

MEMORANDUM

Date: 4 May 2013
To: WPA-GO Committee Chairs (Tim Dougherty, Brian Hendrickson, Jessica Nastal, Laurie Pinkert, Patti Poblete, Kathryn Taylor, Carolyn Wisniewski)
CC: Christine Garcia, Genevieve Garcia de Mueller
From: Al Harahap (harahap@email.arizona.edu) and Brian Hendrickson (bhendric@unm.edu) on behalf of WPA-GO's ad hoc Diversity Task Force
Subject: WPA-GO ad hoc Diversity Task Force Findings/Recommendations to WPA-GO Standing Committees (feedback requested by Feb. 15)

This document has been prepared by Al Harahap and Brian Hendrickson on behalf of the WPA-GO's ad hoc Diversity Task Force, chaired by Brian Hendrickson (University of New Mexico) and comprised of the following members:

- Christine Garcia (University of New Mexico)
- Genevieve Garcia de Mueller (University of New Mexico)
- Al Harahap (University of Arizona)
- Patti Poblete (Purdue University)

WPA-GO's ad hoc Diversity Task Force was formed to examine the issue of diversity in the National Council of Writing Program Administrators as it concerns the organization's graduate student members. The Diversity Task Force therefore set out to:

1. Define ***diversity***;
2. Explain why diversity as we have defined it should be a priority for WPA-GO's standing committees;
3. Identify in the bylaws, recent initiatives, and present agendas of WPA-GO's standing committees where diversity as we have defined it is already prioritized, and where further opportunities exist;
4. Submit a set of findings/recommendations to each standing committee for review/implementation, soliciting feedback in advance of finalizing the report for presentation as a record of WPA-GO's progress toward making diversity a priority.

On January 16, 2013, the original version of this document was submitted to all WPA-GO committee chairs along with a request for feedback by February 15, 2013. In light of the feedback received, the ***Defining Diversity*** section of the document was amended accordingly to account for religious affiliation in its definitions of topical and institutional diversity.

Then at the WPA-GO Graduate Committee meeting at 2013 CCCC on March 14, 2013, the committee agreed that when the GC reconvened at 2013 CWPA, committee chairs would be prepared to present an action plan in response to the following definitions, objectives, findings, and recommendations.

Defining Diversity

WPA-GO's ad hoc Diversity Task Force holds that for writing program administration as a field of inquiry and praxis, **diversity** is achieved when the makeup of administrative positions (including assistantships), organizational membership (especially leadership roles), scholarship published in relevant academic journals, and speaking roles and attendance at relevant academic conferences reflect(s) the following:

- **Demographic diversity:** faculty (tenure track, contingent, and lecturer) and graduate students of varying ethnicity, sex, gender identity, age, religion, socioeconomic status, regionality, nationality, and linguistic variety.
- **Topical diversity:** a comprehensive range of subfields and issues that affect the field, its practitioners, and the various institutions/populations that they serve.
- **Institutional diversity:** faculty and (when relevant) graduate students affiliated with two-year, four-year, private, religiously affiliated, Hispanic-serving, historically black, and tribal colleges and universities, in all regions of the US and internationally.

Prioritizing Diversity

Achieving diversity as defined above is imperative to the continued vitality and efficacy of the National Council of Writing Program Administrators, WPA-GO, and the field of writing program administration in general, in that present and prospective members and constituencies need to know that:

- Their perspectives and experiences are valued and desired;
- Challenges to traditional wisdom are welcome and encouraged;
- Institutionalized disparities are recognized and addressed as grave issues;
- Ours is a community capable of representing, supporting, and advocating for them.

Identifying Opportunities

To ensure that each of WPA-GO's standing committees is doing all it can to achieve diversity in WPA-GO, the National Council of Writing Program Administrators, and the field of writing program administration in general, what follows is a set of preliminary findings/recommendations compiled by WPA-GO's ad hoc Diversity Task Force.

Each set of findings/recommendations corresponds to a different standing committee. In compiling each set, the Diversity Task Force sought to identify in the bylaws, recent initiatives, and present agendas of WPA-GO's standing committees where diversity as we have defined it is already prioritized, and where further opportunities for prioritizing diversity currently exist.

Please keep in mind that these are preliminary findings/recommendations that we hope to improve upon in light of the feedback provided by WPA-GO committee chairs.

Elections Committee

Diversity Prioritized

The 2012 GC election apparently prioritized regional & institutional diversity by organizing the ballot so that candidates competed against others from the same region, ensuring that the three newly elected GC members would represent three different regions of the US.

