6 How Did WAC Affect Philosophies and Attitudes about Teaching?

The workshop made a difference in how I think.
—Biology, Whitworth

In the previous chapter, we reported that faculty saw themselves immersed in a river of change that constantly took them into new teaching ventures. They'd been changing before they came to WAC, and they expected to change after WAC. We noted, too, that a number of faculty credited WAC with enhancing the pace or direction of change ("The workshop encourages you to experiment") and with encouraging them to be self-directors of their own change ("You don't have to be a convert"). This chapter and the next explore in more detail how WAC influenced the changes that faculty made *in their teaching.*

In the introduction, we discussed the problems inherent in establishing the "influence" of WAC (or anything else) on faculty behavior (page 26, this volume). To help us address the question of the influence of WAC on teaching, we have relied primarily on two data sources. One is faculty reports. We reasoned that faculty members themselves often know whether a particular idea or practice was influenced by WAC. They may overstate that influence, however, in the interview situation through a desire to please the WAC researchers or because WAC has been unnaturally highlighted from a mosaic of otherwise intermingled threads and influences. Also, some deeper reasons for their adoption of a particular practice—reasons rooted in psychological or sociological factors, in family, culture, class, or gender—may be largely invisible to the faculty member and are beyond the reach of this study. Nonetheless, many faculty were very clear and concrete in describing how WAC had influenced their teaching strategies.

A second type of data from which we trace the influences of WAC are the syllabi and other course documents, the classroom observations, and our own participant-observer knowledge of what

happened in most of the WAC workshops and groups. Being present in all these places helped us to recognize when a workshop idea appeared later in a faculty syllabus or teaching practice.

On the basis of that data, then, we address in this chapter the ways in which WAC appears to have influenced faculty members' teaching philosophies and attitudes and (in the next chapter) their classroom strategies. Since our data are not consistent in type, we did not code the responses, and we do not here present percentages of faculty who were influenced in various ways. Rather, our data allowed us to read and reread, looking for themes that appeared in various guises and in various types of data.

Our first conclusion from the data is that the depth, amount, and type of influence varied, but *some sort* of influence was reported by nearly all the participants. In the 1991 survey of 117 UC Population A faculty (page 36, this volume), 99 percent said they had changed their teaching in some way as a result of the workshop. Kalmbach and Gorman (1986) found that 82 percent of their ninety Michigan Technological University faculty said their teaching had improved as a result of a workshop. Other research we summarized in Chapter 1 also supports this conclusion that WAC results in change. But what kinds of change?

Faculty reported that *individual WAC teaching strategies* might be altered, passed over, or rejected for certain reasons. But many faculty viewed the changes in their *theories, habits of mind, confidence, enthusiasm, and relation to students* as contributions they would not later reject or lose, but would further build upon. They tended to frame their statements about these contributions with markers such as "The most useful thing for me" or "What I most vividly remember." The most long-lasting outcomes of WAC workshops for faculty may not be in individual teaching strategies, such as previous research has often measured as WAC outcomes, but in changes in teaching philosophies and attitudes.

Our evidence suggests five ways in which the WAC experiences influenced faculty members' teaching philosophies and attitudes:

- *theories* about the nature of teaching and learning;
- *habits of mind* during the planning and teaching process;
- *sense of confidence* in teaching;
- *enthusiasm* for teaching;
- *roles in relation to students.*

Faculty Developed Their Theories about Teaching and Learning

Faculty often reported that their WAC experiences had led them to new insights about the nature of writing, teaching, and learning, insights they often expressed as declarative statements with "writing" or "students" or "learning" or "teachers" as the subject. The theories faculty reported to us often concerned:

- coming to see learning as an active collaboration between student and teacher;
- seeing new possibilities for their role as teachers and for the role of writing in the classroom.

Sometimes faculty reported having been working toward such theories prior to the workshop, but some reported making a sharp turn in their ideas about teaching and learning. Below we present a sample of the theories faculty expressed to us.

