needs. Although we both serve as WPAs now, we have worked as contingent faculty—most recently as graduate teaching assistants (GTAs) during our doctoral studies—in the past, and it is around an assessment experience we shared while in this position that this chapter revolves. The most beneficial way to build the kinds of relationships between tenure-stream and contingent faculty needed to work toward resolving the labor issues that haunt our profession is to collaborate with one another in as many ways as possible. If our suggestion sounds

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1   See James Sledd, Donna Strickland, and Marc Bousquet. It is also worth noting that, while we are focusing here on the relationship between tenure-stream WPAs and contingent faculty, not all WPAs actually are tenure-stream faculty, a separate issue that we acknowledge but do not address here. Deborah Coxwell-Teague and Ronald F. Lunsford's First-Year Composition: From Theory to Practice includes course designs, syllabi, and reflection on teaching first-year writing from several tenured faculty members who have served as WPAs, such as Chris M. Anson, Kathleen Blake Yancey, Victor Villanueva, and Douglas Hesse. We see this collection as an encouraging move away from the narrative of the "boss compositionist."

simple, that's because it is, even though such collaboration often does not occur. Common wisdom asks us to recognize non-tenure-track instructors as cheap, exploited laborers in a technocratic, management-driven university structure that depends on their labor to support an administration-heavy hierarchy focused on the bottom line. University administrators, whose ideologies impinge upon the work that tenure-stream faculty are enabled to do, often engage in a pattern of thinking about contingent labor that depends on two related strands: First, contingent faculty are not invested with institutional power—they are not protected by tenure and are not held to the same research and service standards as tenure-stream faculty.[2] Second, because contingent faculty do not have the same service obligations and because they are already underpaid for their labor, they either cannot or should not be expected to engage in additional professional and curricular development. Unfortunately, this pattern of thinking among administrators often restrains actions WPAs can take to professionalize contingent faculty and to seek ways of mediating material problems.

We agree that contingent faculty members are underpaid for their work, often abhorrently so, and this is a condition that continues to worsen as colleges and universities nationwide attempt to operate on shrinking budgets. Furthermore, apart from monetary compensation which we address later in this chapter, contingent faculty often are not evaluated for service, resulting in the possibility that they receive no credit for their service work. We also acknowledge the connection between the quality of writing instruction and compensation. As Eileen E. Schell astutely notes, "we cannot pretend that instructional quality is not affected by working conditions" (108). But, while the issue of financial exploitation should be a continuing concern—and this edited collection indicates that it is—contingent faculty should not be excluded from programmatic and curricular assessment and development to protect them from overextending themselves. Such a stance strikes us as an infantilizing maneuver that deprives contingent faculty of the chance to engage in professional and curricular development. Although contingent faculty occupy variably tenuous positions, their agency in curricular and programmatic decisions is—and should be—an important factor in the success of writing programs.

Our answer to this dilemma is to develop instructor agency through collaborative involvement in programmatic decisions, especially when those decisions have direct bearing on the curricula that instructors will be expected to teach in

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2   The 2012 confrontation between English faculty and college administration at Queensborough Community College in the CUNY system, as well as the 2013 dismissal of a veteran adjunct instructor in music and president of the adjunct union at the University of Massachusetts at Lowell (a story that continues to develop during the writing of this chapter), illustrates just how tenuous contingent positions can be.

their writing courses.[3] Leaving contingent faculty out of these decisions divorces them from the content and administration of these courses, negatively impacting their relation to the writing program and their investment in instruction. The lack of collaborative engagement with contingent faculty also deprives WPAs of the invaluable practical experience that informs the perspectives of those faculty. If tenure-stream faculty who administer programs are distanced from undergraduate writing instruction because of other obligations, such as scholarship and graduate teaching and mentoring, then they should necessarily rely on the experience of the faculty who teach those courses to supplement their scholarly engagement with the field. WPAs and contingent faculty bring equally important kinds of knowledge with them into assessment and development situations. Tenure-stream faculty are obligated to remain current on scholarship in the field, meaning they should be aware of the latest best practices and innovations in writing assessment and pedagogy. And while many contingent faculty also remain attuned to those scholarly discourses, they bring practical experiences and concerns into the process. As Jacob's dean at the institution where he currently serves as WPA recently put it at an adjunct orientation session, NTT faculty (adjuncts in this case) are the "frontline instructors." While such a metaphor, reminiscent of "boots on the ground," has troubling implications regarding the expendability of adjuncts, the point ultimately is that contingent faculty teach most of the nation's writing courses, so their experience and perspectives are crucial to the ongoing development of writing programs.

