

CHAPTER 12

NAVIGATING THE MINEFIELD OF DREAMS: BRANDING AND STRATEGIC PLANNING AS CONCEPTUAL CORE FOR INDEPENDENT PROGRAMS

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INTRODUCTION

Thirty years ago Maxine Hairston warned us that “if we want the profession of teaching writing to become a recognized and respected intellectual discipline, we are going to have to believe in ourselves and in what we do strongly enough to be willing to take a chance and break with the power structure” (1985, p. 281). While English Studies did not become the discipline unified by “the reintroduction of rhetoric to the curriculum” (1982, p. 25) that James Kinneavy once envisioned, in the interceding years we have witnessed the reinvention of first-year writing, the rise of writing centers, the development of writing across the curriculum, robust growth in professional writing courses, rise of new media writing, innovations in portfolio assessment, the invention of directed self-placement, the development of independent writing majors (professional and otherwise), and the realization of Hairston’s dream of the independent writing department that can “participate in the relationship as equals” (1985, p. 281) with English. Ironically, it is the rejection of Writing Studies as a field of study by belletristic English departments Kinneavy describes as “more concerned with the fine arts or with history and expository discourse, but less and less with rhetoric” (1982, p. 24) that allowed this evolution to happen.

However, achieving this lofty goal can sometimes be easier said than done. The literature of our field, especially within the last 20 years, is thick with “separation narratives” that detail the trials and tribulations of separation and the creation of independent programs and departments. *A Field of Dreams:*

Independent Writing Programs and the Future of Composition Studies (2002) was full of stories, at once hopeful and cautionary, about the accelerating emergence of independent writing programs. While Lalicker and Fitts (2004) have demonstrated that achieving equity with English within the same department is possible—something Lalicker explains further in his chapter in this volume—in some cases coexistence becomes difficult, and usually takes one of two forms. When Writing Studies faculty are outnumbered by English, as Linda Bergmann has observed, they may seek “to maintain numerical superiority over composition faculty on aesthetic, moral, or political grounds” (2006, p. 7). In the second case when their numbers increase to a level that their departmental power begins to rival that of English, conflict often results. Agnew and Dallas describe how “shock waves of discord” (2002, p. 39) erupted following their administrative separation from English, an action that eventually required the intervention of a conflict resolution specialist. Others, especially those who have remained relatively happy in English departments, wonder, like Theresa Enos, “if independence would strengthen or weaken the gains we’ve made in redefining our intellectual work” (2002, p. 248). Among the concerns Enos lists are continued underfunding, the image of writing faculty as “mere service providers” (2002, p. 250), questions regarding the tenure process, respect for pedagogical scholarship, and overdependence on part-time labor.

Prior to 2008, no recognizable “writing program” existed at the University of the Sciences. What existed prior to this was a single, 1980s-era modes-based composition course, a few courses in ESL, a single remedial course, a scientific writing course for a few of our health science programs, and a Writing Center that primarily served as a site of remediation for a “Writing Proficiency Examination.” All of these courses were serviced by the lowest-paid adjuncts in the Philadelphia area. When I was hired as Writing Center Director in 2003, I became the university’s first faculty member with a specialization in Writing Studies. A few years later the university would hire its first Director of Writing Programs charged with the creation of the Writing Programs unit I direct today. Starting in 2007 I worked with the new director to create the new program, and following her departure in 2009 became the program’s director in its first full year of operation. While the creation and maintenance of the program was a significant task, as we improved programs and brought new faculty on board it was not enough for us to be viewed as merely the new “service providers” for first-year writing. We sought to be recognized by faculty, administrators and students as a discipline distinct from English. This required us, as Keith Rhodes (2001, 2010b) suggested, to begin “branding” ourselves as Writing Studies. In what follows I describe the challenges we faced, how our strategic planning process allowed us to share awareness of our discipline,

and how the decisions we made have affected our identity on campus, both for good and ill.

LABOR PANGS OF SEPARATION

Our program's separation from our former department was necessary and ultimately in the best interest of the students since the new writing program could not accomplish its mission due to differences of opinion within the department. (The details of this separation eclipse the purpose of this chapter. For a more detailed account see Pettipiece & Everett, 2013.) However, the execution of the creation of the new Writing Programs unit was flawed and the appropriate aftercare that was desperately needed to normalize relations with our former department was not provided. The result was that long-festering wounds deepened and communication between our program and our former department became difficult.

Along with this difficulty a way forward had not been mapped for our program. As a new unit independent of any department, no model existed for determining course approvals, lines of reporting, and tenure and promotion. The provost, to his credit, attempted to provide some stability by creating a now-defunct "Center for Interdisciplinary Studies" which would house the Writing Programs, Intellectual Heritage, and a program in forensic science. Though the CIS would exist for only two years, it provided much-needed incubation for the program along with a place where courses could be approved outside of a department structure. That said, the structural limitations of the CIS soon became apparent, as the program housed two directors (for Writing Programs and the Writing Center) who were reporting to a third director (for the CIS and doubling as director for Intellectual Heritage). The idea at the time was that the directors of Writing Programs, the Writing Center, Intellectual Heritage, and Forensic Science would report to the CIS director. This created a problem since no model existed for academic directors, who were at least in theory appointed at the same level of authority, for reporting to other directors—previously they had reported either to chairs or directly to deans. Further, that the CIS director was a librarian without tenure was brought into question as the other directors possessed Ph.D.s, two with tenure and the other tenure-track.

