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Writing Across the Curriculum

The WAC Journal

Writing Across the Curriculum

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Sustainability, Cognition, and WAC

MARK L. WALDO

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*“Sustainability is about the terms and conditions of human survival;
and yet we continue to educate at all levels as if no such crisis existed.”*

—DAVID ORR, UNIVERSITY OF VERMONT

AT THE END OF THEIR often cited book *Programs that Work*, Fulwiler and Young list what they call “The enemies to WAC.” Among those many enemies—reluctant or resistant faculty; skeptical, parsimonious administrators; untenured WAC consultants; etc. (some of these enemies have mellowed since the fifteen-plus years the book was published)—is the enemy upon which I wish to focus: objective, multiple-choice testing.

Why is multiple-choice testing an enemy to the WAC endeavor? Fulwiler and Young answer that question this way: In the colleges, “students often sit in large lecture halls and take tests that have been designed to be machine-scored. Test scores are then machine-averaged to produce a final grade . . . In such an atmosphere, the teaching of writing has little place” (291). In the public schools, “no wonder so many [teachers] are seduced by workbook exercises that someone else has designed and that can be marked quickly and efficiently, objective grades in the grade book, standardized test preparation complete, principal and superintendent pleased, the nation secure. In such an atmosphere, there is little commitment to write to learn rather than write to be tested, little commitment to develop a pedagogy that models what writers do so that children can imagine themselves as writers and begin to act as writers do” (292).

My answer to the question of why multiple-choice testing is an enemy to WAC is pedagogical. Generally WAC is bolstered by a related series of educational principles, such as writing shapes thinking (Applebee and Langer); differing writing tasks shape differing critical thinking skills (Bean, Waldo, Applebee and Langer); the process of writing creates meaning (we understand better what we're writing about as we draft and receive feedback); writing tasks should expand in complexity as students grow cognitively, and tasks should not exceed students' zones of proximal development (Vygotsky); writing in a major helps students learn the language of the major (Bazerman); students must be "immersed," "go native" in the language of a discipline in order to think and write in it (Kuhn, 204); and even though mastery of the discipline's language and thinking is an essential goal, students need to be able to collaborate across disciplines (Waldo).

A couple of points unite these principles. They involve WAC in the development of writing and cognitive abilities, and they acknowledge the importance of writing within and across specialized communities. These principles produce assignments that demand time for students to complete them and for teachers to guide and grade the students. And while the results can be easy to measure individually and to compare between students in the same classroom, they are not so easy to compare between schools, districts, and states.

Multiple-choice tests, on the other hand, produce achievements easy to account for, and they readily demonstrate "adequate yearly progress," or lack thereof. They hint at a scientific basis ("objective," verifiable), are easy to grade, and offer ready comparisons between students, schools, districts, and even states. They promote learning of discrete units of text such as, in the language arts, drill and practice in comma usage or subject/verb agreement. Students memorize (or do not) the rules and pass (or do not) the tests. But multiple-choice tests almost never focus on developing cognitive and writing abilities. Usually, they do not encourage use of particular critical thinking skills, and this is a problem in an age with huge, growing long-term problems that need citizens with critical thinking skills to understand and solve them.

* * *

I want to take the remainder of this article to explain why WAC offers a promising pedagogy for helping people solve complex problems, why multiple-choice testing is nonetheless prevailing, and what WAC specialists might do to counter this situation. The complex problem I wish to use as an example is sustainability—the subject David Orr refers to at the opening of this article. I would like the issues and assignments

discussed here to be thought of as a subset of the WAC/WID movement, a *green WAC* which focuses its consulting in assignment design and paper grading on environmental concerns. Environmental problems have surfaced dramatically in both the United States and the world as among our most serious threats to happy existence, and, therefore, everyone has an interest in them.

I think the conditions suggested by David Orr in his quote are true. There cannot be a subject much more important than sustainability, especially given the precarious ecological position in which we find ourselves, and yet, by and large, we continue to educate in the public schools and colleges as if nothing is happening. But before I enter into the discussion of why this lack of focused pedagogy exists, I think it is important to define sustainability and suggest why it is an issue almost as consequential as global warming, its unhealthy twin.

At bottom, sustainability means that human resources are used only at a rate that they can be replenished naturally, with systems remaining productive indefinitely. It means that we measure our “ecological footprint,” understanding that the more resources we use, the larger the footprint of damage we leave. It means that in every personal and professional activity we should consider how our lifestyle choices impact the global environment. If global warming is one of the most pressing problems we face, sustainability has the potential to be one of the great solutions.

It is interesting to ponder why there is so little focused pedagogy on sustainability in our schools. How can the schools, from elementary through post-secondary, “educate as if no ... crisis existed”? Orr did not answer that question in his brief quote, but I intend in this article to answer it, at least in part.

One short answer is denial. In the case of sustainability, some doubters might say that the fit between humanity and its habitat is just fine. They argue we don’t need any special school attention paid to the issue of sustainability. They argue there’s no need to teach our students ecological literacy. Just note how those in denial counter the facts and consequences of global warming, bringing their own “science” and “scientists” to “debunk” the issue. To many the need for sustainability practices, like the need to counter global warming, appears decades off. Given that, turning heads away may seem a reasonable response.

Or maybe it’s not so much denial as ignorance that results in the lack of a sustainability pedagogy. Most people know less about sustainability than they do about global warming—a heavily publicized issue. If the public is generally ignorant of what sustainability is, then teachers will not be trained to teach sustainability practices which

involve complex critical thinking activities, group processes, and practice in real world situations. And such teachers cannot be expected to design assignments which require such activities.

Very little pedagogy these days focuses on issues of sustainability in part because of denial and ignorance, but the full reason is much deeper than that. Much at fault is a profound conflict in pedagogical approaches, a conflict that grows out of a federally funded program, “No Child Left Behind” (NCLB). NCLB was literally imposed on the public schools—elementary, middle, and high school—in 2001. The program requires each state establish “higher” standards than it had prior to 2001. It allows the schools to choose the assessment instruments for this requirement as long as they identify their standards and show how the students have met them. Almost uniformly, schools have chosen multiple-choice testing because such testing is inexpensive, and easy to grade, tabulate, and compare between students, schools, and states. Choosing it is understandable, though, I will argue, a sorry situation with grave long-term consequences.

The following points (from the Illinois Board of Education) characterize the NCLB pedagogy:

- Annual testing of all students against state standards in reading and mathematics in grades 3–8 and in science at least three times in a student’s school career (including once in high school).
- “Verification” of each state’s assessment system via required participation (every other year) by selected districts in the NAEP test.
- “Accountability” through aggregate and disaggregate analysis and reporting of student achievement results.
- A state definition and timeline for determining whether a school, a district and the state are making “adequate yearly progress” (AYP) toward the goal of 100 percent of students meeting state standards by the 2013–2014 school year.
- The use of “scientifically-based” programs and strategies.
- All students will reach high standards.

The first three of these points illustrate the salient features of NCLB. They also illustrate its potential and demonstrated problems. These annual tests occupy the curriculum in two disciplines (reading and mathematics) from grades three through eight and one discipline (sciences) three times. Although the parenthetical “once in high school” requirement in point one sounds syntactically as if it belongs only to the sciences, in fact, many schools test all three areas in high school and include

other tests, such as achievement in writing skills, as well. Because there is so much testing and so little time, it is difficult not to “teach to the test,” and such teaching tends to preclude a project-oriented and process curriculum, where critical thinking skills are developed. Point two shows why schools might be invested in the testing of their students: the schools are tested for verification themselves. If the schools do not pass the “verification” test and/or their students do not pass standardized tests, the schools lose federal money; and they may, in a worst case scenario, themselves be lost. Thus the “accountability” provision of point three. This imposed and essentially closed system of “clear” standards, easy measurement, and severe punishment for non-compliance does not leave much room for other approaches that focus on developing critical thinking.

Imagine a “no child left behind” pedagogy treating the subject of sustainability. The student reads about the issue, hears the teacher talk about it in class, and then takes a multiple-choice test to demonstrate achievement.

Sustainability Multiple-Choice Test

- 1) Which one of the following would not be considered a goal for learning about sustainable living?
 - a) To consider the ties between lifestyle choices and their impact on the earth.
 - b) To understand how the environment is meant to serve humans.
 - c) To understand how nature’s organizing principles can be applied in the design and production of goods and in everyday living.

- 2) An “unsustainable situation” occurs when
 - a) Not enough resources are removed from the environment to sustain human happiness.
 - b) Human activity only uses nature’s resources at a rate at which they can be replenished naturally.
 - c) Nature’s resources are used up faster than they can be replenished.

- 3) Individual “ecological footprints” are
 - a) Hard to find in deep woods.
 - b) Measures of the resources we use during the course of our daily living, the more resources the larger the footprint.
 - c) Suggestions of paths to follow in order to live better lives, lives more ecologically sound.

- 4) Which of the following is not a tenet of sustainable roofing?
- a) Use products made from raw materials whose extraction is the least environmentally damaging.
 - b) Consider roof surface color and texture with regard to climate and their effect on roof system performance.
 - c) Make aesthetics the most important consideration in roof design; pleasing yourself means pleasing others and the environment.
- 5) Sustainable roofing minimizes the burden on the environment, conserves energy, and extends roof lifespan. Which one of the following is a type of sustainable roofing system:
- a) Reflective roofs
 - b) Garden roofs
 - c) Photovoltaics
 - d) All of the above

If you chose, say, four out of five correctly (answers are *a, c, b, c, d*), you meet state standards in a way that can be verified and accounted for. Your score becomes a part of your class's, school's, and state's score. It can be readily tabulated and then compared to the scores of other classes, schools and states. But this is educating in the way David Orr suggests, "as if no crisis existed." This "No Child Left Behind" approach could be termed a product pedagogy. The student reads text, listens to the teacher, and regurgitates what she knows by taking the test with little regard for the processes of thinking critically and experiencing the integration of such thought into the development of a viable solution for a real world situation.

Now, imagine a sustainability pedagogy as described by John Gerber:

SUSTAINABILITY PEDAGOGY: We believe that learning "about" sustainability is not enough. A critical aspect of transformative education for sustainability is the ability to integrate theory and practice in real world situations. Students are encouraged to develop their own proposals for how to acquire experiential education. The range of experiential opportunities is broad, from Community Service Learning in nearby communities to semester abroad experiences. Regardless of the venue, we believe the particular experience chosen should help students integrate the concepts of economic vitality, environmental integrity, and social equity in a real-world business, family, or community setting. We recommend students explore opportunities for internships, practica or independent studies that support their learning. *John Gerber, University of Massachusetts*

Gerber's pedagogy does not completely debunk the "learning about" curricula of NCLB. But he definitely deemphasizes it in favor of a much more active, engaged, "do something" pedagogy. Why is that? It stems from the nature of sustainability itself, highly complex, multilayered, requiring nimble problem-framing and solving skills in numerous disciplines. Sustainability education is experiential, integrating theory and practice in real world situations, and requiring the imaginative while systematic exercise of critical thinking skills. Like WAC activities and outcomes it can become a transformative educational experience, leading students away from passive interactions with data and text into active engagements with concepts and problems. The multiple-choice test, whatever it does for the student, brings him or her no closer to the immense importance of the problem of sustainability and the seriousness of its consequences.

I have created an assignment which I believe approximates Gerber's thinking about sustainability pedagogy and which brings students closer to the issue of sustainability:

SENIOR PROJECT ARCHITECTURE 476/676: *Designing Sustainable Space*. This class constitutes the capstone experience for senior architecture students. The class will divide into four groups of six and each group will compete to win the contract for designing the California Museum of Science building. While this building must be aesthetically unique on the world stage, it must also employ as many of the concepts of sustainability in design and construction as are possible.

CONTEXT. You are part of an architecture firm bidding to design the California Museum of Science building to be built in Golden Gate Park in San Francisco. As part of a team of six, your particular responsibility is to design a functional, aesthetically pleasing roof which blends gracefully with the remainder of the structure and its surroundings. Because of this class, you know that the roof must be more than functional and aesthetically pleasing; it must also be sustainable: "a roofing system that is designed, constructed, maintained, rehabilitated and demolished with an emphasis throughout its lifecycle on using natural resources efficiently and preserving the global environment." To complete this project you must select between garden roof systems, reflective roofs, or roof photovoltaics and defend your choice. You need to do a life cycle analysis "from raw material extraction or processing; through production; packaging; transportation; design; installation; service life; reuse; recover or tear-off; and ultimately disposal." You need to explain

how your design will be cost effective, minimize the environmental burden, conserve energy, and extend the roof's lifespan. To complete this assignment, you 1) should do all pertinent research on sustainable roofing, 2) prepare a written report arguing the merits of sustainable roofing and including the details, drawings, and dimensions relevant to this particular roof, 3) work in regular coordination with other team members in preparing the comprehensive document for submission to the state building review board, and 4) prepare a section of the Powerpoint presentation to be presented to the review board (judges will be esteemed architects from firms around town).

GOALS:

- 1) To understand the concept of sustainable roofing.
- 2) To estimate the benefits of sustainable roofing accrued by installing this particular roof.
- 3) To predict the cost and environmental effectiveness of a general turn toward sustainable roofing.
- 4) To argue persuasively with your team of five others for your roof design and how it fits into your team's overall design of the structure.

GRADES:

- Thoroughness of research into sustainable roofing (20 points)
- Understanding the value of this particular type of sustainable roofing (20 points)
- Quality of individual and group written report (20 points)
- Quality of work with team (help will be provided early in the semester by experts in group work) (20 points)
- Effectiveness of individual and group presentations (20 points)

With its clear goals, engaging context, and pertinent audience, this assignment touches a variety of issues and activities necessary to solving problems of sustainability. It requires an understanding of the problem: the roof must be more than functional and aesthetically pleasing; it must be sustainable. It requires extensive research into what that means. It requires design details, drawings, and dimensions. It insists on individual and collaborative work, and written and oral presentations, a big difference from what the multiple-choice test requires: literacy, memorization, and some spontaneous analysis.

As proponents of writing across curriculum, we have an important role to play in the struggle between these two pedagogies. Because of our training, we know a great deal about how writing shapes thinking, and about writing as process. This knowledge makes us among the best in the academy to show how assignments promoting critical thinking skills and project assignments are superior to multiple-choice and fill-in-the-blank tests in terms of helping students develop focused problem-solving, analytical, and persuasive skills. Given our expertise and the state of the world, I encourage us to work together to develop strategies for offering assignment design workshops to public school teachers—workshops for which participants receive university credit(s). We need to make ourselves available as consultants to the public schools, not as ivory tower sages (not as Friere’s extension agents), but as in-the-trenches guides.

I know from my own experience that faculty across the university curriculum are interested in assignment-design workshops focused on topics of critical importance, such as global warming and sustainability. Last spring (2007), I offered two workshops—one completely open to the faculty without restriction and one topic-based on global warming. This meant that group one could use the workshop to design an assignment on any topic while group two had to focus their assignment design on topics relevant to global warming. The global warming workshop filled first in pre-registration, and it produced the best single assignment in the workshops for that year. (I’ll send you a copy if you email me a request at waldo@unr.edu.) There is no dramatic revelation in the workshop’s popularity; it just suggests faculty interest in having students write in focused ways about topics important to the health of the world.

As WAC consultants, we need to champion writing and critical thinking in the face of pressure to further objectify the curriculum. Our global problems are complicated; they need strong thinkers and writers to confront them. Will the educational system fail to produce the critical thinkers necessary to staff businesses and government agencies that deal with the problems that threaten the well-being of the world? Let’s hope not. In any case, WAC can play a role in transforming curricula to promote the depth of education we all need students to experience, students who will be our future critical thinkers and problem solvers.

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Writing and Learning in the Health Sciences: Rhetoric, Identity, Genre, and Performance

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WRITING ACROSS THE CURRICULUM linkages are generally acknowledged to help students improve as writers and engage more deeply in disciplinary course content. However, the extent to which the literacy skills that are taught in general writing courses transfer to the specific writing needs of a particular discipline remains a debatable issue. Referring to first year writing courses, Amy Devitt notes that writing courses “have been attacked as not useful, in part because of a potential lack of transferability of the general writing skills learned in composition courses to the particular writing tasks students will later confront” (202). Margaret Mansfield similarly maintains that attempts to reproduce real world writing in the classroom are “intrinsically doomed” (69), as do many of the essays in Joseph Petraglia’s 1995 collection, *Reconceiving Writing, Rethinking Writing Instruction*, which question the value of what Petraglia terms GWSI (General Writing Skills Instruction). However, an important benefit of a cross curricular model, one that receives little attention in writing across the curriculum scholarship, is that linked courses not only help students improve as writers, but they can also enable students to understand that “when people learn, they don’t take on new knowledge so much as a new identity” (Lindquist 267). Identity is closely linked with writing, but WAC tends to focus primarily on the actual writing, not on the role writers play in a discourse community.

In this essay, we discuss a successful linkage between a writing class and a class in Health Sciences that used rhetoric, with particular emphasis on the concepts of identity, genre, and performance, to help students gain insight into the role of writing in the field of Public Health and understand what it means to be a Public Health professional. Differences in students’ responses to essays written at the beginning of the semester as

compared to those written at the end indicated the following insights: that writing in the field of Public Health involves assessing a problem and addressing it rhetorically through writing, that simply providing information may not persuade an audience to change its behavior, that it is necessary to assume a more nuanced writer identity in order to have an impact upon an intended audience, and that the assumption of this identity constitutes a performance.

As is probably the case with many fruitful partnerships, the connection between the two courses began with lunch, during which the Health Sciences professor (Fischbach) consulted with the Director of Composition (Clark) about what might be done to improve the writing skills of students majoring in Public Health. Having taught courses in Public Health for over twenty-five years, during which he had been dissatisfied with the quality of his students' writing, Fischbach wanted to figure out what could be done to improve it. Fischbach noted that the writing contained many sentence-level errors, but what particularly concerned him was that his students seemed unable to think logically, to organize information in a text, and to synthesize information into a cogent argument. "In a few years, I am probably going to retire," he said, and "I want to spend those years at least trying to do something about my students' writing, not just complaining about it."

The result of that lunch and of many other conversations was the development of an integrative cross-curricular model in which Fischbach's course in Public Health Education was linked with Clark's course in Intermediate Writing, utilizing a familiar WAC model—that is, the writing course used material from the field of Public Health as the subject matter for writing assignments, and the Public Health Education course, through its syllabus and corresponding student learner objectives, lectures and assignments, focused upon the professional role of the public health worker.

