

CHAPTER 9

QUO VADIS, INDEPENDENT WRITING PROGRAMS? WRITING ABOUT WRITING AND RHETORICAL EDUCATION

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A central question to the philosophy and functioning of independent writing centers (IWPs) is that of curriculum—or as Royer & Schendel call it using an Aristotelian category, the “material of our craft” (this volume). Debates over what and how we should teach have, after all, played a major part in our arguments (and occasional fights, skirmishes, and blown-out wars) for independence. Where old alliances with English/literature programs crumbled, new ones started to be forged with Rhetoric and Communication programs in terms of philosophical and curricular alignment, as well as with university-wide academic initiatives that transcended old curricular allegiances (such as writing across the curriculum, writing in the disciplines, or the writing center). In a special issue on “the profession,” Kathleen Yancey comments on the blurry lines between “teaching, knowledge, disciplinarily, and profession”: “It seems logical to assume that there is some relationship between disciplinarity and profession, but what precisely is that relationship?” (2013, p. 7). The premise of this chapter is that the independence of the writing program is closely connected to the WPA’s engagement with the discipline, and that the current trends in writing pedagogy can in fact support, foster, and sustain our independence. Program independence brings about the freedom and responsibility to make informed curricular decisions that are based on the most current theories and practices of the field. It so happens that, at this particular moment in the middle of the second decade of the new millennium, IWPs are uniquely positioned to decide on, implement, test, and assess new and exciting writing/rhetorical pedagogies that may have an impact not just on our students, but on our scholarship, hiring practices, programs, and universities in general—alongside helping to build one of the main “equities” for writing programs in terms of choices and specializations for majors (Lalicker, this volume). In what follows I review and critique

two trends in writing pedagogy and discuss their applicability to IWPs. One of these trends, Writing about Writing (WAW), is already well established; the other, the interdisciplinary Project for Rhetorical Education (iPRE, or RE in short), is still in the planning stages but shows promise. I will illustrate my discussion of WAW with a narrative of our own program's switch to a WAW curriculum, and conclude with a discussion of the directions I think IWPs should take these developments.

WRITING: THE FORM FOR WHAT CONTENT?

Content has been, until recently, an evasive—and elusive topic in Composition Studies. In general, once composition broke free from English, content was negatively defined as *not*-(necessarily) literature; otherwise, it remained rather loose and amorphous. In 1995, following debates surrounding precisely whether literature should be taught in freshman writing courses, Lindemann described three views of writing in English 101: as a product, process, or system (or what I would call social constructivist). None of these philosophies were described in terms of common content—although she did suggest a point of congruence in teaching (on that aspect, she was briefer or perhaps more optimistic than warranted by the topic, assuming shared core pedagogical writing practices that were theoretical rather than proven). Composition scholars in the early 2000s struggled over the English/Literature rift in aptly titled collections such as *Beyond English Inc.* (2002) or *Composition and/or Literature* (2006), with little consensus other than reform accompanied by productive dialogue across disciplinary aisles was needed. Of course, our students must write about *something*; and absent literature, they have usually had to draw from the handiest pools of knowledge at their disposal: either the self (in expressivist models) or the world at large (in process and rhetoric/situated models). In the former, students have been asked to tap into their own experiences and inner life and make it somehow cogent in writing; in the latter, the instructor teaches students something akin to the process of invention—asking them to brainstorm topics, narrow them down, avoid the trite or the recycled tropes of high school essays, and build a variety of writing assignments starting from there. Such content is at once amorphous and specific, borrowing from “real life” and requiring a gradual “academic” adjustment of the student’s level of expertise on the topic—though not the teacher’s, who, content-wise takes the perspective of an educated layperson. In this version of the course, which is undoubtedly familiar to all of us, the content is student-driven, while the instructor acts as a chaperone in all things rhetorical. Content is itself a rhetorical exercise, expressed best as a verb rather than a noun (finding, inventing, narrowing, and refining content), but is not disciplinary

knowledge or focus on a subject, theme, or topic to be maintained singularly throughout the semester, nor is it bound to the teacher's field of academic expertise, which is presumed to be Rhetoric and Composition, broadly defined.

Fulkerson, in his final of his major three reviews of composition pedagogies published in 2005 in *College Composition and Communication*, seems to take a dim view of content in the latter incarnation, as a disciplinary focus; by extension, he would probably be skeptical of placing writing as the content of the writing course as well in the WAW model. In Fulkerson's view, it is content, in fact, that makes the composition field more fractured than ever, given the rise of the critical/cultural studies paradigm (CCS). Fulkerson's description of the four competing paradigms: current traditional, expressivist, critical/cultural studies, and procedural rhetoric is, of course, much more complex, given the permutations engendered by overlapping epistemologies, views of process, pedagogies, or evaluative theories. However, he devotes a considerable portion of his essay to the critical/cultural studies paradigm (CCS) because he sees its rise as so notable, though aligned with what he used to call "mimetic" pedagogy in one of his earlier articles: it is still writing *about* content predetermined by the teacher, following predetermined pathways and supporting predetermined viewpoints (e.g., feminism). He views the discussion of the required readings within this particular type of course as taking up valuable space and time and detracting from the actual goal of the course—which is, of course, improving writing. One of his conclusions held that "The major divide is no longer expressive personal writing versus writing for readers (or whatever oppositional phrase you prefer: "academic discourse:" "formal writing:" "persuasion"). The major divide is instead between a postmodern, cultural studies, reading-based program, and a broadly conceived rhetoric of genres and discourse forums . . ." (2005, p. 679).

