

Am I a WPA? Embracing the Multiverse of WPA Labor in Community College Contexts

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Co-opting hero metaphors within WPA scholarship, this article explores the (in)visibility issues of two-year college writing program administration. Highlighting the decentralized nature of much two-year WPA labor, the authors argue for reframing scholarly attention on the ordinary faculty who undertake WPA labor—rather than on the hero writing program administrator—to bring visibility to less acknowledged forms of writing program administration. As the authors explore the affordances and constraints of this reframed, expanded conceptualization of WPA labor, they highlight the power dynamics of decentralized WPA labor structures and propose exploring the multiverse as a more inclusive framework.

In the movie *Sky High*, superheroes-in-training attend a special high school where their first task is familiar: a “power placement” test that determines if a student will be labeled a hero or sidekick (a.k.a. “hero support”) (Mitchell). This lifelong placement tracks students as either the highly visible superhero—a special, centrally-positioned person who earns recognition when all goes well and blowback when things do not—or the largely invisible sidekick, destined to toil in relative anonymity while playing a vital supporting role. *Sky High* and its characters subvert what one character calls “the whole hero-sidekick dichotomy,” as the sidekicks become the heroes: individually, they develop and find their superpowers, while collectively, the sidekick-turned-heroes save the day.

Writing from our experiences as two-year English/writing faculty who have worked in a variety of hero-centric and de-centralized WPA labor structures, we seek to increase the visibility of this labor as it is undertaken by two-year faculty—individuals Taylor refers to as “ghosts in the machine” due to their invisibility (133)—and propose an expanded conceptualization of WPA labor in two-year contexts. As we explore the question, “Am I a WPA?” we will discuss the nature of our labor and WPA labor structures, the power dynamics involved in two-year WPA labor, the relative invisibility of much of our labor, and the implications of reframing two-year college WPA labor if we do what the sidekick-turned-superheroes of *Sky High* did and work on “breaking down barriers [so that] We’re not sidekicks and superheroes . . . we’re just people, super people” (Mitchell 44:30–44:36).

THE PROBLEM OF THE HERO METAPHOR

Writing program administration scholarship is saturated with hero stories, as well as their counterpart, victim narratives, with the writing program administrator typically embodying the role of hero (Gaillet 172; Desmet 44; Charlton et al. 38–40; Vidali 134; Reid 132). Desmet centers the composition teacher as hero, arguing that composition theory “exacerbated . . . the myth of the composition teacher as ‘heroic individual’” (44). In her analysis of 40 years of *WPA: Writing Program Administration* articles, Reid analyzes the writing program administrator as hero and notes, “these tropes of WPA identity—the victim and the hero—are recognizable to anyone familiar with disciplinary discourse in writing program administration” (132).

Before we co-opt and present a re-framed, re-envisioned hero narrative for two-year writing program administration labor, we need to recognize the problems inherent in its use. One issue is the perpetuation of reductive conceptions of power dynamics that often leads to a hero-victim dichotomy within WPA scholarship—a trope we fell prey to in earlier drafts of this article in leaning too heavily into a *Sky High*-influenced hero-sidekick dichotomy for four-year and two-year WPA labor. Charlton et al. point out the way these stories can strip agency from WPAs through their reliance on “a heroic or victimized stance foisted on us by beliefs, decisions, or actions of others” (50). Though Reid deconstructs these narratives in a manner that suggests more agency on the part of WPAs (134), Charlton et al. caution against overly simplistic conceptions of power within hero narratives and ask WPA scholars to consider the ways “these narratives shape the understanding of the field,” restrict “new opportunities for thinking about administrative work,” and “include and exclude, liberate and oppress” (38)—issues we attempt to take up in this article. Highlighting the often hyper-masculine and hyper-ableist nature of hero stories, Vidali critiques the problematic expectations these stories establish for writing program administrators with their emphasis on “triumph-over-adversity tales” (41) that “provide little room to reflect upon and grieve the failures that are inevitable” (42). She emphasizes that “hero narratives are particularly dangerous for disabled WPAs because they intersect with existing expectations to overcome disability, creating a double-overcoming bind for the disabled WPA” (41). Additionally, she notes how these narratives position writing program administrators as one-person solution generators, alone in their labor.