From a disciplinary perspective, composition theory emerges from praxis, built around the classroom experiences of writing teachers—or "Practitioners' lore," as Stephen M. North put it (24)—and for that reason, compositionists remain invested in praxis as a heuristic to develop writing programs and scholarship.[4] Louise Wetherbee Phelps characterizes the relationship between praxis and theory as the praxis-theory-praxis (PTP) arc: "crisis [in teaching] generates methodology . . ." (37). For instance, when the Conference on College Composition and Communication was first established in 1949, it was meant to provide college writing teachers with space to converse with one another about new practices and new programmatic approaches (a role it still fulfills); CCCC was envisioned as a site for national collaboration between writing teachers seeking solutions to practical concerns. The relatively recent phenomenon of tenure-track

3   Editors' note: This recommendation is consistent with the CCCC Statement on Working Conditions for Non-Tenure-Track Writing Faculty, issued April 2016

4   In "The Challenge of Textbooks and Theory," William B. Lalicker emphasizes the need to encourage multiple forms of interactions among faculty teaching writing, regardless of rank, including establishing reading and writing groups, program newsletters, in-house listservs, and a lending library. All of these interactions indicate an ongoing need to consider the connection between theory and practice in the teaching of writing.

lines in composition points toward the scholarly focus of the field that developed in response to the emerging disciplinarity of composition, but composition's theory often connects back to praxis in real, practical ways. The assessments that we describe illustrate the importance of the theory/praxis loop, another way of characterizing the PTP arc, as much as the assessment loop itself. Involving NTT faculty in programmatic decisions, particularly curricular decisions, calls on their expertise to inform both the theory/praxis loop and the assessment loop. Without their involvement, WPAs would not have nearly as much needed insight into the classroom experiences of instructors and students in their writing programs, and contingent faculty would not benefit from exposure to the valuable theoretical frameworks that help them to talk knowledgeably about their courses and their pedagogical practices. All parties benefit from collaborating with one another: WPAs stay closely in touch with the everyday occurrences in writing classrooms and contingent faculty connect with current trends in research via the WPA, who brings theory-focused perspectives to bear on curricular issues.

Our argument on the importance of collaboration in writing programs emerges from two portfolio workshops at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, where we both worked as GTAs and earned our Ph.D.s. Our narrative illustrates one way that this middle ground can be productively found while also reinforcing the importance of both theoretical and practical knowledge in the assessment loop. Chris M. Anson in "Assessment in Action: A Möbius Tale" describes assessment as a two-sided möbius strip that unites programmatic decisions and individual teachers' implementation of these decisions. Here, we use this idea of the assessment loop and re-frame it as involving both writing theory often located in the WPA and practical teaching knowledge often located in contingent faculty. These two sides of the moebius strip, as Anson claims, "divid[e] and conjoi[n] at different points; but both are crucial to success" (4). We do not intend this narrative as a prescription of the ways schools should undertake the moves we recommend since every institution and every writing program will be uniquely situated. However, we offer this narrative through the eyes of two formerly contingent faculty as one example of the ways that tenure-stream and contingent faculty can engage in the assessment loop and negotiate the lines between exploitation and expectations, standardization and standards—lines we think critical for writing programs to straddle if contingent faculty are the primary teachers for first-year composition courses.

PORTFOLIO ASSESSMENT WORKSHOPS, 2011-2013

In May 2011, a group of eleven lecturers and GTAs, including ourselves, and the university's tenured WPA participated in a three-day portfolio assessment

workshop that resulted in an extensive collaborative revision of our first-year writing course's learning objectives, portfolio guidelines, and portfolio rubric.[5] Although UNCG offers two college writing courses, English 101 and English 102, we focused on English 101 because it is the only required writing course and English 102 was at that time in a transitional stage in response to a previous round of collaborative assessment. All of the English 101 documents we revised are vital to the direction of our writing program, and contingent instructors were integral to the process of generating these documents. Therefore, the assessment produced curricular changes that benefited contingent faculty by making the course more legible to instructors and altering course requirements to make them more responsive to instructor observations about students' needs. The broad purpose of this assessment was similar to Joseph Eng's at Eastern Washington University: finding "a needed balance between program uniformity and teacher autonomy" (para. 3). Involving a larger number of contingent faculty in this process allowed their teaching experiences and expertise to take a formative role in decision-making while this assessment also brought in theoretical knowledge from the WPA. In other words, this assessment marked a specific point where these two types of knowledge, sometimes separated as Anson points out, joined for specific reasons and to specific ends. Without the involvement of contingent faculty, furthermore, such an initiative would have been impossible because tenure-track faculty very rarely teach first-year composition and generally lack the practical knowledge of the course needed to inform this assessment. The involvement of contingent faculty thus included needed voices and led to curricular changes that impacted their working lives in positive ways, including changes to student portfolios that made the grading burden less onerous by focusing on the quality of student work included over the quantity provided.