After the CIS was disbanded, the founding Director of Writing Programs left the university, I was elevated from Writing Center Director to Director of Writing Programs, and the writing center position was retitled "coordinator" to permit that individual to directly report to the DWP. Intellectual Heritage and Forensic Science were returned to their respective departments, and Writing Programs unit was relocated to the business college, where it had taken on

the responsibility of teaching professional writing courses. (My predecessor had used the new course in professional writing we taught for the business major as a negotiating point to arrange our relocation to that college.) In its new home I began working closely with another independent (graduate) program in Biomedical Writing, forming a department in all but name. With the dean's support, the two cooperating programs began referring to themselves as "Applied Writing," though no department formally existed. In 2010 the combined programs signed a letter petitioning the provost to create a Department of Applied Writing, but the proposal was not acted on. The programs shared an administrative assistant but otherwise remained structurally separate, with each director reporting separately to the dean.

While these programs worked effectively side-by-side within the college, two other procedural issues became problems. The first was the tenure and promotion process. Writing Programs was the first non-department to put a faculty member up for tenure. In theory, this was a problem for both Writing Programs and Biomedical Writing, both of which were free-floating programs, though in reality it was a problem only for Writing Programs, since Biomedical Writing did not have any faculty on the tenure track. The dean took the matter up with the provost, who decided that faculty members were tenured within the university, not colleges and departments, since this restriction would create a problem when faculty members had moved departments or colleges (as Writing Programs had done). Since—following the departure of the prior director—there were no tenured Writing Studies faculty, the first tenure committee had to be cobbled together out of faculty from disciplines with little understanding of the Writing Studies field. Though this tenure bid was ultimately successful, it made apparent the problems that exist when an untenured faculty member is not championed by a tenured specialist in the same field who can explain the candidate's qualifications to non-specialists. Further, it revealed the procedural problems that can occur when a case comes forward that does not fit the promotion and tenure procedures outlined in university documents.

The second procedural issue that became a problem was the result of the initial separation from the Humanities Department. Prior to the separation, general education requirements for the humanities (as distinct from social sciences and natural sciences) had been handled by that department. After separation, the Writing Programs created a new "WR" prefix for writing courses to replace the old "EN" designation for courses under its authority. The Writing Programs faculty had been told by the former interim department chair of the department at the time the separation was being arranged that the professional writing courses would come with them. These included courses in scientific writing, business writing, and rhetoric of science. However, after the new courses were created, the

Humanities Department declined to support these courses for general education credit, even though they were being taught by the same faculty that had taught their “EN” counterparts in the former department. This made it impossible for the Writing Programs to offer most of its professional writing courses since they were then denied a place in the general education curriculum. This was caused by the fact that the University of the Sciences consists mostly of professional health science majors, which allow for very few electives outside of general education credits. In order for courses to count towards general education, they have to be attached to one of the three general education disciplinary requirements—natural sciences, social sciences, or humanities. Though a few programs required our courses in scientific writing and business writing, other WR courses could not be offered because they could not meet the minimum enrollment requirements.

While unforeseen problems were created by separation, there were benefits as well. The business college turned out to be a collegial environment with a supportive dean who listened well and recognized the need for writing curriculum outside of the traditional humanities. Curriculum could be designed, adjunct faculty trained, and assessment programs implemented independent of the belletristic arguments that frequently impede writing faculty within English departments. Budgets were not siphoned to pay for English department needs and the dean, who values writing instruction highly, authorized gradual raises that allowed us to bring our adjunct salaries up to a competitive level. The dean supported requests for new tenure-track faculty lines, though these lines have not yet been approved by the university administration. Further, the faculty who surrounded us demonstrated genuine appreciation when we listened to their needs and modified courses (or, in some cases, created new ones) to meet those needs. Over time, our business colleagues came to understand us as an “applied discipline”—to borrow Barry Maid’s term—(2006, p. 99) fundamentally different from “English.” This gradual recognition was nurtured through discussions about courses, collaborative work on committees, and private conversations of some of the “threshold concepts” (Wardle & Downs, 2014, pp. 6–8) that constitute the field of Writing Studies and differentiate it from English. This transition did not happen overnight, and continues to this day. However, it was made easier by proximity and our common mission within the business college. From this we learned, if nothing else, the value of networking and taking advantage of those liminal moments that occur between classes and meetings in helping our colleagues understand the distinctiveness of our profession. Though when we began this process we were thought of only as a first-year writing program and Writing Center, faculty within the college and beyond eventually learned to reach out to us for assistance with writing at all levels, including courses and workshops for graduate students.

HITTING THE ROAD

As a result of our separation, in the spring of 2008 arguments for much-needed curricular reform were taken “on the road.” My predecessor went before the Faculty Council and described all of the elements of the new program. In a nutshell, we proposed the elimination of an outdated, high-stakes “writing proficiency exam,” an updated writing center (which by that time had become a “writing proficiency sweatshop”), a new directed self-placement program, online portfolio assessment, and a revision to first-year writing that replaced a modes-based composition course and a literature course with a two-semester writing sequence.

At one point during a presentation where these reforms were explained, one professor asked, “I don’t understand what you are asking us to approve.” “Well,” the program’s first director explained, “I’m asking you to support the concept.” Looking back, what was actually happening in that meeting was that my predecessor was introducing the university community to the field of Writing Studies (though she used the term “Rhetoric and Composition”). The earlier part of the presentation focused on some of the scholarship of our field, as well as the WPA OS and the Portland Resolution, as the basis for arguing for change. Though we were scarcely aware of it at the time, what we were really doing in that meeting was not so much putting a new program forward for a vote as much as selling our identity to the university as something fundamentally different from English, and something more aligned with the science-focused mission of the university than the belletristic curriculum that had preceded it, something that would bring to the university a value that had previously been absent. While we certainly did not think of it in these terms back in 2008, what we were essentially doing at that moment was developing a *brand*.