Given the problems inherent in writing program administration hero narratives, we recognize the risks and potential pitfalls in coopting such a

narrative, especially as career community college professionals whose WPA labor has been rendered largely invisible. To center our goal of increased visibility for two-year faculty WPA labor, though, we decided to tap into the heroic narrative tradition within WPA scholarship as a means of creating social recognition between four-year writing program administrators and the two-year faculty who undertake WPA labor. As Toth et al. highlight, studies suggest that “social recognition” is a significant factor in “shaping how faculty identified as professionals and how they recognized other members of their professional community” (111). In our bid to have the WPA labor of two-year faculty recognized within our institutions, the WPA scholarly community, and the communities where we perform this labor, we use this narrative tradition to claim space for what we call ordinary (super)hero narratives that coincide with Reid’s analysis of hero narratives: “rather than aligning heroism with overcoming the odds, this heroic WPA is able to establish positive relationships and work well within institutional structures to negotiate for the interests of the writing program” (135).

Because of the often untitled, shared nature of two-year faculty writing program administration, we are also choosing to reframe the hero narrative onto the WPA labor rather than the hero themselves as much as possible and to embrace a collaborative organization of this labor in response to Desmet’s call:

to get beyond the heroic narrative that pits individuals against a faceless collective, a narrative that unhelpfully constructs any given writing program as a monolith rather than a bricolage of attitudes and practices that enjoys a long and rich—if often obscure—history. (44)

Until the professionalization of the writing program administration discipline in the 1970s, university WPA labor had quite a bit in common with community college WPA labor in terms of how it was framed “as a ‘task rather than a position’” (Charlton et al. 64). L’Eplattenier and Mastrangelo observe that administrative labor was either not recognized in administrative terms or was seen “as a tangential component in their career and not worthy of notice or reward” (xx) and “administrative decision-making often occurs in ways that are never recorded” (xx).

Similar claims could be made about the visibility issues and material conditions of two-year faculty WPA labor today. Two-year faculty may describe facets of our WPA labor as part of our teacher-scholar-activist identities as Patrick Sullivan often does—not in administrative terms but “as a . . . component” in our career (L’Eplattenier and Mastrangelo xx). Vidali’s 2015 proposal for a “disabled model of WPA work that honors productive delegation of tasks to a support team, encourages reliance on communica-

tion modes that work best for the WPA and her program . . . and broadly imagines WPAs as embodied, but not the embodiment of their programs” (43) is not far removed from our experience of community college writing program administration. We propose that because community college writing program administration is accomplished through a dispersed labor structure of multiple faculty colleagues rather than a single position or heroic individual, it already enacts the decentralized power dynamic called for by WPA scholars like Gunner, Desmet, and Reid even as it suffers from lack of visibility within the writing program administration scholarly community.

The labor structures and contextual factors of an open-admissions institution impact every facet of writing program administration in two-year contexts, from whether a writing program is labeled as such, to whom the program serves, its mission and goals, and who does the labor. Like Blaauw-Hara and Spiegel, we recognize that “all WPA work is contextually driven and differences are apparent even within various kinds of four-year institutions” (246). That said, to help us demonstrate some of the differences between the more visible labor in WPA scholarship and the less visible decentralized contexts, we offer a more well-known hero figure than those of *Sky High*: Tony Stark/Iron Man, an example of a central hero type Desmet and Vidali resist as the representation of all writing program administration. Tony Stark is a person of action: he thinks, plans, creates, acts, reacts. He has a support system he can count on in the form of Pepper Potts, who often handles day-to-day minutiae; JARVIS and FRIDAY, computer network systems that remind him of his current limitations and affordances; and Rhodes, a friend and sidekick. In the Marvel Cinematic Universe, Tony Stark and Iron Man are perceived as one and the same, no need for an alter ego. Stark exemplifies a solitary writing program administration figure: faculty assist him in various ways, but they are ancillaries who remain largely invisible when the work is recognized or challenged. The hero acts alone, even when that is not entirely the case, and even as others around him are also capable. Most community college faculty cannot relate to his bold declaration, “I am Iron Man”/“I am a WPA,” as our professional experience of writing program administration differs from the positioning of those who have intentionally chosen the profession.

