Contexts for Change: Problems and Possibilities

As the introduction suggests, Writing Across the Curriculum has begun to be institutionalized. Rather than depending entirely upon initiatives of individual teachers in their classrooms, it has emerged in school and district-wide programs. Administrative support, funding, and collaboration with colleges frequently accompany this program development, and possibilities for faculty development, new equipment, and alternative assessment can emerge. At the same time, the euphoria that accompanies the development of new programs can obscure the complicated issues that emerge with innovation. These issues include faculty resistance, politics, externally imposed evaluation, difficulties with technology, clarity of goals and agreements, and the role of students. The chapters in this section explore these issues and offer both cautions and encouragements to individuals thinking about developing a WAC program.

In Chapter 1, Bernadette Glaze and Chris Thaiss explore the nature of teacher resistance, demonstrating how it can both facilitate and prevent change. They also discuss how students resist the regular writing and more open-ended learning of WAC. Marcella Emberger, Clare Kruft, Sally McNelis, and Sharon Robbins outline the successes and failures of a district-wide WAC program by examining its background, training model, coaching partnerships, assessment, and public relations. In Chapter 3, Lois Easton and Roger Shanley exchange letters to discuss the relationship between assessment and WAC, demonstrating how a school district can foster the development of a WAC program by emphasizing assessment of student writing. Brenda Greene and Lorraine Kuziw draw on their own experience to offer recommendations on what to avoid in developing a collaborative high school-college WAC program. Nancy Linvill and Chris Peters close this section with a consideration of the relationship between WAC and technology, showing how so-called underachievers can use HyperCard to learn through writing.