Fulkerson's is by far not the only critique of content-themed courses. Hesse argues that emphasis on content draws students away from the actual writing and creation of texts and more toward the analysis of other texts. To that effect, he cast a quizzical look at themed writing courses as well as at what he calls the "apotheosis" of the postprocess paradigm, the WAW paradigm:

My point is that a theoretical perspective that privileges writing-with content or writing-as-rhetorical-analysis has little intellectual room for writing imagined not as a conversational turn on a particular subject matter but as a move in a Burkean parlor constituted differently. Put in familiar if reductive terms, the former is a Bartholomaen parlor where rhetors are heard by developing given topics along approved trajectories;

the latter is an Elbovian parlor where writers gain the floor by creating interest, through the arts of discourse. The Elbovian parlor operates by what Richard Lanham calls “creating attention structures” from the stuff of words (21). This is one focus of creative writing. (Hesse, 2010, pp. 40–41).

As creative writing requires a pervasive, applied dedication to “craft,” Hesse argues that perhaps craft is a concept that we have left behind given the many cultural, economic, political, and social issues that require our urgent attention and understanding; creative writing might be too “oblique” (2010, p. 43) to rhetoric’s blunt persuasiveness. Craft, I would add, involves both theoretical and practical or tacit knowledge: beyond what can be described in a textbook or discussed in a class, it requires many hours of practice to fine-tune (in this case) the rhetorical instincts necessary to activate the mechanical processes that translate theoretical knowledge into a “polished piece” of writing (see also Young, 1980). Hesse ultimately advocates for “open borders” between creative writing and Composition Studies (2010, p. 43), which he describes as follows:

For creative writing, this might mean tempering outdated aspersions of composition as formulaic tyranny, considering a broader repertory of teaching strategies, and developing curiosity about additional ways of studying writers and writing. For composition, this might mean recuperating new interest in writerly activities and processes, including the levels of style and word choice, adapting an expanded persona of themselves as writers for readerships beyond other scholars, and making curricular or, at least, conceptual room for writing that does not “respond” to a rhetorical situation. (2010, p. 43)

This, he argues, would not only benefit students, but would be politically advantageous by opening avenues of collaboration between organizations with common roots and parallel lives, such as MLA and NCTE; such alliances would end up serving the profession as well as our students, starting with K-12 education and through college. Creative writing shares with Rhetoric an immense potential to shape what readers think or do; so Hesse would like us to explore how “creative *composing*” would find a place in our curricula.

While these are not the only two notable voices to argue that a focus on content would detract from the writing classroom’s basic purpose, they do articulate a basic apprehension about such classes: the inability to devote sufficient time to skills as well as to content. It is not a trivial concern, but one that the proponents of the WAW model think they have an answer for.

THE NEW PARADIGM: WRITING ABOUT WRITING

Recently, as writing programs have moved away more decisively from English programs and literature-dominated curricula, Writing about Writing (WAW) has become a—if not *the*—major trend in writing pedagogy. The movement has steadily gained popularity with a series of publications by Dew (2003), Bishop (starting with her *The subject is writing* collection series, first published in 1986, now in its fourth edition) and in particular by Wardle and Downs (2007; 2012), reaching peak momentum with their generally well-received first year composition textbook *Writing about Writing* (2011, now in its second edition). WAW pedagogies have been applied to the professional writing course (Read & Michaud, 2015) as well as to the basic writing course (Bird, 2015) with what the authors describe as reasonable amounts of success.

Dew, writing before the “proper” birth of the WAW movement, employed the Writing-with-no-content-in-particular (W-NCP) and Writing-with-specific-content (W-WSC) antagonistic pair to describe the curricular reforms she brought to FYW at the University of Colorado-Colorado Springs (UCCS) (2003). She invokes disciplinarity in the shift to W-WSC courses, more specifically teaching students writing skills in context rather than divorcing form from content. By making Rhetoric and Writing Studies the subject of the course, she claims that writing professors were able to transform their instruction into a “more fully a scholarly enterprise with disciplinary integrity” (2003, p. 88) which allowed them to reclaim a higher professional status within the university. Finally, Dew described better student outcomes and predicted better transfer of writing skills.

Many of these assumptions are also present in the now famous Wardle and Downs 2007 CCC manifesto on “(Re)Envisioning the FYC as intro to Writing Studies,” which was revisited in a 2013 piece in *Composition Forum*, and further explained in a chapter on writing pedagogies in Ritter and Matsuda’s 2012 *Exploring Composition Studies*. Since the authors have explained, and in some cases revised and adjusted their positions many times, I will primarily focus on their 2012 and 2013 pieces, which to my mind greatly clarify their vision for WAW.

