PREFACE

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"Screeeeeeeech-squeeeeeeeek-squaaaaaaaawwk!" The 300-baud modems picked up the incoming calls from a half-dozen students who were then on the cutting edge of higher education, enrolled in my English composition class, which was taught via remote access to the Daedalus Integrated Writing Environment (DIWE) in our department's two local-area network (LAN) classrooms. The year was 1991. For some time we had been seeking to legitimize computer-assisted instruction (CAI) in language teaching areas by recasting its drill-and-practice reputation into potential for interactivity between writers—teachers and students—with real exchange and dialogue via networked machines. Several of us in the composition faculty had persuaded our university to invest in the possibilities for advancing writing instruction through network pedagogy. We had sensed the promise of digital technology for revolutionizing not only personal composing but also writing instruction, and we wanted to experiment to see what was possible.

As the dial-up students, or some of them, made the connection with computers on our LAN, they slowly—painfully—logged into the Daedalus system and began a real time written conversation in the Interchange conferencing application.

> "How are you today, Bob?" I sent out into the ether.
> "I'm ... fine ... Dr... . Newbold ... how ... are ... you?" crept across the monochrome screen.
> "Steve, are you there too?"
> "I ... think ... so ... gosh ... this ... is ... slow"
> "Did everyone understand the reading for today?"
> "Kind ... of ... what ... is ... our ... assignment ... going ... to ... be?"

And so a long journey was begun with halting steps. It was a kairotic moment. Opportunity was at the threshold. Computer networks promised to bring people together, to erase barriers, to promote collaboration. We were riding the Third Wave and were energized by what we saw ahead. But serious hurdles stood in the way. What about access? Only some institutions could offer such facilities as we had, and few individuals outside the professional class owned personal

computers. What about our technology? It often failed and was difficult for non-experts to navigate. What about professional legitimacy? Many of our colleagues were openly skeptical about teaching writing with computers. Still, the possibilities for extending and enriching our teaching, and for meeting needs of students, encouraged us. We knew that "technology was advancing" and attitudes toward online education were changing. We had a growing professional community to rely on and to learn from. So we went onward into the breach.

Recently, I was hurrying to an on-campus class clutching my Wi-Fi connected laptop, through which I had access via cloud storage to prearranged teaching content. Once in the classroom, I connected to the ceiling projector to show screen images of lesson concepts, examples, and websites, including our Blackboard learning management system (LMS). About three-quarters of my students had brought their own laptops with Internet access, and could pull up a Google doc that we would later use for group editing; students without laptops could use the classroom's own desktop stations. Most students knew what they were doing—many knew more than I did, in fact, about navigating devices and network pathways. In the middle of this buzz of activity, I suddenly thought "This has finally come together. This is what we were hoping for years ago. Now it's up to us to use it wisely."

IMPORTANCE OF THE OWI PRINCIPLES

Of course, writing educators have been working hard at doing just that—using digital technology wisely in writing instruction, but individual efforts and professional projects have not until now been able to draw on a comprehensive, research-based resource representing the potentially most effective practices in teaching writing online. The group of teacher-scholars behind this volume, past and current members of the College Conference on Composition and Communication (CCCC) Committee for Effective Practices in Online Writing Instruction (OWI) and members of their CCCC OWI Committee Expert/Stakeholders' Panel, has attempted to provide that resource, under the charge of the CCCC Executive Committee. The 15 OWI principles articulated in *A Position Statement of Principles and Example Effective Practices for Online Writing Instruction (OWI)* provide a broad, research-based distillation of the problems, strategies, and conditions of postsecondary writing instruction online (CCCC OWI Committee, 2013).

Readers may be surprised that the first principle—the keynote of the document—deals not with pedagogy but with issues of inclusion and access—equity for all students who wish to study writing online, especially those with physical or learning disabilities, socioeconomic limitations, and multilingual challenges:

"Online writing instruction should be universally inclusive and accessible" (p. 7). But seeking greater opportunity for disabled students (sight- and hearing-impaired students come particularly to mind) can be seen as just the latest stage in a struggle to provide learning opportunities to all persons regardless of background or personal condition. The history of education in the past two centuries, in the United States and elsewhere, has been one of steady effort (although, admittedly, not in every quarter) to expand opportunity to students at all levels—to remove barriers of economic status, gender, ethnicity, and race. Now the focus is rightfully on those challenged by disability and similar disadvantages. Online teaching and learning presents some special problems in this ongoing struggle for access, problems that *A Position Statement of Principles and Example Effective Practices for OWI* addresses forthrightly in Principle 1 and implicitly in the other OWI principles. Not the least problem is the lack of awareness on the part of many about the difficulty blind students may face, for example, in merely reading screen text, or the issues that academic language presented onscreen may pose for the learning disabled. It is not only right that educators work to meet the needs of all of our students—indeed make it a first priority for OWI—but it is our institutions' legal responsibility and ours as employees to make appropriate accommodations under the Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 (see also Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973). In addition to those protected by the ADA, OWI instructors have to proactively create opportunities and provide access to those who experience academic challenges due to socioeconomic and/or linguistic challenges. Until my work with the CCCC OWI Committee, I know that I had thought too little about the broad issue of access as I designed and carried out my own online classes. The CCCC OWI Committee hopes that OWI Principle 1 will provide an opportunity for many in our community to rethink and re-enact *access* in our teaching.