The workshop began as a means of assessing the portfolio grading rubric then in use. The WPA and Jacob, then assistant director of the writing program and himself a GTA, convened this assessment workshop because of the sense that the rubric was not working. Because of her knowledge about assessment and assessment practices as well as input from two CWPA consultant-evaluators, the WPA questioned how well the rubric, a primary traits rubric using a points system, helped instructors accurately and fairly evaluate portfolios. Our measures to standardize a portfolio rubric were intended to measure the learning outcomes common to all sections of English 101. Additionally, contingent faculty, including both Jacob and Courtney, had complained about how difficult the rubric was to use, primarily because the language in the rubric was slippery. Therefore, both theoretically and practically the rubric did not work. As a group,

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5   This assessment was recommended in our 2010 program review conducted by the CWPA Consultant-Evaluator Service and was supported financially by our Dean of Arts and Sciences.

we sought to create a portfolio rubric that would measure the course goals and create consistency between sections of the course.[6]

To this end, we double-read 110 randomly chosen portfolios from English 101 courses taught in fall 2010. The rubric assessed seven categories (analysis, use of source material/textual evidence, rhetorical knowledge, organization, style, rationale essay, and overall portfolio presentation), with five points available for each category and a grade assigned based on the total number of points a portfolio was given. The grades this group assigned to portfolios were typically in the C, D, or F range. We then scored the same set of portfolios with a rubric from a comparably-sized Midwest institution. This rubric was also a primary traits rubric; however, it looked at six categories (purpose/audience, topic/thesis, organization, prose, final analytic essay, and process) and, rather than points, it provided explicit language for the work representative of each letter grade in each category. Using this rubric, our sample portfolios typically scored in the C range on an exaggerated bell curve with fewer essays receiving grades in the A and B or D and F range than with our own rubric.

As a result of using these rubrics to grade the sample portfolios, we determined that we needed a rubric that would ensure more accurate and reliable grades across sections of English 101 because overall course grades, which were generally reliant on the portfolio for over 30 percent of the final grade, were typically B- and above. The disparity between portfolio grades in the assessment and course grades indicated an unwillingness of instructors to completely buy into the rubric's use value because if portfolio grades were as low for individual students and classes as the grades assigned during the assessment, course grades would be lower than they were. From a theoretical standpoint, the WPA was concerned that our rubric did not align with writing assessment scholarship supporting holistic grading. From a practical perspective, the contingent faculty did not think that the grades given by using the rubric accurately reflected the work students did or that the rubric helped them grade portfolios accurately and quickly. These were particularly problems because portfolios from different sections of the course were found to include very different writing assignments that did not help students develop the writing skills that we felt as a group they needed. To address these concerns, the new rubric would need to include more specific language than our initial rubric, along with more specific portfolio guidelines to ensure that portfolios in different sections demonstrated comparable writing skills. We would also need to revise the course goals because, in refin-

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6   Our workshop was in keeping with the CCCC Committee on Assessment's recommendation that "Assessments of written literacy should be designed and evaluated by well-informed current or future teachers of the students being assessed, for purposes clearly understood by all the participants . . ."

ing portfolio grading standards, we were also revising what we expected students to accomplish in the course. This resulted in new course objectives, now titled Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs), and guidelines to match the university's assessment language; portfolio guidelines; a portfolio assessment rubric; and a detailed instruction sheet for using the new rubric.[7]