Students Who Major in Public Health Education

At California State University, Northridge, a major in Public Health Education is oriented toward helping students acquire the background for developing, implementing, and evaluating health education programs in a variety of settings. Jobs may be located in hospitals, non-profits, government organizations, and corporations, and although some students seek graduate degrees upon graduation, many do not. The major tends to attract students who wish to enter the workforce soon after graduation and who help the public alter their health behavior via an understanding of what is involved in living a healthy lifestyle and/or perhaps negotiating their way through a complicated health care system. Some students are already working; some have families. A number of these

students speak English as a second or third language and struggle with academic reading and writing tasks. In an attitude survey distributed at the beginning of the semester, only a few of these students indicated that they read or wrote for pleasure. Many stated that they were at least sometimes uncomfortable about writing.

The Writing Course as Linked to Public Health Education

The writing course was linked to the Public Health Education course in several ways. Most of the students enrolled in Fischbach's course were co-enrolled in Clark's writing course, although a few students in the course were majoring in other subjects. Moreover, in order for students to recognize the importance of the linkage, Dr. Fischbach attended every class taught by Dr. Clark and referred to Clark's class frequently in his own class. Throughout the course Fischbach's lectures and assignments placed the student in the context of serving as a professional Public Health Educator. Students were exposed to the thinking, values, and behaviors of health educators serving in a variety of public health venues. At the conclusion of the course each student composed a grant proposal based upon the writing he or she had completed in Clark's course. The grant writing scenario placed the student in the role of a Public Health Educator in a particular community setting, requiring the student to defend the proposal before a committee of professional peers. In addition, all assignments in the writing course were concerned with issues in Public Health.

The Assignments

The writing course required four fully revised assignments and two essays written in class, one at the beginning of the semester, the other at the end. The in-class essays served in a limited way as pre- and post-term assessments, although it was recognized that this form of writing assessment might not yield useful results. Both the first in-class writing assignment and the first revised writing assignment were concerned with the topic of obesity as a Public Health issue. The in-class essay asked students to consider whether the government should impose a tax on high-calorie foods, and the first revised essay asked students what issues should be considered in attempting to solve the problem of obesity. The second assignment allowed students to select a health issue that affects university students and asked them to examine the extent to which the university can or should assume responsibility for addressing this issue. In the third assignment, students refocused their second assignment toward the needs of freshman students and gave a presentation on that topic to a class. The fourth involved the writing of a grant proposal to a fictitious Public Health oriented organization. (See appendix for assignments.)

Rhetoric and Identity

Since an important goal of Public Health Education is to provide information to the public about issues in Public Health, that is, to persuade the “public” to adopt a healthy lifestyle, it was decided that rhetoric should be a central focus in the writing course, with particular emphasis on the concepts of genre, identity, and performance. In fact, the most important insight that has emerged from two iterations of this model is not simply the well-documented benefits of WAC—that students are likely to write more successfully about what they “know,” care about, or are currently studying—but also that in order for students to write for a particular field or profession, students must assume a new “role,” or identity—in this case, that of a Public Health professional. It was the assumption of this “role” and what that role entailed that enabled students to gain insight into the rhetorical situation inherent in the field of Public Health Education. Thus, a significant outcome of this cross-curricular model was the realization that a successful WAC linkage involves teaching students how to “perform” as writers and speakers within a particular field or profession. Another was the understanding that the suitability of an identity and the appropriateness of a “performance” in a professional sphere are closely connected with the concept of genre.

Rhetoric and Genre

The word “genre” in the context of rhetoric does not refer to its more traditional association with the form of a literary work (a sonnet, an epic, a novel, etc.). Rather, the term refers to a reconceptualization of genre as a typified social action that responds to a recurring situation—that is, “that people use genres to do things in the world (social action and purpose) and that these ways of acting become typified through occurring under what is perceived as recurring circumstances” (Devitt, “Integrating” 698). Carolyn Miller’s article titled “Genre as Social Action” (1984) redefined genre by building on earlier work in twentieth century rhetorical theory, first drawing on Kenneth Burke’s discussion of rhetorical acts in terms of responding to particular situations and then referring to Lloyd Bitzer’s definition of the rhetorical situation as a “complex of persons, events, objects, and relations” presenting an “exigence” or necessity (Bitzer 5) which the rhetorical act addresses.

This reconceptualized view extended notions of genres beyond their association with a relatively stable set of discourse conventions. By defining genres in terms of exigence, purpose, and action, this perspective provides a framework for understanding text as a typical rhetorical interaction that is situated within a social context. In the case of the writing class for Public Health Education students, the exigence, purpose, and

action derives from the need to “educate” the public about health issues, certainly not a straightforward or easy task.

Genre and Academic Writing in the Linked Courses

Given this concept of genre, one of our first concerns in forging the cross-curricular link was to determine whether the genre of writing that is taught in most writing programs—academic argument—would be appropriate for the sort of writing expected from Public Health Education professionals. This was an issue that needed considerable clarification, since we recognized that the term “academic argument” may be viewed differently according to disciplinary perspectives. In *Clueless in Academe*, Gerald Graff affirms “the academic centrality of persuasive argument” (22) and uses the term “Arguespeak” as the pervasive genre of academic writing. Nevertheless, Graff qualifies that “the Arguespeak of literary studies, philosophy, or history, is very different from the Arguespeak of mathematics or chemistry, which is different in turn from the Arguespeak of the social sciences, economics, or computer science” (22). Other scholars addressing the issue of transferability raise similar questions (see Freedman and Adam, Hill and Resnick, Mansfield, Petraglia, among others). As Jonathan Hall maintains, “All too often . . . the freshman writing program and the writing courses in the disciplines have operated with little or no coordination, as though they were taking place at different institutions” (5).

Others, however, maintain that several modes of thought and conventions associated with academic argument do pertain in other contexts, both within and beyond the university. Susan Peck McDonald argues for the pervasiveness of “problem definition” in multiple academic venues, noting that “the subject of academic writing either already is or is soon turned into a problem before the writer proceeds. No matter how tentative the solutions are, it is problem-solving that generates all academic writing” (p. 316). This perspective is supported by Graff, who affirms the importance of problematizing (45) as a requirement for all academic writing. Similarly, in a comparative study of two hundred essays, Ellen Barton (1993) discussed the importance of “evidentials” as a distinguishing mark between arguments written by experienced academic writers and those written by students. In the context of the academic argumentative essay, Barton’s essay is noteworthy for two claims: first, that evidentials reveal underlying differences in epistemological stance; and second, that although each field is defined by its own special patterns of rhetoric, “argument is more unified than is commonly understood and far more unified than the fragmentation of academic fields might imply. Every scientist or scholar, regardless of field, relies on common devices of rhetoric, on metaphors, invocations of authority, and appeals to audiences” (4).

Even Peter Elbow, whose work is characterized by concern with enabling students to find a voice through personal writing, has acknowledged the existence of “academic writing in general,” which he characterizes as the

giving of reasons and evidence rather than just opinions, feelings, experiences: being clear about claims and assertions rather than just employing or insinuating; getting thinking to stand on its own two feet rather than leaning on the authority of who advances it or the fit with who hears it. In describing academic discourse in this general way, surely I am describing a major goal of literacy, broadly defined. Are we not engaged in schools and colleges in trying to teach students to produce reasons and evidence which hold up on their own rather than just in terms of the tastes or prejudices of readers or how attractively they are packaged? (140)

Elbow’s perspective is similar to that of Mike Rose, who writes in *Lives on the Boundary* of the importance of “framing an argument or taking someone else’s argument apart, systematically inspecting a document, an issue, or an event, synthesizing different points of view, applying a theory to disparate phenomena, and so on” (188). Moreover, as Graff points out, citing Jerry Bona, head of the University of Illinois at Chicago’s Mathematics department, “mathematics journal editors are impressed by article introductions that define an issue broadly and indicate what is at stake in the writer’s argument, what difference it would make to discussions in the field” (23).

Given the uncertainty about whether strategies associated with academic argument are relevant to the writing in other disciplines, it was important for Clark and Fischbach to clarify what sort of writing Public Health students are likely to need. But since they both strongly recognized the relevance of problem-based argumentative writing as a means of influencing the public about health-related concerns, that issue was easily resolved. An important component of Public Health work involves communication—that is, helping the public gain a better understanding of how to engage in a healthy lifestyle and avoid behaviors that are likely to interfere with that goal. Therefore, Public Health professionals can be viewed as rhetoricians, who must become skilled in persuasive argument or what Graff refers to as Arguespeak. Thus, it seemed reasonable, in fact, even necessary, to include a significant rhetorical component in the writing course, both in terms of the Aristotelian concepts of ethos, logos, and pathos, but also in the context of Quintillian’s notion of the successful rhetor as a “good man speaking well”—goodness in this context equated with credibility.

If Public Health professionals can be viewed as rhetors, the effectiveness of their work, as evinced in their writing and speaking, derives from their ability to convey information persuasively to an audience, convincing people that what they have to say

is worth considering, and motivating people to change behavior, a goal that is never easy to achieve, neither in oneself, nor in others. This goal of generating trust and initiating change raises again a question raised some years ago by Wayne Booth in *Modern Dogma and the Rhetoric of Assent*: “How should men work when they try to change each other’s minds?” (12). This was a question that generated a rhetorical focus for class discussions and directly impacted various writing assignments.

Performing the Role of a Public Health Professional

Booth’s question became particularly relevant when our students wrote their first essays, the in-class writing as well as the first assignment, both of which were concerned with the topic of obesity and intended for parents of school-age children. When this topic was first announced, their hands waved enthusiastically because many of them knew a great deal about it. They were convinced that obesity constitutes a serious health problem and that it causes a number of health problems in the community, health problems they could name. They also felt strongly that it is necessary to get the message out about the importance of cultivating healthy eating habits and the dire consequences to society of an overweight population. Our students were pleased to share what they knew—facts, charts, consequences, and figures, but not one began by considering the audience for which this information was intended, and not one viewed the assignment in the context of a rhetorical situation, of understanding the “problem” of obesity in American society in terms of a “situation” or “problem” within a scene (other than the fact that people eat poorly). As a result, their first essays tended to present a great deal of information, but were not focused toward the needs of a particular audience. Students did not think about Public Health work as a rhetorical situation, nor of their work as Public Health professionals as having a rhetorical goal.

The essays written on the topic of obesity contained a great deal of information. However, they were not effective because they were not persuasive. In fact, what soon became apparent in students’ responses to these first assignments was that they were writing not as Health professionals, but as *students* who were responding to a question on an essay exam, the goal being to “show the teacher what you know.” Thus, the persona or identity that most students assumed in these initial assignments was that of a student who had memorized a great deal of information, and, as such, their essays did not problematize the topic or acknowledge the complexity of the situation (that it is sometimes difficult for working parents to put together a nutritious meal, that cultural factors sometimes dictate food choices, that it is sometimes inconvenient or expensive for working and/or underprivileged parents to purchase nutritious meals on a regular

basis, etc.). There was no counter argument—no awareness of the difficulty of making this sort of lifestyle change.

Because students were writing as if they were taking an essay exam and were apparently unaware of the rhetorical demands of academic argument, these early essays were unlikely to persuade an audience of parents to reconsider their food choices. Academic argument is characterized by a nuanced approach to a topic, acknowledgement of complexity, and awareness of audience. But students wrote without making use of these elements. They seemed not to realize that information alone is unlikely to convince an audience to change behavior or a lifestyle, particularly if the effects of that change would not occur immediately.

Performing the Role of a Public Health Educator

As the semester proceeded, an important focus of the course was on helping students understand that Public Health professionals must be skilled “performers.” Performance became an important component of the course, a means of enabling students to assume the persona of a Public Health Education professional. It is a role that is both constrained and constructed by genre, which provides a context for the appropriateness of a particular speech or text. What does performance have to do with rhetoric and genre in a writing across the curriculum context? The answer is—a great deal. The word “performance” has recently become a scholarly buzzword. However, the term has long been associated with Composition theory and pedagogy, especially in the context of Burke’s Pentad and with the concept of discourse community. In his frequently anthologized essay, “Inventing the University,” written in 1985, David Bartholomae makes the following observation:

Every time a student sits down to write for us, he has to invent the university for the occasion . . . The student has to learn to speak our language, to speak as we do, to try on the peculiar ways of knowing, selecting, evaluating, reporting, concluding and arguing that define the discourse of our community. (134)

The terms “learning to speak our language” and “trying on ways of knowing and arguing” in Bartholomae’s essay suggest the concept of role playing or, one might say, “auditioning” that informs any situation in which novices enter a new discourse community. Bartholomae’s idea of “inventing the university” was concerned with the difficulties first-year college students experience when they write academic essays, but the point it makes about novice writers entering a new discourse community pertains to all novice/expert situations. To participate in the discourse community associated with a particular field, students must assume an appropriate role, “perform” that role within a

scene, and address a rhetorical situation or problem within that scene. As a performer, a student who is new to a field may not be able to interpret the scene as insightfully as an insider can, and, understandably, might be unsure about how to play the role.

Role Playing Within a Scene

This idea of role-playing within a particular discourse scene is addressed in *Scenes of Writing* by Devitt, Reiff, and Bawarshi who develop the idea that writing involves role-playing or a performance. Addressing their intended student audience, they write:

You are an actor. Each day of your life you play a variety of roles or “parts” . . . and you act out these parts in a variety of scenesAs in the scenes of a movie or play . . . you take your cues for how to act from the scenes you act within. Each of these scenes is different; each requires you to play a different role, which requires different strategies. (3)

Devitt, Reiff, and Bawarshi further note that when one is acting within a familiar scene, the performance of an appropriate behavior is intuitive and effortless. But when one enters a new or less familiar scene, the performance must be conscious, based on deliberate decisions about how to act. Assuming the role of a Public Health Education professional, then, involves reading a scene, not only listening to the conversations of the discipline, but also observing the scenes that characterize that discipline. Or, to use another metaphor, before one begins to listen to the conversations in the Burkean parlor, one must observe the scene, which Devitt, Reiff, and Bawarshi define as “a place in which communication happens among groups of people with some shared objectives” (7). A scene provides the context for what they refer to as a “situation,”—that is, “the rhetorical interaction happening within that scene.”

Changing Behavior on the Basis of Information

What Public Health Education students did not seem aware of, or what they were unable to read from the scene initially, was that simply presenting information does not, in and of itself, result in changed behavior. But as the semester progressed, with the focus on rhetoric, genre, identity and performance, students began to recognize that human beings tend to resist behavior change if the motivation for that change is based on a consequence occurring in the distant as opposed to the near future. For example, if someone were to hold up a vial of amber liquid and tell us that it is highly poisonous, we would be unlikely to drink it, no matter how tantalizing it might look or smell. But if we are told that eating French fries for lunch can (but not necessarily will) cause health problems in thirty years, one might be tempted to eat at least one or two, perhaps more.

This focus on the human “scene” enabled students to realize that although it is important for a Public Health Education professional to be well informed, the role involves a dramatic or rhetorical element. To reach an audience, the person playing the role of a Public Health Education professional must present an idea in such a way that the intended recipient will actively want to own the idea. In other words, to write successfully in the scene of Public Health involves rhetorical interaction with an audience, and this is where the concept of performance becomes a mechanism for moving students to abandon the former role they have been playing, the role of student taking an essay exam in order to dump a lot of information, and assume another one, the role of Public Health Education professional writing a persuasive argument in order to motivate individual behavior change and in so doing alter the collective health of the community.

A classroom activity in the writing course that helped students develop this awareness involved asking students the following questions after they drafted their essays:

1. Describe the scene or setting to which this essay is addressed. What is happening in society that motivates this essay?
2. Describe the specific situation or problem you are addressing.
3. Who is your audience? What are their primary concerns? How can you affect their thinking?
4. Describe your role as an actor. When you say you are playing the role of a Public Health Education professional, what do you mean?

Eventually, students began to consider how a performance based only on the presentation of information would be viewed by an intended “audience,” an insight that was particularly important for the third assignment, which required students to give a health-oriented presentation to a Freshman class. That assignment, which involved assessing the reactions from a “real” audience, contributed significantly to their growing understanding of the rhetorical elements in their profession and of the necessity of performing a role within that profession. Students thus began to see Public Health Education as a “scene,” and the task of writing within that scene as a response to a rhetorical situation. In their final in-class writing assignment, which required students to respond to the question, “What can a university do to reduce binge drinking among its students?” the responses were a great deal more thoughtful and nuanced than they had been in at the beginning of the semester. Students did not simply list the dangers of binge drinking, although some of that information was included, nor did they off-handedly advocate draconian punishments for students who drank excessively. Instead, they acknowledged that the problem was difficult to solve, discussed possible causes for

student drinking, noted that psychological causes were pertinent, suggested informational solutions, and generally indicated that they understood the complexity of the problem. Their writings, as manifested in paragraph development and sentence-level competence, were not flawless, but they were able to read the scene and had begun to perform the role of a Public Health Education professional.

Similarly, a classroom activity in the public health education course required that students role-play the presentation of their written grant proposal before a committee of professional public health education peers. Both presenting students and students serving as reviewers on the professional public health education peer committee were cast in roles that required them to assume professional identities heretofore largely unfamiliar to the participating students. During a debriefing session students expressed new insights into both the cognitive and somatic meaning of being a public health educator. Some students stated that for the first time that they believed they had a concrete professional goal to which they could direct their educational efforts.

Insights Gained from the Course Linkage

The most important insights derived from the linkage of the course Public Health Education with the course Intermediate Writing were as follows:

- that successful writing within a field or profession, particularly one of education, involves the ability to assess a rhetorical situation, which includes an awareness of scene, audience, and problem;
- that merely providing information as a means of solving a problem may not be effective, particularly when the information pertains to future consequences;
- that entering a profession or field requires playing a professional role, one which may be quite different from the role of student;
- that progress in a linked course may be viewed not only in terms of “writing,” but also in terms of students’ ability to assess a scene and perform an appropriate role within that scene.