Their main argument in the 2007 piece is that Writing Studies should provide the content of the FYW course as a way to improve transfer, empower both students and instructors, promote professionalization of the field, assert Writing Studies as a discipline, and improve labor conditions (for adjuncts as well as for tenure and non-tenure track instructors). Based on studies of transfer that could point to little improvement of students’ writing skills accrued in FYW courses, Downs and Wardle proposed that it was time to take ownership of our field and perhaps improve student outcomes in the process: “[W]e see our field as having

both declarative and procedural knowledge about writing that can and should be conveyed directly to students, so that they are empowered by knowing about the nature and workings of the activity itself and can act from their knowledge instead of having writing done to them” (2013, para. 5). Thus, they problematize our discipline’s deep entrenchment in pedagogy and see WAW as a response to the long-standing dichotomy between teaching form and content. The supporting ethos of the field is resisting “deficit” models of writing instruction (Downs & Wardle, 2012, p. 126), and in that context the authors favor models that give voice to students—in other words, writing as a rhetorical activity, contingent and perfectible. It’s a seductive argument, which would be a no-brainer in an engineering or medical program for example: in order to understand how to build or fix an engine, you must understand how it works; if you want to know how to heal the body, you have to understand how it works; the same principle applies to writing. Students who learn how writing works may end up learning how to write better.

Downs and Wardle recognize our field’s difficulty in teaching form and content in an integrated manner: most of the current pedagogies reviewed by Fulkerson focus on form, whereas others focus on content in a way that leaves open the question of just what that content should be. For Fulkerson, CCS axiology represented nothing more than “content envy” (2005, p. 663) and as I have outlined above, CCS pedagogies would not be conducive, in his mind, to true writing classes. Fulkerson, however, does not consider Writing Studies’ own disciplinary content as a way to marry content and form—which is what Downs and Wardle do. In their opinion, FYW as a skills course undermines our cutting edge research, which belies a separation between form, content, style, and process. This idea is, in a way, an extension of Russell’s famous “ball handling” metaphor (a general course in “ball handling” could do nothing to teach one how to play soccer, basketball, etc.; only a genre-specific course could perhaps provide some utility). In addition, Downs and Wardle are also concerned about transfer and they feel that students could benefit from reading first hand the research in the field. Their goal is to “create a transferable and empowering focus on understanding writing as a subject of study” (2013, p. 131) and “change students’ awareness of the nature of writing and literacy in order to shape the way they think about writing, with the expectation that how they write may change in return” (2013, p. 139). This, they argue, can be achieved by having students “interact” with texts from Composition Studies that are focused on writing and literacy and through emphasis on metacognition and reflection. In their 2013 piece they describe a variety of WAW curricula, varying in terms of emphasis on a continuum from students’ personal growth to students’ actively contributing to the field—research writing.

A WAW pedagogical turn would empower both students and faculty. Downs and Wardle claim that students trained in such curricula could understand, explain, and express their own writing processes (understood broadly as the sum total of the experiences that make them writers), and as a result learn how to write authoritatively about any subject matter down the line. This sense of ownership or control can be conferred only by a deep understanding of writing as an object of study and research—something that the WAW curriculum could provide as a logical “content of the form.” Some preliminary research in transfer by Wardle at UCF and by Bird (2015) seems to support the conclusion that the notions taught in the WAW class endure longer than those in a non-WAW writing class.

Most importantly, a WAW shift would empower those in the writing field to finally claim a home of their own—a struggle all too familiar to those of us who had to justify their field to English specialists or various administrators steeped in old-fashioned views of disciplinary boundaries. By making writing the disciplinary subject of our courses, we effectively eliminate labor inequities built into how FYW courses are usually staffed, and demand actual professionalization of the field. Lalicker (in this volume) also argues for the importance of hiring tenurable, scholarly specialists; insisting on disciplinary content would elevate the status of the profession, promote research, and presumably alter hiring, promotion, and tenure practices in the field. Dew had also noted the positive effect the new curriculum had had on the professionalization of the writing faculty (2003). While Downs and Wardle had initially claimed in 2007 that only specialists trained in writing and composition could apply this type of curriculum, they soften their stance in 2012 to allow for the general open-mindedness and willingness of writing instructors to adapt and learn about new theories and pedagogies—they wryly add, that after all, they expect freshmen to learn these things as well! Additionally, a WAW curriculum would answer beautifully Barry Maid’s call to action in his 2006 contribution to *Composition and/or Literature*; therein, he had admitted to our field and programs as not having “come of age” (p. 107). Ironically, he found the reason for that was the writing faculty, who “. . . need to stop blaming their literary colleagues and simply take their discipline and their destiny in their own hands” (2006, p. 107). In this light, the theoretical underpinnings of WAW read like the coming of age of the composition curriculum.

Emboldened by these, we felt, sound theoretical premises, and the “sneak peeks” of early practical successes, and compelled by the professionalization argument, especially given our particular department’s struggles on this front (see Everett, this volume), we decided to make the switch to WAW in our own program. The experience did not make us lose faith in WAW’s basic tenets, but has taught us that nuance is key.