Upon reviewing the sample English 101 portfolios, we found that students exhibited several common issues in their writing: little critical self-reflection on writing processes and rhetorical knowledge, vague thesis statements, poor transitions between paragraphs and ideas, improper use of sources, and shortsighted conclusions. In general, the issues we found were problems with uses of rhetoric and a reader-based approach to writing.[8] The new portfolio rubric speaks to each of these issues specifically. Additionally, we determined that a holistic rubric rather than a primary traits rubric would result in more accurate and reliable assessment of the portfolios as well as better fit with current writing assessment practices. The WPA provided input about how our decisions related to current writing scholarship and contingent faculty discussed how the rubric could represent standards we felt would be clear to both instructors and students and would accurately and fairly assess the writing our students did. Furthermore, at the suggestion of the WPA, we used the university's overall grading rubric to guide our creation of this rubric so that our programmatic assessment aligned with the institution's assessment practices. Our institution defines a C grade as one that exhibits minimum competencies, which led to our definitions of what we wanted students to minimally be able to demonstrate in their final portfolios. Because a holistic rubric would be new to some English 101 instructors, we devised a rubric instruction sheet to help explain how instructors should use this rubric to determine portfolio grades.

Aside from the rubric, further curricular changes were needed to address the content of the portfolios. Because the 2011 group determined that better guidelines were needed to help students write and choose work that represented how their writing addressed the newly revised SLOs for the course, we also generated more specific course and portfolio guidelines. In addition to ensuring similar workloads in amounts of writing and reading done as well as common policies in relation to attendance and individual conferences, the course and portfolio guidelines reinforce the focus of the course on students' engagement

7   Libby Barlow, Steven P. Liparulo, and Dudley W. Reynolds argue that "*Design must emerge from the process*" (52), an important lesson we learned as our work shifted from simply changing the portfolio rubric to changing SLOs as well since, ultimately, the rubric is designed to measure the SLOs.

8   These issues also resulted in our revision of English 101 guidelines for instructors to encourage fewer but more sustained and complex essays, a trend that Erin Herberg notes in her discussion of portfolio assessment at Rowan University.

with outside sources and argumentative and analytical discourses. The guidelines are meant to ensure that English 101 instructors assign similar materials across course sections while also allowing them as much flexibility as possible in designing their courses. The portfolio guidelines the 2011 assessment group composed are meant to reinforce common standards in the course without forcing standardization of the course on English 101 instructors. Allowing these instructors room to create their own courses within set parameters meets the institution, department, and program's needs for consistency in instruction across course sections while allowing instructors ownership over the creation and pedagogical methods of their own courses.

After the first assessment workshop was finished, we sent a detailed message to all contingent faculty teaching in our program, explaining our assessment procedures and findings and including the revised documents as attachments. We facilitated three sessions during the summer to help instructors design new assignments and adapt old ones to fit the new SLOs. These sessions not only provided space for all contingent faculty to become involved in programmatic changes but also provided opportunities for them to participate in workshops that directly influenced their teaching, furthering our program's balancing of common purpose and individual autonomy.

Contingent faculty were also able to voice concerns about the documents before their implementation, an important aspect to consider since curricular development often elides the inclusion of contingent faculty's voices in decision-making processes. The WPA explained the theoretical underpinnings of the revised documents and how contingent faculty expressed their own concerns in the revision of the documents. This made explicit how theory and practice had been united in the construction of these changes, making the workshops part of our praxis/theory loop. In general, these documents were well received and the contingent faculty had no major concerns about them. We believe that making contingent faculty such a presence in the assessment workshop eased the concerns of the other instructors, who did not feel that the course revisions were being foisted upon them. Therefore, these documents were implemented in fall 2011.[9]

In May 2013, we held another portfolio assessment workshop, this time to determine if our portfolio rubric and corresponding documents were working

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9   Additional opportunities have arisen since then to discuss the changes to English 101 both formally and informally as Chris Burnham and Rebecca Jackson argue are important ways of promoting "program-ness" that help contingent faculty achieve "the worldview of the professional" (160). One of these opportunities was a discussion of the changes, particularly to the portfolio rubric, at a GTA meeting in fall 2011 as GTAs began implementing the rubric in their courses.

to create consistency across sections of English 101 and had helped instructors more accurately and easily grade portfolios. The group assembled to assess portfolios was similar to the previous group in its makeup, comprised of ten GTAs, two lecturers, and the WPA. We double-read 99 portfolios from spring 2013 using our revised holistic rubric. Additionally, Jacob and Courtney, GTAs themselves at that time, circulated a survey among all faculty members who teach English 101 to gain a broader perspective about how instructors felt the rubric was working.