Role-playing, performance and identity are crucial, but as yet under-realized elements in implementing a successful Writing Across the Curriculum linkage, particularly one that involves a profession, such as Public Health Education. But of course, Shakespeare was way ahead of us. The famous line from *As You Like It* refers to the world as a “stage/ And all the men and women merely players./ They have their exits and their entrances,/ and one man in his time plays many parts.” Helping students understand the performative nature of writing and the ways in which writing assignments require students to play a role within a scene is an important benefit of WAC linkages.

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APPENDIX

Assignments

First In-Class Writing

Should the government impose a tax on sugary or fatty foods?

Assignment 1

What issues should be considered in attempting to solve the problem of obesity?

Assignment 2

Choose a health related issue that affects CSUN students (alcohol, drugs, sleep deprivation, sexually transmitted diseases, mental health). To what extent should or can CSUN assume responsibility for addressing this issue for its students?

Assignment 3

Addressing the issue you wrote about for Assignment 2, construct a 3–4 page publication intended for Freshmen students. The goal is to help 18–20 year old students realize that they should be aware of this issue, and to accomplish this goal, you can use headings, bullet points, pictures, graphs, or charts. As part of this assignment, you will be presenting your work to the class.

The Oral Component

Prepare a ten-minute presentation intended for Freshmen (18–20 year olds) that alerts them to the Public Health issue you are writing about. Make this presentation as compelling as possible. You are welcome to work in groups or on your own for this part of the assignment.

Assignment 4 Writing a Proposal

A campus organization, the Public Health Initiative Fund (PHIF), is sponsoring grants of \$10,000 to improve the effectiveness of an existing organization in the field of Public Health. To obtain a grant, applicants must complete a three-page narrative (outlined below) and present a budget on the fourth page.

Please submit a three-page narrative that includes the following sections: Title, Proposal Narrative, Budget.

Final in-class essay

What can a university do to reduce binge drinking among its students?

Can You Hear Us Now?: A comparison of peer review quality when students give audio versus written feedback

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Abstract

MOST INSTRUCTORS TEACHING WRITING courses seek ways to improve student writing and facilitate more active student engagement in the revision process. One way to do this is through teaching students to provide high-quality peer reviews. In this study, we followed first-year composition students for one semester and assessed the quality of their peer reviews when they gave audio versus written feedback to their classmates. Audio feedback was digitally-recorded using iPods or similar technology. In general, we found that the quality of audio reviews was higher than written reviews. Students, however, preferred giving and receiving written feedback. Our results suggest that instructors should adopt audio peer review when possible, but may need to help students recognize its value.

Introduction

In 2004, Duke University gave every one of its 1,650 first-year students an iPod as part of an initiative to foster creative classroom uses of the technology. The students were ecstatic, but many educators were skeptical (French, 2006). Like many of our colleagues, we wondered why the university would spend half a million dollars to distribute a gadget that would undoubtedly get more use acquiring and playing music than downloading lectures or tutorials. On the other hand, we were intrigued by this technology's potential to connect us in new ways with the "wired generation" (Hanman, 2005).

The first academic uses of iPods included recording lectures, field notes, and interviews; listening to audiobooks, music, or vocabulary lists; and storing and

transferring files (Center for Instructional Technology, 2005). As writing instructors, we wondered if iPods might also offer us an effective way to provide students with feedback on their writing, so we decided to experiment with different ways of offering students digitally recorded audio feedback. We tried creating podcasts of our comments, embedding audio clips into text files, and creating MP3 files that we could either post on-line (in Blackboard, the web-teaching platform used at Duke) or email directly to students. We also experimented with recording files using iPods versus using a laptop or desktop with an attached microphone. As we became more familiar with the technology, we noticed that providing students with audio feedback was much more time-efficient than giving written comments, and seemed to be higher-quality. But we questioned if audio feedback would be an effective way for students to offer high-quality comments to each other.

Although plentiful research exists on the effectiveness of peer reviews in improving student writing, few studies have tested the relative merits of audio versus written feedback among peers in a college classroom. One reason is that much of the research on the effectiveness of peer review predates the digital revolution (Nortcliffe & Middleton, 2007). In addition, most studies on the effectiveness of audio feedback have focused on teacher rather than peer feedback (Nortcliffe & Middleton, 2007; Russell & Pearson, 2004; White, 2007). One exception is a study by MacLeod (1999) in which the author used an online teleconferencing tool that had both written and audio functions to facilitate peer review. Although students reported that they liked this technology, the author did not assess the quality of the peer reviews, and did not compare written and audio comments.

With the increasing availability of technology such as iPods with recording devices, or Wimba voice mail on Blackboard sites, modes of digital audio response continue to become much more accessible. Although many colleges and universities are embracing these new technologies, very little published research exists on their effectiveness at achieving learning goals. Given this context, we designed a comparative study to assess the quality of peer reviews when students gave each other audio versus written feedback. Since reviews are ultimately only as useful as writers perceive them to be, we were also interested in knowing which mode of response students preferred from their perspectives as both writers and reviewers. Based on our experiences and observations, we posed the following hypotheses:

HYPOTHESIS 1: *Peer reviewers who give audio feedback focus more on higher-order concerns than reviewers who give written feedback.* As instructors, we noticed that when

we recorded our feedback, we focused less on lower-order writing concerns (such as spelling, punctuation, and grammar) than on higher-order writing concerns (such as the structure of arguments, overall organization, and use of sources). In addition, we could explain the nuances of our comments more completely when recording audio clips than when typing written comments. The use of audio allowed us to communicate more effectively about the equivocal nature of writing choices, which then allowed students to decide themselves what to do about that uncertainty. We also noticed that we spent less time dealing with lower-order concerns when we used audio. Talking about grammatical errors or missing commas, for example, is simply not as interesting for the reviewer, whereas “fixing” these mistakes in writing is easy and expedient. Despite these experiences, we still wondered whether or not audio feedback would help student reviewers focus more on higher-order writing concerns.

HYPOTHESIS 2: Peer reviewers who give audio feedback offer more specific comments than reviewers who give written feedback. In our experience, students seemed to respond better to reviews with comments on specific language or sections within their texts, rather than those with broad generalizations. For example, students may not know what to do with a general comment such as “Your overall organization is confusing,” but have less trouble dealing with a specific comment like, “I was unsure what this paragraph had to do with your main claim.” Although we instruct peer reviewers to try to be as specific as possible in their comments, we noticed that written peer reviews often contained many generic comments, which were probably not very useful. We wondered if using audio clips would improve the specificity of students’ comments about their classmates’ writing.

HYPOTHESIS 3: Peer reviewers prefer giving audio feedback since it is more efficient. As instructors who have given feedback on student writing using a variety of approaches (including offering comments in writing, in person, and using digitally recorded audio), we both felt that providing audio feedback was the most efficient method. When recording our feedback, we had ample time to explain the nuances of our comments, which would have taken much longer to type. Finally, given the inherent tendency (or perhaps compulsion) of instructors to edit and revise their own written comments, recording our thoughts was more efficient since neither of us had the time nor desire to edit our audio files. We wanted to find out if student reviewers commenting on their classmates’ writing also thought that providing audio feedback was more efficient.

HYPOTHESIS 4: *Students prefer receiving written feedback.* Even though we saw advantages in offering feedback using audio comments, we thought students would prefer written comments for three reasons. First, students are most familiar with written feedback, so processing audio comments could move them out of their comfort zone. Second, students must spend more time processing audio feedback; they must listen to the comments (often multiple times), take notes on what the reviewer is saying, and decide how to respond to those comments. Therefore, we thought students who are given a choice might prefer written comments since they take less time to process. Third, we have noticed that inexperienced writers think of “feedback” as suggestions for “fixing” their writing, rather than comments for helping them rethink their ideas and approaches. Therefore, these students often perceive mechanical comments to be the most useful, concrete type of feedback. Since written comments seem more likely to include these lower-order suggestions, students are likely to prefer that kind of feedback.

Methods

We conducted this study at Duke University in the spring of 2007 in three sections of the first-year writing course, Academic Writing (Writing 20). Two sections, entitled *Conservation Biology*, were taught by the first author, a biologist, and one section, entitled *The Duke Student Body and Campus Culture*, was taught by the second author, the Director of The Writing Studio at Duke.

We designed the study so that every student would give and receive peer reviews using both audio and written comments. Students in each section were randomly assigned to one of two groups. For the first writing assignment, students in Group 1 recorded two peer reviews each while Group 2 students wrote both reviews. The groups switched for the second writing assignment, with Group 1 students writing their peer reviews and Group 2 recording theirs. Every student received two peer reviews for each writing assignment, one written and one audio. The instructions for offering feedback were identical (see Appendix) except that one group was instructed to write their comments while the other group was instructed to audio-record theirs.

We collected data in two ways. The first was an anonymous attitudinal survey that asked students about their preferences and perceptions (Table 1, see appendix). We gave the survey during class in the last week of the semester. Thirty-two students responded to our survey, a 91 percent response rate.

We also collected data by quantitatively assessing the quality of the peer reviews. For convenience, we only assessed peer reviews that were submitted to a file exchange site

in Blackboard. Consequently, we assessed 75 peer reviews, 36 of which were audio and 39 of which were written. We excluded email submissions by students, due to the difficulty of accessing those files after the end of the semester. Our sample represents 75 percent of the students in these classes. The audio reviews ranged in length from 2 to 30 minutes (mean = 10 minutes, standard deviation = 6 minutes). The written reviews ranged in length from 213 to 705 words (mean = 496 words, standard deviation = 146 words).

Every peer review in our sample was independently evaluated by two raters. Before the assessment, the raters underwent experiential training using the assessment criteria described below. We determined the level of inter-rater reliability, an indication of the consistency with which different raters assess the same text in the same way, by calculating Pearson's correlation coefficient (Salvia & Ysseldyke, 1998).

Although comprehensively defining what makes a "high quality" peer review is challenging, for this study we focused on two characteristics amenable to quantitative assessment: 1) the number of lower-order versus higher-order concerns addressed in the peer review, and 2) the number of specific versus generic comments made by the reviewer. "Lower-order concerns" (LOCs) are defined as comments on the mechanics of writing, such as spelling, grammar, punctuation, and formatting. "Higher-order concerns" (HOCs) are defined as comments addressing writing issues beyond purely mechanical ones, such as comments about the writer's ideas, arguments, and evidence, as well as organization, coherence, audience, tone, and use of sources. For the second characteristic assessed, we defined "specific comments" as those explicitly referring to language or a location within the students' text, whereas we defined "generic comments" as those not explicitly referring to the text.

Each rater listened to or read the peer reviews and counted the number of HOCs and LOCs and the number of specific and generic comments. If a generic comment was followed by a specific comment on the same topic, only the specific comment was counted. Likewise, if a peer reviewer commented more than once about the same issue, we only counted it once. Finally, we did not count comments that were purely complimentary, such as, "I liked how you defined this term."

Finally, to assess the quality of peer reviews based on the mode of feedback, we calculated the mean number of HOCs, LOCs, specific comments, and generic comments for written reviews and audio reviews, and calculated the 95 percent confidence intervals around those means. We used a two-tailed t-test assuming equal variance to test our hypotheses that the mean scores for written versus audio peer reviews were different.

Results

Inter-rater reliability

The Pearson correlation coefficients were all statistically significant ($p < 0.001$), and ranged in value from 0.50 to 0.91 (Table 2). A value of 0.50 indicates moderate reliability, whereas values above 0.8 are considered highly reliable (Franzblau, 1958; Salvia & Ysseldyke, 1998). Therefore, inter-rater reliability here was moderate for generic comments but high for the other three topic areas (Table 2). The low “ r ” value for the generic comments can be explained, at least in part, by the fact that over half of the peer reviews had no generic comments, resulting in low variability in the data.

Peer review quality

Peer reviewers who recorded audio feedback offered significantly more HOCs ($p < 0.001$) and LOCs ($p = 0.01$) than their classmates who wrote their peer reviews (Figure 1). On average, audio reviews had 4 more HOCs and about 2 more LOCs. Moreover, audio peer reviews had almost 6 more specific comments per review, on average, than written peer reviews ($p < 0.001$, Figure 2). We found no difference in the mean number of generic comments in peer reviews based on the mode of feedback.

Attitudinal survey

Most students (72 percent) preferred giving written feedback to their peers instead of audio feedback (Table 1). The most common reason students gave for this preference was that they could organize their ideas better in writing. The following is a representative sample of student responses to Survey Question 1:

- “I could organize my thoughts better on paper.”
- “It is more comfortable to write my comments than to speak them.”
- “I had time to put my thoughts together instead of feeling pressure to word things correctly the first time.”
- “I had to write my comments down anyway before I recorded my comments because I do not review very often.”

The reasoning of the students who preferred giving audio feedback (28 percent) was very similar to ours, noting issues of efficiency and the ability to communicate nuances. For example:

- “I am able to convey my thoughts more effectively with audio; [my classmate] can hear my intonations and feelings on things, and it was easier and took less time.”
- “It was easier to get your ideas across and to critique without seeming offensive.”

We found that 73 percent of our students also preferred to receive feedback in writing. The most common reason that students gave for this was that processing audio feedback was more time consuming. The following are representative student responses to Survey Question 4:

- “When I received audio [feedback], I would end up writing out the comments my reviewer made so I could see and remember them. Therefore, handling audio comments took much more time.”
- “It was time-consuming to go through all the audio clips and jot down everything the reviewer had to say. Having it written made it a lot simpler to see what I had to improve on.”
- “I prefer written comments because then I have a hard copy that I can quickly look back to.”
- A second common reason for this preference was the feeling that written comments are more precise, as indicated in the following student comments:
- “Written comments were more specific and usually corrected minor grammar errors or wording.”
- “Written comments make it easier to see exactly where in the paper there were flaws so that I can easily fix these mistakes.”
- “It’s easier because everything is laid out for you.”

Discussion

HYPOTHESES 1 AND 2 WERE SUPPORTED: *Peer reviewers giving audio feedback addressed a greater number of both specific and higher-order concerns than peer reviewers giving written feedback.* We understand that the quantity of comments is only one way of assessing peer reviews but we think it is a meaningful proxy for overall quality. Specifically, we think that peer reviews with a greater number of specific comments about higher-order writing issues provide students with more feedback to work with in the revision process. In addition, offering more of these comments allows students to better understand the struggles of their audience, and may help them to detect patterns in their writing. For these reasons, we think that audio feedback, in combination with effective guidelines for peer review, can be effective at encouraging and facilitating higher quality peer reviews.

HYPOTHESIS 3 WAS NOT SUPPORTED: *Students did not think audio feedback was more efficient.* As instructors, time savings are one of the primary attractions of using recorded audio feedback. We have no doubt that for us, as experienced reviewers, it

takes less time to record meaningful audio comments than it would take to type our comments. Thus, we were interested to learn that recording peer reviews does not necessarily save students time. We conclude from this that audio feedback may be more efficient for experienced reviewers such as instructors, but may be less efficient for inexperienced reviewers who tend to perform extra steps such as organizing their ideas in writing before recording their comments.

HYPOTHESIS 4 WAS SUPPORTED: *Students prefer written feedback.* Students prefer written comments, remarking in particular that they didn't like the fact that they had to spend more time processing audio comments. We think that additional "time on task" is probably time well spent, and that audio feedback may ultimately be more beneficial since it requires students to process the intent of the comments instead of simply "fixing" what is marked on the text. Students listening to audio feedback have to interpret the reader's comments and decide how to respond; both of these activities require active learning and thus have much greater potential to enhance students' development as writers.

Lessons Learned

Although most students preferred receiving written comments, we think that audio feedback is more beneficial for two key reasons. First, reviewers using audio comments addressed more higher-order writing issues than reviewers who used written comments, providing their classmates with more and better feedback to consider during the revision process. Second, students remarked that they had to spend more time thinking about audio feedback; they indicated that they had to interpret the reviewers' comments and then decide how to respond. Ideally, all forms of feedback should prompt students to make these writing decisions, so we found it particularly interesting that students may *not* be reflecting critically on written feedback.

Our results corroborate previous studies on the effectiveness of written feedback. We know that students often perceive written feedback to be too much, too detailed, and too incomprehensible to be effective (Glover & Brown, 2006), and that students tend to passively "fix" areas marked on their papers. Ideally, audio comments better facilitate active learning, a pedagogical approach known to improve learning and transfer (Michael, 2006), since students must make writing decisions in response to the comments they receive. Additionally, evidence increasingly indicates that students develop better as writers when they have to make writing choices themselves, rather than have someone else edit or rewrite for them (White, 2007). Finally, some evidence suggests that students comprehend and retain information better when they receive it

from more than one sensory channel (Mayer & Moreno, 2003; Paivio, 1986), suggesting that audio comments may complement other modes of feedback. Although beyond the scope of this study, assessing the relative improvement in the quality of a final text, one that students revise based on audio rather than written peer review, offers rich potential for further research.

If audio feedback significantly improves the quality of peer reviews, as our research indicates, we should integrate such strategies in our classrooms. Although embracing new pedagogical and technological tools can prove daunting, we believe any reluctance we might feel is well worth sublimating in order to reap tangible rewards. The model we propose has only three components: 1) modeling effective peer review strategies in class, using audio and/or written comments, to prepare students to provide constructive criticism; 2) requiring pre-review questionnaires for writers, which are shared with peers and instructors, to encourage constructive and focused comments as students learn to respond orally; and 3) reflecting on the effectiveness of the process, as both writers and reviewers, to sustain the efficacy of using audio feedback in our classrooms. We urge our colleagues to consider the possibilities.

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APPENDIX

Handout 1: Pre-Review Worksheet. To make the most of peer review, we would like you to help focus the reviewers' attention to your specific writing concerns. Please complete this worksheet and include it with your paper that you submit for peer review. Keep in mind that these are the kinds of issues you could address in future solicitations for feedback on your writing (both in other Duke classes and beyond).

1. How would you describe the assignment in your own words? What are you trying to achieve with this paper?
2. How does this assignment fit into the larger goals for the course?
3. Who is the audience for the paper? (For instance, what can you assume your audience already knows?)
4. Have you shared a draft of the paper with anyone already? If so, who was it, and what feedback/advice did you receive?
5. What changes, if any, have you made in light of the feedback you received?
6. What are your top three concerns about this draft? Are you concerned, for example, with the main idea or claim, supporting argument(s) or evidence, organization, use of sources, the grammar, sentence structure, style, introduction, conclusion, or something else? Be as specific as possible.
7. What do you usually struggle with as a writer?
8. What else would you like your reviewers to know about your draft or yourself as a writer (such as particular strengths or weaknesses)?

