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This Newsletter is published by the Council of Writing Program Administrators as a service to its members and as a means by which members of the profession may share information and express opinions. Such opinions are not necessarily those of the WPA.

Publication and distribution of this Newsletter has been assisted by J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College.

Invitation

In subsequent numbers of the WPA Newsletter, we would like to address some of the issues which WPAs face, and offer helpful ways of solving common problems. Here are just some of these issues: relations with secondary schools, choice and use of syllabi, training composition and basic writing teachers, good institutional structure and how to deal with bad ones, relations with faculty outside English, program structure, public relations techniques (when, how, why, and why not use them), observing classroom teaching. (This list was mined shamelessly from the pamphlet "Issues in Writing Program Administration," MLA convention: Teaching of Writing Division, WPA session, December, 1976.)

We will gladly consider for publication short articles (500-1000 words) on these or other issues relevant to writing program administration. Address manuscripts to Kenneth A. Bruffee, WPA Newsletter, English Department, Brooklyn College, Brooklyn, N.Y. 11210. Unsolicited manuscripts to be considered for fall and winter 1978 issues must be received by July 1, 1978. Material received after that date will be considered for 1979 issues.

We would also like to compile a bibliography of materials particularly relevant to the administration of writing programs. Members who know of such items and would like to contribute to the list may send bibliographical information, preferably with a brief annotation concerning relevance and usefulness, to the Newsletter editor.

WPA PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

This past December at the MLA convention in Chicago marked WPA's first anniversary and fulfillment of the charge made to the steering committee a year ago. We exist as a formal organization with bylaws and a working structure; we have a newsletter; and we have elected officers now beginning a three year term. I shall serve as president; Win Horner (University of Missouri) as vice-president; Joe Comprone (University of Louisville) as treasurer; Larry Kasden (J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College) as secretary. The rest of the steering committee will serve as the executive board for staggered terms. And with this issue of the Newsletter, I'm pleased to announce that Ken Bruffee (CUNY, Brooklyn) will assume the editorship, taking over from Bob Farrell (Cornell).

Our plans for this year are big. We're working to establish a Clearinghouse which would respond quickly to your request either for data on other writing programs or for accurate, timely descriptions of course content and sequences on other campuses. Although the NEH-Iowa University project is an important first step in assisting new administrators, we'd like to supplement that approach with seminars and workshops of two or three days' duration for those institutions that cannot spare their program directors for a full term. We're eager, too, to establish a system of advisory teams which could visit campuses by invitation and could evaluate existing structures. Finally, we aim to produce in-depth studies on issues in writing program administration.

These goals will, of course, take money, and we have begun exploring opportunities with granting agencies. Without making any definite commitment, Exxon Educational Foundation has shown serious interest in some of our plans. We will continue, of course, to develop as many methods as we can to carry out our goals.

In all our efforts to call attention to the needs of WPA's and to the nature of their tasks and responsibilities, we aim to work alongside of the MLA's Teaching of Writing Division and the CCCC. We're trying to gather the various groups that represent program heads and will at the CCCC meeting in Denver request one session to share ideas for future action. I hope to see you there — but in the meantime if you think of anything WPA should be attempting, please write to me or to one of the other officers. We want the organization to do what you want it to do.

Let's hear from you!

Sincerely,

Harvey S. Wiener
CUNY LaGuardia

MEMBERSHIP

Please send you 1977-78 membership dues of \$10 and a completed membership form to

Dr. Joseph Comprone
English Department
University of Louisville
Louisville, Kentucky 40208

Receipt of you membership dues will insure that you continue to receive the WPA Newsletter and benefits of WPA membership.

Name

School Address

Home Address

School Telephone

Home Telephone

Please check the appropriate space:

This is my first application to WPA.

This is a renewal of my WPA membership.

Editorial

The following remarks were delivered to the plenary session of the MLA Teaching of Writing Division, Chicago, December 27, 1977. You will notice that they were addressed not to writing program administrators primarily, but to writing teachers. They were an effort to explain the purpose of WPA to our colleagues, some of whom have expressed doubt about the necessity and goals of such an organization.