HERO IDENTIFICATIONS: DECENTRALIZED LABOR IN THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE CONTEXT

We ground our discussion of two-year college writing program administration (WPA) labor in our experiences as two-year practitioners: Nicole

has worked at the same midwestern two-year college for 17 years, where she began as a part-time faculty member who earned tenure over a decade ago. She has served the department in multiple roles that are writing program administration-adjacent, never holding the title of WPA but always situated within the labor of writing program administration. Casey brings her experience as a part- and full-time faculty member at a multi-campus community college system in the Midwest, a staff director of developmental education programs at a small rural midwestern community college, and faculty writing center coordinator at a midsized community college in the Pacific Northwest. She has worked in three positions she calls “facu-ministrator” roles where, regardless of how the institution categorizes her, teaching and service have been integral to her administration responsibilities. Although writing center administrators are often counted within the less-recognized ranks of writing program administrators, Casey focuses on her positionality and experience as a faculty member and on her coordinator roles second because of how essential this positionality is for undertaking WPA labor in two-year contexts (Janetta et al. 13). Neither of us would say we are the writing program administrator for our institutions, but we both prioritize WPA labor to a degree that often positions us as key participants and stakeholders.

Even were we the writing program administrator for our institutions, that labor would be significantly different from university writing program administrators, a recognition that Calhoun-Dillahunt, Blaauw-Hara and Spiegel, Klausman, Ostman, and others also highlight. This difference “is often further complicated by not being labeled as writing program administration: WPAs are frequently department chairs, associate deans, or coordinators” (Blaauw-Hara and Spiegel 246), a point that was inscribed into CWPA’s 1992 *Portland Resolution*. Ostman explains that “Several titles reflect writing program work as the primary responsibilities of the WPA, and several simply reflect a general distinction for the administration of writing courses under the umbrella of other administrative duties” (100). The variety of titles—or non-titles—afforded to two-year faculty performing WPA labor contributes to the invisible nature of this labor (Taylor). This invisibility and lack of a title means “some two-year college leaders might not readily self-identify as WPAs despite the fact that their work is deeply situated in the coordination of writing courses and the faculty who teach those courses” (Blaauw-Hara and Spiegel 246).

Not only is the hero of WPA labor (if there is one) positioned differently in two-year contexts than in four-year contexts; the labor is distributed differently. Scholars like Calhoun-Dillahunt, Nist and Raines, Taylor, and Janangelo and Klausman indicate that unlike in four-year institutions

where the traditional writing program hero tends to be highly visible in the departmental labor, in many two-year contexts, the work is distributed among several less visible people, working on their own or in partnership. For instance, Calhoun-Dillahunt describes programs like hers, where responsibilities rotate without compensation as part of faculty service, highlighting that these programs “are models of how, even without the benefit of a WPA position, writing program work can get done collaboratively” (129). She emphasizes “that much good work is being done in community college writing programs, often without the coordination of a WPA. It’s not just possible; it’s fairly common” (130).

In light of the less hero-centric, more amorphous nature of two-year college writing program administration, we offer Peter Parker/Spider-Man as a metaphor for how intertwined two-year writing program administration is with faculty perspectives. Unlike Tony Stark, who is able to be Tony and Iron Man because the two identities overlap, in each new version of *Spider-Man*, Peter Parker’s liminality causes him to negotiate an impossible balance between his “real life” and its relationships when he is Peter Parker, and the risks/rewards he faces as Spider-Man. He cannot retreat from being Peter Parker without losing a core part of himself, but that also makes him a better hero in his local context. Similarly, community college faculty who engage in WPA labor benefit from remaining true to their faculty identities, using the passions they had/have as faculty members to inform their WPA labor, often because they continue to teach writing courses while participating in that labor, something Holly Larson emphasizes as the “immediacy of our teaching world” to our professional lives (123). At Nicole’s institution, the writing program administrator is a faculty member first and foremost. He or she has more release time than teaching time per semester for the WPA position, but the facu-ministrator mask is temporary, something done after teaching, *while* teaching, and before presumably returning to a 5/5 load of teaching. This blended, simultaneous, yet also separate labor is not often represented in the WPA scholarship, so two-year administrators feel marginalized from those who clearly identify their WPAship as their primary identity, yet also feel isolated from their fellow faculty members by their administrative role. So for some of us, the question isn’t, “Am I a WPA?” but rather “Am I enough of a WPA?”