INTRODUCING WAW TO USCIENCES

Before the fall of 2014, our FYW curriculum had undergone several major redesigns documented elsewhere (see Pettipiece and Everett, 2013), aimed mainly to liberate the two-semester sequence from the literature-centric paradigm it used to be constrained in. Given our school's heavily science-oriented curriculum and the type of writing that our students needed to be prepared for, we chose a process-oriented approach that eschewed expressive writing and focused on rhetorical knowledge, writing processes, and critical thinking, with a focus on research papers and informative genres in the first semester and on argumentation and persuasive writing in the second semester. However, we still struggled with content, as we regularly had to select readers or readings for inclusion into the curriculum, many of which tended to become obsolete and needed to be rotated (in the end, we picked some readers but left most choices at the discretion of our instructors). WAW pedagogies offered a welcome solution to our content dilemmas.

Introducing WAW to our FYW courses in Fall 2014 had all the hallmarks of a first time experiment: excitement, awkwardness, some successes, some failures, conflict, steep learning curves, and rich learning lessons that will factor into how we will continue the implementation of the WAW curriculum in the future. Ours is a specialized school (pharmacy/health sciences) with a relatively small first year cohort (hovering around 400–450 new students each year) and a small full time TT writing staff. However, most of our students are usually well prepared for college and in general we expect them to perform at a high level in our courses; for that reason, we, after some trepidation, decided to make the transition, and adopt the Wardle and Downs textbook for Fall 2014. Our courses were already incorporating WAW elements: a rhetorical analysis and a reflection essay accompanying student portfolios, as well as reading blogs and self-reflection pieces accompanying every submitted assignment; thus, we felt prepared to take the leap.

Since most of our courses are taught by adjuncts, we took pains in ensuring that we had a smooth transition to the new curriculum: during our three-per-semester training workshops starting the year before, we distributed relevant literature (Downs and Wardle's 2007 article, among others) and discussed it in the workshops; we also discussed WAW curricula and types of assignments; we introduced the new syllabus and textbook the previous semester and discussed potential problems; we asked for input regarding readings and assignments; we worked on ensuring everybody agreed on common rubrics for assignments in an effort to both reduce adjunct load and smooth the transition. We were well aware of the teaching and research load that the new curriculum would impose on our adjuncts (most of whom had graduate degrees in literature, not in composition); and in general, we were trying to maintain curricular consistency across sections

while requesting frequent feedback during or outside our training workshops. We built a demanding syllabus with four assignments that progressed in difficulty and eventually required students to perform original research on some form of digital/multimodal writing technology. We were, of course, aware of Downs and Wardle's initial arguments regarding the need for *specialized* instructors, with graduate degrees in Writing Studies, to implement WAW curricula—as a practical, philosophical, and political statement that would help the field achieve higher professionalization standards and greater administrative support; in their subsequent pieces, they walked back some of their initial comments, admitting that they had underestimated instructors' openness and willingness to learn and adopt such curricula. However, when we modified our FYW course, we were aware of Downs and Wardle's initial apprehensions, so we were cautious but determined, partly because hiring more (and more qualified) full-time instructors was (and to a large extent still is) an impossibility. At the same time, we wondered whether the various levels of buy-in we saw from our faculty were not interwoven with the equally varied perceived levels of competence. To what extent does a literature person feel qualified teaching "Writing Studies"? How much or how little training is needed? How much persuasion is necessary to "sell" the new curriculum? All of these were issues we had to "feel" our way around in our first year of preparing the transition.

Overall, students responded as well as expected to the new curriculum and the demanding readings: while they required more explanations than usual, and we as instructors found ourselves lacking sufficient time to unpack all the sophisticated theoretical/philosophical underpinnings of the academic essays we assigned from the Wardle/Downs reader, most students seemed to "get it," especially in terms of some of the larger threshold concepts that the book introduces and that are central to our field, such as rhetorical situation, discourse community, and multimodality. Some students were excited about the opportunity to conduct their own research and potentially discover something new, although the results of such results were generally underwhelming (something that we recognize may have come from the terms of our assignment itself). The type of metacognition/metatalk we cultivated in the classroom constantly was clearly unfamiliar to the students in the beginning but became second nature by the end (or at least we hope).

As in any "content" course, we struggled with time management: reading and discussing the readings (and having to swallow our suspicions that only a small percentage of certain readings was actually thoroughly understood) and then managing the writing projects, including class workshops, peer reviews, and conferences. In effect, we admit here to Fulkerson's dilemma about CCS writing courses: discussing and understanding content while practicing skills turned out to be much trickier than we thought. While I understand Wardle and

Downs' rationale for including challenging readings (borrowed from Bartholomae), in the end I was not the only one among our instructors to feel uneasy with the burden exacted by the curriculum. Even the few readings we selected from the book required a "back story," and one that I was not certain many of our adjuncts could provide; for their part, our students lacked by definition the educational foundation that would allow them to read texts written for a very different audience. These were texts in which "students" were referred to in the third person and were often the object of musing or experimentation; they assumed an ease with theoretical and philosophical foundations, rhetorical analysis, and hermeneutics that first year students rarely possess. They can be trained to do so, but not in the time allotted. In effect, the texts asked them to position themselves very differently as readers and scholars, and that was a struggle for many, one whose worth needs to be weighed carefully in the future. We want to challenge our students, but not to the point that they lose the joy of discovery, which is where we teetered dangerously close. While the occasional text that would be appropriate in a graduate seminar could be helpful for freshmen, after a while I began to wonder whether ideas could not have been transmitted to the same effect in a way that was more direct, written *for them* rather than for a rarefied, specialized academic audience. After all, that is why tertiary literature exists in other disciplines: are first year students in Biology, Anthropology, Mathematics, Sociology, Speech Communication, or History, to name just a few disciplines, made to read academic essays from specialized journals espousing ideas (ranging from basic to fascinating, foundational, controversial, or notorious) in order to understand them? Or is this the hallmark of our discipline, being really *that* young and unsettled in its groove, to not know what or rather *how* to present its threshold concepts? I don't think that is the case, since Wardle and Downs do a rather good job in briefly explaining some of those concepts in their prefatory notes to textbook sections and the full book on the topic was published in 2015. And I think there is a way to talk about disciplinary concepts without betraying one of the basic principles our discipline is espousing: *knowing your audience*.