You may find them useful, therefore, both in explaining the organization to others, and in thinking further about the implications of our work as writing program administrators.

* * * *

Last September a notice in the MLA Teaching of Writing Division Newsletter announced a new organization loosely associated with the division, called the Council of Writing Program Administrators. Many of you may have disregarded that notice because you are writing teachers, not writing administrators. To writing teachers, an organization devoted to the interests of writing program administrators could not seem to be of such importance.

In this case, however, I think appearances may be deceiving. This new organization of writing program administrators, along with such programs as the new institute for writing program administration being

planned at the University of Iowa*, is important not just to our colleagues who do jobs variously called Director of Freshman Comp, Chairman of Rhetoric, Supervisor of Freshman Comp, Chairman of the Comp Committee, and so on. In my judgment, efforts to improve writing program administration are important also to all of us who work as classroom teachers under the guidance and protection of writing program administrators. Today, especially, and increasingly in the future, successful writing program administration in our colleges and universities is essential to our own success as writing teachers. Or, to put it another way, it seems to me that a good deal of our recent lack of effectiveness as writing teachers could be traced to limitations built in structurally to the way most writing programs are set up and administered in this country.

Naturally, my purpose here is not to criticize the efforts of the many hardworking people over the years who have knocked themselves out trying to create and maintain sound, workable, progressive programs in writing. Rather, it is to describe and explore the implications for writing teachers of what seems to me to be a relatively new phenomenon in our profession.

Very recently a striking change has taken place in the organization and visibility of what we writing teachers do. I am not talking about the press we've gotten in the last few years. What I'm talking about is the fast-growing tendency in colleges and universities throughout the country to involve whole campuses in writing programs. In many institutions today, writing is no longer perceived as the exclusive province, responsibility, and tough luck of the English Department. Writing is being per-

*For a description of this program, see PMLA 92 (November, 1977), p. 1252.

ceived as the active concern of the whole college. As a result, the director of the writing program at many schools has been catapulted into a new, important, demanding, and highly visible position of leadership.

This situation is, of course, not new at some colleges, where good writing has been a focus of campus-wide attention for many years. But for most of us it is a great change from what we're used to. When I became a director of freshman English seven years ago, for example, the task was defined in the traditional manner. I answered to the English Department Chair, who appointed me, and I was expected to represent him in dealing with the teachers of freshman comp. They in turn dealt with me. And that was about it.

Contrast that with a recent experience I had as a CEA Campus Consultant at a medium-sized private college in the midwest. I spent a day there. For a few hours at the beginning and another hour at the end I talked intensively with the person most directly involved with their writing program, their Director of Freshman English. In between, however, in lounges, offices, over coffee, at lunch, I was plied with acute, well-informed questions (many of which, I hasten to say, I had difficulty answering) about organization, procedures, staffing, budget, faculty training, textbooks, location of drop-in writing center facilities, methods of evaluation, and writing pedagogy -- all these questions directed at me by faculty development administrators, faculty council representatives, a representative of the college president, as well as students, faculty members, and department chairs from departments of English, History, Biology, Education, Business, and others. The person who organized my meetings with these people, informed them, and is now primarily responsible for putting their recommendations into effect is the writing program administrator on that campus -- the so-called Director of Freshman English.

Despite these new demands now being made on writing program administrators in our profession they remain a beleaguered group. For one thing, as most of you realize, the profession is in the habit of considering them second-class citizens, in part because they have stepped through the looking glass, from the traditional academic point of view, into that never-never land where croquet mallets turn into flamingoes and croquet balls turn into hedgehogs: the land of administration; and mainly, of course, because they take the job of teaching writing seriously.

Writing program administrators are beleaguered also because when the campus rises out of its lethargy in arms about the deplorable state of student writing, the buck inevitably gets passed to the writing program administrator. As I suppose some of you may have noticed, the director of freshman comp is held personally responsible for the worst student writers on campus. That the director of freshman comp is not responsible in any way for the best writers on campus is also universally acknowledged.