"There Are Different Ways of Asking Students to Communicate"
—Math, UC

[Note: This faculty member mentions that a number of math faculty had been to the two-day Shakertown workshop, and others to a 2-1/2-hour on-campus workshop just for math faculty. As a result, he says,]

I think that the basic idea that there are different ways of asking students to communicate other than computation tests has disseminated throughout the department quite a lot, and I suspect it's almost to the point where people don't even give it a lot of thought now. It's sunk in. WAC was certainly what got us thinking about educational ideas.

"Writing Has Stages"
—History, Raymond Walters College of UC

The workshop gave me the idea of thinking more of writing as having stages. And if all you do is get the writing at the end, then it's too late to do anything other than grade it.

"Students Need to Internalize"
—Architecture, UC

Students need to internalize material in order to understand it, and the process of writing or other processes of personal expression are very critical in that process. That to me was the real critical issue of the workshop, and that's been very effective.

"I Shifted My Philosophy of How People Learn —from More Passive to More Interactive"
—Adjunct Political Science, College of Evening and Continuing Studies, UC

Allowing students to step back from what's being discussed or read, and to concoct their own version of it, has become much more important in my class. I had been through some interpersonal and reflective kinds of training, and I would include the Shakertown workshop as part of that. I think there were enough of those kinds of sessions that I really had shifted my philosophy about how people learn—from more passive to more interactive.

"You Have to Start Where the Students Are"
—Math, University College, UC (two-year, open-admissions)

I had been going this direction, but in my own little narrow way. The workshop helped keep my interest up, lit some fires underneath, and gave me materials to work with. . . . You have to start where the students are. You've got to get down with them, get into the dirt.

"Give as Much Guidance as Possible"
—Music, Whitworth

The most important thing I remember was how important it was to give students a lot of detail, a lot of instructions. Sometimes we think that we should just tell students and they should know what they're supposed to do. I had heard in my doctorate, too, to give detail and help guide students. And the other things were to respond to drafts, do conferencing, and things like that. Professor Walvoord's approach was to give as much guidance as possible.

"Teaching Writing Goes on Over and Over throughout a Student's Career"
—History and Political Science, Whitworth

What I most vividly remember—and this is a transition I made—at that time I thought teaching writing was something that only people in English did. And they ought to be able, with a good, solid [first-year] composition course, to bring students up to speed. So then I could just read papers that were written at an acceptable college level. And I think I realized in the workshop that teaching writing is something that goes on over and over and over throughout a student's career.

Faculty Developed New Habits of Mind

Faculty often reported having developed new habits of mind—that is, ways of thinking during the planning and teaching process. Their reports on this score support Sipple's (1987) study of think-aloud tapes made as WAC faculty planned writing assignments. She found that WAC faculty planned courses differently from faculty who had not been through a workshop. WAC faculty were more oriented toward learning goals and more likely to use assignments for learning, not just for testing knowledge.

The selections below, taken from 1993–1995 interviews and supported by our other data, indicate some of the new habits of mind that faculty reported.

"It Caused Me to Think through My Goals for Each Course"
—Religion, Whitworth

I think the most useful thing for me was the discussion of the relationship between goals (learning objectives) and curriculum and the way that writing can serve those ends. And that caused me to go back and think through more carefully what the exact goals are for each one of my courses and how writing assignments might serve those goals. I found that very useful.

"The Workshop Made Me Worry More about Assignments"
—Biology, Whitworth

The workshop made a difference in how I think about assignments. It made me worry more about assignments. I look at them and I think, "Well, crud, I mean, what would I expect a student to actually *do* with this? What do I really think I'm going to see at the end of this process?" And I've concluded that if I don't have a good picture of that in my mind, then either it's not a well-written assignment, or I'm not ready to give the assignment. A couple of times on the CORE team, I think it has made me a bit of a nuisance, if we're under the gun to get this paper topic ready.

Faculty Gained Confidence in Their Teaching

A common theme was that faculty had gained a new sense of confidence. This sense of confidence came partly from the naming and legitimizing that we mentioned in the chapter on what WAC experiences meant to faculty. It also came from a sense of collegial support, of community.