Further Opportunities

- The bylaws do not prioritize diversity as a concern for the Elections Committee.
- Applicants do not know ahead of time the criteria by which they will be nominated for the ballot.
- Without further qualification, the nomination process might appear exclusionary and/or prohibitive to some applicants.

Recommendations

- Specify in the bylaws a range of options by which the Elections Committee might prioritize diversity in selecting nominees for the ballot (e.g. region, institution, gender, ethnicity, scholarly focus).
- Make selection criteria explicit in calls for nominees in order to encourage applicants representing traditionally underrepresented institutions, regions, ethnicities, etc.
- Explain that self-nominating vs. being nominated (including the identity/status of the nominator) has no bearing on decisions of the Elections Committee in selecting nominees for the ballot.
- Promote upcoming elections via social media, non-WPA conferences, and other venues to increase transparency/inclusivity.

Events Committee

Diversity Prioritized

- The bylaws make a point of ensuring that in planning WPA-GO events, the Events Committee solicits participation from one or more local graduate students, effectively advertises events through listservs and social media, uses social media to promote a sense of community among event attendees, and uses events as an opportunity to solicit attendee participation in future WPA-GO initiatives.
- Detailed and advanced planning on behalf of the Events Committee ensures timely event promotion.
- Locations of 2012 CCCC and CWPA events allowed for comfortable, friendly, casual interactions, especially with/among first-time attendees.
- Times of 2012 CCCC and CWPA events adequately avoided scheduling conflicts that might otherwise have limited attendance.
- Providing food/drinks eases the financial burden of attending.
- Prospective 2013 CCCC morning coffee hour, if hosted in addition to the usual evening meet and greet, could increase the number of attendees reached by WPA-GO events while providing attendees to both events further opportunities

for socializing/networking.

Further Opportunities

- Bylaws do not emphasize the need to plan and structure events and assign roles to committee members in a manner that ensures all attendees, especially first-timers, feel welcome and included.
- Scheduling 2012 WPA-GO SIG directly before meet and greet at 2012 CWPA Conference made it difficult for potential attendees to schedule dinner and attend both events.
- Changing 2013 CCCC event from its usual time of Thursday evening following the annual Bedford-St. Martin's party to Friday morning detracts from a consistency in event planning likely to lead to increased attendance, as well as the possibility of recruiting attendees from one event to the other.
- Proposal for 2013 CCCC event does not include plans for event promotion.

Recommendations

- Maintain time/date/setting type of events to enhance consistency, but if financially feasible:
 - serve pizza or some other food at 2013 WPA-GO SIG so that attendees have enough to eat in advance of the meet and greet;
 - add Friday morning coffee hour to increase time/opportunities for networking/socializing.
- Develop a plan for event promotion, assigning roles for posting to lists and social media as well as promoting WPA-GO events at non-WPA regional/national conferences, making a point to invite graduate student attendees, especially those giving WPA-related presentations. The Events Committee should coordinate with the Outreach and Communications Committee in executing these initiatives.
- Coordinate activities during events to promote interaction between a range of attendees. Several possibilities include:
 - a formal call to attention and greeting by WPA-GO officers;
 - an icebreaker or series of activities that facilitate introductions/dialogue between attendees, encouraging interactions with individuals from other institutions.

Mentoring & Professional Development (MPD) Committee

Diversity Prioritized

- Although its bylaws do not explicitly prioritize diversity, the initiative of membership polling serves to ensure that WPA-GO is aware of the mentoring and professional development needs and interests of a range of its constituents, and the committee's coordination with the CWPA Mentoring Project ensures that these needs/interests are represented to the larger organization.
- 2012-2013 goals for the MPD Committee enhance the current bylaws by explicitly prioritizing diversity and facilitating graduate student access to mentors.
- Numerous sessions at 2012 CWPA addressed a range of graduate students' mentoring and professional development needs/interests.

- The 2012 CWPA CompPile indexing session connected interested graduate students with a range of established scholars in the field.
- The inaugural thread on the CWPA Mentoring Blog specifically addresses issues of ethnic diversity as they pertain to the field of writing program administration, affording interested parties the opportunity to respond to posts in a collegial forum, thereby enabling ongoing, productive dialogue surrounding issues of diversity.
- Proposed 2013 CWPA sessions emphasize demographic and topical diversity by addressing a range of issues of concern to prospective WPAs, and soliciting participation from scholars at different stages of career development.
- Plans for 2013 CWPA breakfast buddies addresses the MPD Committee's goal of facilitating mentorship opportunities.