But writing program administrators are beleaguered in two more important respects as well. And remember the people we are talking about represent the interest of writing teachers to the English Department and to the College as a whole. First, most writing program administrators are untenured, and, therefore, vulnerable. They often cannot act boldly, because their jobs may be at stake. Tenure decisions are not notoriously made by members of the faculty who revel in opportunities to teach writing. Most writing program administrators are also subject to the will of the English department chair, whose constituency often consists largely of traditionally minded academics who depreciate teaching writing and writing teachers. In fact, the department chair may himself or herself be just one of those traditionally

minded academics, deeply -- although these days probably covertly -- antagonistic to anything that smacks of teaching writing. In short, the position of most writing program administrators is untenable at base because most of their interests as writing program administrators whether they know it or not, are inherently opposed in many respects to many of the interest, whether they know it or not, of the people who in most cases appointed them.

Second, most writing program administrators are beleaguered because they take the job young and freshly p-h-deed by graduate programs which in most cases teach them little either about teaching writing or about administrating anything at all. As a result, most have at best a rudimentary idea of what is required in order to do that job successfully. They don't know -- because nobody ever tells them -- what they are being asked to do.

And here is just some of what they are being asked to do. They are asked to organize junior faculty and teaching assistants under their care -- people sometimes only slightly younger and slightly less experienced than the writing supervisors themselves -- and teach these junior faculty how to teach writing, in many cases from scratch. They are asked to cajole into a semblance of harmony with the prevailing ideas about teaching writing, older faculty who outrank them, who resent having to teach writing, and who would willingly slay the messenger of the bad news that they must teach writing. Again, writing program administrators are asked to reach out beyond the English department, to faculty in other departments, teaching them how to deal with poorly written papers, teaching them how to assign papers short enough and clearly defined enough that students can do a decent and meaningful job of writing them, and even, of course, teaching many of them -- the faculty at large -- what the educational value is of assigning

papers at all. And beyond the college faculty itself, writing program administrators are also asked to teach college administrators, the general public, and sometimes even legislators and other government officials what is involved in teaching writing.

In short, writing program administrators today are the emissaries of writing teachers to the world outside their classrooms. Writing program administrators are responsible for creating the context -- in the widest possible sense -- in which we all teach writing. And creating an enlightened, sympathetic context is essential today to our success as writing teachers, because unless they create that context, we all teach writing in a vacuum. Our students cannot learn how to write in a context in which the general public, legislators, college administrators, college faculty, most English department members, and, alas, even many writing teachers themselves fear writing, view writing as punishment, and have an understanding of the nature of language which is roughly at the level of a "grammar quiz" on the inner pages of Readers Digest.

Now, you will perhaps have noticed that in my list of what writing program administrators are expected to do I have not included what most of us think administrators do -- the managerial tasks of making up schedules, assigning classes, hiring and firing, that sort of thing. Of course some writing program administrators have those responsibilities too. But where writing program administrators differ -- or should differ -- from most other college administrators is that the most important part of their job is not managerial but directly educational. Writing program administrators in their administrative capacity are writing teachers. Writing program administrators in fact teach students how to write in almost exactly the same sense -- although not, of course, in the same ways -- that we classroom

teachers teach students how to write, because both of us are actively undertaking to create conditions in which learning can occur.

In fact, I would say that only when writing program administrators conceive of their job in this larger way, as teaching, do they have a prayer of doing the job as it must be done. And in order for these intelligent, energetic and mature, but as I have said mainly young and professionally vulnerable people to begin to conceive of their work in this sufficiently large way and undertake the task with a proper regard to its immensity, they have simply had to organize. They have, therefore, associated themselves as the Council of Writing Program Administrators in order to support each other in their work, teach each other how to do that work, and focus their own and the nation's attention on the problems of teaching writing from the broad and fully informed perspective that writing program administrators alone are in the best position to hold.

This as I see it is the purpose of the Council of Writing Program Administrators. Only when the people who are really on the spot can identify one another and together identify the problems that together they — and we all -- face in improving the quality of undergraduate writing in this country, will we who toil in the classrooms under their guidance and protection have a chance of success.