"I Understood It Well Enough to Have Confidence"
—International Business, TSU

What really helped my confidence was not somebody in the workshop talking at me, but someone saying something, and then I was able to walk through and see, in fact, how it happened, and I could feel how the happening felt. Then I understood it well enough to have the confidence to try it myself. Prior to that time I [didn't have] the confidence because I didn't have the understanding.

"With Growing Confidence, I Began to Use the Process with My Students"
—Speech and Mass Communications, TSU

I shall never forget what the writing group gave me at a crucial time in my career—the pleasure of acceptance and the stimulation of listening and learning among peers. With growing confidence, I began to use the process more and more with my students.

Faculty Gained a Renewed Enthusiasm for Teaching

"The Workshop Just Turned Me On"
—Music, Whitworth

The other thing I like about those kinds of workshops is the intellectual stimulation. The WAC workshop just turned me on to these ideas.

"It Cements Your Commitment to Teaching"
—Adjunct Political Science, College of Evening and
Continuing Studies, UC

I think one of the more valuable things about the workshop was the experience of thinking about the quality of your teaching as felt by students, as experienced by them. It forces you to go back to your philosophies. Lots of mundane things shove aside these big, deep thoughts, and it helps to have support and to be in an atmosphere where people are discussing this, [where] people are assuming we want quality teaching. It helps you to recommit your energy to that. It cements the commitment.

Faculty Changed Their Roles in Relation to Students

The following story illustrates the final point we're making in this chapter—that for some faculty, WAC resulted in a change in their relations to students. But it also illustrates all the other points. It's the story of a teacher's long-term struggle to become more human toward his students. The struggle is played out in many ways: through assignments; through the syllabus and handouts; through what the teacher did in the classroom; through how he handled himself in face-to-face conversations with students; and through how he thought of himself and his students. It was a shift in philosophy and attitude influenced not only by the WAC seminar, but by other factors as well—graduate school experiences, words of advice from colleagues, a National Endowment for the Humanities summer seminar, and a Fulbright Fellowship in Korea.

"There's More of a Sense of 'Let's Work Together'"
—Arlin Migliazzo, History, Whitworth

The WAC seminar made me rethink the tone of my syllabus.

Faculty: The WAC seminar made me rethink the tone of my syllabus. When I was a student, I didn't learn as much as I could have because I knew what the shortcuts were, and the teachers left them there. You could drive a truck through the gaps—and I did. So, as a teacher, what I did for years, and it's still a temptation, is to try to plug the holes so students have no recourse but to learn. But by the time I came to the seminar, I had been thinking, "Does this sound like me? Do I like it?" And I realized that in plugging all the holes, I didn't leave a whole lot of room for the students.

I realized that in plugging all the holes, I didn't leave a whole lot of room for the students.

The other thing was the way the syllabus came off. I hate to use the word "authoritarian," but it just came off like, "We do this; we do this; we do this." It was devoid of much humanness, I suppose. I had an attendance policy I didn't like—that was part of it. Finally, I said, "This is nuts. I shouldn't do this." So I rewrote practically the whole syllabus. And a lot of my handouts now are done in a different vein. There is more of a sense of "Let's work together on this; these are ways I think you can learn best."

The syllabus was devoid of much humanness.

Interviewer: Besides the syllabus change, have you initiated any other of the changes talked about in the workshop?

Faculty: What I've moved to a lot is the freewrite. I remember saying, "If a student writes and you never grade it, doesn't that kind of leave them hanging?" And you [Linda Hunt] and Barbara [Walvoord] said, "That's not the function of the assignment." So, when the thought hits me or when I think we need to shake things up a little bit, I'll just ask them to take out a piece of paper: "For the next five minutes, I'd like you to write a letter to Joseph Stalin and tell him, 'This is how you should fix the union.'" And then I'll look at some of the papers. I don't use it as a gauge to determine how well they're writing or anything like that. It's more to get them to hook into concepts.