Writing pedagogy itself, whose basic theory is valid in any teaching-learning environment, is the focus of the first section of the document. The principles remind us of what have been widespread and implicit tenets in our profession: online writing courses (OWCs) should focus on writing rather than digital technology; teaching-learning strategies should make use of the affordances of the digital environment; and appropriate traditional theories, pedagogies, and strategies should be adapted to teaching online. Improving the skill of our students by retaining the value in proven methods, while adapting them to new forms of teaching-learning interactions, has always made sense. With elucidation of these general principles through examples of specific effective practices, the document points to practical steps that can be taken to support the quality and effectiveness of our teaching online.

Related concerns and interests of teachers and students also are focal points

of the document. Teachers have a right to maintain reasonable control of their intellectual property as technologies enable "teaching" to be offered in a variety of ways that may benefit institutions more than instructors and their students. Materials being used in successive courses without the participation of the authoring teacher, stand-alone independent courses, and even massive online open courses (MOOCs) place stress on existing pedagogical and compensatory models. Those who teach online must not be put at a personal and professional disadvantage: appropriate compensation, workload, and training increase teachers' effectiveness and enrich students' learning. Teachers' satisfaction, often overlooked and undervalued, also is a core component of effective OWI.

Clearly, the needs of students should be understood and addressed. Online students should be prepared by both the institution and teacher for effective learning. This learning should take place in the context of online relationships involving peers and instructors, and general and technical assistance should be readily available both online and onsite. Helping students learn how to use any applicable hardware and software systems, and providing clear access to institutional resources such as library databases and research aids are other important components of student's success online. Major support for online writing students from writing centers and online writing labs (OWLs) has been increasingly available; writing programs and institutions need to ensure appropriate selection and training of tutors to make effective use of the online environment.

Those in charge—administrators, faculty, and tutors—have a special responsibility to coordinate and maximize the OWI enterprise within our institutions. This means not only proper oversight of classes and programs, but also organizing and conducting assessment and research with the goal of improving students' achievement and teachers' effectiveness and satisfaction. The whole writing instruction community can and should benefit from this shared knowledge.

THE URGENT NEED FOR PRINCIPLED OWI

All of us engaged in OWI have thought at one time or other about these obligations and challenges, but *A Position Statement of Principles and Example Effective Practices for OWI* focuses urgency in presenting them together as principles generated from survey, field, interview, and scholarly literature research. At several levels, the OWI principles can assist, support, and encourage teachers and administrators to engage in or offer quality, effective OWI as the number of enrolled students and teachers involved increases every year. In their Introduction to this book, Beth L. Hewett and Kevin Eric DePew report startling findings released by the Sloan Consortium: over the past ten years, the annual growth rates of online enrollments in all areas of higher education have varied

from 9.3% to 17.3%, and total enrollments have leaped from 9.6% of all students in 2002 to 33.5% in 2012 (Allen & Seaman, 2014). These numbers alone should make all engaged in English education and writing instruction sit up and take notice of the need to meet this challenge.

The broad scope of the OWI principles and example effective practices presented in this volume makes them particularly valuable for starting discussions on campuses and within institutions where OWI is increasingly prevalent and important. The strong position that *A Position Statement of Principles and Example Effective Practices for OWI* and this book take regarding the need for access and inclusivity in OWI calls everyone to account in making this long-term goal of literacy education move closer to universal inclusion; students with disabilities and other socioeconomic and language-based challenges know best what they need, and, indeed, insist on in their education. Teachers, writing program and departmental leaders, and senior administrators now have a reasonable, research-based foundation for negotiating how best to meet needs on all sides and how to plan for expanding OWI and making it a strong part of the literacy curriculum.

We need OWI to succeed as part of the new culture-wide, digital landscape: individually, institutionally, and nationally, we must grow in positive ways, without overlooking the interests of any one group or our responsibilities as educators, including our obligations under the law. The 15 OWI principles explicated in this book can help us to make genuine and meaningful progress toward this goal.

REFERENCES

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