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# Writing Center Directors: An Emerging Portrait of the Profession<sup>1</sup>

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Although writing centers have become institutionalized within the academy, their ubiquity has not resulted in anything approaching security among writing center personnel. Indeed, as Thomas Hemmeter has observed, insecurity about the center's status has been the subtext of much writing center scholarship: "To read the publications of writing center teachers and administrators is to listen to a disenfranchised voice from the margins telling a tale of painful marginality" (35). For those outside the writing center, the most prominent telling of that tale was Stephen North's 1984 *College English* article "The Idea of a Writing Center." North complained that writing centers are generally misunderstood—their purposes over-simplified, their personnel under-appreciated, their services inappropriately utilized. He was especially miffed because the people he might most have expected to understand writing centers—i.e., his English Department colleagues—were as ignorant and misinformed as anyone else. North's comments grew mostly out of his own observations and perceptions, and his evidence was largely anecdotal.<sup>2</sup> Against what he perceived as widespread misunderstanding of the writing center and its personnel, North asserted his idea of a writing center. Central to that idea was the autonomy and professional status of the writing center staff, which North posited as an a priori fact: "[T]he first rule in our Writing Center is that we are professionals at what we do" (441).

In 1988, Gary Olson and Evelyn Ashton-Jones attempted a more systematic examination of attitudes toward writing center personnel. Their WPA article reported on a survey of 188 freshman English directors about their perceptions of writing center directors. The image that emerged was a narrow one: writing center directors were viewed primarily as administrators rather than as scholars or teachers. In fact, Olson and Ashton-Jones concluded from their survey that the writing center director is essentially perceived as a "wife"—someone whose work is not valued in the "real" world, whose influence is largely confined within four walls, whose place is in the "home." They close with a call for greater recognition of writing center directors as professionals, arguing that "[t]he future of the writing center and the integrity of the larger writing program are directly linked to the professional status accorded their directors" (25).

Valerie Balester echoed Olson and Ashton-Jones in a 1992 CCC piece. Reacting to the 1991 CCCC "Statement of Principles and Standards for the Postsecondary Teaching of Writing," Balester criticized that document for not recognizing writing centers as research sites nor as pedagogical alternatives to the composition classroom. She complained that "[w]riting center staff are not seen as professionals, not even among compositionists. . . . We are the third-class

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citizenry in English departments . . ." (168).

All these commentators concern themselves with how writing centers are perceived by *outsiders*, especially compositionists and members of English departments, and how those perceptions affect the professional status of writing centers. What's missing in these and other analyses, however, are two important kinds of information: first, a comprehensive profile of the position of writing center director—what those people do, their academic training, their salaries and academic rank, etc.—and second, some indication of how writing center personnel see themselves and their jobs. It's one thing to claim—as North, Olson and Ashton-Jones, and Balester do—that writing center personnel are professionals and should be more widely recognized as such. But if we are to understand the issue of professional status among the people who run writing centers, we need to know more about who they are and how they conceive of their own roles.

## Approach

To that end, I administered a survey to a national sample of writing center directors. I was interested in two main questions: 1) What sorts of people run writing centers? 2) How do these people feel about their jobs? The survey, then, yielded both demographic and attitudinal data. This was a preliminary study designed not to produce comprehensive conclusions about the professional status of writing center directors, but rather to begin developing a profile of the position and to begin subjecting the profession to the kind of analysis that has been directed at other occupations. Career satisfaction indices are a common instrument used by occupational sociologists (Robinson, Shaver, and Wrightsman); hence, it makes sense to begin an analysis of writing center directors with an attempt to measure their attitudes toward their jobs.

I began by purchasing two mailing lists: members of the National Writing Centers Association (NWCA), and subscribers to the *Writing Lab Newsletter* (WLN). Removing duplicates and library subscriptions left 875 names. Because the survey was designed specifically for writing center directors and assistant directors, and because I had no way of knowing whether individuals on the mailing lists I had purchased fit that category, I asked recipients who were not writing center directors or assistant directors to return the survey uncompleted. I also enclosed a post card on which respondents could indicate if they were interested in receiving a summary of survey results.