Handout 2: Peer Review Guidelines. The goal of this assignment is to help you learn to give effective feedback to your classmates about their writing. Before you begin your review, your classmate will provide you with the writing context and her or his concerns about the draft (Handout 1). Your peer's concerns and questions should always drive your response.

The peer review process should look something like this:

- Read **Handout 1** and your peer's paper once just to get a sense of the paper, jotting notes to yourself as you go. You will not be returning a marked-up copy of the paper to your classmate, so any notes you make will be to remind yourself about something you wish to comment on later.
- Re-read the assignment, your peer's concerns (from **Handout 1**), and the paper again. This time, look to see if the overall structure and logic of the paper are sound, how the writer uses evidence, and any patterns or errors (again making notes to yourself).
- Write (or speak) your comments, using the guidelines on the following pages to ensure that you are working productively.
- If you are assigned to the group that is providing **written comments**, please write your comment in the form of a letter to the author. Save your file as "WP1.2.PR for (classmate's name) by (your name).doc" and upload it to Blackboard's Discussion Board Forum 5 before class on Friday, March 2.
- If you are assigned to the group that is providing **audio comments**, you may wish to jot down notes to yourself, then organize your thoughts before you begin to record your comments. In your recording, you should use the same tone that you would in a written letter. Instructions for creating an audio file can be found in **Handout 4**. Save your MP3 audio file as WP1.2.PR for (classmate's name) by (your name).mp3 and upload it to Blackboard's Discussion Board Forum 5 before class on Friday, March 2.
- For each review that you do, plan to spend about an hour. This includes the time it takes you to read the draft, think about your comments, and write or record your letter, but does not include the time it takes you to upload your documents. If you are not spending at least an hour with the text, you may not be considering it fully enough.

Guidelines for Offering Feedback

- *Be mindful of your tone as you respond to your peer's writing:* There's certainly no need to go overboard with niceties, but consider integrating a couple of positive

comments for things that seem to be working well, especially at the beginning of your comments. You might want to use language such as: “I like how you ...” or “I’m impressed by ...” Essentially, think about ways to achieve something like the balance between being honest and congenial that you’d aim for if you were talking face-to-face. A tone that works particularly well is one that is both friendly and supportive.

- **Ask questions:** Your job as a reviewer is not to fix the paper, but rather to help your classmate understand how the writing affects readers. Given this approach, it can be very helpful to ask questions, just as you might do if you were talking face-to-face. It will be helpful for the writer to reflect on these questions when making writing choices.
 - *Questions about claims.* You might ask, “What in the readings or evidence prompted you to develop this claim? Why are you interested in this aspect of the topic? How does the evidence support your claim? How many pieces of evidence do you have (and does the quantity of evidence say anything about the strength of that evidence)? Do you have additional evidence that isn’t included in this draft?”
 - *Questions about evidence.* If the writer needs more evidence, you might say that you would like to hear more about a particular point, that you didn’t understand a certain point, and/or that you have additional unanswered questions.
 - *Questions about organization.* If you think a certain paragraph doesn’t belong, you can describe your response as a reader; for example, “When I got to this paragraph, I wondered what it was doing here – it seemed like you had been talking about A, but all of a sudden, here’s this paragraph about B! Can you help your reader understand how this paragraph should fit in?” The student may need better transitions, or may have left out something important that will clarify matters, or he or she may see that the paragraph doesn’t really belong. But let the writer make those decisions – if you say, “Take that one out!” you are making the writing decision for her/him.
 - *Questions about sentence structure.* How might you help your classmate learn to revise a sentence without changing it? Make up a similar sentence and carry out your revisions on it, explaining what the problem is, what options there are for revising it, and why you selected the option you did. Offer several different options, not just one, so that the writer sees that he/she has many choices.
 - *Questions about word choice.* Ask why the writer chose the word; tell what the word means to you and why it seems odd to you in this context. You could say, for example, “In your opening paragraph, I wonder how you chose the word ‘bellicose.’ When I read this word, I think of someone who is aggressive and warlike; is that what you meant?”

- **Look for patterns:** When addressing sentence-level issues, look for patterns of error, rather than going through the draft and pointing out errors in the order in which they occur. The same sort of big-picture reflection will be helpful with non-sentence-level issues, too. If you notice wordiness, see how often it occurs; if you see one transition that troubles you, check out the others. You can then try to offer the writer new ideas about this general issue, instead of just commenting on one sentence here and another one there.
- **Beware of taking over:** Avoid the following, as easy and tempting as they may be:
 - Revising the writer's thesis or claim
 - Presenting new evidence for the writer to include
 - Rewriting individual sentences
 - Telling the writer to use a different word (and suggesting what the new word should be)
 - Telling the writer to remove a paragraph or to move it to a specific place
- **Organize your comments:** Consider outlining or clearly grouping your comments, realizing that a certain approach may work well in one instance, but not necessarily another. Here are some strategies:
 - Organize your comments by first addressing the writer's concerns (in an orderly way) and then moving on to additional concerns you noticed.
 - Emphasize the more significant writing issues (such as how effective the claim is, how powerful the evidence) at the beginning of your feedback, and ending with more minor issues (word choice, spelling errors, etc.).
 - Make your comments chronologically: Feel free to note specific paragraphs or sentences where problems occur; for example, you could say, "In the second paragraph you..."
- **Use your time effectively:** You should plan to spend about an hour reading, thinking about, and responding to the paper. To use this time most effectively, consider the following strategies:
 - Consider holding off making any comments until you've read through the whole paper at least once. This allows you to get a sense of the overall writing, to make sure your comments focus on the real issues, and may save you having to go back to amend earlier comments. (Taking notes as you read, of course, is still a good idea!)
 - Consider letting the writer's stated concerns/goals guide your approach to the organization of your commentary. This gives you a focus while reading, as well as a set of topics on which to center your comments. (Of course, if you identify

issues that you perceive to be of more concern than those your classmate raises, you should certainly comment on those.)

- **Consider your language choices:** Because your classmate isn't with you and you can't see her/his reactions, be sure to write in a respectful and fairly neutral style. It's important to avoid evaluative claims; instead of saying, "Your paper is really successful," it would be more appropriate to say, "After seeing your presentation of the evidence, I was convinced of your argument." Be especially careful about anything that might sound overly harsh, offensive, or patronizing.
- **Make your organization explicit:** If you are responding in writing, consider simple visual strategies (bullet points, numbering, boldface, etc.) to keep your content clear and to emphasize your main points. If you are recording your comments, you may want to use language such as: "First I'll make some suggestions related to your organization. Second, I will discuss ways you might make your claims more effective. Finally, since you asked about commas, I will point out a few places where you make the same error and include a link to a handout that should help."
- **Know the limitations of this type of work:** In the time you spend with this paper (roughly an hour), you may find that you could discuss a large number of different writing issues. Keep in mind, however, that your classmate may be overwhelmed (and dismayed) if presented with a list of fifteen things to look at or work on. Therefore, it is essential that you prioritize your comments. Use signals such as, "If you only had time to work on one thing, I think you could increase clarity the most by considering ..." or "The three areas that gave me the most trouble as a reader were ..."
- **Refer the writer to other resources:** As a peer reviewer, no one expects you to be the expert on all issues related to writing. If you sense that there is a problem with the writing but are unsure, feel free to refer your classmate to a handout from class, a chapter from one of our texts, the Writing Studio Web site, or the course instructor. It is particularly helpful to point out several places in the paper where the error/problem occurs, and then let the writer try to resolve the issue using the resources you suggest.
- **Emphasize the fact that you are just one reader:** Keep in mind for yourself, and emphasize for the writer, that you are just one a reader; consider prefacing your comments with phrases such as, "As one reader ..." or "From my perspective ..." You are not offering the definitive summary of what does and does not work in the paper.

TABLE 1

Student responses to the attitudinal survey (n=32). Bold values show the majority response.

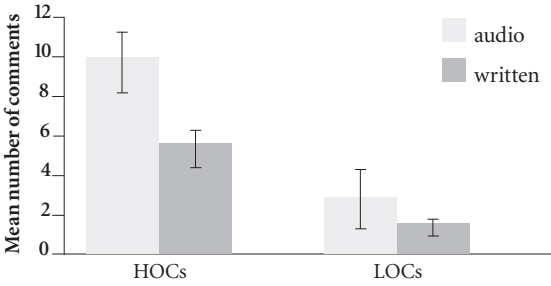
| SURVEY QUESTION | PERCENTAGE PREFERRING | | |
|--|-----------------------|-----------|---------|
| | AUDIO | WRITTEN | NEITHER |
| As a peer reviewer | | | |
| 1. Which mode of response did you prefer to use | 28 | 72 | 0 |
| 2. Which mode of response helped you provide more helpful feedback? | 39 | 61 | 0 |
| 3. Which mode of response was more efficient to use (in terms of the time and effort it took to do a good job)? | 40 | 60 | 3 |
| As a writer | | | |
| 4. Which mode of response did you prefer to receive from your classmates? | 27 | 73 | 5 |
| 5. Which mode of response was more helpful when revising your draft? | 21 | 79 | 0 |
| 6. Which mode of response was more efficient to use (in terms of the time and effort it took to do a good job)? | 21 | 79 | 0 |
| As both writer and reviewer | | | |
| 7. Which mode of response tended to focus more on higher-order concerns (claims, evidence, organization) than lower-order concerns (grammar, punctuation, documentation format)? | 68 | 32 | 5 |

TABLE 2

Inter-rater reliability, showing means (μ) and standard deviations (σ) of scores for each rater, based on assessment of 75 peer reviews. All Pearson correlation coefficients (r) were statistically significant ($p < 0.001$).

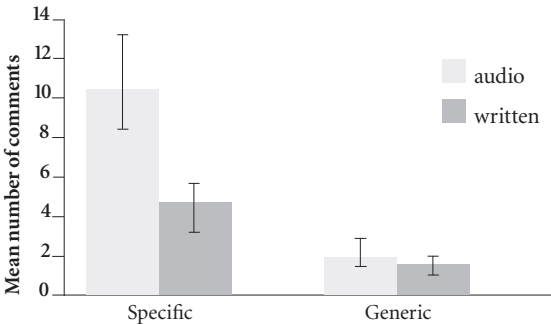
| Topic area | RATER 1 | | RATER 2 | | r |
|-------------------|---------|----------|---------|----------|------|
| | μ | σ | μ | σ | |
| HOCs | 8.2 | 5.8 | 7.2 | 5.7 | 0.83 |
| LOCs | 2.5 | 5.9 | 0.9 | 2.0 | 0.86 |
| Specific comments | 8.5 | 8.3 | 6.5 | 6.2 | 0.91 |
| Generic comments | 2.2 | 2.1 | 1.6 | 1.5 | 0.50 |

FIGURE 1



Mean number of comments that focused on higher-order concepts (HOCs) and lower-orders concepts (LOCs) in audio versus written peer reviews. Error bars represent the 95 percent confidence intervals around the means. The mean number of HOCs for reviews using audio was significantly higher than the mean for written reviews ($t=4.98, p<0.001$). Similarly, there were more LOCs in audio reviews than in written reviews ($t=2.54, p=0.01$).

FIGURE 2



Mean number of specific and generic comments in audio versus written peer reviews. Error bars represent the 95% confidence intervals around the means. The mean number of specific comments given in audio reviews was significantly higher than the mean for written reviews ($t=5.24, p<0.001$) but there was no difference in the mean number of generic comments ($t=1.13, p=0.26$).

WAC Program Vulnerability and What To Do About It: An Update and Brief Bibliographic Essay

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Introduction—Update

TWO YEARS AGO I HAD the honor of being Carol Rutz's interviewee for her annual series on WAC leaders in this journal. With that honor, though, came a good deal of intimidation. My interview followed those of John Bean, Chris Anson, and Bill Condon, a prestigious lineup to be sure. There was a factor beyond these esteemed colleagues' reputations, however, that contributed to my intimidation: I chose to speak frankly about an issue that was foremost in my professional life at that moment—the possible demise of the WAC program that my colleagues and I had guided for over fifteen of its twenty years.ⁱ

In her introduction, Carol describes the interview as having a “subtext [that] might require an elegy for Missouri’s wonderful, long-standing WAC/WID program” (43).ⁱⁱ At the time of my interview, Campus Writing Program (CWP) had for several years been under pressure to make changes that CWP staff, members of the Campus Writing Board, and writing-intensive (WI) faculty found unsettling. Indeed, the scenario was sufficiently dire that it was difficult to imagine that the Program could survive. Among the issues CWP faced were physical relocation of our office, loss of our well-established tutorial component to another campus entity, pressure to implement assessment procedures that were contrary to acknowledged best practices, and strained relations with the administrator to whom we reported.

Remarkably, however, MU's Campus Writing Program has not only survived, but, following two years of excellent interim leadership, is undergoing a renaissance. The hire of a new permanent director is pending; two new staff members who serve as liaisons to WI faculty have been hired; a new administrator has been appointed to whom

the Program reports; and there has been no lessening in the number or quality of WI courses being offered. The future of CWP looks very bright indeed. Reporting these developments, as an update to the 2006 interview, gives great pleasure to all of us who were associated with CWP.

Former CWP staff is crafting a local history of the Program, with which we have a combined forty-four years of involvement. In it, we speculate on factors that may have led to our successful Program's difficult period and its subsequent recovery. But the larger point is that CWP is not alone among WAC programs that experience vulnerability. If faculty resistance to WAC is legion, programmatic vulnerability is just as common. In 1991 David Russell posited that "on an institutional basis, WAC exists in a structure that fundamentally resists it" (295).

Perhaps one of the best-known devolutions of a well-established WAC program is that of the English Composition Board (ECB) at the University of Michigan. Founded in 1979 and perhaps the earliest WAC program at a major university, it became a prototype for numerous programs around the country. It acquired a solid reputation for, among other things, the scholarly productivity of the non-tenure-track associates who worked with it. Despite ECB's widely respected work and its success at Michigan, however, the program was dismantled quickly and easily by Michigan administrators who had other priorities. A similar example is the writing program directed by Chris Anson at the University of Minnesota, about which he has written, "What strikes me . . . is how easily all the things that have taken so much negotiation, planning and hard work are dismantled" ("Who" 168).

Other examples abound, as anyone who reads WPA-L or WAC-L can attest. In 1994, Ed White comments on the phenomenon, as well, in writing about WAC programs that rely on "flagged" courses, which are specially designated with a "W," or "WI," and the like. "The 'W' program usually begins with a strong vote of confidence from the faculty and the administration," White writes, "since its advantages are many and obvious. . . . But the 'W' program is filled with traps for the unwary and usually leads to unimagined fiasco" (161). He goes on to describe in grim detail one of many such programs he has seen over the years that failed to live up to its initial expectations. The net result, he reports, was "less writing throughout the new curriculum, cynical faculty, mocking students, [and] graduates even less prepared to do critical thinking and writing than before" (163).

There already exists a good body of literature that speaks to how and why WAC programs struggle, along with various sources for addressing the problems. This essay summarizes several of the representative sources, the "classics" as it were, and then offers additional suggestions not found in earlier work, suggestions that could perhaps enable WAC programs to avoid, manage, and/or overcome their vulnerabilities.

WAC programs, it is good to remind ourselves, are highly idiosyncratic. It is an axiom within WAC initiatives that if WAC is to be successful it must respond to the exigencies of each institution—mission of the school, fiscal resources, student demographics, and faculty governance, to mention a few. Toby Fulwiler pointed out, in 1988, the challenges that WAC’s idiosyncrasy presents for *evaluating* WAC programs. This idiosyncrasy also makes it difficult to prescribe a one-size-fits-all set of suggestions for *sustaining* WAC. Inasmuch as this essay cannot be a comprehensive “how to” manual, readers are encouraged to delve more deeply into all of the literature and to call on their counterparts at similar programs who are nearly always willing to lend an ear and share experience.

Compelling reasons exist to consolidate some of the old with some of the new at this moment in WAC’s history. By most accounts, the number of WAC programs is growing; and, many institutions are looking to revitalize existing programs. At the 2008 Writing Across Research Borders conference, for example, Chris Thaiss delivered preliminary results from the national and international WAC surveys he and his colleagues are engaged in. To date, they have 1250 respondents from the U.S. and 207 international respondents from 47 countries. Sue McLeod’s 1987 WAC survey indicates that 418 institutions at that time had WAC programs.ⁱⁱⁱ The current number is 608, an increase of 48%. Plus, 209 recent respondents indicate that their institutions are planning to begin WAC programs. Of the Ph.D.-granting institutions represented, 59% report having WAC programs of some kind. And surprisingly, a large number of programs are directed by tenured faculty.^{iv} Research from WAC programs was well represented at sessions throughout the three-day conference.

WAC Program Vulnerability and Possible Solutions—The Early Literature

The seven citations in this section—a partial list, to be sure—each address WAC program vulnerability and possible solutions in different ways. They appear in chronological order.

In “Evaluating Writing Across the Curriculum Programs” in *Strengthening Programs for Writing Across the Curriculum* (1988), Fulwiler itemizes seven “obstacles” to evaluating WAC programs. He notes that these obstacles are “inherent in the programs themselves” (62). That is, program vulnerability and evaluation are integrally interconnected. The seven obstacles are as follows: WAC means different things at different institutions; WAC programs are result oriented, not research oriented; WAC programs grow, evolve, and mutate at alarming rates; WAC program administration varies from institution to institution; measures that are quick and dirty do not seem

to prove much; WAC programs are amorphous and open ended; and evaluating successful WAC programs is as complicated as evaluating good teaching or successful learning (63–64). Fulwiler follows with five “dimensions” that could provide measurable data (or, as I read it, suggestions for addressing potential vulnerability): the institution’s community of scholars; pedagogy; improving student learning; improving student writing; and improving faculty writing (65–72). His overarching suggestion is to “look at everything that is happening at your university (everything within your capability and resources, that is), document it, and see what patterns emerge when you study this information” (72).