Louise Wetherbee Phelps envisioned the WPA position as a “densely tangled knot, a node of entwined filaments whose relationships pose a multitude of dangers and opportunities. . . . Perhaps because of the emotional intensity this knottiness generates, the WPA is peculiarly vulnerable to being overidentified (by herself and others) with the role, unleashing a series of seductive and lethal metonymies” in which the WPA cannot sepa-

rate herself from identification with individual strands of the knot (263). For the community college facu-ministrator, the knottiness may become more entangled because of the faculty-first identification: choking and marginalizing at times when other faculty are upset with a decision associated with the facu-ministrator, seductive when they are called upon to represent faculty voices in a tokenizing way, and easily discarded in circumstances where it is more rhetorically necessary or convenient to identify primarily as faculty. While other entities at the institution may more closely associate the facu-ministrator with the writing program, that association morphs when the two-year writing program administrator returns to their department, where all of the strands are potentially immediate concerns of each faculty member who teaches any level of composition (which is the majority of the administrator's colleagues). The power dynamic is also vastly different, as the person in the administrative position wields no particular power over colleagues, especially in departments with department chairs who are responsible for staffing and evaluation while the writing program administrator is mostly responsible for curriculum and assessment matters (Taylor 121; Calhoon-Dillahunt 125–26; Janagelo and Klausman 139–40).

The liminal nature of two-year writing program administration makes distinguishing boundaries between roles particularly difficult. In the writing program's administration, some responsibilities of Casey's writing center coordinator role and the officially designated composition coordinator role have shifted and become intermingled. During Casey's first year on the job, the composition coordinator resigned partway through the year, and some of that position's labor was redistributed to Casey. Even after the composition coordinator role resumed, Casey's labor remained intertwined with much of the program's labor. Yet, Casey was and continues to be labeled as the writing center coordinator first, faculty first or second depending upon the context, and never as a writing program administrator or as part of a WPA team—even after a team model was incorporated into a recent faculty job description. While these decentralized labor models facilitate doing the labor, those performing it have to navigate fulfilling their official responsibilities along with performing the tricky dance of collegial collaboration without having formal claim to being a writing program administrator.

AGENTS OF ACTION: THE EXTRAORDINARY ORDINARY OF SHARED AUTHORITY

Hassel and Cole indicate that faculty leadership tends to be “conceptualized as something that happens among and between other faculty,” where

faculty are identified as “‘thought leaders’ . . . whose primary claim to leadership is making other faculty do things” (3). They further suggest that this faculty leader paradigm “relegates the role of faculty to facilitation and integration, rather than change or policy work” and positions faculty mostly as influencers and master persuaders of their colleagues in support of others (3). Higher education leadership publications position faculty “as needing persuasion to manage change through a ‘team effort,’ to be part of a ‘climate of trust’” (5). In other words, “Faculty require managing, motivating, and surveilling” by administration and their appointed faculty leader colleagues who act as middle-level herders (4–5).

Hassel and Cole advocate for a different model of faculty leadership: service activism, which asks faculty “how, where, and with whom can you leverage the service you do to capture, create, and realize the impact of our values as educators?” (14). They urge faculty “to become engaged actors in their institutions, with the intention of energizing the faculty in higher education to participate in, reimagine, and transform their institutional and professional work” (15). Janangelo and Klausman call for a similar reframing of two-year WPA labor, one that avoids

the easy temptation to imitate four-year college models of writing program “administration.” Instead, we recommend focusing on the evolving nature and demands of the important and variegated leadership work itself, rather than on the concept of a writing program “administrator.” If we can articulate the intricacies of these leadership practices beyond that particular and perhaps limiting enunciation, category, and label, we stand a better chance of rendering new and valuable ideas rather than purveying celebrated ideals, or worse, sedimented ideations. (142)

In short, rather than focus on a hero—the title, person, the position—focus on the labor.

