

# WPA Task Force on Internationalization

## Final Report

March, 2008

### Background

In 2006, the WPA Executive Board formed a task force to explore the possibilities of extending the organization's reach beyond North America. The WPA Task Force on Internationalization was charged with "studying the issues surrounding the potential internationalization of the WPA, discussing these at CCCC, and presenting a report to the Board by the summer WPA conference in Chattanooga in July 2006 with a recommendation and rationale to pursue or not pursue internationalization; and should the Task Force recommend internationalization, prepare a full proposal for such internationalization to the Board by December, 2006." Chris Anson was appointed chair, and, with Board consultation, invited the participation of fourteen WPA members who had experience working at or with institutions abroad and/or a history of international scholarship. (Two members—Anson and Howard—were also members of the WPA Executive Board.)

Chris Anson, North Carolina State University (Chair)  
Charles Bazerman, University of California, Santa Barbara  
Christiane Donahue, University of Maine, Farmington  
Lisa Emerson, Massey University, New Zealand  
Cynthia Gannett, Loyola College, Maryland  
Rebecca Moore Howard, Syracuse University  
Paul Matsuda, Arizona State University  
Susan McLeod, University of California, Santa Barbara  
Joan Mullin, University of Texas at Austin  
Donna Reiss, Clemson University  
David Russell, Iowa State University  
Chris Thaiss, University of California, Davis  
Martha Townsend, University of Missouri  
Art Young, Clemson University  
Terry Zawacki, George Mason University

The number of Task Force members made it difficult to meet en masse at major conferences. After an initial meeting at CCCC in 2006, subsequent meetings in July 2006 and 2007 at the WPA conference, November 2006 at the NCTE conference, December 2007 at the MLA conference, March 2007 at the CCCC conference, and May 2006 at the Clemson WAC conference brought together various Task Force members. In addition, several groups of Task Force members met at international conferences between 2006 and 2007. A special SIG at the Clemson WAC conference included several attendees from institutions outside the United States.

A listserv was also created for Task Force members to communicate between meetings and to share occasional updates on their international activities.

In July of 2007, Anson provided to the Executive Board a brief report of the Task Force's activities and recommended that its charge be continued until the Board meeting at CCCC in April, 2008, when a final report would be presented and the Task Force's official responsibilities would end. That recommendation was passed unanimously by the Executive Board.

The rest of this report makes three final recommendations based on the Task Force's deliberations, each accompanied by a brief rationale and contextualizing information.

### **Recommendation 1: Preserve the WPA's existing name for the foreseeable future**

Although deeper issues concerning internationalization preoccupied much of the Task Force members' focus, discussions often turned to the WPA's identity as represented in its name. Early on, we entertained the idea that the WPA could rename (and refigure) itself as the *International Council of Writing Program Administrators* to represent a major shift in the organization's mission, membership, and operations. The example of the International Writing Centers Association was often invoked, as well as the titles of some U.S.-based conferences. When this question came up at a WPA-sponsored session at the 2007 MLA conference, Ken Bruffee, a founder of the WPA and interested attendee, even urged us to internationalize the WPA's name immediately and without further deliberation.

In the Task Force's view, several concerns argue against changing the name of the organization for now, at least until some of the further recommendations in this report can be implemented, tested, and studied. First, one of our members who played a central role in the internationalizing of the IWCA expressed concerns that the move had been somewhat premature, although the IWCA has recently seen considerable international activity. Second, without further international study, it is not clear whether the WPA as presently configured can meet the needs of various organizations abroad. It may be more prudent to look for ways that the WPA's programming, membership, and services might extend themselves internationally and to decide at a later point whether a change in the organization's name is justified.

### **Recommendation 2: Internationalize Specific Programs and Services**

In light of the burgeoning interest in international collaborations, the WPA should actively seek opportunities to connect with, and learn from, writing programs around the globe. This will require that the WPA expand its understanding of "writing programs" beyond those typically administered in North America, especially first-year composition, which does not exist as ubiquitously outside the U.S. but does take a number of other forms in varied kinds of curricula. In addition, many writing scholars in the U.S. are just beginning to learn about the widespread scholarly and organizational activity on writing in many other countries. Each major program or service within the WPA should continue to extend its reach, reporting to the Executive Board periodically about its international efforts and interest.

- The Consultant-Evaluator Service has already conducted reviews for American universities in two countries (the American University of Beirut, Lebanon and the American University in Cairo, Egypt). The Task Force recommends maintaining a subpool of qualified C-E panelists who have experience working with (and ideally providing external reviews for) universities in other countries. These members should meet strict criteria for international experience and cross-cultural understandings. In addition, the C-E directors should look for ways to appoint international members to the C-E panel when turnover is justified. The director and associate director of the C-E Service should continue to look for opportunities to review programs outside of the U.S. Task Force members suggested that such reviews might require a particular openness to alternative perspectives and a spirit of collaborative problem solving.
- Task Force members spent many hours considering the possibility of establishing an international journal or expanding *WPA: Writing Program Administration* into an international journal. With the release of the *Journal of Writing Research* (<http://www.jowr.org/>), a new, international, peer-reviewed journal, together with existing journals that have international editorial boards and publish work from scholars worldwide (e.g., *Assessing Writing*), the Task Force feels that creating a new journal under the auspices of the WPA is not advisable at this time.