Conceptual complexity evidenced by reading selection was matched in at least one case by assignment complexity: our news media research assignment, based on the Wardle and Downs textbook, was far too complex, in retrospect, to be entirely useful to our students. The assignment required a variety of complex cognitive, theoretical, and research-oriented tasks (including discourse-analysis-type coding) from the students that could not be seriously or thoughtfully managed in the time we allotted for it at the end of the semester (roughly four weeks). The problem, then, could have been that, in our eagerness to "cover our bases" and discuss digital media in some meaningful way, we rushed through

this last segment and as a result the assignment might have not, in effect, helped students become better writers or researchers, although it might have taught them some interesting facts about their object of study.

However, overall, the curriculum nudged students toward being better critical thinkers and, hopefully, better writers, by making them question writing practices, processes, and notions that they might have taken for granted; that much is evident in their incipient work during their second-semester writing sequence. The emphasis on analysis, metacognition, and rhetorical questioning is potentially beneficial and must be assessed long term; such assessment must start as a concerted, rigorous, and long-term effort if IWP are inclined to adopt WAW curricula.

There was one other unexpected “adverse event” to our WAW venture, to borrow a pharmaceutical industry term. One of our brightest adjuncts, with a Ph.D. in literature with an emphasis in composition, who had taught for us for many years and whose opinion we valued, was openly hostile to the new curriculum from the beginning. She had numerous objections to the textbook (which she expressed out loud as blanket statements rather than specifics during our training workshops). It became obvious that she was trying to undermine the curriculum at every step during her interactions with the other adjuncts; she told us that WAW could never work at a school like ours. She quit abruptly at the end of the semester, citing differences in teaching pedagogy as the main reason. We later discovered that she had instructed her students to return the textbook and had designed her own curriculum and assignments (which turned out to be a problem in the second-semester writing sequence, where we build on the first semester). She never contributed the assessment spreadsheets for her two sections that we usually collect from all instructors in order to conduct our programmatic assessment. The rest of our adjuncts were less vocal in their opposition—one was enthusiastic, and most were rather neutral; I suspect it will take several iterations of the curriculum before everybody sees the value in it.

We do freely admit that our own implementation of the curriculum depended too much on the Wardle and Downs book (perhaps because we felt we, as well as the adjuncts, needed it as a guide). However, the emphasis we put on research might not have been, in retrospect, what our particular student population needed; and we felt the same about some of the readings we initially selected. Since our school has no Writing major/minor, or a Communication major/minor, we feel that the students did not really benefit from reading solely articles meant for *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* or similar audiences. I will return to review some of the possible implications of our experiment for IWPs after I review the other possible direction for FYW, Rhetorical Education.

RHETORICAL EDUCATION

The other interesting trend in FYW pedagogy comes primarily from our colleagues in Rhetoric and Speech Communication, where thought leaders such as Roxanne Mountford and William Keith have been spearheading a rapprochement between composition and speech (Mount Oread Manifesto, 2014; Mountford, 2009). In this version of the first year communication course, writing and communication merge (as in the Mountford-supervised effort at the University of Kentucky), acknowledging on one hand the common root of the two disciplines (composition and speech) in Rhetoric, and on the other hand their disciplinary separation from English and Literary Studies. While both the WAW and the RE movement find the first year writing course as the primary (though not sole) locus of curricular innovation, and carve deeper trenches in the divide between English/lit and Writing, they work from different disciplinary stands and motivations and they would have different curricular consequences for FYW. WAW ideology is based on studies of transfer and wagers the putative transformative difference of a WAW curriculum; such a curriculum would also take advantage of the true strength of the writing instructor/specialist, promote professionalization, and at least in theory teach students more about writing than a “traditional” curriculum (meaning, a non-WAW or a curriculum which is not entirely WAW). An RE curriculum would take a more global view of communication as both written and spoken arts, and revert to a more traditional rhetorical education as the foundation of both. Issues of instructor competency and professionalization are problematized in the wake of such a transformational movement.