The brand we had started with, and the brand in which many of us of a certain age were educated, was literary study. For many of us this brand was defined by William Riley Parker’s “Where Do English Departments Come From?” (1967), Gerald Graff’s *Professing Literature* (1989), and other works. Parker’s view is typical. Though he speaks highly of rhetoric, he refers to teaching freshman composition as “slave labor” (1967, p. 347). Holbrook (1991) documented the characterization of teaching composition as low-status service work disproportionately assigned to women with the teaching of literature predominately assigned to men. This view of composition as menial labor has not faded as much over the years as we might like to think. Royer and Gilles noted that one of their literature colleagues compared teaching composition to “cleaning a toilet” (2002, p. 23) (see Johnson & Rhoades et al., this volume, for similar views). Fortunately, within the same timeframe our own identity was beginning to emerge, cham-

pioned by James Kinneavy, Maxine Hairston, James Berlin, and many others. In hindsight this self-concept has crept up on us, with the field emerging from the title of an often maligned, low-status course, only gradually to evolve into a distinct field under various names, including “Composition,” “Composition and Rhetoric,” and most recently, “Writing Studies.” At what point our field became something distinct from English, if it ever has, is open to debate. The general turning point, I would like to suggest, occurred some time after 1990. Gail Hawisher cites the establishment of “The Center for Writing Studies” at the University of Illinois as an early instance, where “The entire English Department came to refer to us as Writing Studies, and we realized that Writing Studies was being increasingly used around the country to name the field” (Patrick Berry, personal communication via WPA List, September 8, 2014). The term came into increasing use by the 2000s, and was given a further boost by Louise Wetherbee Phelps’ and John M. Ackerman’s (2010) work to have the term added to college and university CIP codes as a graduate research field. Even the Modern Language Association, that monolithic bastion of literary study, has recently expanded its field descriptions to be more inclusive of Writing Studies.

Following our initial presentation in 2008, we returned to the Faculty Council with a presentation focusing on two crucial curricular issues that would require a vote. The first was the replacement of the old freshman composition sequence and the university’s writing proficiency requirement. The freshman composition sequence had consisted of two semi-independent courses, EN 101 (College Composition) and EN 102 (Introduction to Literature). Only the first was formally a writing course, with the second course often described as “a literature course in which writing is done.” As the failure rate on the “Writing Proficiency Examination” (WPE) rose, the Writing Center’s primary work, helping students with writing assignments across the curriculum, had become marginalized as more and more of the Center’s work had to focus on tutoring students so they could pass the WPE. We presented two courses with the new WR course prefix which would make it easier for faculty and students to determine which courses were “writing” and which courses were “literature.” Though I believe the prefix change was crucial to our mission, too many changes were put forward too quickly. Within the scope of a single semester (the spring of 2008) the old writing requirement was eliminated, a new one created, a new writing prefix created, and the WPE scuttled. In the excitement of the moment all of this seemed to make perfect sense—an illusion perhaps magnified by having our changes supported by the provost, the dean, and the department’s interim chair. The changes were also welcomed by certain faculty members who had long complained about “flowery writing” inappropriate to the sciences and who wanted more emphasis placed on scientific and professional writing. All the same, the haste with which

these changes were made created a rift that has negatively affected the curriculum and relations with our former department to the present day.

IT'S ALL IN THE NAME

Keith Rhodes argues for “the value of consciously applying marketing language to educational efforts” (2000, p. 51). He asks us to consider the value of utilizing “total quality marketing” (TQM) theory with a focus not only on the targeted audience (the students) but also the broader stakeholders (which can include other faculty, administrators, and employers). Rhodes argues that by niche-marketing writing, “composition has marketed itself into a corner” (2000, p. 52) by focusing on the ideals of liberal education. Since college now focuses more on career preparation than liberal education, he argues, education in writing should focus less on sociocultural values and more on the requirements of the market (2000, p. 55). All of this was written, of course, shortly before the first version of the WPA Outcomes Statement was ratified, at a time when there was much excitement about its creation. Rhodes’ vision proposes marketing rhetoric as “the superstructure for a new wave of general education” (2000, p. 64) with full-time writing specialists at its core.

Much of what Rhodes says here seems to echo Hairston’s own hopes fifteen years earlier. Looking back from the present, the differences between these aspirations and the current reality are sobering. Most colleges are still dominated by English departments, where writing faculty are sometimes still treated as second-class labor, and overworked adjuncts still teach the majority of writing classes at many institutions. But progress has been made. Writing faculty are increasingly treated as equals by their English colleagues, more independent programs and departments are appearing every year, and writing majors are starting to spread like wildfire. Some part of this success is certainly due to the marketing efforts Rhodes called for in 2000.

A decade later Rhodes revisited the topic when he endorses the CWPA as the brand name best positioned to promote our field while improving the quality of writing instruction overall (2010b, p. 59). Though Linda Adler-Kassner takes exception to Rhodes’ characterization of the promotion of Writing Studies as a distinct field from English as “branding,” she concedes that “writing instructors and program directors always work from a point of principle and that part of the challenge of changing stories (if that is something that we want to do) is identifying those principles and beginning to consider how and whether they intersect with principles held by others” (2010, p. 142). To this Rhodes responds “I hope that we do not decide that marketing and branding, essentially branches of rhetoric specialized for interaction with commerce, are

somehow inherently unprincipled. Ultimately markets are themselves a kind of rhetoric, a way for audiences to evaluate messages” (2010a, p. 147). Indeed, identifying what those principles are, and how to communicate them, is an important part of our evolution from English, to Composition, and now, most would agree, to Writing Studies. In fact, Linda Adler-Kassner has very recently been instrumental in defining what those principles are. Her recent book with Elizabeth Wardle, *Naming What We Know: Threshold Concepts and Composition Studies* (2015) is making important strides toward further defining our field. Indeed, Wardle and Downs (2014) have included five threshold concepts in the second edition of their textbook *Writing about Writing*: literacies, discourse communities, rhetoric, writing processes, and multimodality. In the meantime, particularly in institutions where writing programs, as political units, separate from English, where parallel majors and minors necessitate articulating the differences between the fields, or where both conditions prevail, a means for communicating those distinctions must emerge.