This labor focus affirms the Two-Year College English Association’s (TYCA) positioning of the role of two-year college English faculty. TYCA’s 2012 *Characteristics of the Highly Effective Two-Year Instructor in English* designates two-year college English faculty as being part teacher and part administrator, effectively incorporating WPA labor into two-year faculty roles when it stipulates that faculty “are flexible and supportive in accepting varied teaching assignments and administrative responsibilities as needed in an effort to meet department and program needs” (1). By folding administrative responsibilities like those associated with writing program administration into the essential functions of a two-year faculty member, TYCA and two-year colleges across the country have, in some senses, substantiated

the visibility issues surrounding WPA labor by hiding the work in plain sight: right in the job description and service expectation of everyday, ordinary faculty members.

Focused as they are on faculty leadership through service, Hassel and Cole's emphasis on service activism aligns with Warnke and Higgins's invitation to two-year faculty to embrace the role of "critical reformer." Warnke and Higgins build upon Sullivan's teacher-scholar-activist identity by specifically positioning "critical reformers between forces for reform—often administrators and corporate-funded nonprofits such as the Gates Foundation—and reform resisters—often faculty who see themselves as doing inherently good work beyond reproach, the 'good intentions' model" (365). Within their critical reform framework, they acknowledge the competing discourses, interests, values, and beliefs that these stakeholders bring, staking out the position of critical reformer as one where "we are tasked with linking what we know empirically with our values and vision for the community college" (368). Like Hassel and Cole, Warnke and Higgins do not limit this influencing, change-oriented role to faculty in more visible, traditional, and official leadership positions like the hero role of writing program administrator. Rather, they leave open the possibility that many, perhaps even most, faculty have the potential to be critical reformers through their everyday, ordinary work, including the WPA labor that many two-year faculty engage in—and they position critical reformers as the everyday, ordinary sidekick-turned-heroes of their institutions. So do we.

Critical reform-oriented faculty doing the work of writing program activism reifies the Peter Parker metaphor, as he represents many core facets of the ordinary community college faculty hero. Parker (and later, Miles Morales) is an ordinary teen who is bitten by a radioactive spider to receive the call-to-action; although far less dramatic, two-year faculty who engage in WPA labor have historically heeded the call of their contexts, not because they felt any great ability but because they were tapped as the person who was most likely to do the work of the department at that given moment. The community college WPAs retain an "I'm just a kid from Queens" ethos as they join the fray, learning to be WPAs as they do the labor of writing program administration (although this entrée into the labor is shifting as graduate programs become more adept at providing coursework in writing program administration). In describing Spider-Man—and the two-year critical reformers undertaking writing program administration more generally—as "ordinary," we echo Nancy Chick's use of "ordinary" to describe the faculty and stories of faculty-powered change within Hassel and Cole's edited collection, *Academic Labor Beyond the College Classroom* (ix). Much like our article, Hassel and Cole's collection eschews hero-centric narra-

tives of a relatively small collection of specially-focused individuals in favor of “ordinary faculty who ask and answer important questions via research; organize and participate in groups, programs, and partnerships designed to learn and act on what they learn; and participate in shared governance within the institutions” (Chick ix). These ordinary faculty are similar to Warnke and Higgins’ critical reformers and much like many of the two-year faculty who perform WPA labor.

Whether receiving release time or not and regardless of titles, Casey and Nicole have enacted critical reform as part of their service activism. As English faculty at a midwestern multi-campus community college system, Casey was on the board of the regional chapter of what was then the National Association for Developmental Education (NADE), a role that allowed her to help coordinate and provide professional development to two-year faculty across a five-state region. The group brought nationally recognized scholars to a regionally-accessible location in an affordable format for two-year faculty who often have little financial support for professional development. When her state became one of the many enacting developmental education reform legislation, she was part of a group of ordinary faculty with different skill sets from institutions across the state who teamed up to initiate the legislative response and call for formalization of a largely faculty-driven statewide developmental education consortium in a similar vein as the statewide policy team described by Estrem, Shepherd, and Duman (88–90).

These groups of ordinary faculty fulfilling WPA labor are helpful for countering some of the constraints of the hero-centric writing program administrator model that upper administration may find more useful so they only have one or two liaisons for writing class needs and issues. These liaisons may become marginalized, depending upon campus climate and relationships between faculty and administration. When Casey was asked to work with the composition coordinator to deliver professional development to part-time faculty, the workshops were not well received in part because of the contentious context: the department had moved to hiring more external candidates like Casey with degrees in rhetoric and composition, the department had experienced recent conflict between faculty with administrative release and those without—and her dean emphasized workshop attendance. Casey was perceived as a less experienced newcomer in a WPA role helping impose an administratively-enforced professional development directive, a situation that exacerbated tensions related to faculty in coordinator roles.