In “A Century after the Divorce: Challenges to a Rapprochement between Speech Communication and English” (2012), Mountford notes that Rhetoric has tremendous interdisciplinary potential—one that is nevertheless waning in both English and Speech Communication, which once used to house Rhetoric as “*mater familias*” (2009, p. 408). This is significant because both English (through FYW) and communication (through FY communication courses) are required “entry” courses for our freshmen, ideal sites to offer a proper rhetorical education. While more cross-disciplinary coalitions have been forged in recent years (Mountford and Keith alone are formidable forces, though they are by far not the first and not alone), the relationship between the two is troubled, Mountford thinks. She explains this by borrowing from the work of Min-Zhan Lu (2004; quoted in Mountford, 2009, p. 409) on uneven power struggles in colonial relationships. In this simile, English is the position of the privileged colonizer, which professes ignorance of the practices of composition without impunity because “knowledge of composition holds little cultural capital in English studies” (Mountford, 2009, p. 409). Because English has colonized Composi-

tion Studies for so long, essentially, the revival of rhetoric in 1960s “served the cause of teaching writing” (Mountford, 2009, p. 409); however, rhetorical work in Speech Communication, the field that had been the “caretaker” of rhetoric for the better part of the century, had been ignored. This is a huge disservice to the profession, including teaching and scholarly work in Writing/Composition Studies; as Mountford puts it, “this ambivalence over work in Speech Communication by the field of Rhetoric and Composition suggests the ongoing legacy of domination that forced the exit of speech teachers from English in 1914” (2009, p. 409). Mountford sketches that history of a century-long divorce, which marked the triumph of literature in the American college curricula as the only discipline that was worthy of teaching.

Mountford convincingly argues that the focus on rhetoric coming from the English Studies stems from the desire to legitimize the enterprise of teaching writing (2009, p. 410). She reminds us that a reunion of written and oral literacy was brought together by the desire to educate officers preparing to be leaders in World War II; the Army deemed literature irrelevant to their education and urged educators to revise their curriculum. They required “reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills to be taught together” (Mountford, 2009, p. 411). CCCC was born as a space for instructors to explore this alliance, but the union was brief. Expertly summarizing the various history of the schism of the fourth C from CCCC (and thus the erasure of Speech Communication expertise from the composition curriculum and pedagogies), Mountford documents how the organization basically in charge with supervising writing and composition courses turned away newer forms of communication and reverted to a written word-based rhetoric—a move that occurred at the beginning of the 1960s. Mountford reinforces George and Trimbur’s history of the elusive “4th C” (1999), agreeing that composition scholars retreated into a narrowly defined art of composition, whereas rhetoricians would have engaged with the broader social contexts, or “writing as a medium of social engagement” (2012, p. 414). Rhetoricians working primarily in Speech Communication focused on educated students to be part of an enlightened, educated citizenry, and were particularly open to embracing viewpoints from other disciplines such as psychology in order to better help their students—a focus that was mostly absent in FYC.

Mountford’s 2009 review is quite cautious regarding rapprochement efforts between the two disciplines. The one area where a reunion seems possible is that of feminist scholarship in Speech Communication and English studies: she explains that feminist scholars tend to read each other’s work across the disciplines “because their object of study so frequently overlaps, and because their subaltern position make interdisciplinary alliances more attractive” (2012, p. 419). In contrast, the 2014 Mt. Oread Manifesto for Rhetorical Education,

which she co-wrote with William Keith in the wake of one of Rhetoric Society of America's Summer Institutes (with editorial input from the seminarians), makes an even stronger case for resuscitating a communication movement that has waxed and mostly waned throughout our discipline's history.

Now in the twenty-first century, a unified vision of rhetorical education is both more important and realizable than at any time since Speech filed for divorce from English. Thanks to technology and the expansion of modes and modalities of public communication, the civic dimension of the rhetorical tradition is plainly crucial to producing students with the communicative capabilities needed in this world." (Keith & Mountford, 2014, p. 2)

Mountford and Keith argue that the centrality of digital technologies dissolve erstwhile impenetrable barriers between speech and writing; rhetoric thus remains the common denominator of all first year oral and written communication courses. Thus, the RSA working seminar group propose that Rhetoricians should cross departmental and disciplinary lines and collaborate to design and implement an integrated curriculum in rhetorical education to replace separate introductory courses in communication (public speaking or presentation) and first-year written composition in order to develop citizen participants, not simply future employees or more literate students. This consolidation should result in an increase in resources for teaching students, not budget or resource reduction. Rhetoricians should also work to establish pedagogy as a respected area of scholarship in our transdisciplinary field. (Keith & Mountford, 2014, p. 3)

The signatories of this document see Rhetoric as a fractured field and seek not to restore its integrity ("restore" would be misnomer, since the field never had the unity that they envision in this document), but to unify the rhetorical arts under one purpose, to educate a rhetorically-literate citizenry who can function as such in public life—whether analyzing, interrogating, or producing discourses that matter. To that end, they call for the establishment of an Interdisciplinary Project on Rhetorical Education (iPRE), which to the best of my knowledge is not currently very active. However, the conversation on the topic, led by the indefatigable Mountford and Keith, continued in workshops and specials sessions at the RSA conference in San Antonio, 2014, and there is no doubt that such conversations will continue in the future. At least in one place—Mountford's erstwhile institution, University of Kentucky—first year writing and speech courses have been integrated, and increasingly more and more universities are adopting "Communication across the curriculum" programs—a first step, perhaps, toward the recognizing that the two disciplines are inseparable.