MISSION STATEMENT AS CORE IDENTITY

In 2007, when I was Writing Center Director, our newly hired Director of Writing Programs approached me about writing a mission statement for our program. At that time we were still attached to a department, which itself did not have a formal mission statement, though it did have a statement of purpose (Department of Humanities, 2007): “The Department of Humanities aims to develop in students an understanding and an appreciation of history and literature, philosophy and language, art and music. It hopes thereby to stimulate students’ imaginations and their joy in life.” Not even the Writing Center had a public mission statement, and none had ever been requested of me. (Since that time, I have found out that was not alone in my lack of knowledge in this area. A search of CompPile reveals only twelve hits, with most of these referring to analysis of mission statements in the corporate world.) I remember thinking it odd, because I thought of mission statements as something associated with the university as a whole and the upper administration.

My predecessor began not by working from the statement from the department website, which did not mention first-year writing at all (though it did contain a hyperlink to the writing minor). Instead, we began with the university mission. It became clear to us that our work and that of our former department fell under different “bullets” within the university mission statement. While it might be arguable that the humanities, broadly speaking, addressed “the intellectual, cultural, and ethical understanding and awareness needed to become leaders and innovators in a global society” and “appreciation for diversity among

people, cultures, and ideas” we saw our emerging role as something different. Instead, we focused on the idea that our students should have “have the knowledge, skills, and values to be successful in their professional careers” and that as Writing Studies specialists we should model best teaching practices in our classrooms by fostering “a student-centered learning . . . environment” (University of the Sciences, n.d.).

It was not that what the Humanities Department taught was in any way wrong or irrelevant to the university mission. It was merely that, as the university’s first Writing Studies specialists we understood that the expertise and value we brought to the university was different from what our former department had previously offered. In this sense we were neither disrespecting nor replacing the teaching of writing as it had been done before—in fact, the teaching of writing within the tradition of the humanities continues in that department to the present day—but broadening what the university had to offer its students by bringing expertise it had previously lacked.

During this time we utilized the research in our field in concert with the university mission statement to define our role for both the wider university community and for ourselves. The Portland Resolution (Hult et al., 1992) and the WPA Outcomes Statement (1999) became central documents in this process. Using the university mission as a starting place, our mission statement incorporated elements of the university mission while focusing on how our program could contribute to the overall success of the institutional mission:

[T]he mission of the Writing Programs at University of the Sciences in Philadelphia is to educate Students in the types of interdisciplinary writing and rhetorical practices critical to academic and professional careers. The goal of Writing Programs is to provide student-centered and innovative learning experiences in all composition and professional writing courses and to ensure University of the Sciences in Philadelphia graduates are effective written communicators. Additionally, Writing Programs supports the writing undertaken by faculty and staff on campus and provides tutorial and other services in the Writing Center. (Writing Programs, 2008)

It might be said that in drafting this statement, which was written in the fall semester of 2007, that the Writing Programs unit was born, though we were not yet administratively separated from our former department. However, by that spring, with the support and leadership of the interim chair of our former department, we began to think of ourselves as having a function that had heretofore not existed within the university structure. This identity began with our

own self-identification as members of a field distinct in significant ways from English Studies. Next we literally inscribed this identity into a mission statement, which became instrumental in presenting ourselves first to our former department, then to the university administration, and eventually to the university community at large. This was a first, crucial step in branding ourselves as “Writing Studies” and toward a strategic planning process that was at once liberating, visionary, and at times, unbelievably frustrating. Intentional self-awareness was in this sense both a blessing and a curse. Not only being aware of, but publicly promoting, our differences from English Studies put us in a liminal state between the humanities and the sciences. Our embracing of the part of our identity that declares us an applied discipline or a practical art opened apparent new vistas before us. At the same time a door was closed behind us, and there could be little question that we were complicit in closing that door. Moving forward and finding our place in a university that specialized in the health sciences would require a carefully defined plan.

FROM MISSION TO STRATEGIC PLAN

The Strategic Plan for Writing Programs that we co-authored and presented to the Faculty Council in 2008 did not resemble the shorter, institutionally standardized strategic plans that many of us may be familiar with. One reason is that the university had undergone a considerable transformation in the previous decade. In earlier years known primarily as the Philadelphia College of Pharmacy and Science, the institution officially became the University of the Sciences in Philadelphia in 1998 (History, n.d.), when was it reorganized into colleges. In the same year the first mission statements began to appear in the university catalog. Formal, university-wide strategic planning is a relatively recent process which has developed over time, but was only beginning to become centralized with the arrival of a new president in 2011, who established the University’s Strategic Planning Council. Before that, strategic plans in different departments and colleges were semi-independent efforts in various states of development. At the time my predecessor began talking about it in 2007, while I was familiar with the concept, it was an idea I associated primarily with business or the university’s upper administration.