Rather than providing clear answers to our questions about consistency and improvement, this portfolio assessment created more questions about what instructors see happening in English 101. We found that grades we assigned for portfolios generally occurred in a bell curve, but this did not align with final grades for the course even though the portfolios are worth 40-50 percent of students' grades. In our discussion, we found that many instructors assumed that portfolio grades, if containing evidence of revision, necessarily should receive better grades than individual essay grades. Therefore, the grades we assigned for students' essays were not reflected in students' portfolios. As became clear during the portfolio assessment, this meant that portfolio and, subsequently, final grades did not reflect the quality of writing that students were producing. The survey results also indicated a dissonance between how instructors felt the rubric worked and how it corresponded to the goals of the course. Out of twenty respondents, thirteen characterized the rubric as very or extremely useful in grading portfolios, but the same respondents were strongly divided about the accuracy of portfolio grades based on rubrics in relation to course grades. Optional comments provided in the survey and comments made in the workshop suggested that the portfolio process as currently implemented led to significant grade inflation, which had been a serious concern for our writing program for several years. After two days, the workshop participants had generated numerous ideas for future directions for the course and possible assessment strategies, but the group decided that more assessment and discussion was necessary to make any changes. The second workshop produced no revisions, but instead it demonstrated the importance of engaging in continued assessment. The group's chief conclusion was to call on the incoming WPA to continue assessment activities and to lead workshops with instructors to consider new approaches to English 101.

This discussion was an important step in closing the assessment loop begun with our first portfolio assessment. Or rather, in continuing to travel along the assessment loop, since the group recognized that more information and input was necessary to make changes. The workshop participants found that the questions we began the second assessment with were not the primary questions that

needed to be answered and we discovered more tension in the course's outcomes and assessment than we thought existed. The WPA alone or even a small group would likely not have arrived at similar conclusions; as Anson suggests, it took the involvement of a WPA with theoretical knowledge about assessment and writing instruction and a larger group intimately familiar with teaching first-year composition to bring up these valuable points. Positive changes based on such conversations ultimately benefit contingent faculty since their labor is in large part determined by the curricular structures in place at any given institution. Further, contingent faculty's involvement in these conversations helps create buy-in to a program's mission through the inclusion of their voices in the changes that will shape their labor.

TOWARD A RHETORIC OF EXPECTATIONS AND STANDARDS

In "Building a Program with the WPA Outcomes," Kimberly Harrison articulates the importance of revising a program to achieve "internal coherence," a move that provides a logic and stability to the writing curriculum at Florida International University and, through her use of the WPA Outcomes, a connection to the professional ethos of the field that strengthens the local, personal ethos of the WPA. She also notes that the faculty within the program benefited from the curricular revision because of their collaboration with one another: "Discussions about teaching increased; TAs and faculty got to know each other better and shared ideas, participation in frequent workshops and roundtables increased, and assignments were shared, adapted, and discussed" (36). Through curricular revision, all parties who participated built stronger collaborative relationships with one another, and continued discussions that could not have begun without the initial collaboration. Our assessment example is another demonstration that collaboration in curricular revision is necessary to maintain a strong praxis/theory connection between WPAs and contingent instructors.

Discussion about contingent faculty development frequently centers around whether asking GTAs and other contingent faculty to do "extra" work in addition to teaching their courses is exploitation.[10] For example, Anthony Edgington and Stacy Hartlage Taylor's survey of compensation for GSAs revealed various compensations for GSA work, but one writing program director tellingly ar-

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10   Exploitation is not the only argument against contingent participation in curricular development. For instance, see Ann M. Penrose, who suggests that "the tenuous status of NTT faculty" and "in some cases their limited exposure to the field's knowledge base" limits their ability to participate productively. Additionally, some schools or teaching unions prohibit the involvement of contingent faculty in activities not explicitly related to teaching.

gued, "'the compensation is experience . . . it's the chance to put administrative work on one's resume/vitae'" (154). Failure to provide actual compensation, such as course releases, for involvement in writing program decision-making rather than envisioned compensation, such as lines on a CV, can indeed be a form of exploitation, even though the professional experience is assumed to be valuable for job candidates. The contingent faculty participants in our assessments were monetarily compensated with a stipend for their labor. Our experience as contingent faculty in this assessment was enhanced because we felt our labor was valued. In other words, not only were we helping to make positive curricular changes, but our *time and expertise* were viewed as valuable commodities deemed worthy of compensation by the institution and the writing program. We argue that no labor should go uncompensated as in some of the examples from Edgington and Taylor's survey. Despite best intentions, this work would then result in the exploitation of already underpaid and overworked contingent faculty.