Of course, one should wonder: Is it a good idea to reunite formerly divorced bedfellows that seemed to have done just fine without each other? Should they do it just for the kids? For the love of rhetoric? The answer depends on whether you focus on details on the larger vision—and the latter is, admittedly, appealing. Echoing this recognition, Communication across the Curriculum (CxC) programs have become more and more common across campuses, complementing, integrating, or replacing WACs or WIDs, so the fourth C is in free motion, flirting widely with the others and proposing more lasting partnerships. Since Rhetoric is the disciplinary home and the foundation of all our writing pedagogies, as well as of Speech Communication, the Mt. Oread Manifesto call makes sense, and proposes a disciplinary foundation that is every bit as justified as Writing Studies as the disciplinary foundation for FYW courses. However, an RE project has the distinct disadvantage of not being confined in one department, however fractured that department might be. It calls not for independence, but for synergy, cooperation, interdepartmental collaboration, and a certain blurring of administrative boundaries; unfortunately, not all academic institutions are well equipped to tolerate that degree of overlap. To realize an RE project, an IWP would need to cooperate with the Speech Communication Department. At least on our campus, that cooperation has failed. Our attempts to even initiate a dialogue to see how our courses may intersect, let alone how we may use rhetoric as a foundation for both, have fallen flat and there is no indication that the situation will change in the future. It turns out that no matter how inspiring the vision, the devil remains in the details. Kurt Spellmeyer, in his contribution to *A Field of Dreams* (2001), had remarked that after decades of calls for interdisciplinarity, nothing has happened, to put it mildly. Is the call for RE yet another call destined to suffer the same fate? I think a lot will depend on local challenges and momentum.

IWPS AND WRITING PEDAGOGIES

The ramifications of and conversations surrounding the WAW and RE movements show that our field's pedagog(ies) are due for another systemic change, and I believe it is the responsibility of IWPs to take a leading role in identifying, testing, and assessing the best ways to improve students' writing (and overall communication skills) in the twenty-first century. The two approaches have a lot in common. Fundamentally, they look to rhetoric as their theoretical or foundational home; they aim to educate rhetorically-skilled citizens who can understand, assess, and adapt their communication to a variety of circumstances; and they aim to restore prestige to the profession. Furthermore, they share a serious interest in digital literacies and pedagogies. In their contribution to *A Field of Dreams* (2001), Selfe, Hawisher, and Ericsson had warned that our obsession

with writing (alphabetic literacy) comes with costs—of not understanding, anticipating, and adapting to future challenges, and of ignoring other potential modes of communication and intelligence (p. 271). They had also urged that IWPs break away from the insistence on writing and alphabet-based modes of communication and instead promote a more inclusive view of composition as visual and aural art. In that, both WAW and RE pedagogical approaches would find plenty of common ground and a drastic departure from the approach of a traditional English class.

Of course, the two approaches also differ significantly. Where RE is for now a set of loose principles bound together by a common vision and enthusiasm but not much else and whose implementation depends very much on the local conditions, WAW has been tried on numerous campuses in numerous courses and in numerous incarnations, has a robust set of pedagogical principles, and several textbooks to its name. The conversations around WAW are also gaining critical momentum, some assessment programs are in place, and it is poised to become, probably, *the* FYW pedagogy of the new millennium. The conversations surrounding RE are by comparison less robust and the implementation of its vision—the merger of written and oral communication in a FY RE course—still fluid and not yet in an assessable shape.

Given this review and our program's own experience with WAW, I would think it is in the IWPs best interests to adapt WAW pedagogies to their own local needs, while keeping an open mind to collaboration and opportunities with other departments (in particular Communication departments). Below I summarize my suggestions in this regard.

First, IWPs need to assess their local needs, strengths, and own rhetorical situations, strategic positions, and opportunities for alliances. This includes the strengths and needs of the IWPs own faculty (full time and adjunct), of the programs managed by the IWP, of the larger university and its students, and the relationships with other departments. To take a small example, Speech Communication departments at other universities might be more open to collaboration than others; and communication across the curriculum (CxC) programs are already in place at others. But also, it is crucial to keep the students' needs, strengths, and opportunities in mind. Our first-time experience with the WAW curriculum told us that while the ideas and units we chose were probably sound, our implementation and usage of the textbook were not ideal for our freshman audience. In other words, we need to become more of what we preach: skilled rhetors in addressing (and invoking) our audience, recognizing opportunities when they may arise, adjusting to circumstances, and keeping our purpose(s) clear. This will determine what kind of WAW curriculum IWP programs should design to best fit with the strengths of the faculty, the interests of the students,

the mission of the university. It will also determine whether and to what degree collaboration with the speech department, for example, is possible, and whether a WAW-RE hybrid class would be possible under the circumstances.