Nicole’s program has valued grassroots innovation, so she has regarded herself as more of a critical reformer than a writing program administra-

tor; she served in two release time positions, but because she has never been the elected writing program administrator or the department chair, she has never considered herself as a WPA, even while doing writing program administration labor. As the computer-assisted instruction coordinator, she oversaw the computer labs (home to all of the college's writing classes), led technology pedagogy workshops, and served as a liaison between faculty and those who maintain the networks, course management systems, and hardware. To prepare for and perform this faculty-administrator labor, she synthesized what she gleaned from conference attendance, scholarship, and classroom experimentation, as well as what Holly Larson refers to as the "kitchen-table-conversation" amongst colleagues in reciprocal sharing of their needs and classroom experiences (121). Similar additional labor was performed in the even less visible preparation for serving as a pilot teacher for learning communities and then the Accelerated Learning Program model of basic writing. As a critical reformer who has used what she has learned in the immediate praxis of her classroom and then shared it with colleagues, she has participated in this labor as *ordinary* faculty. This voluntary writing program administration labor may be much more common in two-year settings where the need for faculty-led professional development is greater: according to Heather Ostman, "an institution that shifts as much as its student body" has more frequent last-minute hires of part-time faculty and all faculty benefit from in-house faculty development to learn more about the ever-changing student demographics (151). As a last-minute part-time hire when she started, Nicole found the faculty development and camaraderie in the department to be so foundational to her teaching that she gives back by helping to sustain that work, alongside a good portion of her colleagues who are similarly committed to a collaborative, egalitarian workplace.

Nicole's department serves as a healthy model of a decentralized team where labor is visible; the writing committee is guided by the WPA and the department chair with an expectation that invested faculty will attend regularly, and all who teach or tutor writing are invited to attend. After a hiring initiative to increase the number of full-time faculty in the department, term limits for chair and WPA were instated, so the roles would be more likely to rotate amongst capable faculty members. Rotate, they have. Not only are faculty able to transition into new roles with the benefit of their predecessors' knowledge, but they serve people who have been in the same service roles: faculty members who understand the particulars of running a writing program. The department functions as a group of once and future writing program administrators (chair, WPA, and other release

time positions), which helps facilitate the labor of the program while reducing burnout.

When the labor of the writing program is invisible, it has the micro-level consequence of exhaustion and burnout for those who repeatedly do the labor without acknowledgment and the macro-level consequence of invisibility at the institutional level—where release time or other departmental benefits may be challenged or reduced if the administration cannot see the work that transpires behind the scenes. In a thriving program, the work of innovating and assessing is a perpetual cycle where the labor is ideally shared by many instead of few in the department. When all of that labor is represented by one person, department members can contribute less and less, presuming that someone else, someone with release time and a title, can shoulder the burden, and then the labor of the department can become too much for one individual. Or, faculty members will continue to contribute but become wary that they are continually working above and beyond while others do the minimum service. These local visibility issues contribute to and exacerbate visibility issues within the profession.

SUPERHEROES UNITE UNDER COLLECTIVE BARGAINING: AN UNDEREXPLORED FACET OF SHARED AUTHORITY

One part of two-year contexts that often goes un- or underexplored in scholarship surrounding two-year WPA labor involves how labor is defined on an institutional and state level by right-to-work policies and unions. Nicole and Casey work in union environments where WPA labor visibility issues can be exacerbated or ameliorated by faculty unions. At Nicole's institution, the visibility of the department chair's labor across disciplines was vital to receiving contractual protection for release time, while the writing program administrator's labor has been primarily visible within one department and is not protected yet. The department chair is the public face of the department, interacting with a variety of power dynamics across stakeholders—and also managing programmatic paperwork that is visible across college divisions. The labor of the writing program administrator is much more behind-the-scenes, often being transacted with the chair and other faculty who are at the same level of authority as the WPA, but this less visible labor is only possible with course release time, which is subject to change without union protection. The previously mentioned computer-assisted instruction release time position Nicole once had was unceremoniously eliminated because its value could not be understood outside of the department. Other faculty release time has been provided to coordinate various initiatives—a trial placement reform, the learning communities

pilot, and service learning across the college—but it has fluctuated depending on grant funding or enrollment surges.