Even today this is a concept those of us who direct writing programs do not usually actively think about or write about as we go about our day-to-day tasks. A 2015 search of CompPile generated only 23 hits for the term “strategic planning,” and the term “strategic plan” only 26 hits. Most of these hits refer to the business communication or professional writing fields, though a few do refer to strategic plans for writing centers. Two of the most useful resources are

Pamela Childers' (2006) "Designing a Strategic Plan for a Writing Center" and Kelly Lowe's (2006) "If You Fail to Plan, You Plan to Fail: Strategic Planning and Management for Writing Center Directors." Childers emphasizes the steps involved in designing a strategic plan, including understanding the context and motivation to develop the plan along with the rationale, vision, goals/objectives, the scope of the plan, and its assessment. The context and motivation, which she has discussed under the headings of "preplanning activity" and "reality" cannot be overemphasized. It is clear that in her case the plan was largely internally motivated to help the writing center justify its resource requests. This is certainly a laudable approach and is always, to some extent at least, always a part of the process, though the strategic planning process can also be motivated by school initiatives as the master strategic plan is deployed down to the college and department level. Another important element that Childers mentions is the vision, which increasingly takes the form of a mission statement. The mission should be core to the plan, for it is from the mission that the goals and objectives are derived, and against which the assessments are measured. Lowe, for her part, defines strategic planning as "a way of planning for the future while taking into account local variables and the increasingly competitive environment of higher education" (2006, p. 72). She also emphasizes mission, objectives, goals and assessment. To this she adds the feature of SWOT analysis, which, like strategic planning itself, is borrowed from the business world. This involves a self-assessment of a center's strengths (what it does well), weaknesses (what it does not do well), opportunities (new potential areas of expansion), and threats (areas where the center is in some danger of losing ground).

Ortoleva and Dyehouse discuss the use of SWOT analysis as an assessment tool in more detail, noting that it "offers a momentary snapshot of an organization through the eyes of stakeholders who believe in, work closely with, or rely on our writing centers" (2008, p. 2). This analytical tool, borrowed from organizational theory, divides its analysis into "internal attributes (strengths and weaknesses) and its external environment (opportunities or threats)" (Ortoleva & Dyehouse, 2008, p. 2). In an IWP, internal attributes would refer to things a program has control over, such as number of full-time faculty with degrees in Writing Studies (a strength), or excessive reliance on adjuncts (a weakness). External attributes would include things the program has less control over, but affect it nonetheless, such as the creation of a writing department (an opportunity) or faculty resistance to a vertical writing program proposal (a threat). Further, it is important that this data be collected from external sources such as surveys, interviews, or focus groups (cf. Ortoleva & Dyehouse, 2008, pp. 2–3). As our program became independent by administrative edict in 2008 a SWOT analysis of the writing courses—as no formal program existed at the

time—would have been useful before going forward with our strategic planning process. Unfortunately the tasks that were put before us by the administration at that moment did not permit the luxury of time.

BRANDING MEETS STRATEGIC PLANNING

During the program's first two years (the fall of 2007 to the spring of 2009) my predecessor had managed not only a difficult separation from our former department, but provided the vision and leadership to craft the program, begin the process of training adjunct faculty, hired a new full-time faculty member, and co-authored with me a scholarship-based vision and structure for the new program in the form of a 115-page *Strategic Plan for Writing Programs*. This was not a strategic plan as most people would recognize it. Ours was a hybrid of sorts, with each planned goal delegated to a different chapter, with each chapter reviewing the scholarship in our field relevant to that goal. In this sense it served two separate ends. The first was a branding mission, as described by Keith Rhodes (2000 & 2010b) earlier in this chapter. By reviewing the scholarship related to the stated program objective, the chapter was, in effect, serving to demonstrate that Writing Studies is distinct from English Studies not only as a field that exists in its own right—something a member of our former department denied (cf. Pettipiece & Everett, 2013)—but one legitimized by a distinct area of scholarship. The second end was to describe the process for implementing the proposed changes in much more detail than might be possible in a more conventional strategic plan. The chapters in that document included the new first-year writing program, which replaced the old introduction to literature course with a new course in rhetoric and writing; the elimination of the “writing proficiency examination” with course-based portfolio assessment; replacing an entrance essay written during campus visits with directed self-placement; redesigning and expanding Writing Center services; and developing courses in professional writing to serve other majors across campus. The document, without question, was extensive and unwieldy. Most individuals, if they read it at all, only read the four pages of single-spaced executive summary—and who can blame them? (Since then I recall one faculty member telling me he read it cover-to-cover, though I also recall the provost, who had asked for the document to be created, that he “wouldn’t read it,” though I understand he did read the executive summary.) The point is that *the existence of the document was in and of itself a statement*. It was a rhetorical move proclaiming that the field of Writing Studies existed separately, and on even intellectual footing, with English Studies, complete with a rich scholarly heritage. It was the affirmation of a *brand*.

SWOTING OUR WAY TO . . . INERTIA?

As our newly relocated program began its first full year of implementation, I began trying to understand our program's new place in the university structure. Like Shirley Rose and "Bud" Weiser, I wanted to better understand how my program's "goals and purposes not only align with, but also significantly contribute to achieving . . . larger institutional goals and commitments" (2010, pp. 3–4). What I was seeking, building on our first strategic plan, was a way to align the Writing Programs with the university culture and the health professions it serves. I found myself agreeing with Faber and Johnson-Eilola, who argue that:

If technical communication wishes to construct a future in which we are valued for the aspects we tend to value in ourselves . . . we must articulate a meaning for technical communication that both makes visible and builds those very aspects of our profession. (2003, p. 229)

While these writers are addressing the need for Technical Communication programs to reinvent themselves to meet the professional needs of modern corporations, the need to "articulate a meaning," to communicate a message, to transmit a brand, relevant to the university culture could as easily be applied to writing programs. To do that I would need to do three things: 1) begin presenting the Writing Programs "brand" to the rest of the campus; 2) complete my own SWOT analysis and, if necessary, revise the mission and strategic plan to better address the needs of the university as a whole; and 3) increase the program's presence with representation on influential committees. In this way, I hoped, the campus community would gradually begin to see us as Writing Studies as a unit distinct from English Studies, and as a unit that brought their programs a value they had lacked in the past.