I don't use the freewrite to gauge how well they're writing. It's more to get them to hook into concepts.

Interviewer: The other thing I remember talking about at the seminar is that because you are big [both laugh] and you have a forceful voice, the authority issue is sort of automatic by your presence.

Faculty: Yeah. I had a student today who was asking a question. So I walked over and sat down across the table from her, since I'm pretty tall. I try to do that for male

students, too, but I'm particularly aware of it for female students because of the size differential.

Another thing I've done is dress more informally. I remember I had a colleague when I first started teaching, and he said that a suit and tie communicate certain things. And he was a suit-and-tie kind of guy. Well, I can be, but I don't necessarily like to be.

. . . .

The biggest change in terms of structure is how I do major research assignments. It was really intriguing to me, the approaches that we experimented with in the WAC seminar. So what I do—and I can show you the syllabus—is, about the fourth week, we talk about how to develop a major research paper. And I have four steps and four handouts. The first handout talks about the thesis argument: what it is, why you have it, what it does. I use my own work, pieces that have been successful and that have not been successful, to illustrate.

The biggest change in terms of structure is how I do major research assignments.

And then about three weeks later, I give them the second handout, on the plotting web. I really like that. I talk about how I wrote my dissertation and how so often we're taught that we've got to put every dumb little thing on the outline. And I said—again reflecting my own struggle with balancing creativity and analysis—"Outlining can stifle your creativity." I think the plotting web lends itself more to creativity and spontaneity and better organization. And then I have a sample of one I made up about Theodore Roosevelt. It shows my thesis and the plotting lines. So then I say, "I would like you, on such and such a day, to submit a honed thesis, and then from that thesis, the thesis argument and the plotting web. And I'd like four more sources." And I always have to work with the students because half of them still don't seem to get that you're *arguing* something.

Then a few weeks later I give them the third handout—a speed draft [Figure 6.1]. It comes, again, directly from my own experience with both the old take-it-off-the-note card-and-outline method and my experience in graduate school. I remember when I first started graduate school, one of the recent Ph.D.s said, "The way you write a chapter is you look at your notes and then put them away and write." And I looked at him with horror, and I thought, "How can you possibly do that?" Well, I did the first chapter that

I looked at him with horror and thought, 'How can you possibly do that?'

HI 488W   **Research Project**   **Arlin Migliazzo**
                                     Step Three

The Speed Draft

Before proceeding to this stage of your project, the vast majority of the research must be completed. This does not mean that other sources should not be explored (especially if you are waiting for interlibrary loan materials). But it does mean that enough of the note taking and bibliographic work has been done so that you can clearly define and flesh out the sections of your paper as represented in your plotting web. Do not be overly concerned if the plotting web that you initially presented to me needs some revision as you get deeper into the research. That is as it should be. *Remember, even at this stage, you are working with tentative interpretations.* It is natural to expect that your thinking and your organizational schema for the project are still in something of a state of flux. Once you are at the point where most of the available sources have been mined, you are ready to write your speed draft. The speed draft is essentially a rough draft of the paper with a rather significant twist. It must be written at one sitting without referring to outlines, notes, books, or a plotting web. Before you are ready to rise in revolt, let me explain the rationale for this type of drafting process.

When you tie yourself to a plotting web, outline, or note cards, there are at least three major hindrances which block your creativity and inhibit the development of that "artsy" side of history we have been talking about. First, since you have done all this work, there is a powerful tendency to cram *everything* into the draft. As a result, you are so concerned about finding a place for all your research, that this concern overrides completely the narrative style you use to communicate your research. And we have already noted that it does not matter how wonderful your research is if you cannot communicate it to others in an engaging manner. Second, constant referral to a plotting web places an inordinate amount of emphasis on putting all your research in the right place. Strict adherence to the web *while writing the draft* will kill creativity just as surely as will constant checking of note cards. Finally, relying on notes, webs, and so forth while writing the draft will almost surely pull you off your main thesis argument. You may have found a place for all your research and put all your research nuggets in just the right places, but dollars to doughnuts, you will have failed to build a logically convincing or very readable draft. Therefore, to write the speed draft, follow these brief instructions:

1. Decide which day you will write the draft, and then count three to five days prior to that date.

2. Find a time during each of those days when you can methodically review your plotting web and each of your note cards.

3. On the day you have decided to write the draft, *put away all your note cards and sit down with a pen and paper.* Begin writing, filling in the organization and details you recall from your research. *Do not worry about citations.*

4. Continue writing until you have exhausted your store of knowledge. Put down your pen, put your name on the back of the draft, and do not look at it again until you turn it in to me at the beginning of class.

Figure 6.1. Speed draft assignment.

way, and that was it. I've never *not* done it that way. So I tell the students that story.

So once I get the speed drafts, I have a week to look at them, and then I dismiss class for a week and conference with each student for twenty to twenty-five minutes. I don't do anything with grammar. I look at how it fits together organizationally. I really try to emphasize the clear thesis statement. And does all the information that the student provided support the thesis argument in some way? Is there extraneous stuff here where maybe the creative juices got flowing a little too much and we're off into something else? And maybe it would be better not to put that in this paper. That's for the student's next project.

I dismiss class for a week and conference with students.

Interviewer: How would you describe the payoff in that?

Faculty: The average grade has gone up, but not as much as I'd hoped. I would like to see everybody in that 3.7 to 4.0 category, and I don't see them there. So I'm still working on that. But I've probably taught writing-designated classes about seven times now since the seminar, and I don't think I've had anyone earn below a "C."

The average grade has gone up, but not as much as I had hoped. I'm still struggling.

The issue I'm still trying to work with is—what if a student is late turning in the thesis and the four sources or the plotting web? It really kind of gums things up. So I still struggle with that.

The thing that was really helpful about the WAC seminar was just crafting assignments that hopefully would help people think and write better. But it also helped me focus more on what kind of presence I really want to project in class. That's a pedagogical issue that we don't really talk about, but I think it's extremely important. I realized that *my* perception of me was very different in some cases from the *students'* perception of me. I think the way to become a better teacher is to have those things line up. I need to see myself the way students see me. Or vice versa.

The seminar helped me to focus on the kind of presence I really want to project in class.

Even the way the plotting web project, the thesis argument handout, and all those things are put together is very different from the way I put things together five or six years ago. I think that it projects a different sense of what I'm here for. And I think that's been demonstrated on my student evaluations. I think I have seen a better sense of connectedness to the students. Obviously, there are some issues that still have to be worked on, but I think that the WAC workshop gave me the opportunity to work on not just the assignment I give to students, but *how* I give them

My handouts project a different sense of what I'm there for.

the assignments, how I portray what I think needs to happen in class. That's real helpful.

Interviewer: Have there been things from the seminar that have not worked?

It put me in the position of being the punisher. So I trashed that puppy.

Faculty: Before the seminar, I was going through and correcting all my students' grammatical mistakes. And Barbara [Walvoord] said, "Don't do that. That's not gonna help 'em; *they* have to find it." So I went to a system where I just put a check next to the line. And she talked about not even accepting a paper if it had too many check marks, but just handing it back for revision. So I wrote right on the syllabus if there are five errors on any one page, I'll turn it back and not read it. And it was *disastrous!* I think in the first set of forty papers, maybe six of them got through. It was horrible for me as well as for the students. They felt like they couldn't do anything right. And the papers just kept coming back and coming back, and I thought, "This is terrible! I can't ever get on top of this." And it put me in the position of being a punisher. So I trashed *that* puppy!

I also trashed revision. They've got to decide what they're going to do. Give them ownership.