Ed Nagelhout's "Faculty Development as Working Condition" realigns the discussion about the involvement of contingent faculty in programmatic decisions away from exploitation. He contends "that faculty development should be both professionalization *and* a working condition" (A14), arguing that although many claim that faculty development must be compensated through money or food, this is a result of seeing "working conditions affect[ing] faculty development rather than vice versa" (A15). In describing his own solutions to avoiding exploitation of contingent faculty, Nagelhout asserts that "Faculty development must address the problems of workload and time commitment," building faculty development "into the expected workload" or designing it "to save teachers time" (A15). These are important factors to consider. We see Nagelhout as actually describing faculty development in terms of *expectations* for the professional development of faculty that will benefit their teaching lives even though we argue that some compensation should still be provided to contingent faculty involved in programmatic decisions. It is to a rhetoric of expectations that we wish to align contingent faculty involvement in programmatic decisions, seeing this involvement as beneficial to contingent faculty agency, students who must learn in their courses, and writing programs that administer this instruction.

Two attempts to resolve the problem of exploitation have been either the standardization of program curricula or complete refusal to standardize. Suellynn Duffey et al. relate these two poles in their attempt to strike a balance between GTA powerlessness and agency by creating "a collaboratively structured program [that] would invite new graduate student instructors—*and* new writing program administrators—to develop, proactively, their own professional identities, philosophies, and practices" (80) through collaborative peer teaching groups. What they found, however, was a double bind: "Either we all made the

same assignments and conducted the same discussions in our groups, or we all went our separate ways down the slippery slope of permissive pedagogical relativism" (81). In the first instance, WPAs think they are helping contingent faculty because they are preventing them from having to develop courses, an admittedly time-consuming task. In the second instance, WPAs think they are helping contingent faculty because they are allowing contingent faculty to create courses that they enjoy teaching.

We argue that both of these responses are inherently flawed. On one hand, there is not enough evidence to indicate that a standardized syllabus actually reduces the necessary time for teaching writing courses, especially since much of that time is dedicated to assessing student writing. Furthermore, standardization has negative effects on contingent faculty ownership over their courses that have yet to be acknowledged. The standardization of curriculum also implies that instructors can easily be switched out without great impact on the course, program, or students, further lending credence to the terrible working conditions many contingent faculty labor under. On the other hand, a completely autonomous writing program cannot guarantee similarity between course sections, a distinct problem when WPAs try to tell administrators and other faculty what the course does or when students take the same course with drastically different results or try to transfer the course to another institution. Since no two sections are necessarily the same, teachers of autonomous courses lack instructional support for the teaching and assessment of their courses. This model allows for outdated or naive ideas of writing instruction to persist, particularly when no efforts are made to familiarize instructors with recent scholarship concerning writing pedagogies.

We found, as Harrison similarly did, that providing some standardization that allows instructors room to personalize courses creates the best teaching environment for both WPAs and contingent faculty. By focusing on collaboratively designing and implementing course standards (goals, guidelines, rubrics), writing programs can ensure continuity across course sections while allowing individual instructors flexibility to design their courses in line with their personal teaching practices. These standards can continue to be revised by WPAs and contingent faculty to ensure they reflect the research in the field and practices of the writing program and its teachers, supporting the instructors who, as we know, often stay in our programs for a limited amount of time. This is not a solution to the problem of contingent faculty working conditions but a way to reconceive the role of contingent faculty, particularly within the programs they work in, as they operate under less-than-ideal working conditions that the field continues to work on improving.

The integration of contingent faculty into the programmatic decision-mak-

ing process can become a rationale that writing programs then use within their institutions to make an argument for sustained employment and less exploitative conditions. Although local conditions may limit the extent to which contingent faculty can be expected to do this work (due to departments and programs being unable to compensate such work, limitations owing to unionization, etc.), we propose that this involvement is one way that most writing programs can address the limited agency of contingent faculty while continuing their efforts to reduce the exploitative practices that often accompany contingent faculty lines. Our ultimate goal is still better working conditions for contingent faculty; this essay, however, argues that our field's collective focus on this larger goal, while necessary, has allowed us to ignore ways to improve the working conditions of the contingent faculty who continue to teach within our programs under potentially exploitative conditions. A rhetoric of expectations and standards rather than a rhetoric of exploitation and standardization is one way that WPAs can improve contingent faculty ownership of their courses with the goal that these efforts will further our mission of providing better working conditions for contingent faculty.

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