In the fall of 2009 I began this process by first reconstituting the Interdisciplinary Writing Committee that had been originally created by my predecessor as an advisory group. I invited members from all colleges—including our former department—as well as crucial stakeholders from student advising, admissions, the registrar's office, the library, student affairs, and the provost's office. This, I hoped, would promote the idea that the Writing Programs existed to serve the university as a whole and not simply the internal needs of our own profession. I asked our newly appointed administrative assistant to schedule appointments with as many department chairs and academic program directors as possible. This in itself was a branding move. Though our unit was not a department, the presence of an administrative assistant suggested a quasi-department status. These meetings during my first semester as interim director served two purposes.

By meeting with the chairs and directors I was able to start branding Writing Programs as the field of Writing Studies and was able to discuss the CWPA, as Rhodes (2010b) suggested, as our primary brand. I did this not by directly defining and promoting Writing Studies, but by arriving at each administrator's office, yellow note pad in hand, and asking two elusively simple questions: "What are your students' writing needs?" and "What can I do to better serve those needs?"

This was my inelegant attempt at a simple SWOT analysis. I allowed chairs and program directors to talk, and I listened (see also Thaiss et al., this volume). And took notes. After listening to their needs, I switched gears and talked about the new first-year writing curriculum, the assessment program, the improvements to the Writing Center, the professional writing courses, and offered to create workshops to address their students' needs. In a few cases I was asked to create those workshops, sometimes within the Writing Center and other times imbedded in courses. Still, the results of these meetings were understandably mixed. In some meetings I was thanked for creating the new curriculum, while in others—particularly in the six-year professional programs—I was told they could not see improvements in their students' writing. (This is somewhat understandable, since there would typically be a three-year gap between completing first-year writing and entering the professional coursework.) If nothing else, these initial meetings crossed disciplinary barriers, facilitated communication, and allowed us to better understand each other. For my part, I gained more insight into the writing needs of students in specialized professional health science programs. At the same time I tried to make sure that chairs and directors were aware that we offered courses such a Scientific Writing (often, I learned, they were not) and articulate ways our program could help them meet their writing needs.

In a SWOT analysis, *strengths* and *weaknesses* refer to resources under your control, including human and dedicated financial resources. *Opportunities* and *threats* refer to external factors not under your control, such as market trends, the economic environment, external sources of funding, and external relationships (Fallon Taylor, 2016). From our informal analysis we determined that we had three particular areas of *strength*: a robust first-year writing program based in the WPA OS; a developing online portfolio assessment program with potential for development in the future as a vertical writing portfolio; a new directed self-placement program that eliminated complaints about writing placement while increasing the success rates of students who placed in remedial courses; and revitalized courses in scientific and business writing that were required for several majors on campus. These were all developments that resulted from the implementation of our original 2007 strategic plan.

Our primary *weakness* at that time (and, unfortunately, to the present day) was the lack of more full-time lines and an overreliance on adjunct faculty to

teach first-year writing. Since these adjuncts were inherited from our former department, they were all trained in literature and had little familiarity with the Writing Studies field, necessitating a robust program of professional development workshops three times a semester, which are still ongoing. At the same time we lobbied the administration to improve their salaries, which we did incrementally until they were raised to a reasonably competitive level. In hindsight, this had the undesirable effect of depleting one unfilled salary line, which the administration used to fund the adjunct raises. (We effectively lost one full-time position since 2007, bringing our current total to three. In training adjunct faculty and managing them well we have, unfortunately, become victims of our own success. As of this writing we remain desperately in need of new expertise, especially in the area of business writing.)

Based on our own analysis and needs identified via the interviews, we identified four potential *opportunities* for future growth. The easiest, and one we were able to operationalize, were workshops created to serve particular programs, both within the Writing Center and in courses. More substantial were needs for a writing across the curriculum program and increased services for ESL students, particularly at the graduate level. Though the former was verbally supported by the provost and a detailed proposal developed by the Interdisciplinary Writing Committee, which was in turn presented to the provost (two subsequent provosts, actually) and the faculty as a whole, this program has yet to be greenlighted. Some recent progress was made toward bringing a WAC program to fruition as its development was recently moved from a proposal to an item on the University Master Plan for future funding and development. Similarly, the proposal for the ESL institute was developed by the Interdisciplinary Writing Committee and submitted to the provost's office. Though this is the program that has had substantial verbal support from graduate faculty due to poor English language skills among some international students, it has yet to be developed (though it, too, had a brief shining moment when it was moved to the University Master Plan before being summarily removed). In its place the university entered into agreements with external ESL schools to bring international graduate students up to an acceptable level of literacy, though this has met with mixed success. At the request of the graduate programs we created a graduate-level course, Writing for Graduate School, to address the literacy needs of the students in need of further assistance. In short, six years later most of these opportunities remain, though yet unrealized. The WAC program—so named for the convenience of our scientist friends, though what we are proposing would be best known to those in our field as a vertical writing initiative—to this day stands the greatest chance of success. One final looming opportunity, the creation of an independent writing department, remains a distant possibility.

In 2009, our external *threats* came from two sources. The first was the lack of the financial support that would have permitted us to realize our opportunities by hiring more full-time faculty, and, having gained this expertise, moved forward on our WAC and ESL initiatives. Moreover, additional lines would have allowed us to move forward in our dream of becoming a department. The other threat was the structure of the curriculum itself. The first-year oral and written communication component aside, the general education curriculum was divided into four other areas: natural sciences, social sciences, humanities, and multidisciplinary inquiry. The unfortunate result was that, if a course did not fit a specified place in general education, students would simply not take it. This left us with only two courses beyond first-year writing that we could reasonably offer at the undergraduate level—the courses in business and scientific writing that were required of certain majors. Because of this the minor in professional writing we had developed could not realistically be offered. In 2014 this threat was slightly alleviated by curricular changes that relaxed restrictions on electives, though it has not had enough of an effect to permit us to offer our minor. We have, though, recently been afforded the opportunity to contribute to the university in other ways. Though the multidisciplinary inquiry requirement was not on our radar in the 2009–2010 academic year, recent changes in the requirement has provided us opportunities to offer multidisciplinary courses in our areas of expertise.