Casey's current institution has a long-established, powerful, NEA-associated faculty union that directly impacts all facets of labor, including the existence of, stability of, and individual agency associated with faculty coordination work. At the time of the writing of this article, the faculty contract differentiates between two faculty coordinator roles: roles like her writing center coordinator position where a person is hired into the position with a job description that includes a significant percentage of time for coordination work and roles like the current composition coordinator where the person is granted unguaranteed release time after being hired. Due to austerity measures, divisions are being consolidated under fewer deans, and the college is implementing a faculty department chair model that may result in losing the composition coordinator role and many of its key WPA labor functions. How administration, unions, departments, and individuals leverage the contractual positioning and framing of labor can lead to the erasure of WPA labor and associated positions.

WHEN FACULTY CRITICAL REFORMERS RESIST: HERO SERVICE ACTIVISM AMID CONSTANT CHANGE

While we value critical reform via service activism and seek to find new ways to frame, make visible, and advocate for adequate compensation and time for WPA labor in two-year contexts, two-year faculty across the country remain subject to institutional changes (Calhoon-Dillahunt et al. 4) as well as state and national education policy changes and trends that complicate our sense of agency and ability to collaborate and engage in the mindful manner we aspire to. The exacerbated changes and pressures within two-year colleges cause us to engage in WPA labor from a reactionary stance regardless of our “intellectual posturing towards the work” (Charlton et al. 4). For instance, over the last three years, placement-related reform labor has waxed and waned at Casey's institution due to the sudden stop of an Achieving the Dream committee that morphed into three waves of committees with varying faculty input. The most recent Guided Pathways reform committee assembled in a few weeks, partly in response to coronavirus-impacted placement disruptions. As they engage in, react to, enact, and/or resist placement-related reform efforts, the composition coordinator along with Casey—often as the background researcher, second reader, and/or sounding board—remain accountable for the labor and implications of placing students into a given class. The rapidly changing landscape of community colleges can open up opportunities for critical

reform to take place more quickly, as it did when Nicole's English department established Accelerated Learning Program (ALP) classes as a stable feature of their curriculum less than a year after hearing about it.

As we have worked to articulate our differently situated hero positioning and dynamics for this article, we seek to take up Desmet's call to "yield to another kind of epic, in which teachers, WPAs, students—and epic narratives themselves—are always *in medias res*" (58) in an effort to both acknowledge our material labor conditions while avoiding "a simplistic rendering of heroes and villains" (Charlton et al. 139). Yet placement reform at Nicole's institution provides an example of how a department's labor can be *in media res* and still ultimately lack agency. In 2015, when they learned that COMPASS, the placement exam they had been using to determine if students were prepared for transfer-level coursework, was being discontinued, the writing committee had already been investigating alternatives, and the upper administration readily acquiesced to considering a homegrown placement assessment that better matched the objectives of the English department. In spring 2016, Nicole was elected to 4 hours release time to implement and study beta testing of the new assessment in all sections of writing courses across three campuses; for two years, she developed additional versions and researched their effectiveness with smaller samples. In 2018, the placement reform committee of English and math program coordinators, their deans, and staff from enrollment services and information technology were only months away from implementing new placement methods. Then IT announced they would not implement a placement assessment that involved different systems for math, writing, and reading, halting reform. An institutional leadership change led to the continued use of purchased placement exams and a new committee that excludes faculty—removing critical reformers from the process.

The diffused, decentralized labor of two-year programs creates a problem of invisibility within their own institutions. These are not the only narratives of initiatives hastily assembled by writing program administrators and adjacent colleagues to respond to matters of urgency, whether those issues have arisen from state mandates, budgetary concerns, or shifts in administrative personnel. Because these narratives are only known to those who perform the labor, the work is not visible, and because our collective disciplinary expertise permits us to hastily manufacture multiple contingency plans of varying efficacy, there is a sense from upper administration that this work does not need to be valued, even as it would not be possible without a variety of people committing time and efforts to remaining current in the field while also continuing to complete the official myriad other tasks that constitute more visible program labor.