## Response Rate

A total of 444 surveys were returned—348 that had been completed, and 96 from people who indicated they were neither a director nor an assistant director of a writing center (see Table 1). The overall response rate was 50.7%. What is not clear is whether the writing center directors and nondirectors had comparable return rates, or whether nondirectors, for whom there was no particular incentive to complete the survey, may have responded at a lower rate.

**Table 1:**  
Survey Response Rate

<i>WLN</i> Mailing List	667
NWCA Mailing List	477
Duplicates/Libraries	269
Total Surveys Mailed	875
Returned: Nondirectors	96
Returned: Directors	348
Returned: Total	444
Total Response Rate	50.7%

## The Sample

Several observations about the sample are in order. First, the only people who received a survey were those who were either members of NWCA or subscribers to *WLN*. Obviously, this is a skewed sample. For example, I suspect that respondents to my survey might not accurately reflect the proportion of part-time positions that exist. Some 88% of survey respondents said their position is full time. But how many people with part-time positions subscribe to *WLN* or have memberships in NWCA? Additionally, it could be conjectured that part-time people would have less time to fill out a questionnaire, so even those part-timers who did receive the survey may be underrepresented in my results. In any event, because the vast majority of respondents to my survey were full time, the results reported here reflect only the responses of people who indicated they have a full-time position.

Second, some surveys went to people who work in high school writing centers. About 8% of the questionnaires returned were from individuals in either a public or private high school. In my preliminary data analysis, I lumped secondary and postsecondary respondents together. As I began further analyzing the data, however, I realized that many of the survey items were not well suited to high school writing center personnel. Indeed, the language of the survey in general assumed a postsecondary audience (a fact that several respondents noted in their written comments). Regretfully, then, I decided not to include respondents from high schools in my data analysis; the results reported here reflect only postsecondary respondents. Limiting my analysis to individuals with full-time postsecondary positions resulted in a final sample of 273 respondents.

Finally, although the survey is fairly straightforwardly titled "Writing Center Directors Career Study," and I although I explicitly asked only directors or assistant directors to complete it, the designation "writing center director" is, it turns out, by no means unproblematic. For example, what about the person who directs a "learning center" that includes tutoring in writing as well as in other subjects or skill areas? Or the person who works with writers in a learning

center but does not “direct” the center as a whole? What about the person for whom running the writing center constitutes only, say, 20% of her job, which also includes teaching and/or other administrative responsibilities? Is she a “writing center director”? The way I dealt with such questions was simply to assume that anyone who completed the survey was in fact a writing center director or assistant director. I have no way of knowing, of course, how many people who did not complete it, because they thought they weren’t qualified, were in fact as qualified as some of the people who *did* complete it.

## Titles

The complexity of this issue of how writing center people refer to themselves was suggested by responses to two items. In answering item 6, “Which one of these categories (writing center director, assistant director, other) best describes your principal form of employment?” nearly half (46%) checked “other”—even though the instructions had directed those people receiving the survey who were neither a director or assistant director of a writing center to so indicate and to return the questionnaire uncompleted. Furthermore, respondents described themselves with a remarkable variety of labels. Table 2 provides just a sample of the responses to another question, “What is your official title?”

**Table 2:**  
Official Titles

Director of the Writing Center	Writing Center Manager
Writing Lab Instructor	Writing Specialist
Staff Coordinator	Director, Communication Skills Center
Writing Lab Coordinator	Learning Center Specialist
Coordinator of Technology	Writing Clinician
Supervisor, Writing Laboratory	Coordinator of Communication Skills Center
Writing Center Instructor	Peer Tutor Coordinator
Technical Assistant to the English Department	Director of Academic Resources
Writing Desk Liaison	Director, Learning Assistance Program
Academic Support Services Officer	Director of Instructional/Support Services
Director, Writing Across the Curriculum	Director, Language Support Services
Director of Academic Services	Writing Center Facilitator
Writing Coordinator	Tutorial Specialist
Writer’s Workshop Director	Writing Specialist
Director, Center for Writing and Learning	Coordinator, Writing Support Services
Professional Writing Tutor	Learning Skills Lab Coordinator
Director, Learning Support Services	Writing Center Advisor
College Lab Assistant I	Instructional Program Manager
Program Coordinator for Center for Academic Improvement	Program Director—Reading and Writing/Study Skills Lab