However, *WPA: Writing Program Administration* should explore ways to gain visibility among international scholars and program administrators, and look for opportunities to publish material that leads to conversations and collaborations among WPAs around the world. Such an effort could be spearheaded with a special international issue.

- The membership committee should continue to discuss the implications of broadening the WPA's membership to include more teachers, scholars, and administrators from other countries (see Recommendation 3 below).
- Conference siting committees should look for ways to extend the WPA's conference locations beyond the United States. When an opportunity arose for the WPA to hold its annual conference in collaboration with the Australian Association of Writing Programs, the Board felt torn between the appeal of a joint international conference in another country and the need, for the sake of its existing constituency and mission, to enable as many U.S. WPAs as possible to attend. The invitation was ultimately declined, but special efforts were made to keep the spirit of the collaboration alive (e.g., a grant to the leaders of the AAWP to attend the WPA conference in the U.S.). However, the WPA could explore ways to add conferencing opportunities to the existing summer conference and workshop by collaborating with other organizations, advertising international conferences, and arranging SIGs or subgroups of WPAs to attend conferences overseas. Should other opportunities arise for participation in international conferences or for holding WPA conferences overseas, the Executive Board should consider ways to seize such opportunities while not compromising the annual U.S.-based conference or excluding from participation those who cannot afford the costs of international travel.

- The WPA CCCC Breakfast Committees could work with the CCCC to issue special invitations to international WPAs so that they can join the conversations there. Leaders of writing organizations in other countries could be given opportunities at the breakfast to announce conferences and events or encourage collaborative activities.
- The WPA Grants Committee could encourage members to submit proposals that have an international component or involve international collaborators. Depending on future revenue, perhaps a special grant for such international efforts could be offered in addition to the current grants program.
- The WPA Web site could include more information about international activities, perhaps with a page specifically devoted to these. More links could be made to existing international sites, such as CompFAQ's international page and other organizations of writing researchers, teachers, and administrators (the European Association of Research on Learning and Instruction's Writing SIG; the International Association for the Improvement of Mother Tongue Education; the Australian Association of Writing Programs; the Simpósio Internacional de Estudos de Gêneros Textuais [International Symposium on Genre Studies]; the European Association for the Teaching of Academic Writing; the European Writing Centers Association; the Association for Writing Development in Higher Education; InterLAE; the International Conference for the Study of Speech, Writing, and Context; the Canadian Association of Teachers of Technical Writing; the newly formed Middle East and North African Writing Centers Association; and so on).
- The Elections Committee could make a special effort to attract the nominations of international Board members, perhaps starting with those working in the U.S. Although it may be difficult to attract those currently working internationally to run for Board membership, as the organization expands this could become more likely, especially if meetings continue to be held in conjunction with major conferences such as CCCC.
- Although there has been some resistance to proliferating standing committees in the WPA, the organization might consider establishing an ongoing committee to engage in cooperative endeavors and liaisons with higher education writing organizations globally. Although historically dominated by an interest in first-year writing programs on the American model, the WPA now represents more than such programs in being symbolic of the very concept of a "program," however it might be configured in various parts of the world. The WPA should be in a position to be part of whatever global networks are forming.
- Following on its successful Allied Organization panel about international issues at the 2006 MLA, the WPA could provide regular SIGs and other informal meetings at CCCC as well as during the summer WPA conference in order to continue focusing on international issues and providing a forum for the exchange of ideas.

### **Recommendation 3: Find Liaison Members**

In many meetings of Task Force members, concerns were expressed about the way in which the WPA might position itself in its international efforts. How can the WPA become more international without maintaining a dominant U.S. organizational ideology or behaving as if "writing program administration" is the province of U.S. colleges and universities? What do WPAs, as a group, know about the teaching and administration of writing programs abroad? How can the organization become better informed?