THE WPA MULTIVERSE: IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS
FOR INCREASED VISIBILITY AND SUSTAINABILITY

Because WPA labor differs across contexts, we cannot all achieve the same level of institutional recognition for WPA labor, so we propose exploring the multiverse as a healthier, more inclusive framework. Over the course of decades of different comic book authors, when superhero story lines became woefully inconsistent, “superhero comics made a virtue out of necessity and presented their storyworlds as part of a larger ‘multiverse,’ in which a variety of mutually incompatible narrative worlds existed as parallel realities” (Kukkonen 40). In *Spider-Man: Into the Spider-verse*, Miles Morales teams up with Peter B. Parker and other spidey characters from across the vast Spider-Man comic history to *collectively* do the work Spider-Man does best. In an essay about *Spider-Man: Into the Spider-verse*, Terrence Wandtke writes, “Like oral culture, superhero stories maintain a basic core for their characters but retell (or redraw) their stories over time and produce many variants.” Given the range of abilities, as well as the ethnic, racial, socio-economic, and gender identities of the Spider-People in the multiverse, the multiverse also represents a much more inclusive vision of who engages in WPA labor. We’re looking for a WPA scholarship multiverse where the narratives of two-year college faculty who engage in writing program administration labor are valued variants that are appreciated for the many heroes offered and also have crossover potential with narratives in other, more visible contexts.

Not unlike the Marvel Cinematic Universe, where audiences were able to see Iron Man, Captain America, and Thor in multiple movies years before a woman or person of color received a stand-alone movie, WPA scholarship is in need of greater representation of marginalized writing program administration narrative variants. The diffuse labor of community college writing program administration is but one dimension of the visibility, access, equity, and inclusion issues within the field. García de Müeller and Ruiz explain that scholarship “that focuses directly on race in WPA work or support systems for WPAs of color” is lacking (23). Sheila Carter-Tod found that *WPA: Writing Program Administration* has made conscious efforts to include articles on “race, gender, ability, language, and sexual orientation” (101) but we should as a discipline, “expand our focus and attention to embrace the full trajectory of scholarship (broadly defined) that honors the expanding multiplicities of identity affiliations that we have in our field” (102). A key mark of visibility for the variant narratives of individuals who engage in WPA labor is going to be when our work is cited outside of our individual disciplinary contexts (such as *TETYC*) and special

issues dedicated to a specific group, across the multiverse of scholarship. In this *Into the Spider-verse* metaphor, the multiverse is already here; the portal just has not been opened to it yet. Faculty and staff—with and without titles—are already performing the labor in a variety of ways; the professionalization of the discipline at the four-year level has created the appearance that there is only one model, but other models of labor toil in relative anonymity, furthering a cycle of underrepresentation.

There have been signs, however, that the multiverse is expanding and more visibility is being sought, including for those of us who identify as “just people, super people” (Mitchell 44:35–44:36). Recent calls for participation from open-access journals and national conferences have been inclusive of two-year writing contexts, but especially the 2019 “More Seats at the Table” Council of Writing Program Administrators national conference call, which was sent to the TYCA listserv and asked: “What writing programs currently exist that are understudied or marginalized in some way—for example, community-college programs, prison writing programs, community and adult-education writing programs, immigrant-focused and second-language programs, basic-writing programs” (Blauuw-Hara)? This call is a reminder that many writing programs—and individuals who perform WPA labor—fall outside the paradigm most frequently represented in WPA scholarship.

Because the individuals who perform the labor of these underrepresented writing programs tend to go unrecognized as part of the discipline’s professionalization, calls from within the *WPA: Writing Program Administration* to expand the repertoire of what it means to be a WPA have not necessarily been answered. As multiple articles in this special issue suggest: decentralized writing program administration labor is a valid way of doing the labor—these labor configurations are how the work is accomplished in many contexts. Calls like this issue suggest a willingness to (re)recognize these forms of labor and the individuals who engage in it. In taking up this call, we hope to have opened space for the invisible to push aside what Andelora refers to as the community college “crisis of confidence” to take a leap of faith into the community in which we want to engage, push back against, and belong (311).

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