STRATEGIC PLAN 2.0

We are now several years down the road from our initial separation and relocation within the business college. We have had some time to reflect on our strategic planning and branding efforts, and I would like to think that we have learned a few things along the way. According to Doyle and Lynch, a top-level strategic plan has five essential components: 1) a statement of *mission*; 2) a “background analysis which assesses the university’s areas of strong and weak performance” (1979, p. 604); 3) a statement of *objectives* which define what will be achieved over the duration of the plan; 4) a list of *strategies* outlining how these objectives will be achieved; and 5) and “an assessment of the *organizational structure* and *information system* necessary to implement the strategic options determined” (1979, p. 604). I would like to modify these slightly to make the outline more applicable to the individual department or program, as well as what I have learned from our own university’s strategic planning process:

Vision: A brief paragraph describing what the unit would like to become with time. It allows the strategic plan to aim for an endpoint in the more distant future beyond the scope of the immediate plan.

Mission: A brief paragraph explaining what the unit is promising to achieve now, and can realistically achieve within the time period of the strategic plan. This will typically include an explanation of programs or services provided to the university. (*Note:* The mission, and generally the vision, should incorporate appropriate elements of the corresponding statements at the university and college level.)

Goals: Brief statements, broad in scope, covering longer-term objectives to be completed in incremental steps across the scope of the strategic planning period (usually five years). These are comparable to Doyle and Lynch's *objectives*. Because of their broad nature, *goals* are not subject to assessment.

Objectives: Brief statements, focused in scope, which are to be accomplished within a given year and should be assessable. In a five-year plan, there will typically be five *objectives* for each *goal*.

Assessment plan: An assessment plan should be associated with each *objective* and include a statement of data to be collected and how it will be assessed to determine if the *objective* was achieved during that period. (*Note:* Because of workload issues, objectives do not necessarily all need to be assessed each year. Different objectives for different goals will often be assessed on a rolling basis. Often these parameters are defined by the university's strategic planning procedure, which should be uniform for all units.)

The background analysis is crucial to modifying the mission/vision as needed and defining the goals for the planning period, but can take a variety of forms. Self-studies and external studies are commonly used. For my part, after my program was relocated to the business college and I stepped into the role of director, I used the meetings with chairs and directors, as well as the wisdom of the Interdisciplinary Writing Committee, to not only collect data for my impromptu SWOT analysis but also to begin the process of branding the program.

About a year after I had completed the interviews, I was visiting with the director of our business program about some changes we were making to the business writing course we teach for their program. When I started talking about my strategic planning process and our branding moves, he said, "You know, you really should look at the BCG Matrix. Before your program moved over here it used to be a dog. Now it's a question mark." After being initially wounded by the unfortunate language of his assessment, I researched the matrix and have found it to be a useful tool for determining the place of writing courses within the university culture. Named for the Boston Consulting Group that created the matrix in the 1970s (Assen, van den Berg & Pietersma, 2009), the matrix is laid out in a grid according to market share and market growth:

Doyle and Lynch (1979) applied the BCG Matrix to the evaluation of academic programs, though they changed "cash cow" to "prop" and "question mark" to "problem area." However, since its original language is better known, I will

Market Growth	High	Question Marks	Stars
	Low	Dogs	Cash Cows
		Low	High
		Market Share	

Figure 12.1. BCG Matrix. “Welcome to the BCG Matrix Guide,” by BCG Matrix, n.d., <http://www.bcgmatrix.org/>.

utilize those terms here. Essentially, a “star” is a product that enjoys both a high market share and an expanding market. According to Doyle and Lynch, these are “areas attracting a large number of applicants and where [the program or major] has a strong reputation” (1979, p. 606). These are its trademark courses and programs. At my own institution this would be the six-year Doctor of Pharmacy program, which attracts roughly half of our students. Its opposite is a “dog,” which has a small market share and low growth. These are typically struggling programs that should be eliminated from the curriculum. A “cash cow” enjoys a large market share, but the market is saturated. Doyle and Lynch (1979) call these “props,” courses that are good for the reputation of the university but do not bring in large numbers of students. The final category is the “question mark,” which has high market growth but a smaller share of that market. These are products that may or may not see future growth that will result in increased profits. Doyle and Lynch term these “problem areas,” “degree programs that are strong nationally, but . . . are relatively unattractive to applicants” due to “a weak reputation in an attractive area for expansion” (1979, p. 606).

If these concepts are scaled down to the course and program level, they can be informative in evaluating the place of writing courses in the institutional cul-

ture. Our program has no major, and like many, if not most, similar programs across the country exists in service to other majors on campus. Eighty percent of our courses are devoted to first-year writing, with the remaining 20% providing professional writing courses for other majors (though, as I wrote earlier, we are on the cusp of offering courses in multidisciplinary inquiry, another service function). From this viewpoint we have to consider the relative value of our courses to faculty and students in other majors. Few students (let's be frank) ever seek out or takes first-year writing because they're interested in the subject. Only occasionally does a student seek out a professional writing course (at our institution, anyway) for more than a program requirement. However, the courses are supported by faculty in other majors for a value it brings to their programs. It is this perceived value, based on my interviews and discussions with faculty and program directors, that allows me to interpret our program's success in terms of the BCG Matrix.