Just two years later, in the concluding essay to *Programs That Work: Models and Methods for Writing Across the Curriculum* (1990), co-editors Fulwiler and Art Young itemize six “enemies” of WAC: uncertain leadership; English department orthodoxy; compartmentalized academic administration; academe’s traditional reward system, which does not value teaching; testing and quantification; and entrenched attitudes (287–294). The challenge for WAC, they say, “is to change attitudes, ways of thinking, and academic structures”—no easy feat, as anyone who works in any sector of academe knows (294). Still, they point out, the fourteen programs featured in *Programs That Work* managed to do so to some degree. The key is developing “a more or less permanent structure whereby writing-across-the-curriculum advocacy is ever renewed and expanded” (294).

Margot Soven’s concluding chapter in *Writing Across the Curriculum: A Guide to Developing Programs* (1992), which she co-edited with Sue McLeod, points to the “road-blocks” and “dangers” WAC faces, in spite of the many positive outcomes that programs produce. Among them are cynical faculty who have given up on students and efforts to help them; English department faculty, in particular, who don’t trust that discipline-based faculty will follow through on writing instruction; and administrators who look to WAC programming as a means of saving money spent on writing instruction (135–136). Soven’s chapter embeds two other often-cited sources: Ed White’s “The Danger of Innovations Set Adrift” and Mike Rose’s myth of transience. In the former, White describes various WAC program innovations undertaken at one institution and then adopted by another, unsuccessfully. “In each case,” Soven notes, “the cause of failure was imagining that ideas that work well at one institution can be transported to another without considerable attention to the substructures in place at the school” (136). Soven quotes Russell who describes the myth of transience—“the convenient illusion that some new program will cure poor student writing, that there is a single pedagogical solution to complex structural issues” (qtd in Soven 136)—as “perhaps the most insidious threat to WAC.” Soven ends the chapter with yet another sobering

problem: a great deal of any WAC program's success relies on the person directing it. But she also offers a possible solution. "The hidden danger to writing across the curriculum may not be faculty burnout but writing administrator burnout; the cure is the mutual support and encouragement writing program administrators provide to one another" (136).

In addition to Soven's concluding chapter, McLeod & Soven's entire 1992 volume warrants inclusion in this list. Although not structured as a "problems and solutions" manual, the book includes twelve chapters, along with appendices, by experienced WAC program developers, each of whom address various components of WAC programming. The book is now out of print, but was published on the World Wide Web in 2000 and can be downloaded from the WAC Clearinghouse.

John Ackerman, not writing as a proponent of WAC but instead calling attention to one of its weaknesses, nonetheless, informs readers how a shortcoming can be re-cast to better ends. In "The Promise of Writing to Learn" (1993), he writes about one of WAC's most prominently espoused pedagogies, noting that writing-to-learn is widely acclaimed, but little proved. "[W]riting as a mode of learning' (Emig, 1977)," he says, "is at best an argument yet to be made" (334). Most of his essay demonstrates the lack of research WAC proponents can marshal for this pedagogy, yet he does not mean to "untrack or devalue teachers and advocates of WAC who have found ways to invigorate their teaching, classrooms, and professional status with write-to-learn practices" (362). Rather, he suggests posing the question of how writing enhances learning differently: "How, why, and with what consequence do you and your students carry on the work of daily classroom, disciplinary, or everyday practices?" (363).

Writing in observation of WAC's twenty-fifth anniversary in 1995, Barbara Walvoord (1996) argues that, "the 'enemies' frame may limit WAC's responses to the complexities of its next quarter century" (58). Instead, she suggests that seeing WAC within the paradigm of social movements is a more positive way to frame the challenges, each of which then suggests a possible solution: work with other movement organizations; define WAC's relationship to institutional administration; define WAC's relationship to technology; reexamine the meaning of key terms; and deal with assessment (68-74). The advantage of this framing, she suggests, "is the power that [social] movements sometimes have to change individuals, to change a culture" (74).

Eric Miraglia and Sue McLeod also write in celebration of WAC's twenty-fifth anniversary, and they present results from a 1995 survey of WAC programs. This survey looked at mature WAC programs to see what factors might account for programmatic staying power or, conversely, demise. "Whither WAC? Interpreting the Stories/Histories

of Enduring WAC Programs” (1997) is useful, then, for three key findings that lead to WAC program longevity: administrative support, including funding; grassroots and faculty support; and strong, consistent program leadership (48). “Cast in negative terms, the bottom line could hardly be simpler: lack of administrative support and lack of funding are the two most oft-cited causes of program discontinuance” (50). Faculty disinterest ranked third among cited causes for discontinuance (52). And, a “significant subset of respondents” tied absence or departure of a director to a program’s discontinuance (54). These findings, both positive and negative, point to what WAC programs need in order to endure.^v

WAC Program Vulnerability and Possible Solutions—Recent Literature

In this section, bibliographic sources are embedded within a list of characteristics that describe successful WAC programs. Not all of these characteristics must be obtained for programs to become successful, but a combination of some of them certainly does, and the first three are absolutely essential. Again, the axiom applies that each institution must grow the program that works within its own constraints and possibilities. These characteristics derive from WAC literature, from CCCC and WPA annual conferences and workshops, from WAC-L and WPA-L exchanges, and from my observations of over twenty years of working in and consulting for WAC programs in the U.S. and abroad. For the most part, these sources are post-2000. Rather than appearing in chronological order, citations are included under the entry to which they pertain. Entries appear under Institutional, Classroom and Teaching, and Program levels.

Characteristics of Successful WAC Programs

Institutional Level

1. **STRONG FACULTY OWNERSHIP OF THE PROGRAM** Grassroots and faculty support is one of Miraglia and McLeod’s three key findings from the 1995 survey on mature WAC program longevity, cited above. Such things as faculty-requested help to use writing in their teaching, faculty-established policies for writing requirements, and faculty representation on writing committees are signs that faculty care about student writing and want WAC to succeed. In the University of Missouri’s case, faculty concern about student writing led to the formation of its WAC program, and faculty ownership resides in the Program’s proactive governance organization, the Campus Writing Board. Conversely, as Miraglia and McLeod point out, when faculty are disinterested, WAC programs wither. In “Enlivening WAC Programs Old and New” (2007), Joan Mullin and Susan Schorn describe how UT Austin’s program needed

rejuvenating after it had begun to run on “auto-pilot” because WAC course approval was relegated to staff, leaving faculty out of the loop (5–6).

2. **STRONG PHILOSOPHICAL AND FISCAL SUPPORT FROM INSTITUTIONAL ADMINISTRATORS, COUPLED WITH THEIR WILLINGNESS TO AVOID MICROMANAGEMENT** Administrative support, with funding, is another of Miraglia and McLeod’s key findings from the 1995 survey. WAC programs require influential officers who understand that writing is much more than grammar and correctness, officers who are willing to advocate for good writing instruction at all levels of institutional decision making. Administrators must take an active role in securing resources for adequate staffing and program operation; they should not see WAC as an easy or cost-effective substitute for composition. At the same time, if administrators interfere with day-to-day management of the program, faculty will perceive an inappropriate top-down meddling with curriculum, which is traditionally faculty’s purview. Maintaining a healthy balance is critical.

3. **ONE AND TWO ABOVE, IN COMBINATION** Neither is sufficient without the other; both must be present and operate synchronistically. If either faculty or administration is unwilling or disinterested, the WAC program will likely fail. This point recalls Fullan and Miles’s Lesson Six in “Eight Basic Lessons for the New Paradigm of Change” summarized by McLeod and Miraglia in *WAC for the New Millennium: Strategies for Continuing Writing-Across-the-Curriculum Programs* (2001): “both top-down and bottom-up strategies are necessary” (20).

4. **SYMBIOSIS WITH THE INSTITUTION’S MISSION AND LINKAGES WITH OTHER PROGRAMS** One of the enduring lessons from the 1990 Bryn Mawr Summer Institute for Women in Higher Education Administration is tying programs firmly to institutions’ mission statements. Thus, Missouri’s Campus Writing Program selected four university missions that intersected closely with our WAC work, which we then highlighted in on-campus publications. (See Townsend, 2001, 250–253.) In “A Reflective Strategy for Writing Across the Curriculum: Situating WAC as a Moral and Civic Duty” (2003), John Pennington & Robert Boyer describe how their Catholic, liberal arts college situates WAC as a moral and civic duty, a strategy that “complements our mission to provide for a values-centered curriculum” (87). In “Transforming WAC through a Discourse-Based Approach to University Outcomes Assessment” (2005), John Bean and his co-authors describe how Seattle University’s Strategic Plan assessment mandate provided the impetus to reform writing and critical thinking. In “The Future of

WAC” (1996), Barbara Walvoord recommends that WAC programs establish closer relationships with campus leaders in technology, assessment, administration, and even with other social movements. Obviously, any WAC program should articulate with its institution’s composition program, so that students see the writing requirement(s) as parts of a whole, rather than disconnected items to be checked off a graduation requirement list.

5. **AUTONOMY, FOCUS, AND GOALS** WAC programs require a clear understanding of what they aim to accomplish and an appropriate measure of autonomy that allows them to do it. Walvoord advocates “constant clarification of goals at both the national and local levels” (67). Recognizing the success that Clemson and North Carolina State universities had experienced when incorporating communication into their WAC programs, staff at Missouri debated whether we could add communication to our overall program goals. Ultimately, we decided that we lacked sufficient personnel and resources; keeping our WAC focus allowed us to maintain the strength of our current work. Lillian Bridwell-Bowles’s fairly new CXC program at Louisiana State University, on the other hand, is making excellent progress with *four* emphases (written, oral, visual, technological) that it undertook from the very outset. Wendy Strachan’s *Writing-Intensive: Becoming W-Faculty in a New Writing Curriculum* (2008) describes how the lack of autonomy adversely affected Simon Fraser’s newly developed Writing-Intensive program. When an administrative mandate required it to integrate into an already existing teaching and learning center, the new partners “discovered they had less in common than had been hoped or assumed,” and the forced integration created a “concretely diminished visibility of the [Writing-Intensive] unit as an individual entity with a distinctive, campus-wide mission” (227–229).

6. **A REWARD STRUCTURE THAT VALUES TEACHING** Faculty need to perceive that their work is valued by their colleagues, departments, institutions, and disciplines. Those who haven’t previously used writing as part of their pedagogical repertoire will undoubtedly experience an increase in workload, if for no other reason than they are restructuring their teaching practices. The rewards are often not immediate or concrete, especially at research extensive institutions where the most notable rewards come from publication. The work begun by Ernest Boyer and the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching in the 1990s, now popularly known as the scholarship of teaching and learning (SOTL), is making inroads on some campuses. The lesson from Strachan (admittedly a single example) seems to be to work closely with teaching and learning programs,

but not be subsumed by them. As the University of Missouri's case has shown, WAC can succeed in research extensive environments, but those leading the programs have to work harder and be prepared to counter more opposition. Stipends for attending workshops, individualized consultation with WAC leaders afterward, and TA support can provide meaningful incentives and demonstrate institutional support.

Classroom & Teaching Level

7. ONGOING FACULTY DEVELOPMENT Once WAC programs are up and running, administration may look to reduce fiscal support on the grounds that the faculty development component has been accomplished. Not so. Faculty change institutions or drop away from their WAC involvement; new ones arrive; previously uninvolved faculty become interested; committed WAC faculty want new ideas or a more sophisticated understanding of how writing and learning intersect. The need for faculty development never goes away. An effective resource, cited by WAC personnel across the U.S., is John Bean's *Engaging Ideas: The Professor's Guide to Integrating Writing, Critical Thinking, and Active Learning in the Classroom* (1996). We give a copy to every faculty member who attends our semi-annual workshop and we base workshop sessions on selected readings. Another resource is Chris Anson's *The WAC Casebook: Scenes for Faculty Reflection and Program Development* (2002) with dozens of examples based on real WAC problems. Specific answers aren't provided, but plenty of suggestions for discovering them are. Faculty who are drawn to teaching with writing are often the same ones drawn to teaching with technology. "WAC Wired: Electronic Communication Across the Curriculum" (2001) by Donna Reiss and Art Young is a good source for helping WAC leaders to hone that connection if they haven't already.

One of the most important components of faculty development is creating relationships between the WAC program and the faculty who are doing the teaching. Campus Writing Program personnel eagerly invested time in getting to know the faculty in the disciplines who were doing the hard work in the trenches. Exiting a local bank recently, I ran into an animal science professor, T. Safranski, who we had worked with. Acknowledging the transition the Program is undergoing, he lamented that, "If I went over to CWP's office right now, no one would know who I am." WAC programs can—and should—become welcoming places where faculty can go to talk about teaching, particularly if their departments or colleagues don't value those conversations. These relationships are an often-overlooked aspect to faculty development, one that can be difficult to explain to administrators, but which experienced WAC leaders understand.

8. **LOW STUDENT-TO-INSTRUCTOR RATIO, WITH TA HELP IF NECESSARY** Even with the best advice on managing the paper load that accompanies writing-based teaching, WAC faculty still need time to read and respond to student papers. Granting that many variables enter into the equation, the optimum class size is likely fifteen to twenty-five students per instructor. If conditions require larger enrollments, graduate teaching assistants, preferably from the same discipline as the course, should be employed. This kind of work for faculty and TAs, though, is far from intuitive, as Lisa Higgins and Virginia Muller point out in “An Other Teacher’s Perspective: TAs in the WI Classroom” (1994). They offer a list of eleven questions the professor and TA should discuss. Beth Finch Hedengren recommends that professors read her TA’s *Guide to Teaching Writing in All Disciplines* (2004) with their TAs. Each chapter has a “Working with Your Professor” section with suggestions for discussing the content.

9. **INTEGRATION OF WRITING ASSIGNMENTS WITH COURSE GOALS; STUDENT ENGAGEMENT** If there is one single principle that applies to all WAC teaching, it is that the writing assignments (whatever form they take) must reinforce course learning goals. It follows that the writing must conform to the instructor’s comfort level with using a variety of assignments. Bean’s *Engaging Ideas* is an excellent source for showing faculty the myriad ways they can integrate writing into their discipline-based teaching. Mary Segal and Robert Smart’s co-edited *Direct from the Disciplines: Writing Across the Curriculum* (2005) shows how faculty members from eleven different disciplines developed WAC courses at Quinnipiac University. The faculty examples range from “fairly modest” to “more radical” (5–6); Art Young describes the book as “reader friendly . . . a welcome contribution to faculty in specific disciplines” (Back Cover). Katherine Gottschalk and Keith Hjortshoj’s *The Elements of Teaching Writing: A Resource for Instructors in All Disciplines* (2004) is also a useful resource.

Closely related to student writing and learning is higher education’s relatively recent focus on student engagement. Nearly all of the researchers in this field tout writing as one of the top means of ensuring student engagement. George Kuh, the developer of the National Survey of Student Engagement, and his co-authors of *Student Success in College: Creating Conditions That Matter* (2005) are unequivocal: “Writing across the curriculum encourages interdisciplinary efforts and challenges students to think critically and holistically about their assignments. Required coursework in writing ensures that everyone benefits from the extensive writing experience, and discipline-specific writing helps students realize the importance of writing well in their future professions” (185). In *Making the Most of College: Students Speak Their Minds* (2001), Richard Light

writes, “Of all skills students say they want to strengthen, writing is mentioned three times more than any other” (54). He notes that the relationship between the amount of writing for a course and students’ level of engagement is “stunning . . . The simple correlation between the amount of writing required in a course and students’ overall commitment to it tells a lot about the importance of writing” (55–56). In separate publications in 1992 and 1993, Alexander Astin reports that “[Writing] proved to have significant effects on nine of the 22 general education outcomes” (38) and that “the number of courses taken that emphasize the development of writing skills is positively associated with self-reported growth [in a number of areas] . . . The pattern certainly reinforces the idea that the current emphasis on ‘writing across the curriculum’ is a positive force in undergraduate education today” (243). In *Our Underachieving Colleges: A Candid Look at How Much Students Learn and Why They Should Be Learning More* (2006), former Harvard University president Derek Bok affirms that “good writing—like critical thinking—will never be a skill that students can achieve or retain through a single course [like first-year composition] . . . sustained improvement will require repeated practice” (98). These few examples represent only a small portion of the support for WAC available in the literature on engagement and student success.

Programmatic Level

10. **KNOWLEDGEABLE, DIPLOMATIC WAC PROGRAM LEADERSHIP AND STAFF** Faculty in the disciplines need access to well-informed WAC specialists when they are designing writing assignments and grading criteria, coordinating assignments with course goals, and matching the myriad WAC pedagogies to their own teaching styles. At the same time, well-trained WAC personnel must be confident enough to sublimate their own knowledge when working with faculty who are, of course, the experts in their own disciplines. Strong, consistent program leadership, as Miraglia and McLeod’s survey demonstrated, is key to WAC program longevity. WAC programs require more than just a director; they also require staff members who, Strachan argues, need to be highly qualified and permanent. “Short-term hiring and turnover of [staff],” she says, “means loss of experience and continuity, a loss that can weaken an initiative . . .” (233). As Mullin and Schorn point out, WAC leaders must be able to recognize when programs have stagnated and then be willing to renew and re-invigorate when those signs occur. It takes strong leaders to acknowledge, as they did, that, “We needed . . . a renewal of the institution’s WAC culture” (6).

11. **BUDGET AND RESOURCES** This characteristic, from the Miraglia and McLeod survey and embedded above in item two, bears repeating as a separate item. High quality higher

education is not cheap, and high quality WAC programs do not develop without adequate resources, which the administration must provide. WAC, however, should not be a hard sell. Academe as a whole, along with virtually every discipline, avows the necessity for graduates to communicate clearly. Writing is at the center of general education and of every disciplinary major higher education offers. Writing is one of the few universally agreed upon aspects of a quality education. Among the resources WAC programs need are a well-staffed writing center; leadership and staff plus professional development for them, to ensure they stay current in the field; incentives and instructional materials for faculty development; a campus WAC newsletter; and perhaps awards for exemplary student writing.

12. RESEARCH AGENDA Every WAC program, no matter how modest, should undertake some effort to conduct research about the work it is doing. In-house publication of positive findings can reinforce and reward faculty accomplishments. Conversely, negative findings presented sensitively can enable classroom improvement. Student voices and opinions can be included in these reports. Conference presentations and refereed publications by WAC personnel and WAC instructors can positively impact WAC program credibility, especially at research-oriented institutions. Chris Thaiss and Terry Myers Zawacki's *Engaged Writers and Dynamic Disciplines: Research on the Academic Writing Life* (2006) is an excellent example of two WAC WPAs who studied the faculty and students in their program and report on what they learned. Administrators take note when WAC programs contribute new knowledge to the field. At the very least, the WAC program itself should model to its constituents the same intellectual curiosity and critical inquiry that WAC courses are intended to foster in students.

