

FOREWORD

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Since the 1970s, Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) has been an educational movement devoted to students of all ages learning disciplinary content as they simultaneously develop their language abilities. Elementary schools, secondary schools, and colleges all experimented with a variety of approaches to WAC, and since the 1980s, WAC has been a significant presence in American education at all levels as teachers seek to make connections between students' writing and their learning of subject matter—within the broader framework of increasing students' critical-thinking, problem-solving, and creative abilities. A motivated and engaged writer and learner is a successful student no matter the disciplinary knowledge being learned.

A major premise of WAC is that subject-matter teachers and writing teachers should work together “across disciplines” to make WAC approaches to disciplinary writing and learning more effective and meaningful. Whether in physics classes or in writing classes, when teachers work in isolation the result often is a rote-learning approach rather than an active-learning approach. WAC, on the other hand, demonstrates that partnering with other teachers will improve student learning and communication abilities.

WAC Partnerships between Secondary and Post-Secondary Institutions builds on traditional approaches to WAC based on the collaboration of teachers from different disciplines, collaborations often initiated by an interdisciplinary faculty workshop—what one of the authors in this collection refers to as “the quintessential WAC experience.” But this book goes further and proposes that teachers and institutions partner not only across disciplines in their schools and colleges, but also across educational levels and with other community organizations—locally, regionally, nationally, and even internationally. Two of the chapters are by teacher-researchers in Argentina and in Germany. The editors and authors in *WAC Partnerships* envision exciting possibilities for teachers, students, and institutions that embrace WAC, an educational movement begun over 45 years ago, but now in the twenty-first century more than ever full of opportunities and possibilities.

My involvement with WAC began in the 1970s and early 1980s, exciting times for educational initiatives. My colleagues and I at Michigan Technological University developed interdisciplinary workshops and cross-disciplinary proj-

ects in which teachers at opposite ends of the campus came together to develop strategies for improving students' writing abilities and subject-matter knowledge through a variety of teacher-to-teacher projects and department-to-department projects. We conducted workshops in local elementary and secondary schools, and we partnered on workshops with institutions in other states. We started a writing center with tutors who replaced decontextualized self-paced, fill-in-the-blanks, learning modules. My colleague Toby Fulwiler founded and co-directed the Upper Peninsula Writing Project (UPWP), an affiliate of the National Writing Project (NWP). UPWP soon had an emphasis on WAC, inviting teachers from disciplines other than English to enroll, as well as maintaining NWP's principles of emphasizing writing process theory and pedagogy and a teachers-as-writers approach to building and expressing knowledge. But, as you will read in this book, these activities are just the beginning of opportunities that now await engaged teachers and institutions that form partnerships across disciplines and across educational levels.

Jacob S. Blumner and Pamela B. Childers, nationally-known and respected teacher-researchers on WAC and writing centers at both the secondary and post-secondary levels, have collected and edited an engaging and important anthology that will be of special interest to teachers and administrators already participating in or seeking to participate in WAC and writing center programs and possibilities. *WAC Partnerships* provides models for collaborations between secondary and higher education institutions and between individual teachers in different educational settings. Readers learn of a successful collaboration between a private high school and a public community college that provides an example of best practices when planning to build a partnership. Readers also learn of a partnership between a high school and a university that was not successful, offering a case study in mistakes that may lead to failure. Readers learn of collaboration between a high school writing center and a university writing center that creates substantial and unexpected benefits for the student tutors in both locations.

These partnerships and others in this volume are presented in the context of new opportunities for WAC and writing centers brought about by recent changes in local, national, and global educational cultures, from new technologies that support collaboration across distances, and educational policies designed to equip students to contribute and even thrive in the information-driven world of the twenty-first century. Such opportunities emerge from new educational policies, such as the Common Core State Standards for writing and literacy, to prepare students for writing in college, a key area for partnerships between secondary schools and colleges, and from STEM, a curricular innovation in science, technology, engineering, and math, which focuses on writing in the

science and engineering disciplines in high school and college. One essay by a high school science teacher reports on a collaboration between NASA senior scientists and secondary science teachers who are dedicated to “supporting the next generation of STEM professionals.” Key components of this collaboration are the use of WAC strategies, such as problem-based learning, frequent informal writing-to-learn activities, and formal writing-to-communicate assignments and projects for both teachers and students.

Other fresh opportunities for WAC and writing centers are being created every day by the rapid development of digital communication technologies, technologies that allow students, teachers, and institutions to collaborate across short and long distances on both short and long term projects. Electronic communication tools such as email, blogs, Skype, and other social media provide numerous resources for WAC programs and writing centers and the individual students, teachers, tutors, and clients within them to develop individual and institutional partnerships to enhance students’ engagement and learning. One essay by a writing center director describes a short-term project in which writing center consultants in training at her university in the US partner with new consultants in training at a university in Sweden through email discussions about recent tutoring experiences and shared readings.

I can attest that such direct personal conversations using electronic communication with distant partners can be extremely rewarding for students and teachers, sharpening through conversational learning participants’ reading and writing abilities, subject-matter knowledge, and critical thinking. At Clemson University since 1987, I have seen remarkable engagement and thoughtful and insightful learning when my students in South Carolina discussed William Blake’s poetry via email exchange with students in Andreas Pellizzari’s English class at Alessandro Volta High School in Bagno a Ripoli, Italy, and when my students discussed Tim O’Brien’s novel *The Things They Carried* on a blog with students in Nancy Swanson’s creative writing class at Daniel High School in Central, South Carolina, just five miles from Clemson. In both cases, the often great distance between high school teachers and students and college teachers and students was bridged, making these writing-across-the-literature-curriculum projects successful as participants used their language abilities to build knowledge and perspectives not available to any one individual. In a longer term project, 2003-2013, students in English classes each year at Clemson University have discussed various American, British, and Swedish poets on blogs with engineering and science students in Magnus Gustafsson’s “Fiction for Engineers” classes at Chalmers University in Gothenburg, Sweden. Students were quick to discover the cultural and linguistic differences in the critical interpretations of Swedish students compared to American students, a multi-cultural collab-

oration not available before the advent of rapid, asynchronous, international communication.

I am pleased to offer this foreword to *WAC Partnerships between Secondary and Post-Secondary Institutions*, which describes valuable current models for planning, building, and maintaining partnerships between institutions, as well as sound advice from experienced practitioners for teachers and students seeking to extend the boundaries of their learning through collaboration in WAC and writing center projects.

WAC Partnerships shows that engineers and scientists are excited to support “the next generation of STEM professionals.” No matter our disciplines, we teachers strive to strengthen the abilities of all our students as they prepare for their professional and civic lives. In particular, teachers involved in WAC and writing centers recognize that students who become more able learners and communicators, some of whom are our junior colleagues as consultants in writing centers and teaching fellows in WAC programs, will one day be strengthening the language and learning abilities of the students they teach, counsel, and serve.