Prior to 2007, it is probably fair to say that our courses qualified for the "dog" category. At that time we did not have a program in the formal sense of the word but did have a single composition course and an introduction to literature course. When I was hired as Writing Center Director (the position of Director of Writing Programs did not yet exist), the single writing course was generally viewed as antiquated and the introduction to literature course as not teaching the skills professors wanted students to have to prepare them for writing in their science courses. In one focus group I conducted in 2006 as part of my job as Writing Center Director, one student described the writing courses as "a joke," with others noting that it only reinforced what they had already learned in high school. This observation is not meant to be a criticism of the Humanities faculty; they were focusing on teaching the intellectual heritage sequence of humanities electives. Instead, this was the unfortunate result of having turned these courses over to poorly paid adjunct professors who were minimally supervised.

In the time since then, the courses were completely redesigned, a new DSP placement system initiated, an online portfolio assessment system established, and a robust faculty training program begun. The discussions with chairs and directors (followed up again in 2012), intermittent surveys of students and faculty, and our own portfolio assessment have convinced me that it is reasonable to move the first-year writing program to the "cash cow" category. While the course itself is not generally valued by students, faculty have generally shown a high level of satisfaction with improvements in student writing and the refocusing of course content away from literature and toward scientific and academic writing. Administrators are impressed with our assessment reports and indicate confidence that the program is meeting, if not surpassing, its objectives. While it does not bring in tuition money, the program does a good job of returning an academic dividend in the form of improved writing ability compared to the courses

prior to 2007. The problem is that it has saturated its niche in the market (its six-credit share of the communication disciplinary component of general education) and has no realistic potential for future growth. The curriculum continues to be fine-tuned year after year (we recently introduced a Writing-About-Writing component), but has effectively reached the limit of its growth.

A more problematic area that exists for us is professional writing. Prior to 2006, only a single professional writing course existed—Scientific Writing—which was taught unsupervised by a lone adjunct. At the request of the business college, a business writing course had been created. In 2008 several new professional writing courses were created, and the old ones substantially revised under the “WR” course prefix. A tenure-track colleague with a specialization in medical rhetoric was hired, and the scientific writing course again substantially updated. A minor in professional writing was created, though, due to the limited number of electives allowed in professional programs, only a few students have signed up for its courses, and only one minor has graduated. In spite of this, advisors in some academic programs strongly encourage students to take the professional writing courses and sign up for the minor. Further, growing enrollment in several of these programs has increased the number of sections of scientific and business writing that must be offered each year, often with faculty requests for course overloads to be permitted. Unlike first-year writing courses, students do request these courses, especially those that, due to the programmatic restrictions I have already mentioned, have a tendency not to fill. These especially include requests for our courses in writing for the web and public relations writing. In light of this, the professional writing courses could be placed in the “question mark” category, or what Doyle and Lynch (1979) term a “problem area.” They have high potential for growth but are limited from achieving this growth due to local market share conditions. The problem is not that the courses have “a weak reputation” (Doyle & Lynch, 1979, p. 606) but that the restrictions placed on them by the general education program do not permit them to be “slotted” as anything other than “free electives.” One result of this analysis is that we have targeted these courses as a potential area of future growth in our revised strategic plan.

Both the SWOT analysis and the BCG Matrix have proven to be powerful tools in helping us complete the background analysis and update certain elements of our strategic plan. The development of the first-year writing program, the creation of a new assessment system, and the development of a minor in professional writing have all been rolled off the plan in the latest revision, though we continue to seek a slot of professional writing courses in the general education curriculum. This brings me to an important element of the strategic planning process—accounting for plan goals that fall under the “threat” category of a SWOT analysis. In this case, defined goals may not be achievable due

to environmental conditions that are outside of your control. In our case, three goals, though supported by the dean, have not moved forward due to action by external forces. The first, described above, had to do with our inability to offer certain professional writing courses due to structural problems with general education. The other two, the proposals for an ESL Institute and the Writing Across the Curriculum program, have moved forward to different degrees but have yet to be funded by the administration. When assessing these goals, the answer is fundamentally simple but ideologically more of a challenge. In assessment reports it is easy enough to indicate that objectives related to the *goals* have not progressed due to lack of funding from the administration (such as requests for more faculty lines linked to developing the WAC program). On the other hand, at some point a decision has to be made to determine whether the goals are realistic and should be removed from the strategic plan. One such *goal* we had initially developed was to create a major in professional writing. While this *goal* was perfectly consistent with our mission and aligned with both college and university missions, it was unrealistic because of the university's commitment to resources in other areas that were more strongly aligned with the university mission as a whole. At such times a wake-up call is warranted, and *goals* may need to be modified or dropped due to other institutional priorities. This does not mean in any way that the program or its faculty have failed. It means that strategic planning is a fluid process, and unit-level plans, especially those that are more ambitious, are always subject to scrutiny from above.

All said, institutional-level branding and strategic planning for writing directors remains an often frustrating, occasionally pleasantly surprising, but always useful tool for communicating the work we do to students, faculty in other programs, and the denizens of the university administration. This is particularly important for directors of newly independent programs, who sometimes find themselves unceremoniously thrust into public positions rife with controversy, sometimes without tenure, due to no fault of their own. When a program is newly independent, early conversations with outsiders may begin with, "What's the fuss over there?" or "Why can't you people just get along?" These statements are often appeals for clarification. This generally means that our colleagues do not understand the difference between Writing Studies and English Studies, and do not understand the unfortunate hierarchical dynamics often present in our former departments. By answering Keith Rhodes' (2010b) call to promote the Council of Writing Program Administrators as our professional brand we can take important strides in this direction. As has often been recommended, we can use documents such as the Portland Resolution and the WPA Outcomes Statement to help define what we do, and how in training, expertise, and scholarship we are as distinct from our English brethren as they are from their colleagues in

the departments of Education and Communication. Moreover, since we sometimes find our supporters in the administration rather than in English, we can utilize the tools of strategic planning to define who we are and help determine our new place in the university outside of English. In some fortunate cases, these efforts have resulted in the creation of departments of Writing and Rhetoric. I am still waiting for that call. But I remain ever hopeful.

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