Ken Bruffee

COUNCIL OF WRITING PROGRAM ADMINISTRATORS

BY LAWS

Adopted December 29, 1977

I. Purposes

Notwithstanding any other provision of these articles, the Council of Writing Program Administrators (WPA) is organized exclusively for one or more of the following purposes: religious, charitable, scientific, testing for public safety, literary, or educational purposes, or to foster national or international amateur sports competition (but only if no part of its activities involve the provision of athletic facilities or equipment), or for the prevention of cruelty to children or animals, as specified in section 501 (c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954, and shall not carry on any activities not permitted to be carried on by a corporation exempt from Federal income tax under section 501 (c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954.

No part of the net earnings of the WPA shall inure to the benefit of any member, trustee, director, officer of the corporation, or any private individual (except that reasonable compensation may be paid for services rendered to or for the WPA), and no member, trustee, officer of the WPA or any private individual shall be entitled to share in the distribution of any of the corporate assets on dissolution of the WPA.

No substantial part of the activities of the WPA shall be carrying on propoganda, or otherwise attempting, to influence legislation (except as otherwise provided by Internal Revenue Code section 501 (h), or participating in, or intervening in (including the publication or distribution of statements), any political campaign on behalf of any candidate for public office.

In the event of dissolution, all of the remaining assets and property of the WPA shall after necessary expenses thereof be distributed to such organizations as shall qualify under section 501 (c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954, as amended, or, to another organization to be used in such a manner as in the judgment of a Justice of the Supreme Court of the State of New York will best accomplish the general purposes for which the corporation was formed.

II. Membership

The Council of Writing Program Administrators will offer membership to directors and former directors of writing programs in colleges and universities across the country. By means of advertising in MLA, NCTE, CCCC, and other journals, directors and former directors from institutions of all kinds -- private, public, urban, rural, two-year or four-year, large and small -- will be encouraged to join. Since the Council wishes to encourage

the membership of active program directors and former directors who will use the Council as a clearinghouse for exchanges of program information and as a political base for promoting local programs, the Council will not solicit membership from other than program directors and former directors or those designated by their departments or colleges as holding administrative responsibility for an institution's writing program. In those schools, for example, that do not have a Director of Composition or of Freshmen English the chair of a program steering committee or a regular faculty member without administrative appointment might well be designated by his or her institution as a potential Council member.

Membership in the Writing Division of the MLA and the CCCC should be corequisite with membership in the Council, thereby providing the Council and the institutions represented by it the influence and general support of the associations' larger memberships. To encourage exchanges of program information and to expedite the exchange, the Council should collect dues of \$10 per year to cover the expenses of mailing, printing and distribution of its newsletter and other necessary information.

III. Voting

- A. Any dues-paying member is eligible to vote.
- B. The executive committee will consist of a President; Vice-President; Secretary; Treasurer; a six member board of directors; and one representative from the MLA and one from the CCCC. The executive committee will include representatives from each of four geographic regions and one representative from a community or two-year college.
- C. All officers and members of the board of directors will be elected to two-year staggered terms by mail ballot.
- D. General meetings will be held at the annual MLA convention, open board meetings will be held at the CCCC convention, and the board will meet periodically as needed.

IV. Goals

The Goals of the Council of Writing Program Administrators are as follows:

- A. to serve the interest of writing programs by educating the academic community and the public at large about the needs of successful writing programs.
- B. to promote cooperation among the various writing programs in two and four-year colleges throughout the country by sharing information and by defining common interests and needs.
- C. to enumerate conditions for the successful teaching of composition and to bring attention to these conditions so that college administrators will support realistic writing programs.
- D. to establish a clearinghouse of research on writing program administration.
- E. to work for the improvement of basic writing competencies of college students.

- F. to sponsor and support a newsletter which represents the goals and needs of the organization.
- G. to work along with public and private elementary and secondary schools in the development of successful writing programs.
- H. to review and to evaluate criteria used in judging students' writing and in establishing placement and proficiency standards in colleges.
- I. to explore funding sources for the growth and development of model writing programs.

V. Additional Procedures

- A. The executive committee will appoint the editor of the newsletter after requesting nominations from the membership.
- B. The newsletter committee will present an editorial policy for approval by the executive committee.
- C. The newsletter should periodically report programatic research supported by The Council of Writing Program Administrators.