## Demographic Information

This sample indicates that writing center directors are disproportionately female: 74%. Nearly all directors (96%) have a graduate degree: 44% with an MA, 40% with a PhD, and 12% with another degree (e.g., MEd, EdD, MFA). Writing center directors are most likely to be trained in English/literature (66%), followed by education (20%) and composition/rhetoric (10%). Their salaries range from \$9,600 to \$71,000, with a mean of \$33,323. Eighty-six percent of respondents teach in addition to their administrative responsibilities in the writing center, spending an average of 36% of their time teaching, while 25% also serve as writing program director. Sixty-nine percent of respondents have a faculty appointment, while 46% have a tenure-track position. Respondents work an average of 44 hours per week and spend half of that time on center-related business.

This demographic information helps outline an emerging portrait of the profession. According to this study, writing center directors tend to be female, are not typically trained in composition/rhetoric, are more likely than not to have a nontenure track position, and are likely to teach as well as direct a writing center. Their salaries put them in the mid-range of their colleagues across the academy.<sup>3</sup> Much of this information is probably unsurprising to most writing center directors. Anyone attending a writing center conference quickly observes the profession's gender imbalance. Furthermore, writing center folklore tends to assume second-class citizenship for directors, many of whom are recruited to run

**Table 3:**  
Demographic Information

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271	Female: 74%	Male: 26%	
248	Highest degree:	BA/BS	4%
		MA	44%
		PhD.	40%
		Other	12%
272	Field:	English/Lit.	66%
		Education	20%
		Comp./Rhetoric	10%
		Creative Writing	3%
		Other	1%
268	Salary:	Mean	\$33,323
		Median	\$32,146
		Range	\$9,600 - \$71,000
233	Teach:		86%
272	% time teaching:		36%
266	Faculty appt.		69%
265	Tenure track		46%

the center in addition to teaching and/or performing other administrative duties.<sup>4</sup>The one surprise in my findings might be salary figures. When I reported on preliminary results from this survey at the Conference on College Composition and Communication, I asked audience members to predict the average salary for a writing center director. Their guesses tended to be lower than the figure I reported.

## Attitudinal Information

The other purpose of the survey was to address the question: "How do writing center directors feel about their jobs?" To measure job and career satisfaction, I formulated nine Likert-scale items (see Appendix A, item 25). I also asked respondents to compare their expectations before undertaking their current position with the reality of the job as they actually experienced it (item 26). In addition, they were asked to indicate whether they felt prepared or unprepared for various aspects of their job (item 27). The survey concluded with open-ended questions about the biggest frustrations and rewards of their job (items 30 and 31). Means and standard deviations for items 25-27 are presented in Tables 4, 5, and 6.

**Table 4:**  
Career Satisfaction

Indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements.

Disagree	1	2	3	4	Agree	5		
							M	SD
							4.1	.87
							2.7	1.4
							2.7	1.0
							2.0	1.2
							2.4	1.3
							3.4	1.4
							2.2	1.3
							2.3	1.5
							2.5	1.4

**Table 5:**  
Job Expectations

Please evaluate your experience by comparing your expectations before undertaking your current position with the reality of the job as you have actually experienced it. To what extent did the following items meet, exceed, or fall short of your expectations? Also indicate the extent to which these issues represent a current problem for you.

<u>Expectations</u>					<u>Current Problem</u>				
Fell Short		Exceeded			None		Severe		
1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
<u>M</u>		<u>SD</u>			<u>M</u>		<u>SD</u>		
3.6		.93			3.1		1.2		
3.4		.90		The time the job would require of me.	2.2		1.1		
2.8		.92		The intellectual challenge of the position.	2.9		1.2		
3.8		.95		The financial rewards of the job.	1.9		1.1		
3.6	1.0			Making a difference in people's lives.	3.0		1.2		
				The administrative demands of running a writing center.					
3.5	1.1			The difficulty of dealing with the bureaucracy.	3.2		1.2		
3.6	.93			The emotional rewards of my job.	2.0		1.1		
3.6	1.0			The stress of my job.	3.1		1.2		
3.6	1.1			Forming close, satisfying relationships with employees.	2.0		1.1		
3.7	1.1			The political complexities of the job.	3.2		1.3		

**Table 6:**  
Job Preparation

When you started in your present position, indicate the extent to which you felt prepared or unprepared for the following aspects of your job.