Such a needs assessment should be multifaceted, localized, and purposeful and should ask the question: what should the FYW course be, to these students, at this university, now and in the foreseeable future? We are often bombarded with a lot of messages about the FYW course and what it needs to achieve: improve students' writing throughout their academic careers and beyond, make students better critical thinkers, teach students citation conventions in about every conceivable academic field, teach students genre conventions in the same, help students find their own true voice, "fix" student's grammar, help students understand what makes good writing good, help students understand, critique, and apply basic rhetorical principles, get students to discuss, write about, and apply ideas of social justice, help students become better communicators, teach students how to write for multimedia, broadly defined (e.g., design websites, write blogs, make videos, manage social media), teach students rhetoric and Writing Studies scholarship, turn our students into enlightened future democratic citizens, empower minority students, empower and professionalize our faculty, provide an entry to future writing courses and possible minors/majors—and I haven't even exhausted the list of possibilities. This is a very tall order and I am doubtful that one FYW course—or even a year-long FYW sequence—can do all these things at once (see also Ross, this volume, for "identity fatigue"). However, we do need to ask ourselves: what do our students (here, at this institution, now, at this particular moment) need to get from our writing courses? If asked, now, the same question Linda Bergmann echoes in her intro to the *Composition and/or Literature* collection—"What do you folks teach over there, anyway?"—what would our answer be? Even more importantly, we should be able to answer *why* we are teaching what we're teaching, especially as independent units. I think Rhetorical Education provides the answer to the "why" question; and Royer and Schendel description of how independence helped their department "realize the goal of helping students to become engaged citizens through rhetorical effectiveness" is encouraging in that respect. Quite possibly, Writing-About-Writing provides a good answer to the "what" question—although the loftier RE goals would necessarily deny us our insular alphabetic mode and have us seek out the expertise of our Speech Communication colleagues.

Thus, once we take stock of our needs and allies, we must prioritize: choose wisely what is at stake at our institution, for our students, and our faculty. We also cannot afford to naively assume that our job can be "done" in a one or two semester first year writing course. IWP's next frontier, especially at those schools that do not have good prospects for developing writing majors or minors, is

to develop robust vertical writing curricula (WAC or even better, CxC) that would allow our students to develop and maintain these skills over time; this is already happening at some institutions, as Read and Michaud demonstrate in their discussion of WAW pedagogies in the multimajor professional writing course (2015). For both, we must be good rhetors, arguing convincingly for the existence of such programs, and act as kairotic agents of change.

Once the reasonable expectations and agenda of the writing courses are chosen, the next step is to invite all faculty (full time and adjunct) to the conversation, via training workshops, discussions, online forums, and any other form of preparation. Ideally, all stakeholders will be allowed a say in the decisions to be made about transitioning to a new curriculum. I would argue that a unified WAW curriculum for FYW courses would work best, though, naturally, various universities have traditionally given more freedom to instructors in creating their own syllabus. However, a WAW curriculum may be a daunting task for first timer, so a uniform syllabus might be a better solution, having also the distinct advantage of working better for assessment purposes.

Third, IWPs should lead the way in assessing the long-term impact of such a curriculum, especially in the two major areas where Downs and Wardle postulate its most significant achievements: transfer and professionalization of faculty. Eventually, multi-site longitudinal assessment plans should be in place to assess the efficacy of WAW pedagogies in these as well as other areas (such as WPA outcomes: rhetorical knowledge, critical thinking, knowledge of conventions, and writing processes). There is hope for such cooperation as there are several emerging IWP and WAW networks that are gaining national prominence.

Fourth, such a curriculum may help achieve some of the five basic equities for writing programs that Lalicker describes in this volume: it may contribute to the professionalization and acculturation of writing instructors, and could play a vital role in the English major and Writing Studies specialization, as well as in graduate curricula.

Finally, let us not forget what our larger goal here, which is *higher* education—for our students. Professionalization is a noble goal, but is still secondary to our primary mission. A rather famous Doris Lessing quote reminds us of the transient nature of knowledge and the enduring *process* of indoctrination:

Ideally, what should be said to every child, repeatedly, throughout his or her school life is something like this: “You are in the process of being indoctrinated. We have not yet evolved a system of education that is not a system of indoctrination. We are sorry, but it is the best we can do. What you are being taught here is an amalgam of current prejudice and the choices

of this particular culture. The slightest look at history will show how impermanent these must be. You are being taught by people who have been able to accommodate themselves to a regime of thought laid down by their predecessors. It is a self-perpetuating system. Those of you who are more robust and individual than others will be encouraged to leave and find ways of educating yourself — educating your own judgements. Those that stay must remember, always, and all the time, that they are being moulded and patterned to fit into the narrow and particular needs of this particular society.” (1999, preface)

Ideally, our FYW course should be more than a self-perpetuating system indoctrinating our students into the current theoretical fads. It seems to me that an RE program comes closest to exposing students to the fraying edges of our cultural doctrines: rhetoric can explain, and by doing so empowers and offers the hope for change, breaking the dangerous cycle of ideological self-perpetuation. A skillfully executed WAW program would carefully avoid the indoctrination trap by always reassessing its own rhetorical situation and stakeholders, falling back on RE principles as sustainable practice, and critically reevaluating its curriculum on an ongoing basis to best foster student writing excellence. IWPs should capitalize on WAW’s insistence on metacognition and reflection to empower our students to take charge of their education and find ways to apply that empowerment in other areas of their academic and non-academic lives. At the same time, if IWPs are to find their disciplinary home in Rhetoric, they should seriously consider RE as their overarching pedagogical philosophy and rethink their academic alliances, as well as their goals and overall approaches to teaching writing, to include that elusive 4C back into the classroom.

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