13. FLEXIBLE BUT SOUND GUIDELINES, IF FLAGGED COURSES ARE USED Criteria for certifying "W" courses if they are part of the curriculum must be flexible enough to accommodate all disciplines, rigorous enough to ensure course and programmatic integrity, and be informed by current theories and best practices within the field. Daunting though this may sound, numerous programs have arrived at workable standards. Not surprisingly, these guidelines tend to be somewhat similar across programs. An overview of features that typify "W" courses as reported by Christine Farris and Raymond Smith appears in Townsend's 2001 article "Writing Intensive Courses and WAC," along with the guidelines used by the University of Missouri since 1984.

14. **REGULAR INTERNAL ASSESSMENT COMBINED WITH PERIODIC EXTERNAL PROGRAM REVIEW** The assessment culture that permeates higher education now may mean that these essential functions are less overlooked in WAC programs than was formerly the case. Often, institutions have regular cycles for *departmental* reviews; *programs*, however, can sometimes slip through the cracks, so WAC WPAs may need to lobby for administrators to commission and pay for external program reviewer visits. Institutional re-accreditation can be one impetus for requesting an external review. Internal assessment should be part of any WAC program's ongoing agenda. William Condon's "Accommodating Complexity: WAC Program Evaluation in the Age of Accountability" (2001) is an excellent place to start. "Integrating WAC into General Education: An Assessment Case Study" describes how Missouri's Campus Writing Program used both a new general education initiative and hiring a new director as impetus for internal and external reviews. (See Townsend, 1997.) Administrators will sometimes urge WAC leaders to give writing competence tests as part of the WAC program's assessment agenda. Resist strongly. In "Dangerous Partnerships: How Competence Testing Can Sabotage WAC" (2005), Doug Brent calls his attempt to link competence testing and WAC a "total failure" (87), noting that "their seemingly complementary approaches ... mask some deeply divided pedagogical assumptions that threaten to undermine the benefits of a WAC program" (78).

15. **PATIENCE AND VIGILANCE** When all is said and done, WAC "attempts to reform pedagogy more than curriculum ... It asks for a fundamental commitment to a radically different way of teaching, a way that requires personal sacrifices, given the structure of American education, and offers personal rather than institutional rewards" (Russell, 295). WAC programs and commitments grow slowly, and reforms take time. WAC leaders must be simultaneously patient and perseverant while programs evolve.

Conclusion

Strachan's *Writing-Intensive* is the most recent and most in-depth account of a WAC program's vulnerability. Her narrative will make for instructive reading for WAC WPAs and for graduate students in WAC WPA training or seminars—as would all of the entries in the bibliography. But because many of Strachan's points mirror the situation Missouri's Campus Writing Program experienced not long ago, the positive update at the beginning of this essay is all the more meaningful to report. It has been seventeen years since David Russell (in 1991) wrote, "[W]ithout structural changes to integrate writing into the disciplinary fiber of institutions, without a commitment to permanent change in the way academia values writing in pedagogy, WAC programs will always

work against the grain”(304). Based on some of the sources above, one could say his cautionary words have been validated once again. But in those WAC programs that have found solutions to the particular vulnerabilities they have experienced, those of us who practice, promulgate, and research WAC can find ample encouragement and inspiration to move ahead with our work enthusiastically.

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ENDNOTES

- ⁱ At the time of my interview I had accepted an offer to develop a new WID program at another university and was stepping down from my Campus Writing Program directorship at the University of Missouri. During a one-year hiatus in the English Department at MU, I realized that after fifteen years of WAC/WID program administration a shift in my career was warranted, and I am now a regular faculty member in my department. My CWP colleagues, Marty Patton and Jo Ann Vogt, also

left CWP after twelve- and seventeen-year tenures respectively. Marty is also fully in MU's English Department, and Jo Ann is now director of Indiana University's Writing Center.

- ii The distinctions between WAC and WID aren't crucial for this article. Rather than the "WAC/WID" formulation, I simply use "WAC" to refer to programs that may have characteristics of either or both.
- iii See "Writing Across the Curriculum: The Second State, and Beyond," *College Composition and Communication* 40 (October 1989): 337–343.
- iv Chris Thaiss, Tara Porter, and Erin Steinke, "The International WAC/WID Mapping Project: Objectives and Current Results," Writing Research Across Borders conference, Session E16, University of California-Santa Barbara, February 22, 2008. See <http://mappingproject.ucdavis.edu> for more information.
- v All three of Miraglia and McLeod's findings are reflected in the six reasons that MU's Campus Writing Program was seen as having been sustained. Steve Weinberg, a journalist and member of CWP's 1992 Internal Review Committee, wrote in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (June 16, 1993, B2-B3) that CWP had likely survived because the program has a regular line in the campus budget and the support of the provost; has a staff housed outside in English, and is therefore perceived as belonging to the whole campus; has a director and staff who are specialists in WAC; offers TA and faculty development skillfully; students learn in first-year composition about MU's larger writing requirement; and faculty members see the rewards from their extra work.
- vi This list reframes and enlarges on an earlier version for W-flagged courses. (See Townsend, 2001, 242–245.) Thanks to Lynn Bloom for the assignment that led to the 2001 concept and to Wendy Strachan for the inspiration to add "levels" and broaden the characteristics to WAC programs generally.
- vii Marty Patton is the first in our Program to have pointed this out.

A Conversation with a WAC Colleague: An Interview with Art Young

XIAOLI LI, CLEMSON UNIVERSITY

TO SOME EXTENT, it was the Communication across the Curriculum (CAC) program under the leadership of Art Young that attracted me to Clemson University to finish my Ph.D. study. Before I joined Clemson, I had read from various sources that the CAC program helped Clemson receive the *Time* Award for Public College of the Year for 2001. A year later, the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) honored Dr. Young with the Exemplar Award for his contributions to the field of rhetoric, composition, communication across the curriculum, and technical communication. In 2007, *Princeton Review* and *U.S. News and World Report* recognized Clemson as one of the best universities in the nation, in large part owing to its CAC program.

Art Young came to Clemson from Michigan Technological University in 1987 as the first endowed Campbell Chair in Technical Communication, a joint appointment with the College of Liberal Arts and the College of Engineering which seeks to promote interdisciplinary collaboration and effective communication. In 1989, he founded Clemson's Communication across the Curriculum program and in 2000 began their Poetry across the Curriculum initiative. In May 2006, he organized and hosted the Eighth International Conference on Writing Across the Curriculum, which was attended by 450 participants from 12 countries and 41 states. Over 70 colleges and universities in the United States and abroad have invited him to conduct workshops and make presentations. His monograph *Teaching Writing Across the Curriculum* is in its fourth edition (by Prentice Hall Resources for Writing, 2006, and online at the WAC Clearinghouse).

Because of all his honors and accomplishments, for quite some time I approached him in awe though he smiled and greeted me very warmly. He is one of the most modest persons I have ever known. His commitment to teaching, his attitude toward students, and his individualized guidance set a good example for us young scholars in the field. From him we learned that the CAC program here at Clemson thrived because

of his personality and his magic of creating a community of colleagues. That's why I chose this title for the interview.

XIAOLI LI: As with a number of WAC figures, you were trained in literature. You received a Ph.D. in Romanticism from Miami University. How did you get involved in writing across the curriculum?

ART YOUNG: I got involved in WAC in the 1977–1978 school year in a very interesting way. I was at Michigan Tech and the new provost wanted a program that would improve students' communication skills, mostly in the colleges of engineering and science. I was the department head of Humanities, which included writing and speaking, literature, music, art, theater, foreign languages, and philosophy. He charged me to develop a plan. My colleagues, Toby Fulwiler, Bob Jones, Randy Freisinger, Elizabeth Flynn, and later Cindy Selfe, Dickie Selfe, Diana George, and Nancy Grimm all helped me in the process to plan and develop a program.

WAC was not very much known on the national scene at all. We talked to deans of engineering and others about requiring a junior-level course of scientific and technical writing. There was already a full-year of composition in the first year. One professor proposed a junior-level writing course. The Dean of Engineering suggested testing all students at the end of sophomore year. Those who failed would have to take a remedial course to get up to speed. But just about that time, Toby Fulwiler went to a three-week National Endowment for Humanities (NEH) summer program in New Jersey, run by Lee Odell, Dixie Goswami, and Robert Parker. Toby came back with ideas about writing across the curriculum, particularly those that have been developed in the United Kingdom by James Britton, Nancy Martin, and their colleagues. So we began to think about writing across the curriculum rather than required tests and courses.

We also touched base with some other schools that were doing WAC or thinking about doing it. Most important for us at Michigan Tech was Beaver College in Pennsylvania, where Elaine Maimon had a grant from NEH to develop a WAC program. Another place was the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor, which started an English Composition Board with a goal to strengthen communication skills throughout the College of Arts & Science, run in those days by Dan Fader, Jay Robinson, Bernard Van't Hul, and Richard Bailey. We began to develop our own WAC program, and we chose to go that way because our students at Michigan Tech were quite bright and fairly good writers. But they saw their writing courses like an extra hurdle they really didn't need but were just required to do. They assumed someone else would be writing

reports for them. It was the days before desktop computers and word processing for everybody. So we wanted to get faculty of different disciplines involved, having them say it is important to learn to write, speak, and think like an engineer. To do well, they should be given assignments to help develop their skills within their discipline, to begin writing like an engineer or a scientist. Under the leadership of Toby Fulwiler, we began a program with faculty workshops. Funding from the General Motors Foundation enabled us to take people off campus for two or four days to work on teaching writing and integrating writing into classes, which also included collaborative learning, group work, and critical thinking. We were fortunate that we attracted some good teachers to these very first workshops. They came back to campus and told their colleagues and administration that WAC was a good and necessary program. And so the program took off from there.

XL: When you were at Michigan Tech, it seemed that you had some institutional support and support from colleagues. Still, when the program first took off, what was the biggest challenge you faced? Was it the doubt from some faculty or was it the lack of enthusiasm from students? How did you solve it?

AY: There were many faculty doubts, as you might expect, and many were the same as today: (1) Many people say that it is the English Department's job to teach students how to write. "I don't have time and I have to cover the material." Why can't "they" just do it? (2) They blame the high schools that students didn't learn how to write. (3) Many complain primarily about grammar and spelling, and yet, when we looked closer, faculty were not really happy with the way students were organizing, developing, providing evidence, or writing a coherent report or essay. There was still concern about editing, but it turned out not to be the major concern.

We liked to talk about the conversion experience. People who were doubtful but open-minded came to one of our workshops for a couple of days and then gave WAC a chance in their classes. Many of those early adaptors from the departments of Metallurgy, Biology, and Mechanical Engineering said they had never thought about having students revise their reports. They were "converted" and spread the word.

It wasn't all easy. After the program had been going on for two or three years, a motion was introduced to the Faculty Senate at Michigan Tech for the English Department to stop doing workshops that encouraged free writing. The motion ordered us to suspend this program and go back to grammar drill, to concentrate on having students write correctly and precisely. So we had to defend our WAC program. Fortunately, some of

the people in this faculty senate had been to our workshops and knew what was going on. Randy Freisinger took a leading voice, representing our position, and the senate defeated that motion. This meeting was a very tense moment in which the senators felt that because first-year English was required for all students, then they should have a say in how it is taught. Some senators didn't want writing to be taught with brainstorming, freewriting, revising, and editing. They wanted it to be taught as spelling and grammar.

XL: To some extent, we could say that this incident caused public attention. Some who went to the Senate meeting and heard the debate began to think about WAC. In this sense, it helped promote the development of WAC. Do you agree?

AY: Sure, more people were aware of WAC and more people defended it and a lot of unpredictable things happened. We proposed WAC instead of a junior-level required writing course, but the university community required a junior-level writing course and WAC. In other words, there were more students taking writing courses, not just students in Humanities and English, as well as doing WAC. We believed that was a good approach. First, people who were really professionals in rhetoric, composition, and technical communication were teaching students in the first year and the third year, not only how to write, but audience analysis. In addition, instructors in the disciplines were teaching students how to write to disciplinary professionals, using evidence and citation the way that people in their specific fields do.

One professor from the department of Metallurgy, quite famous nationally as a researcher, was considered a good and popular teacher and sometimes taught the basic course, Metallurgy 101. He was doubtful about WAC, but he gave a couple of days of his time to see what it was all about. He came back so excited that he went to the Provost and the President and wanted to speak to the Board of Trustees, impressing upon everyone else how important this program was. Because he was a major professor on campus, people listened to him.

XL: When you first came to Clemson in 1987, there was no WAC. How did you persuade the higher administration to consider WAC?

AY: There was no cross-the-entire-curriculum writing program at Clemson in 1987. The ETC (Effective Technical Communication) program in the College of Engineering included faculty from the liberal arts and engineering working together on writing and speaking across the engineering curriculum.

I was brought in as the Robert S. Campbell Chair to help with writing in the College of Engineering by working with faculty and students. Bob Campbell was a 1937 Clemson Alumnus who endowed the program. Then in 1989, I invited everyone on campus to a full-day off-campus workshop at the Clemson Outdoor Lab on the lake. To my surprise, 60 faculty members from a variety of disciplines signed up.

Faculty members asked for more, so we started doing workshops on topics that people were interested in, such as assignment design, assessment, and collaborative learning. I had support from colleagues in English like Dixie Goswami, Mark Charney, and Carl Lovett, as well as people from the College of Engineering like Dan McAuliff, Wayne Bennett, and others.

In 1990, some colleagues and I had the opportunity to present a proposal to Roy Pearce, a graduate of Clemson's Class of 1941, most of whom were veterans of World War II. This proposal established the Pearce Center for Professional Communication to house Communication across the Curriculum. Mr. Pearce wanted speaking as well as writing to be included. As we thought more about the Center's mission, visual and digital communication were incorporated into our communication across the curriculum program, with academic writing still central as the way we learn how to communicate with each other.

The Pearce Center endowment provided ongoing funding for special projects with faculty, to assess whether our program was working, and to bring in workshop leaders from outside. For example, Kenneth Bruffee did a workshop on collaborative learning; Peter Elbow did one on the significance of audience in writing; we had Deanna Dannels on speaking across the curriculum; and Toby Fulwiler on writing to learn and journals across the curriculum. And we continued working with disciplinary faculty, including workshop leaders from Chemistry, Biology, Horticulture, and Chemical Engineering. They were able to show other faculty members that effective writing was not just an English project but integral to all disciplines.

When Clemson was recognized as the 2001 Public College of the Year by *Time/Princeton Review*, over 300 of Clemson's 1,000 faculty had gone to at least one workshop voluntarily. We tried to look at writing from the students' perspective. If two of their four or five courses each semester were communication-intensive, that would be a major improvement. Back in 1986, many classes gave just scantron tests, or maybe essay tests, but that was all the writing. Students might have done one paper, but that was one draft of a paper. So a lot of things have changed from 1987 until today. I don't think Communication across the Curriculum deserves all the credit, however. Nationally and on our campus, people were interested in service learning and started

projects where every student had a laptop. Faculty in English often took a lead in these initiatives; for example, Clemson has award-winning client-based projects in technical writing. All of these activities emphasize our mantra: *active learning by the students and interactive teaching by the teachers*. Before this, a teacher often came to class, gave a lecture, and took a few questions, if there were any. Students mainly took notes with little discussion. That approach to teaching is no longer dominant at Clemson for a lot of reasons. I think Communication across the Curriculum helped pave the way, and now many people have started projects that really emphasize active learning and interactive teaching.

In 2003, the Clemson Class of 1941 endowed the Class of 1941 Studio for Student Communication and became the second phase of our CAC program, where we would work directly with students. A decade ago, WAC and CAC were more faculty-centered. But now they are both faculty centered and student centered. At the Studio, students get help with a variety of multimodal projects such as slide shows, posters, and making videos. That's why we call it a studio, not a writing center. It also is a research facility where a faculty member or Ph.D. student can teach a class or study the effect of classroom configuration on learning. With the Pearce Center and the Studio, we are integrating teaching and research with program administration, serving students and faculty.

XL: To sum up, as an administrator (Department Head at Michigan Tech, the CAC coordinator at Clemson), how did you motivate your colleagues to join the WAC/CAC/WID team?

AY: It wasn't all administration: workshops, personal lobbying, going to colleagues and inviting them to work with me. As the Campbell Chair at Clemson, I had funding to buy lunches for people who went to the workshops, to bring in speakers, and to print brochures for advertising. This was before universal email. When I was recruited by Clemson as the Robert S. Campbell Chair, my role was to work with faculty across disciplines to integrate communication into their courses. It was a high-visibility appointment, so some people might have gone to the workshops for the first time out of curiosity.

XL: As one of your students I can say that we all like the way you treat each student and the very specific guidance you give to each individual student based on his/her research interest and background. What's the rationale?

AY: Certainly I try to establish a community of learners in my classroom. I'd like to think that I treat all students—first-year students, MA students, MAPC students, RCID PhD students—as colleagues. We are all in the same community in terms of trying to learn, whether it is Victorian poetry or communication across the curriculum. I see myself as a learner trying to communicate what I have learned. The students are learners trying to communicate what they have learned. So this approach is very deliberate. I write each student a letter in the middle of the term, evaluating their work. I am really having a conversation with them about their work.

What really helps me at Clemson is that my teaching load is only one course per semester and part of my salary comes from the endowment so that I can run the CAC program. I can spend more time and effort on that one course than a teacher who is teaching three or four courses. Another thing that affects my teaching is that I have been doing communication-intensive work across the curriculum. I am always trying new things. For example, I am teaching a literature class this semester. I am experimenting with multimodal assignments and blogs between my students and students in Sweden. Then I try to look at the results carefully. I take that experience to workshops and show faculty from other disciplines that this approach might work in their disciplines, and of course, I try to contribute to the research on WAC and WID, teaching with writing, focusing on things I am learning from my classes as well as the theoretical and other work. I don't see myself as a theorist in the sense of writing high theory. I try to integrate theory into a coherent approach to teaching, recognizing that theory is always evolving, expanding, and contracting. In other words, not be a slave to theory, but see what is happening in my class with my students. We may have to modify our theories to make sure we reach our students.