	Unprepared				Prepared	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>
	1	2	3	4			
Budgets and financial management						2.4	1.4
Promoting the writing center						3.5	1.3
Hiring staff						3.4	1.2
Training staff						3.5	1.3
Dealing with administrators						3.0	1.2
Mediating conflicts among staff members						3.2	1.2

These data indicate that writing center directors are generally satisfied with their jobs, with the exception of how much money they make. Although some more negative aspects of the job exceeded their expectations and tend to be described as a current problem (e.g., administrative and bureaucratic demands, dealing with stress, and political complexities), these are balanced by positive dimensions of their work, such as emotional rewards, satisfying relationships, and the feeling that they are making a difference in people's lives. The area where they felt most unprepared for beginning their jobs was budgets and financial management. This is not surprising given the fact that nearly all of them received their academic training in the humanities.

## Data Analysis<sup>5</sup>

Once I had derived these summary statistics, I became interested in whether any particular variables or combinations of variables might predict how people feel about their jobs. I began with a factor analysis of the data, which identified five factors. I labeled these: *personal growth*, *job stress*, *job barriers*, *job satisfaction* and *preparedness*. Items with high and unique loadings were collected to form scales. Next, stepwise multiple regression analysis was used in an effort to determine the relationship between these scales and selected variables. Four scales were used as dependent variables. Fourteen independent variables were identified from the survey, some quantitative (e.g., age, salary) and some dichotomous (e.g., tenure track/nontenure track). These variables are listed in Table 7.

For each dependent variable, stepwise multiple regression analysis was used to see how well some combinations of independent variables would predict each dependent variable. These results are summarized in Table 8.

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**Table 7:**  
Multiple Regression Analysis: Variables

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Dependent Variables

Job Satisfaction  
Job Barriers  
Job Stress  
Personal Growth

Independent Variables

Age  
Salary  
Employment Type (Director/Asst. Director or Other)

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**Table 7 (continued)**

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Independent Variables (cont.)

Faculty Appointment

Tenure Track

Years in Position

Years in Writing Center

Total Hours/Week

Hours/Week in Writing Center

Percentage of Total Appointment Devoted to WC

Number of Supervisees

Prepared

Existing Position

Existing Writing Center

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**Table 8:**  
Multiple Regression Analysis<sup>6</sup>

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**Predicting Job Stress (n=205)**

<u>Predictor Variable</u>	<u>Multiple R</u>	<u>R<sup>2</sup></u>	<u>Partial Correlation</u>	<u>Bivariate Correlation</u>
Hours in WC	.26	.07	.26	.26

**Predicting Personal Growth (n=203)**

<u>Predictor Variable</u>	<u>Multiple R</u>	<u>R<sup>2</sup></u>	<u>Partial Correlation</u>	<u>Bivariate Correlation</u>
Total Supervisees	.18	.03	.18	.18

**Predicting Job Satisfaction (n=213)**

<u>Predictor Variable</u>	<u>Multiple R</u>	<u>R<sup>2</sup></u>	<u>Partial Correlation</u>	<u>Bivariate Correlation</u>
Salary	.38	.15	.30	.38
Tenure Track	.42	.18	.19	.33
Hours/Week	.47	.22	-.18	-.15
Hours in WC	.48	.23	-.12	-.24

**Predicting Job Barriers (n=208)**

<u>Predictor Variable</u>	<u>Multiple R</u>	<u>R<sup>2</sup></u>	<u>Partial Correlation</u>	<u>Bivariate Correlation</u>
Hours/Week	.33	.11	.31	.33
Existing WC	.35	.13	-.15	-.14
Prepared	.37	.14	-.13	-.12
Hours in WC	.39	.15	.11	.10

Of the four dependent variables, job satisfaction was the one best predicted by the set of independent variables. Salary makes the largest contribution, followed by tenure track status, how many hours per week one works, and how much of that time is spent in the writing center. A respondent with a higher salary who is tenure track and works fewer total hours and fewer hours in the writing center tends to have the highest level of job satisfaction.