Further Opportunities

- Potential graduate student participants in the CWPA Mentoring Project might not know about the initiative or understand how it works, or they might be too intimidated to make the first move, especially if they do not believe the CWPA Mentoring Project possesses the kinds of demographic, institutional, or topical diversity that might appeal to them.
- Potential graduate student participants in MPD-sponsored sessions such as the CompPile indexing session might not be familiar with scholar-mentors' research history or current interests.
- Format and style of the inaugural CWPA Mentoring Blog thread, which currently presents as a more formal, academic discourse, might be uninviting in terms of the apparent time and effort required for established scholars to respond, whereas it might be intimidating for junior scholars and graduate students.

Recommendations

- Promote the CWPA Mentoring Project through social media, conference sessions, and WPA-GO events by providing details about participating scholar-mentors and inviting participating scholar-mentors to interact with WPA-GO event attendees.
- When arranging sessions like the CompPile indexing session, provide bios for scholar-mentors to better inform graduate students while increasing the visibility of demographic, institutional, and topical diversity within the CWPA Mentoring Project.
- Use Rita Malenczyk's original post as a model in terms of length (brief) and style (conversational/dialogic), thereby encouraging more, less demanding responses. (Also see: [The Chronicle of Higher Education blogs](#) and [Inside Higher Ed blogs](#) for formats and styles that have invited the most responses.)
- Use other media outlets such as GWPA listserv and FB page to cultivate conversations among graduate students.

Outreach & Communications Committee

Diversity Prioritized

Although its bylaws do not explicitly prioritize diversity, duties such as maintaining a

robust social media presence are essential to increasing inclusivity. Current goals to that effect include:

- plans to increase web presence to better promote travel grants, elections, WPA-GO events, etc.;
- plans to produce promotional business cards that are easier to distribute at conferences and more likely to be kept with other networking materials collected by attendees, increasing the likelihood of attendance/membership;
- Plans to devise materials targeting specific regional and national conferences, organize a system of delegates to distribute materials, and make these materials readily available/manipulable in a central online location.

Further Opportunities

Lack of committee membership places an onerous burden on the chair to fulfill the responsibilities of the committee.

Recommendations

Recruit committee members at WPA-GO events and via listservs and social media, delegating responsibilities early on based on individual members' strengths.

Travel Grants Committee

Diversity Prioritized

- 2012-2013 goals include making the selection criteria more transparent, while emphasizing preference given to first-time conference presenters as well as applicants who demonstrate the greatest financial need.
- 2012-2013 goals appeal to topical diversity by offering one grant to applicant that best responds to conference theme: for 2013 CCCC, basic writing; for 2013 WPA, queer studies.

Further Opportunities

- Bylaws do not explicitly prioritize diversity in discussing scoring criteria.
- Call for applications did not include a scoring rubric for review by prospective applicants.
- Graduate students facing particularly severe financial and/or time constraints might not have enough time to apply, or might have already ruled out attending by the time the call for applications is released.
- Any potential additional funding sources were not solicited early enough to include in the call for applications.
- The current call for applications narrows the applicant pool to accepted presenters only, excluding graduate students participating in other related mentoring and professional development opportunities like the Research Network Forum or other related but separate, special-interest conference presentation venues.

Recommendations

- Specify in the bylaws a range of options by which the Travel Grants Committee might prioritize diversity in scoring grant applications (e.g. region, institution,

- gender, ethnicity, topical focus).
- Include a scoring rubric in the call for applications that makes the scoring process transparent to prospective applicants.
 - Distribute the call for applications well enough in advance to afford all prospective applicants the opportunity to apply.
 - Solicit additional funding sources well enough in advance to include in the call for applications, which might in turn encourage the inclusion of further categories of award that prioritize various forms of diversity, including but not limited to grants for graduate students presenting at related but separate, special-interest conference presentation venues, or who are at various stages in their professional development and thus might not be prepared to present their research but for whom CWPA and CCCC provide indispensable mentoring and professional development opportunities.
 - Revise bylaws to advertise grants early enough to be accessible to all manner of graduate students, does not solicit enough funding early enough to include all details in CFA, does not advertise these opportunities sufficiently enough through social media, listservs, websites, and conferences well enough in advance of deadline, and does not sufficiently highlight accessibility features of grants in announcements.

Thank you again for your time and consideration. The Diversity Task Force values your feedback, and we look forward to working with you in prioritizing diversity in WPA-GO.