XL: You use your teaching experience to inform the workshops. You always share your experience with other colleagues through your research work, which seems to characterize your research style. Am I right?

AY: I have been fortunate to be able to integrate teaching, research, and service. I teach the way I do and also I write the way I teach. Together, they help me design the next stage of the CAC program.

Most recently, I have been interested in what I call the middle-ground, which means conversational learning and conversational writing. I try to place this middle ground between expressive, personal writing (which is the kind of writing and general speaking you do for yourself like journals or freewrites with no real audience except

yourself) and public or academic writing (where you help students learn the discourse conventions and how to think and write in a public way what they know in their learning, whether it is engineering or literary studies). So I have been talking and writing about this middle ground such as letters back and forth, blogs, and discussion boards. It is the middle ground in the sense that you have to recognize your audience, so you write to be understood. For freewrites, you don't have to do that. Yet you are still in the discovering stage of trying to learn about a particular subject.

This year my classes are trying this kind of learning on a discussion board, about a poem by T.S. Eliot. Another assignment is blogs with students in Sweden about poems by Emily Dickinson. We have groups of six students, half from Sweden and half here at Clemson. I am interested in the power and potential of the assignment when I am designing it. Students learn about the subject matter by participating in that kind of written conversation. I think they gain confidence and motivation. Many students, including M.A. level students, said that they had never written for a fellow student before. I think they begin to improve their level of academic discourse because they are writing about an academic subject. They are using and watching other students use a vocabulary and conventions and come up with an opinion about what the poem means. Maybe they quote a line or two from the poem that gives them that idea. Of course, these are scholarly habits of the mind that literary critics use. I like to think of the middle ground in terms of learning collaboratively and conversationally as well as a movement toward helping students become sophisticated academic writers. And technology helps tremendously. I have been assigning conversational writing for 30 years. It used to be students' passing paper letters back and forth. When photocopies came in, I could put students in groups to share their writing. The Internet opened up a world of interaction and interculturality where students are not in the same physical class.

XL: Your service to the community is very impressive. From your CV I learned that you have been invited to many schools to conduct workshops, both in and outside the US, which surely takes lots of time. You also do lots of university service. How do you balance all this?

AY: Lots of my travel is connected to everything else I do. I bring back ideas that will help Clemson, and my work at Clemson gives me ideas to share with other schools and with other colleagues. So I do see the travel as part of the process for my work at Clemson and for WAC and CAC.

XL: What are the common questions you have received from workshop participants?

AY: If I give a workshop on ways you can integrate writing to learn in courses across the discipline and on assignment design and assessment, hopefully people walk out with something they can really implement. The kinds of questions I get are: How can you cover all the content? How do you handle the paper load? All these students are doing the writing and they want teachers to read them, but teachers don't have time to read them. With multiple drafts, students turn in writing, and teachers need to read it, give feedback, ask students to revise, and read it again. How can this be done?

I try to show faculty that if students have to look at your comments and do something with them, and if part of the grade is how they revise, then they will learn. It is difficult, though. I give suggestions such as have the students critique each other the first round, then give you the final draft. Sometimes these suggestions work, but sometimes teachers say it is not for me.

XL: Your book *Programs that Work* in 1990 was very helpful for over a decade for schools that were considering WAC programs. Do you think the programs in 2008 are still following the same models as shown in your book?

AY: By 1990, there was a sense of community among people doing WAC. We knew each other by going to 4Cs and other conventions. We asked people to write essays to describe their programs in a way that would help others think about doing a program themselves. The main difference between that 1990 book and some of the things going on right now is the rise of the writing in the disciplines (WID) aspect of writing across the curriculum. Certainly it existed in the 1990s, but now WAC is studying it more carefully and working more individually with particular departments on establishing their curriculum and assessing their own students and programs. For example, as a result of helping a business administration department with their curriculum, their students learn how to write the way business professionals should.

Of course another main change is technology. There is more adaptation of WAC online. Some say that for an online class you just put your notes online and still teach the usual way; however, others think that online classes can be more effective if they are interactive and communication intensive where students write back and forth and learn together.

XL: Can we say that there has been a climate change since the 1970s now that WAC is better understood and practiced?

AY: It is hard for me to estimate any more. A recent survey suggests about 50 percent of colleges have a WAC program or are considering one. There is a lot of interest in WAC now globally, in Europe, Australia, New Zealand, and in particular, the Middle East. Many of my colleagues are consulting and conducting workshops in places like Dubai. And obviously through work like yours and Wu Dan's and some others, WAC and CAC will be spread to China and Asia. The Internet, of course, contributes to the internationalization of WAC and CAC.

XL: What do you see as the new trends in WAC development?

AY: (1) Technology, (2) international or transnational, (3) research that embraces both WAC and WID, and (4) more sense of being broader, that is, WAC is connected or collaborating with writing centers and service learning projects, changing the name of WAC at some schools to CAC to include writing and speaking across the curriculum or to ECAC to include electronic communication across the curriculum. Instead of focus on individual teachers to integrate writing into their class, we're now looking at the entire four years of a college education. For instance, we look at the entire chemical engineering curriculum. We look at our university's goals for their students to have international experiences. WAC is involved in those initiatives. In 1990, people weren't thinking that we could learn from Europe and they could learn from us, but now we do.

XL: There is a rumor that you are retiring after 42 years of teaching. What are your plans afterwards?

AY: I taught my first class as a graduate student in 1966, and now I plan to retire in December 2008. I haven't made specific plans about my retirement, but I will begin to think about it seriously this summer. I do know that I plan to stay active in the academic community and in writing across the curriculum.

Considering WAC from Training and Hiring Perspectives: An Interview with Irwin “Bud” Weiser of Purdue University

CAROL RUTZ, CARLETON COLLEGE

FOR THIS ISSUE of *The WAC Journal*, I interviewed Irwin “Bud” Weiser, who, in addition to bearing the very best nickname in the business, has a long career in writing instruction at the undergraduate and graduate levels as well as serving as an administrator of writing programs. A graduate of Miami University (Ohio) with M.A. and Ph.D. degrees from Indiana University, Bud has taught writing at a variety of schools and held numerous administrative appointments. Author of dozens of articles and book chapters and a tireless presenter at conferences, his most recent book-length project, co-edited with Shirley Rose, is *The Writing Program Administrator as Theorist: Making Knowledge Work* (Heinemann, 2002).

Currently in his second five-year term as head of Purdue University’s English department, Bud provides a thoughtful, seasoned take on the prospects for new Ph.D.s who are attracted to WAC work. As a department head, he speaks from both sides of the interview experience—as one who advises candidates preparing for the job market and also as one who helps search committees craft position descriptions and conduct interviews.

CAROL RUTZ: You have been affiliated with Purdue University and its well-regarded Rhetoric and Composition Programs (undergraduate and doctoral) since 1981, and you have held various administrative positions in writing programs at Purdue and elsewhere. What drew you to the teaching of writing?

IRWIN “BUD” WEISER: I’d guess my story is similar to most people’s. What drew me to the teaching of writing was the enjoyment I received from working with students in the composition classes I taught as a teaching assistant at Indiana University. I found—and still find—it very rewarding to think about ways to teach writing that will help students develop their abilities to use language to accomplish their personal and professional goals.

In the early 1970s, when I started teaching, there were not many Ph.D. programs where one could formally study the teaching of writing, so at Indiana, teaching assistants formed their own informal support groups. And like most people in the Ph.D. program at I.U. at the time, I was there to get a Ph.D. in literature—Victorian literature in my case. But the 70s, not too unlike today, was a time when the literature job market was weak, and my first academic job was as an adjunct at the University of Louisville. That was a turning point for me, because I got that job the same year Joe Comprone was hired to be director of composition at Louisville. Joe is the person who introduced me—and all of us teaching in the program—to composition scholarship and research. As I began to read that work—especially work by Frank D’Angelo, Ross Winterowd, and Janice Lauer—my interest in teaching writing intensified and I began to look for faculty positions as a writing teacher.

CR: And you were off and running. In addition to teaching writing, you are an expert teacher of writing teachers. What is different, in your experience, between teaching writing to undergraduates and helping new teachers of writing learn the moves?

BW: When I teach writing, I’m teaching students to produce written discourse. When I teach new teachers of writing to teach, I’m teaching them how to teach their students to produce written discourse. In a first-year composition course, I don’t ask students to read composition scholarship or rhetorical theory; instead, I rely on my understanding of that work to develop a course and assignments and to guide my evaluation and response to students’ work. In a graduate practicum on the teaching of writing, I do assign scholarship in rhetoric and composition, and we talk about how that work can be applied in the writing course. And of course, I observe new teachers teaching and I read examples of student writing they’ve responded to and I try to describe to them what I see in their practice—what I like and what I think they could work on.

CR: Your own university is not a WAC campus. There must be a story about that. Would you care to tell that story?

BW: There are a couple of stories here. One is that Purdue has no general education requirements. Every College in the university establishes its own requirements (though every College requires students to have credit for first-year composition, either by taking the course, transferring in credit, or scoring well on the A.P. exam). Given that, there's no mechanism for establishing a campus-wide WAC program.

Almost ten years ago, the College of Liberal Arts revisited its curriculum and adopted a requirement for a writing intensive course, post-first-year composition, for every student in the College. But the College has over 6,000 students, and the resources for implementing that requirement simply haven't been available. We were able to conduct some very popular and effective workshops for faculty who wanted to incorporate more writing in their courses as part of the preparation for the W-I requirement, and I know that a number of the faculty who attended the workshops continue to use ideas and assignments they generated as participants.

CR: As an administrator as well as a faculty member, you must have an internal scale to assess the difficulty of various problems that come to your attention. In your experience, how do WAC-ish problems rate relative to other administrative challenges?

BW: Since we don't have a WAC program, WAC-related issues aren't part of my regular work. The closest to addressing WAC issues I face is when other Colleges want us to do more teaching of writing than we're able to do and I instead offer to help them develop ways of doing more writing instruction in their existing courses, or when an administrator from another College wants to talk about how a course we offer isn't meeting their expectations. Both of these things happen rarely.

If we had a WAC program, I doubt I'd be particularly involved in it, since as a department head, I'd only support having such a program if we had the personnel to do it right—at least one person designated to direct it, an appropriate way to support instructors in the program, and sufficient resources to sustain it. My sense is that at large research universities, it's been very difficult to sustain WAC programs because to do them right, it costs money, and too often there's not an institutional commitment to provide enough.

CR: A sobering thought, but I think it's accurate for most large universities. The large thriving WAC programs—I think immediately of Missouri and Washington State—do so because of an institutional commitment to provide the resources. We can hope that the new initiative at Minnesota demonstrates another successful approach.

To slightly shift gears, I'd like to talk about the job market for rhet/comp people and WAC opportunities. Your position as the head of a large department with oodles of Ph.D.s, MFAs, and MAs to place makes you a good person to talk to about the job market for various kinds of specialists. You probably have a sense of what it takes to 1) land a WAC job and 2) succeed at it. My guess is that you have observed—if not personally advised—folks who have either sought, settled for, or ended up with WAC in addition to other responsibilities.

What are the risks for new hires who become WAC or other writing program administrators (WPAs) in general? Is a staff job or a hybrid faculty/administrative job a risk? Why or why not?

BW: As you certainly know, the standard advice for new Ph.D.s on the job market is to avoid administrative positions before tenure. Of course, that advice isn't always followed, and it isn't necessarily even the best advice. As you said, jobs differ, institutions differ. And especially since we and other programs are beginning to incorporate writing program administration into our graduate curriculum, it's not surprising that our graduates are interested in doing administrative work early in their careers. What I tell people, when they ask, is that they have to get a good idea of the nature of the administrative work they're going to be asked to do, the support they'll receive for it, and the way that work gets evaluated and counted towards tenure and promotion. Major administrative responsibilities, as any of us who have had them can attest, are drains on time and energy far beyond any release time from teaching that they carry with them. For untenured faculty, taking on these responsibilities without a commitment from the institution about how they will be evaluated, compensated for, and treated at tenure time is very dangerous. Taking them on at research universities is problematic unless the person is confident that the work will contribute to her scholarship and publication. But taking on those responsibilities at smaller institutions can also be problematic, particularly when the institution has a heavy teaching load and very little course release for administrative work.

For untenured faculty who are WAC directors, I think all of these comments apply, but they get complicated because the person is interacting with people from across the institution. There's a lot of potential for good in these positions, since the person gets to know people from across the university, and that isn't always the case for new faculty. So if the person is perceived as doing good work, there's going to be broad support for her. But on the other hand, working outside one's own department can be dangerous, especially if the WAC director is perceived as trying to force a WAC or WID program on unreceptive colleagues.

As an experienced WPA and a department head, my best advice is “Proceed with the utmost caution.” I certainly don’t encourage new Ph.D.s to accept administrative posts, but I don’t tell them it’s automatic professional suicide. And I think there are some contexts in which doing administration as a beginning faculty member could be a very good thing for the person. I’m thinking particularly of positions as assistant director, which can certainly provide a person with excellent experience and support, but without the full responsibility for the program.

CR: Let me extend my question with a little more context: At small schools a title like “writing director” can mean various things, ranging from responsibility for hiring and training adjuncts to fill required first-year composition or first-year seminar sections to running a writing center, to faculty development, to teaching—or maybe all of that.

Just this past year, Jill Gladstein at Swarthmore conducted a survey of over 50 small schools, asking questions about how writing programs and centers were organized, staffed, and so on. Her data show that slightly less than one-third of the schools surveyed have a tenured or tenure-able writing director. What her survey did not show was the range of credentials—that is, how many terminal degrees; how many degrees in “writing” broadly construed (rhet/comp, “creative,” English ed., linguistics, etc.); or how many jobs were term jobs based on some kind of rotation within a home department.

Obviously, institutions organize themselves in various ways that may be inscrutable to outsiders but make some sort of internal sense. Nevertheless, I’m curious about your observations and also about the advice you would give to your graduate students as they look at jobs at small schools. What kind of small-school job would be attractive to your new Ph.D.s?

BW I’m not sure what it takes to land a WAC job, and I’m saying that not because I don’t know what good credentials are, but because I know that often people get hired to administer programs who don’t have the kinds of credentials I’d most prefer to see. If I were advising a student at Purdue who wanted to become a WAC director, my advice would be a bit different than it would if we had a WAC program. If we did, I’d certainly advise that student to get involved in it as a teacher, writing specialist, tutor, assistant director, or in any other way she could. Since we don’t, I’d encourage the student to get a secondary specialization in writing program administration, an option we offer in the Ph.D. program. I’d encourage her to take the WAC seminar, the Writing Center Theory and Practice seminar, and the writing assessment seminar. I’d encourage her to seek a variety of teaching and tutoring and administrative assistantships. For instance,

I'd recommend applying to tutor in the writing lab, to teach an upper division professional writing course (since they attract students from many other disciplines), and to be one of the assistant directors of the introductory writing program or writing lab.

One of the most interesting questions you raise is "How can small schools with WAC programs make them attractive to well-prepared Ph.D.s?" There are so many variables. If the program is well established and well supported, it's going to be easier to attract people than if it's just starting up or if it's been neglected or is trying to function without sufficient resources. It matters, too, if the teaching load is reasonable.

And one thing I've seen is that well-prepared Ph.D.s are often shy about going to a place where they'll be the only rhetoric/composition/writing person there. It's quite a transition for people coming out of active Ph.D. programs where there are faculty and other students who share their scholarly and pedagogical interests to find themselves without people who have similar interests and backgrounds. It would, I think, be very smart for institutions to think about hiring two people if they have none. It's also a disadvantage for an institution that's recruiting if they don't have at least one well informed person on the search committee, so I'd say that even if a school doesn't have a rhet/comp specialist, it would be a good idea for someone who will be involved in the search to do some reading in the field, get on appropriate listservs, attend the WAC or WPA or Writing Center or CCCC conference a year before the search, and so forth. And schools need to realize that they have to be aggressive in their recruiting since the best prepared people coming out of Ph.D. programs are still very hot commodities. It's a mistake, for example, to wait until CCCC to interview for a new assistant professor, since by then, a lot of people will have accepted jobs based on interviews at MLA.

I'd also advise patience—the same patience I advise our students on the market. The job market is increasingly a year-round event, and good candidates may be available in late spring and early summer. This may seem contradictory—be aggressive and be patient—but I don't think it necessarily is. We regularly see that the candidates who are most appealing to us are also most appealing to others. We may interview people at MLA who have another dozen interviews, and we may not be successful in hiring our top choices. That doesn't mean we don't have other strong applicants, and I'd encourage people who are recruiting new faculty to look at applicants who have the kinds of experiences that I've listed above. In some cases, they may not even be people who are earning Ph.D.s in rhetoric and composition, but instead people with course work and experiences that supplement their primary area of interest in literature or linguistics or creative writing.

CR: I'm interested in your observation that small schools may not be attractive to those who have been trained within a rhet/comp department with an active teaching and research agenda. As you point out, a new hire often ends up as the only rhet/comp person on campus. One could say the same for the petrologist or the medieval historian or the labor economist. Each of them ends up teaching the specialty as well as intro courses and whatever else the department negotiates. How does the rhet/comp person's situation differ? Or does it?

BW: Good point. But these folks are in departments where there are other geologists, chemists, historians, or economists. The rhet/comp person may be the only non-literature or creative writing person in the department, doing work that no one else does or understands, with what is likely very different graduate preparation. And the work affects others in the department and college because it's connected to curriculum and teaching in ways that the work of "regular" faculty such as those you mention is not. So one potential issue is that the isolated rhet/comp person may become who everyone turns to for everything concerning writing, making it an overwhelming task.

CR: I see what you mean. If anything, it's compounded by the expectation in WAC programs that the rhet/comp person (or the poet or the Victorianist) with WAC responsibilities is expected to engage with the whole faculty. It's no secret that WAC programs depend on relationships to succeed—both at the individual level, between the WAC director and individual faculty members, and at a more corporate level—fostering an open, collaborative climate across campus to support writing pedagogy and assessment.

Given what we have already established about factors in play, I'm even more interested in your sense of what institutions and candidates should be aware of and prepared for as they advertise or respond to ads for WAC positions.