And I also trashed revision. I tried it in a survey class. I still give them the option of giving me the rough draft ahead of time. But I don't say, "Okay, turn this paper in, and then you can revise it if you want to." In a survey class, where they have two or three short papers, after the first one comes back, I say, "If I can help you think through how to do the next one better, why don't you come in?" And in a class of forty, I usually get between five and eleven or twelve people. You see, it gives them ownership. They've got to decide what they're going to do. Let *them* decide from the get-go. Whereas, just after I took the WAC seminar, with the revision option after the papers were handed in, it was "Well, I'll see if you measure up, and then you can decide whether you're going to turn the paper back in." I can't do that. It's too much.

Interviewer: Can you describe peak moments in your teaching career?

Faculty: There were two. One happened probably six or seven years ago. We had a student here who was really hard to get along with, a nontraditional student. And I felt like I went the extra mile for this person and tried to work things out, but I'd been pushed to the limit by her. In my "Pacific Northwest History" class, she said something, and I just snapped. I still remember where she was sitting. I didn't yell

or scream, but I put her in her place. And I realized as soon as I did that what I'd done. It's one of those things that after you say it, there's no way you can get it back. The whole tenor of the class changed. Oooooh! I couldn't get myself back on track. The students were obviously just as surprised, because I don't think anyone had ever heard me do that before. It was just horrible. I got out of class and thought, "What am I going to do?" Then I said, "Well, it's her fault. She did it." But by the end of the day, I knew what I had to do. I had to apologize to the whole class. Especially to her. So I made a time to see her before I saw the whole class, and I said, "I want to apologize for doing that. I would like to apologize in front of the class, because I think the class was part of that, and I want the students to know that we have worked toward reconciliation." She said, "That'd be fine."

I knew what I had to do. I had to apologize to the whole class.

So the next day I went into class and I said, "I want you to know that I was out of line. I'm not the perfect person. You saw that very much the other day." And I said a couple of other things about reconciliation and forgiveness. Then I said, "Okay, let's go on." And what was so neat after that is I got at least one note from a student, and I think other students talked to me. They'd never seen any prof do that before. And that has nothing to do with content. It has everything to do with presence.

That has nothing to do with content. It has every-thing to do with presence.

And the other peak moment does, too. Usually, when I talk about the sixties in the survey class, I give a lecture on Vietnam, and I play some rock music of the time. And this time I thought, "I'm not going to do that." I'm getting away from trying to stay to my notes. So I decided to go in and just tell them what it was like to be sixteen in 1968, and Martin Luther King Jr. gets killed, and then Robert Kennedy gets killed. I always struggle with how much to tell stories. Is it condescending? Is it trying to make too much out of my own experience? But this time I thought, "I don't care. I'm just going to see how this works." So I went in and pulled my draft card out of my wallet and told them about my visit to the draft board. Then I started to talk about Martin Luther King Jr. and Robert Kennedy and what it was like to live in L.A. and have that happen. And I told them, "I'm never going to take this draft card out of my wallet. I'm going to die with this in my wallet." And I started to crack up. I mean, I couldn't hold my composure. I couldn't go on. I didn't have any notes. I had my draft card and my memories, and that was it.

It had every-
thing to do
with connec-
tion, with
people and
humanness.

I think I scared some students. But also I had students come up and just say, "Man, that was—I never heard that before." It wasn't *content* at all. I think it was more how much I am willing to risk in front of the students. And that was a little *too* scary, that one. I was really out of control for a few seconds. But maybe, in a sense, that was good because they saw how close that really was. I mean, even though it was twenty-five years ago, it's just right there for me. And it had little to do with content and everything to do with connections, I think—with people and humanness.

We were struck by the importance that our faculty respondents attributed to their changes in philosophies, habits of mind, enthusiasm, commitment, and relation to students. The match-to-sample data we summarized in the introduction, and the "resistance" case studies with their emphasis on "my ideas" being adopted or resisted, perhaps have missed the most important outcomes of WAC. Individual teaching strategies may shift and change after WAC, as the story above and the accounts in the next chapter show. But WAC's most important outcome may be that underneath the shifting strategies, underneath the teacher's necessary accommodation to real-life constraints, lies a deeper stratum of faculty life—a stratum of belief, attitude, habit, commitment, and community—that can be changed, in some cases profoundly.