It should be observed that although job satisfaction was the dependent variable best predicted by the set of independent variables, the correlations are fairly low. Correlations are even lower for other dependent variables. The only significant predictor of job stress was the number of hours per week one spends on writing center work. For job barriers, individuals who work more total hours per week and spend more time on writing center work, who feel less prepared for various aspects of their job, and who run a new writing center tend to experience the most job barriers.

Just as interesting as what were significant predictors is what were not. Number of supervisees, for example, which ranged from 1 to 160, was not, as one might have expected, a significant predictor of job stress. It did, however, contribute to whether respondents' jobs provided a sense of personal growth. How long respondents had worked in a writing center or in their present position did not seem to affect their attitudes about their job, nor did the percentage of their total appointment devoted to the writing center.

Given the low correlations between the independent and dependent variables I analyzed, perhaps the only conclusion that can be stated with certainty is that it is very difficult to predict what factors will influence writing center directors' attitudes about their jobs. And given the remarkable diversity of those jobs, as revealed in this research, perhaps that unpredictability should not be surprising. For example, what would conventional wisdom predict about the factors contributing to job stress? Looking at the independent variables I considered, one might expect that people with fewer years in the profession and in their present position, who work longer hours, have more supervisees, and feel more unprepared will experience greater job stress. However, someone fairly new to writing centers in general and/or to one center in particular could fit several different profiles, e.g., the new literature-trained PhD who, in a tight job market, somewhat reluctantly accepted a position that included a course reduction for running the writing center; the already harried writing program director who was assigned to start a writing center because she was the only person in the department with any administrative experience; the adjunct whose appointment to the writing center meant now being able to survive on one appointment at one campus instead of traveling between two unconnected jobs; the experienced but frustrated classroom teacher who saw in the writing center a chance to revitalize a stagnant career.

Even an apparently straightforward criterion such as preparedness proves, upon reflection, to be rather more complicated—given the variety of people serving as writing center directors. For example, the person for whom the writing center feels like a burdensome assignment, a distraction from other

demanding involvements, may experience more job stress as a result of his feeling unprepared for various aspects of writing center administration than would the person who feels equally unprepared but for whom that feeling translates into a sense of trailblazing excitement about an involvement that lies at the center of his professional identity. In other words, the multifariousness of the entity "writing center director" seems to make the business of predicting job attitudes a chancy one.

## Frustrations and Rewards

Open-ended questions asked respondents to list the biggest frustrations and rewards of their jobs. The most common responses to these items are summarized in Tables 9 and 10. It should be noted that because a given respondent may have had responses in more than one category, percentages do not add up to 100%.

**Table 9:**  
Biggest Frustrations

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n=272	
Not enough money /staff	66 (24%)
Too many responsibilities, not enough time	45 (16%)
Marginalization of center; lack of recognition, appreciation	42 (15%)
Lack of understanding or support from faculty/administration	41 (15%)
Student and faculty misunderstanding of center's role (remedial, quick fix, etc.)	36 (13%)
Insufficient facilities, equipment, space	25 (9%)
Finding qualified staff; staff instability, turnover	24 (9%)

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**Table 10:**  
Biggest Rewards

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n=272	
Helping students, seeing their success and improvement	136 (50%)
Working with tutors and other staff, seeing them develop	100 (37%)
Seeing growth and influence of writing center campus-wide	45 (17%)
Relationships with faculty colleagues; seeing writing center effect classroom and programmatic change	43 (16%)
Professional development: personal growth, ability to make meaningful decisions, collegiality within profession	30 (11%)

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## Discussion

These results confirm several common perceptions about writing center directors: they are disproportionately female, they work long hours for not a lot of money, many lack the academy's ultimate validation (tenure), and they struggle with inadequate resources. In addition to providing confirmation of existing perceptions, though, these results also add to an understanding of writing center directors and their jobs. It is interesting, for example, that while Olson and Ashton-Jones assumed that freshman English directors and writing center directors were two different positions, this study reveals that 25% of the writing center directors surveyed also serve as writing program director. Indeed, the diverse nature of the position and how people feel about their varied responsibilities is one of the most notable findings of this survey.