BW: Let's talk about the institutional side first. It's important to define the goal—the product. Asking for a "Ph.D. in comp" won't be specific enough, given the many directions rhet/comp graduate study can take. An accurate job description that includes the need for an administrative orientation as well as experience with program development and faculty development will help candidates decide whether their qualifications fit the job. Similarly, the search committee must have a clear idea of expectations for the position so that they can conduct a careful reading of applications and vitae to enable productive interviews based in the right credentials combined with the relevant interests.

That said, hiring groups run off the rails if they lack a clear understanding of rhet/comp as a field and assume that any Ph.D. can handle all of the responsibilities the committee associates with writing specialists. Chances are, no single candidate from a good graduate program can bring all of that program's strengths to the job. Misunderstandings at that level lead to jobs with comprehensive nicknames such as "writing czar," which implies that the person in the job can do everything involved with writing—as conceived by the institution. A candidate who accepts such a job without detecting that fundamental expectation is set up for feeling caught, overwhelmed, and unsuccessful. This outcome is not a result of malice on anyone's part; it's a lack of awareness of the potential complexity of WAC/writing work.

CR: You're edging once again toward advice for candidates. What else would you advise?

BW: My advice is much the same for those interested in WAC as for anyone going on the market: Focus on positions of genuine interest that merit your serious consideration. Prepare well for interviews by doing thorough research on the institutions and on the faculty who will be on the interview committee. Be honest if they ask something that is surprising or outside of your expertise to date. For example, if you learn at the interview that supervision of administrative staff is expected, explain that you lack such experience—if that is the case. Of course, candidates can express interest in learning how to do supervision—or something else—but it's probably wise not to promise that those skills will be in place on day one.

CR: I remember from my graduate student days that some of my peers were interested in landing jobs at small schools or other places that were likely to have WAC programs, but I always worried that they really didn't know what they were getting into, particularly if their own experience of higher ed was exclusively at universities. Before a candidate applies your advice to interviews, how should s/he prepare herself as an applicant?

BW: This is where the individual graduate program's offerings will vary a great deal, so I'll have to speak in ideal terms rather than recap the offerings from Purdue's curriculum I mentioned earlier. To the extent that you can, take advantage of courses in WAC, writing program administration, writing center theory, and assessment. These courses are more common than they were 10–15 years ago, although you may have to

search out writing assessment courses in Education programs as well as in Rhetoric or English departments. As you take such courses, maintain a bibliography of resources that you can quickly access during the job search. This particular move will help ward off panic when the interviews come up.

Again, assuming your program has teaching options for graduate students, vary your teaching as much as possible. Be a writing center tutor, teach writing courses at various levels, and if your campus has WAC courses, try to teach writing in a disciplinary context other than your own. Finally, if your program hires graduate students in assistant director, TA training, or other roles, do your best to land one of those jobs for the administrative experience.

Obviously, not all graduate programs offer all of these options. The point is, combine coursework and practical experience. You don't want your c.v. to draw exclusively on just one or the other; the combination is much more convincing.

CR: It occurs to me that even if a course in, say, assessment, is not readily available, a research methods course will give good background.

BW: Absolutely. In fact, if a WAC job is really what you want, you may be able to shape your dissertation project to reflect that. I can think of three advisees off the top of my head who completed dissertations based on WAC or WID problems that they studied in departments outside of English.

CR: I know you have taught courses in writing program administration for a long time. Have you ever taught a course in WAC theory or administration?

BW: I have, although it's been a few years. In that course, I used a lot of readings and tried to point students toward the practical implications, challenges, research sites, faculty development ideas, and potential dissertation projects. We looked at some WAC programs and discussed the kinds of institutions where WAC seems to thrive and those where it's more of a challenge. Students need to understand that available resources and institutional demands make a difference, such as who controls staffing, faculty support, and ongoing faculty development.

I have to admit that one of the biggest challenges in teaching such a course at a place like Purdue is that we in my program don't have a handle on what happens through the curriculum—university-wide. Some years ago, we did have some wonderfully successful faculty development workshops. I met colleagues from across the Colleges who

still come up to me and talk about how they continue to use what they learned in those workshops, which is gratifying. However, we lost the resources that made those annual workshops possible, so my knowledge of the current curriculum is dated.

CR: That must be frustrating, given your command of the WAC moves that work elsewhere.

BW: In some ways, it is. However, Purdue is not likely to transform into a WAC campus anytime soon.

CR: Lately, I've visited some small schools that are trying to revive or institute WAC programs, and they want to hire wisely. In one case I was shown a draft job description for an administrative/non-tenure-track teaching position that included developing a WAC program (including outreach and faculty development), administering the writing center, developing and teaching writing courses, and being available to faculty to consult on their scholarly writing. Now that I hear your caution about institutional assumptions that a "writing person" can do anything related to writing, I better understand the thinking that went into what looks to me to be a completely unrealistic job description.

BW: Yes. WAC work requires an active choice by the WAC director to develop relationships and learn through assessment. The work also requires maturity and confidence in negotiating within the institution. It's another reason to discourage untenured faculty to take jobs such as the one you just described.

Consider this: If the job is non-tenure-track, the institution signals a lack of commitment to the hire, especially if the new person has little or no administrative experience. Why expect continuity from a person who knows up front that s/he is defined outside of the academic reward system? In such cases, you have to wonder whether the job is conceived as intellectual work. In an interview, it would be wise to ask about institutional goals for WAC. What projects are underway? What projects are expected? Who are potential allies for the WAC director?

I don't like the hybrid administrative staff/faculty jobs as a category. I think they complicate the lines of reporting and the evaluation of the person. For new faculty, they often mean two sets of responsibilities, two supervisors to report to, two units that evaluate the person on different criteria. Of course, like everything else, it's very context-tied, and it might work some places better than it does others. I see it as par-

ticularly problematic for untenured faculty, particularly if their tenure decision will be made by the department where the nature of their split appointment may not be understood or appreciated. The other side of the coin is that the person often is doing a lot of faculty work under the administrative title. Sometimes that work isn't compensated as well as it would be if it were a faculty position, especially if it's an administrative professional or administrative staff position. Also, I think faculty members generally have more credibility with other faculty members, so it could make working with faculty harder.

CR: The issue of credibility with faculty is a key one. It's hard to offer faculty advice about teaching, research, and assessment without some street cred, as it were. Communicating those expectations would be essential for hiring committees and candidates. It strikes me that most job ads are so form-driven that they verge on meaninglessness. How can institutions do better in describing the work to be done so that appropriate candidates apply?

BW: I agree that it's vital to jump start some imaginative thinking, starting with the ad. In most cases, deans and provosts lack the language to define the job they think they want done. I would love to see deans consult with those outside of their own institutions who actually do the WAC work elsewhere. They could call their peers and get in touch with WAC people at other campuses and listen to them.

Then they can look at the rhetoric of ads and think about the fit (or lack thereof) with the program's goals. It's important to use verbs that signal the work: administer, develop, lead, direct, and coordinate. Differentiate those activities and be realistic about demands.

Part of the problem is that administrative work doesn't divide into the same chunks as faculty workloads, which are typically defined as courses per year. Often administrative responsibilities are counted as "release time" from teaching, but the actual work may not be equivalent by any measure. Faculty work can be defined in a number of ways, and there is no hard and fast reason that administration should be viewed exclusively as "service." Program demands differ, and it takes imagination to equate administrative work with teaching and other duties more characteristic of a tenure-track appointment. Certainly, faculty development, tutor training, and similar duties are equivalent to teaching and can be counted as such. If the appointment really depends on intellectual work, the institutional reward system can be adjusted to accommodate the expectations of the job and convey a commitment to the new hire.

CR: This has been great, Bud. Thank you. What else would you like *The WAC Journal* readers to know about you and your work?

BW: Well, I could echo Blanche Dubois and say “I have always depended on the kindness of strangers.” That is, I have found the community of scholars in rhetoric and composition to be generous and welcoming. When I first began attending the CCCC convention, in 1978, when the entire program book was 97 pages long, I found that the people whose work had become important to me were always willing to talk. And many of those strangers have become colleagues and friends. My work as a teacher and administrator, I hope, reflects their knowledge and their generosity.

A Review of *Engaged Writers and Dynamic Disciplines: Research on the Academic Writing Life*

JACOB BLUMNER, UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN—FLINT

Chris Thaiss and Terry Myers Zawacki. *Engaged Writers and Dynamic Disciplines:
Research on the Academic Writing Life*.
Boynton/Cook Heinemann Press, 2006. 186 pages.

ANY BOOK THAT TRIES to define academic writing bites off more than most can chew. Chris Thaiss and Terry Myers Zawacki defining academic writing is one part of a larger goal in their book *Engaged Writers and Dynamic Disciplines*. Not only do they develop a definition of academic writing, they also build a developmental model for stages students move through to enter the academic conversation. I admit to being skeptical when I read the introduction of the book and saw how ambitious Thaiss and Zawacki were. If one has read David Russell's *Writing in Academic Disciplines*, one knows the long, slow march academia has taken toward disciplinary specialization. Still, I hear WAC program directors and faculty reify academic writing without ever being able to adequately describe it. Instead, the more concrete their description, the more problematic the definition becomes. Thaiss and Zawacki tackle the challenge of defining academic writing through a large-scale study involving surveys, case studies, assessment workshops, focus groups, department rubrics, and writing samples.

There is no suspense in the book; Thaiss and Zawacki define three standards for academic writing on pages five and six. I will spare you the suspense as well. Here are their findings: "1. Clear evidence in writing that the writer(s) have been persistent, open-minded, and disciplined in study ... 2. The dominance of reason over emotion or sensual perception ... 3. An imagined reader who is coolly rational, reading for information, and intending to formulate a reasoned response." Of course, these

standards are abstract, and the rest of the book fleshes out what those might look like in practice and how students grow as writers and scholars to achieve them.

The book is broken into five chapters. The first introduces the book and abstractly defines academic writing and alternative discourses. Though arguably most of the book is focused on traditional academic discourse, Thaiss and Zawacki also examine alternative discourses as a way to define traditional discourse and to try to shed light on the kinds of writing academics do in non-academic settings. They define alternatives in five ways based on their findings: alternative formats, ways of conceptualizing and arranging academic arguments, syntaxes, methodologies, and media (12). All of these repeat throughout the book and play an important part in how faculty view writing and the kinds of writing faculty ask students to produce.

The second chapter details the kinds of writing faculty do within the academic context and alternatives to it, and the third examines how faculty teach students to write. These chapters have the data to explain the standards for academic writing. They contain narratives of faculty describing their writing, and professional writing the faculty admire, and how they try to teach students to enter the academic conversation. The narratives are compelling in places and exemplify the kinds of faculty most institutions have, ranging from fairly conservative writers who rigidly conform to academic conventions to those exploring radically different alternatives. In all of these cases, faculty seem to really understand the complexity of writing and that different aims mean different approaches to tasks. The narratives are nuanced and show the complexity of the work academics do. The cases also show that faculty care deeply about their students and ask them to write similar kinds of texts as they themselves produce.

Late in chapter three, Thaiss and Zawacki examine department rubrics and come to some unsurprising conclusions that echo the work of John Bean and Margot Soven. They found that the rubrics repeat “‘generic academic’ terminology, but that disciplinary nuances are much harder to discern” (86). Terms such as evidence, organization, audience, and thesis repeatedly appeared, but different disciplines defined those things differently. Here the authors find evidence of their overarching standards as well as the individuality disciplines display.

After hearing from the faculty, Thaiss and Zawacki turn to students to learn about their experiences with writing, something few scholars have looked at with this breadth and depth. This is an area writing scholars need to dig deeper into, and this book provides tremendous groundwork. From their research, presented in chapter four, Thaiss and Zawacki posit three stages for the development of a disciplinary writer:

1. A first stage in which the writer bases a sense of disciplinary consistency on writing experience in very few courses with criteria in these courses generalized into “rules.”
2. A second stage in which the writer encounters different exigencies in different courses, and the sense of inconsistency, sometimes interpreted as teacher idiosyncrasy, supplants the perception of consistency.
3. A third stage, described above, in which the writer understands the differences as components of an articulated, nuanced idea of the discipline. (109–110)

The rest of the chapter fleshes out these stages, finding that disciplinary writing is much more personal than some might believe, needing passion, voice, and reflection. Also, the findings here exemplify that students use feedback in more complex ways than one might expect. Students use the feedback for cumulative learning of disciplinary conventions as well as an understanding of individual faculty member’s idiosyncrasies. The picture painted of students here is complex and provides helpful information for WAC program directors and faculty who want to better understand student learning and motivation.

The final chapter, “Implications for Teaching and Program Building,” doesn’t offer radical insight or new ways to teach writing or run writing programs. Nearly all of the suggestions, as noted by the authors, appear in many other places such as the WAC Clearinghouse, but this text does something most of the sources for that information do not. It provides pages and pages of data gleaned from interviews, surveys, rubrics, and essays, enough for one to chew on for quite some time. It provides the kinds of information that faculty can appreciate and use to guide their own practice. This book is an excellent resource for faculty and WAC program directors who want scholarship that provides insight and support for their work, and it is a necessary addition for WAC program directors’ bookshelves.

A review of *Reference Guide to Writing Across the Curriculum*

XIAOLI LI AND DAN WU, CLEMSON UNIVERSITY

Charles Bazerman, Joseph Little, Lisa Bethel, Teri Chavkin, Danielle Fouquette and Janet Garuris. *Reference Guide to Writing Across the Curriculum*. West Lafayette, Indiana: Parlor Press, 2005. Also, on The WAC Clearinghouse. pp.188.

IMAGINE THAT YOU have just arrived at a new place that you haven't visited before. At the visitor center you are given a map, and you know you will be able to explore this place by following the map. *Reference Guide to Writing Across the Curriculum* is such a map with which you will be able to explore all the aspects of writing across the curriculum (WAC), such as definition, history, pedagogical approaches and philosophy, administration, classroom practices, and assessment both at the student writing level and the program level. Extensive as it is, it is not in-depth instructions on how to incorporate writing practice because, as its title suggests, it is a reference guide.

Reference Guide to Writing Across the Curriculum is divided into three parts. Part I is "The WAC Movement," which provides a review of theoretical origins from the British secondary education system through the historical development of the WAC movement in the United States. It introduces the key concepts to understand WAC, such as WAC, WID, writing-intensive courses, writing in the professions, and first-year writing. This part also describes the programs from the early stages of the WAC movement to the mid-1980s and WAC programs in K-12 education. It briefly introduces the earliest programs with the names of the schools (both private four-year liberal arts colleges like Central College in Iowa, Carleton College in Minnesota, and Beaver College in Pennsylvania, and public universities like Michigan Technological University and

University of Michigan) that instituted a WAC program, key players at each institution, different program models and approaches adopted by each institution, and refers to publications by individuals from each institution for readers who want to learn more about the programs and use them as models for a program at their own institutions.

Part II illustrates three different approaches to theory and research that are closely associated with programmatic and pedagogical developments in WAC. The first approach looks closely at classroom practices and students learning to write within disciplines and explains the demands of academic writing within university classrooms. The second approach, writing to learn, claims that writing practice could assist in achieving student-centered engagement with disciplinary materials by students writing journals and other forms of expressive writing to encourage them to explore and develop their thoughts on paper. The third approach, the rhetoric of inquiry or writing in the discipline, contributes to a common picture of writing practices in the various disciplines and the relation of those processes to the production and use of disciplinary knowledge. These inquiries help us understand how different disciplines construct knowledge through different textual forms, and the kind of challenges students must meet when learning to write within their chosen fields (p. 66).

In addition to discussing these three approaches to theory and research, Part II also addresses two ongoing concerns in WAC: the particularity of disciplinary discourses and the place of students in disciplinary discourse. The former concern is related to the question of to what degree academic writing is the same or different across disciplinary settings when it comes to evaluating students and shaping curricula. Some argue for generalized writing skills, general criteria of writing quality, and instruction in general principles and procedures, while others view writing as a discipline-specific activity and argue that students should respond to the particularity of the situation, task, and means. Scholars like Bazerman and Russell see the engagements WAC makes with the practices of different disciplines as opening up inquiry into the specialized tasks of writing. Because of this inquiry into the particularities of writing tasks, they use genre and activity theory as ways of articulating these differences. The latter concern centers upon students' involvement within academic and disciplinary discourse, such as their position, stance, voice, and agency.

In Part III, the authors provide practical guidelines on the institutional operations of WAC programs, assessment in WAC, and a few subject-specific (mathematics, literature and language arts, psychology, economics, and history) examples of WAC classroom practices. Topics in Part III on how to coordinate WAC with other campus resources such as writing intensive courses, writing centers, and peer tutors might be of

interest to a wide range of readers: administrators, writing center directors and tutors, writing program directors and advisors, ESL instructors, and writing-intensive course instructors. These readers might also be interested in such new topics as electronic communication across the curriculum (ECAC), service learning, and interdisciplinary learning communities, which are also discussed.

Assessment or evaluation of practices or the application of theories is a vital part of a successful movement, and WAC is no exception. Chapter 10 of this reference guide starts with two questions concerning assessing students' work and assessing the success of programs. First, WAC challenges the traditional assessment based on general skills displayed in undifferentiated testing situations. In a WAC program, forms of writing and what counts as good writing vary from discipline to discipline and from one writing task to another. Second, assessment of WAC programs is even more problematic than the known difficulties of assessing writing problems given the heterogeneity of WAC programs, the range of faculty involved, and the multiple desired outcomes of student performance (p. 120). This reference guide presents the three stages of assessment literature: the anecdotal accounts of programs in the early 1980s; the more methodical and more empirical studies before the mid 1990s; and the more theoretically analytical approaches since the mid-1990s, such as Moran's business model, Selfe's contextual model, and Fulwiler's goal-oriented model. The chapter concludes that both the assessing process and the presentation of the assessment results are rhetorical, which means that it is important to consider the purpose, context, *kairos* (timing), and audience.

As a reference guide, this book provides necessary and concise information, especially for an American readership. But although the last decade has witnessed a rapid WAC movement in Europe, Australia, and New Zealand, this book does not cover other countries or compare the WAC movement in the US with that in other places.

The bibliographic section of this book deserves special attention. Thirty pages long, the bibliography provides a comprehensive coverage of WAC literature from 1962 to 2004. It is an excellent resource for all WAC stakeholders (administrators, faculty, and students) alike. The concepts clarified in the text of the book lay a solid foundation for understanding WAC, and then the bibliography points the way to articles and books to deepen one's understanding.

Notes on Contributors

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