On the negative side, directors tend to have underestimated the administrative and political demands of their jobs and to feel most unprepared to handle budgetary and financial matters.<sup>7</sup> On the positive side, writing center directors express general satisfaction with their lives. They derive great rewards from their work with people—both writing center clients and staff. Making a difference in people's lives makes working in a writing center meaningful. In particular, I was struck with the number of respondents who wrote about the rewards of developing relationships with tutors. Writing center directors prize the relationships they develop with their employees, as is evidenced by comments such as these:

- I really enjoy getting to know the tutors—some of the brightest students on campus.
- I have had tutors present at conferences and even publish—very satisfying.
- I have also been rewarded by a number of bright, interested tutors who have much to teach me about the minds and writing processes of students.
- They are far more savvy, insightful, clear about writing than I ever was as an undergraduate. I enjoy especially the collegiality of the group; they are better at it than faculty.
- I feel like more than just their supervisor, but also an advisor, mentor, friend. Many call years after graduation for advice about careers or just to keep in touch.
- The student tutors have made the Center their space. They have grown and developed as tutors and as writers. They shoulder responsibility, take responsibility, and act responsibly. I adore them all—all their quirks and wonderments. I am so proud of them, their attitudes, their potential, their wonders, and their delights. When I hear faculty praise work they've done, I feel like my heart is too big for my chest.

Running a writing center is challenging, rewarding, and sometimes frustrating work. Writing center directors express the greatest dissatisfaction with such things as salary, lack of resources, and lack of understanding and

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recognition—some of the supposed marks of professional status. Professionalization proves to be an elusive goal, for as occupational sociologist George Ritzer has observed, it is a dynamic process rather than a static designation. Those occupations that have sought but not yet achieved full professional standing are always in the process of trying to achieve it, while the established professions are always in the process of protecting their standing from various external threats to their domain. As writing center directors strive for professional recognition for themselves and the centers they direct, we need to ask: How do they see themselves? This survey was an attempt to begin discovering some answers to that question.

## Further Research

Further research in this area might address the complex issue of definition that emerged in this study. Just what is a writing center director? We need a better sense of where writing center directors find themselves within academic hierarchy, who they report to and how they are funded—areas that my survey did not address. It would also be interesting to know more about the kinds of job descriptions for writing center directors that are in place at different institutions. For example, Sharon Wright found that among 14 of Oklahoma State University's "peer" institutions, 79% required the writing center director to have either a PhD or tenure-track faculty status, but none required any kind of administrative training or experience.

Another interesting line of inquiry would be to apply the case study approach employed by Kinkead and Harris to the position of writing center director. Nine of the writing centers profiled in their volume include a section on administration, typically a paragraph that includes only a few sentences about the director. The exceptions are Joan Mullin's description of her position at the University of Toledo's Bancroft Campus and Ed Lotto's profile of his position at Lehigh University. Mullin explains her political and philosophical reasons for maintaining autonomy from the English department, while Lotto describes his attempts to relocate the center and himself in the organizational flow chart. More fully developed descriptions of this type would help flesh out the profile of writing center directors that my study has outlined.

But beyond position descriptions, it would be interesting to know how and why writing center directors entered the profession. Outside the academy, we expect professionals to have sensed some kind of "calling" to their profession and to have devoted themselves with considerable intentionality and focus to their chosen specialty—whether in medicine or law or whatever. In the academy, those kinds of expectations apply to faculty members, less so to administrators. College and university administrators are often former faculty members who either got kicked, or kicked themselves, "upstairs." Their "call," their training, their occupational socialization was typically to and in a particular academic discipline. They "end up" in administration—for a variety of reasons and with a variety of attitudes toward and kinds of preparation for the responsibilities they assume.

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To what extent do writing center directors fit this image? How many of them set out to become writing center directors, how many simply "ended up" there? And to what extent have motivations and intentionality changed in recent years as writing centers have increasingly gained an institutional foothold? Interviews with a cross-section of writing center directors might produce some interesting findings.

## Notes

1. I am grateful to General College at the University of Minnesota for generous support of this research.
  2. North did refer to one study by Malcolm Hayward, which compared faculty and writing center staff's perceptions of the center and its purpose, finding that while the two groups agreed on what the goals of writing instruction should be, they disagreed sharply about what the writing center should emphasize in its work with writers.
  3. Because I did not ask respondents to state their academic rank, salary comparisons are difficult since most summaries of faculty salaries are reported by academic rank. The *Chronicle of Higher Education Almanac*, for example, lists the average 1992-93 salary for an assistant professor in English at a public four-year institution as \$32,344; for an associate professor it was \$41,032.
  4. At a recent gathering I hosted for Twin Cities-area writing center directors, one woman related that she obtained her position by being voted in at a faculty meeting that she had to miss because of a funeral. She returned to the announcement that she was the new writing center director—a position for which she had never expressed any interest nor for which she felt especially well qualified.
  5. For invaluable assistance with both the design and interpretation of this survey, I am indebted to Bob delMas of the General College Office of Research and Evaluation.
  6. The multiple correlation coefficient (Multiple R) indicates the degree of association between the set of predictor variables and the dependent variable being predicted. Stepwise multiple regression first selects the predictor variable with the highest correlation. For example, salary had the highest correlation with job satisfaction. After factoring out the variation accounted for by that variable, the predictor variable with the next highest correlation is selected. This correlation with the remaining variation, i.e., the variation not already accounted for, is the partial correlation. For example, tenure track status had the highest partial correlation with job satisfaction, so it was selected next. The  $R^2$  column gives an indication of how much variation in the dependent variable is accounted for by a given predictor variable. For job satisfaction, salary accounts for 15% of the variance, and all four predictor variables together (salary, tenure track, hours/week, and hours in the writing center) account for 23% of the variance.
- The partial correlation is the correlation between a particular predictor variable and the dependent variable, after the variance accounted for by all other predictor variables in the set has been partialled out. A partial correlation is a measure of the relative contribution of each predictor variable to the Multiple R. For example, salary makes a larger contribution than tenure track status in predicting job satisfaction. The bivariate correlation indicates the correlation between a particular predictor variable and the dependent variable without any variance partialled out by other predictor variables. Partial and bivariate correlations indicate both the strength and the direction of a correlation. For example, the greater one's salary and the fewer hours per week one works (because there is a negative correlation with hours), the more job satisfaction one experiences.

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7. In this respect, writing center directors are similar to other professionals who have managerial and administrative responsibilities but whose professional training typically does not acknowledge that part of the job. As Wright notes: "Many of us are responsible for tens of thousands of dollars in budget decisions. Should we not at least require professional development seminars on administrative topics—budgeting, instituting change, leadership, and so on—for our directors?" (3).

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## Appendix: Writing Center Directors Career Study

1. What is your sex? \_\_\_ Male \_\_\_ Female
2. What is your present age? \_\_\_
3. Please circle your highest degree.
  - a. B.A.
  - b. B.S.
  - c. M.A.
  - d. Ph.D.
  - e. Other \_\_\_\_\_
4. In what field did you receive the degree listed above? \_\_\_\_\_
5. What is your marital status?
  - a. Single, never married
  - b. Married
  - c. Separated
  - d. Divorced
  - e. Widowed
6. Which one of these categories best describes your principal form of employment? (Circle only one.)
  - a. Writing center director
  - b. Writing center assistant director
  - c. Other \_\_\_\_\_
7. What is your current annual salary? \_\_\_\_\_
8. My academic appointment is for \_\_\_ months at \_\_\_ % time.
9. What percentage of your total appointment is devoted to the writing center? \_\_\_%
10. In addition to your work in the writing center, what other academic work do you currently do? (Circle all that apply and list the percentage of your time each involvement represents.)
  - a. Teaching \_\_\_\_\_%
  - b. Department chair \_\_\_\_\_%
  - c. Director of writing program \_\_\_\_\_%
  - d. Research \_\_\_\_\_%
  - e. Other \_\_\_\_\_%
11. What other academic work have you done in the past? (Circle all that apply.)
  - a. Teaching
  - b. Department chair
  - c. Director of writing program
  - d. Research
  - e. Other \_\_\_\_\_
12. Do you have a faculty appointment?
  - a. Faculty appointment
  - b. Nonfaculty appointment
13. Is your position tenure track?
  - a. Tenure track
  - b. Non-tenure track

14. Is your position full time or part time?  
 a. Full time  
 b. Part time
15. What is your official title? \_\_\_\_\_
16. Which of the following best describes the institution where you work?  
 (Circle only one.)  
 a. Public four-year university or college  
 b. Private four-year college  
 c. Junior college or community college  
 d. Public high school  
 e. Private high school  
 f. Other \_\_\_\_\_
17. What is the highest degree that can be obtained at your institution? \_\_\_\_\_
18. How many years have you served in your present position? \_\_\_\_\_
19. How many total years have you worked in a writing center, including the center where you work now as well as any other writing centers you have worked in? \_\_\_\_\_
20. How many total hours per week do you work? \_\_\_\_\_
21. How many hours per week do you spend on writing center-related business? \_\_\_\_\_
22. What kinds of employees do you supervise? (Circle all that apply and state the number of employees in each category.)
- |                                | # of employees |
|--------------------------------|----------------|
| a. Undergraduates              | _____          |
| b. Graduate students           | _____          |
| c. Professional academic staff | _____          |
| d. Civil service staff         | _____          |
| e. Other _____                 | _____          |
| f. None                        | _____          |
23. Approximately what percentage of your writing center's clientele does each of the following groups represent?
- |                      |        |
|----------------------|--------|
| a. Undergraduates    | _____% |
| b. Graduate students | _____% |
| c. Adult specials    | _____% |
| d. Nonstudents       | _____% |
24. Approximately what percentage of your writing center's clientele does each of the following groups represent?
- |                                   |        |
|-----------------------------------|--------|
| a. Native speakers of English     | _____% |
| b. Non-native speakers of English | _____% |
25. Indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements.
- |   | Disagree |   |   |   | Agree |
|---|----------|---|---|---|-------|
| On the whole, I am satisfied with my life.              | 1        | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5     |
| I appear more satisfied with my job than I really am.   | 1        | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5     |
| Most important things that happen to me involve my job. | 1        | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5     |
| I feel trapped in my present position.                  | 1        | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5     |

- I live, eat, and breathe my job. 1 2 3 4 5
- Running a writing center is more frustrating than most people think. 1 2 3 4 5
- I frequently consider changing careers. 1 2 3 4 5
- I am likely to change careers within 5 years. 1 2 3 4 5
- I am satisfied with how much money I make. 1 2 3 4 5
26. Please evaluate your experience by comparing your expectations before undertaking your current position with the reality of the job as you have actually experienced it. To what extent did the following items meet, exceed, or fall short of your expectations? Also indicate the extent to which these issues represent a current problem for you.

<u>Expectations</u>		<u>Current Problem</u>	
Fell Short	Exceeded	None	Severe
1 2 3 4 5	The time the job would require of me.	1 2 3 4 5	
1 2 3 4 5	The intellectual challenge of the position.	1 2 3 4 5	
1 2 3 4 5	The financial rewards of the job.	1 2 3 4 5	
1 2 3 4 5	Making a difference in people's lives.	1 2 3 4 5	
1 2 3 4 5	The administrative demands of running a writing center.	1 2 3 4 5	
1 2 3 4 5	The difficulty of dealing with the bureaucracy.	1 2 3 4 5	
1 2 3 4 5	The emotional rewards of my job.	1 2 3 4 5	
1 2 3 4 5	The stress of my job.	1 2 3 4 5	
1 2 3 4 5	Forming close, satisfying relationships with employees.	1 2 3 4 5	
1 2 3 4 5	The political complexities of the job.	1 2 3 4 5	

27. When you started in your present position, indicate the extent to which you felt prepared or unprepared for the following aspects of your job.

	Unprepared			Prepared	
Budgets and financial management	1	2	3	4	5
Promoting the writing center	1	2	3	4	5
Hiring staff	1	2	3	4	5
Training staff	1	2	3	4	5
Dealing with administrators	1	2	3	4	5
Mediating conflicts among staff members	1	2	3	4	5

28. When you started your present position, was it an existing position or a newly created one?
- Existing position
  - New position
29. When you started your present position, was it in an existing writing center, or did you develop a new center?
- Existing writing center
  - New writing center
30. What have been the biggest frustrations of your job?
31. What have been the biggest rewards of your job?
32. Do you have any other comments?