Unanimously, Task Force members believe that it is particularly useful for the WPA to keep its members informed about the diverse programmatic structures, theories, and conditions that guide how writing is conceived, studied, taught, and administered outside the U.S. One reason for doing this is to welcome participation by scholars and teachers in all countries. Most of the fifteen members of the Task Force have already established relationships with administrators, researchers, and teachers abroad at institutions that include the following:

- Universidade Federal de Pernambuco, Recife, Brazil
- Universidade Federal de Santa Maria, Santa Maria, Brazil
- Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla, Puebla, Mexico
- Institute of Advanced Communication Education & Research, Kathmandu, Nepal
- University of Qatar, Doha, Qatar
- University of the West Indies, Kingston, Jamaica
- Prince of Songkla University, Thailand
- EARTH Universidad, Costa Rica
- University of the Western Cape, South Africa
- Nankai University, China
- University of the Arts, London
- St. John's University, York, UK
- Hellenic American University
- National Yang-Min University in Taiwan
- Chalmers University, Goteborg, Sweden
- Freiburg University, Germany
- Sabanci University, Turkey
- Queen Mary, University of London
- Open University, Milton Keynes, England
- Kungsholmen Tekniska Högskolan (KTH), Stockholm, Sweden
- George Mason University campus at Ras al Khaimah, United Arab Emirates
- University of Bergen, Norway
- Zayed University, Dubai and Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates
- Coventry University, UK
- Nagoya University
- Tokyo International University
- Nagoya Gakuin University
- Nagoya University of Foreign Studies
- Kinjo University
- International Christian University, Japan

- Temple University Japan
- Columbia University Teacher's College, Japan
- Korea University
- National Autonomous University of Mexico
- University of Hong Kong
- Chinese University of Hong Kong
- Tamkang University, Taiwan
- Tunghai University, Taiwan
- Malaya University, Malaysia
- Université de Lille III, France
- Université de Grenoble II, France
- IUFM de Paris, France
- Université de Paris VIII, France
- Université de Paris V, France

Many dozens of WPAs and others within our field have established similar partnerships, and international collaborations are increasing rapidly. Those individuals are well positioned to help create international connections with WPAs and others overseas. Yet there is no practical way for them to share their expertise and create new partnerships between those they have met and those currently in the WPA. One solution to this problem could be a portal where such relationships can be shared, with contact information, program descriptions, and other material (subject to the approval of all parties). The International Writing Studies wiki mentioned above, linked from the WPA site, could be one ready-made way to start such sharing (<http://comppile.tamucc.edu/wiki/CompFAQsInternational>).

In addition, the WPA might look for ways to draw on the experiences and knowledge of WPAs at U.S. universities (and campus installations or existing institutional partnerships) abroad. In making this suggestion, the Task Force does not want to suggest what could be perceived as a move of exclusivity and nationalism (that is, tap into a U.S. membership that happens to be working overseas). Instead, we see this as a potential opportunity to create new alliances with those who teach and study writing, and administer programs, in other countries through a series of "liaison" members. By virtue of working in other countries, such members will have learned about programs and activities at non-U.S.-based institutions and will know about the potential to connect with these. For example, language issues may be a major impediment to internationalizing the WPA, but without knowing the linguistic situation at a specific institution, it is impossible to seek ways to draw in writing scholars and teachers. In Doha, Qatar, a five-U.S.-university consortium called Education City provides instruction and degree programs that mirror their U.S.-based institutions, including writing courses. Those in charge of such programs will know that Qatar's national university, Qatar University, converted to English language instruction (with the exception of the Law School) from Arabic five years ago, and one of its writing scholars is interested in the WPA. Without a link to this information, the WPA as an organization has no way to extend its reach or create new opportunities for internationalization.

For this reason, it is worth considering creating connections with WPAs at as many U.S.-based institutions abroad as possible in order to learn about their own connections with national universities in their regions. Appendix A lists just some of the U.S. colleges and universities

overseas. Together with the connections already established with other institutions by existing WPA members, a network of interest parties could be created to begin sharing information, perspectives, and opportunities toward the ultimate goal of helping the WPA move beyond its primarily North American roots and operations.

Finally, we urge the WPA to create stronger relationships closer to home, in North America and throughout Latin America. For example, Canada continues to move towards U.S. writing models, yet the WPA has only a tiny handful of Canadian members. In Latin America, with the growth of higher education in recent decades, a number of countries are trying to develop beyond the received European models, and in the coming decades the WPA and other U.S. organizations should be in a position to engage in creative dialogue. This is also true in parts of the Caribbean, where entrenched European models of education are giving way to new structures and systems that involve both foundational writing experiences and writing across the curriculum.

The Task Force wishes to thank the WPA Executive Board for supporting its work and will follow the organization's future efforts with interest.

Respectfully submitted,

Chris M. Anson, Chair  
On behalf of the Task Force

Appendix A  
 Partial List of U.S. Colleges and Universities Abroad

American University of Sharjah	Temple University Japan (TUJ)
American University of Beirut	Arab American University (Palestine)
American University in Cairo	Halgazian University, Beirut
American University of Kinshasa	Lebanese American University, Beirut
American University in Dubai	Webster University, Vienna
American University of Kuwait	Vesalius College, Brussels
American University in Girne (Cyprus)	Parsons School of Design (Paris)
American University of Rome	Jacobs University, Bremen
American University of Paris	John Cabot University, Rome
American University of the Caribbean	Webster University in Leiden
American University of Afghanistan	St. Louis University, Madrid
American University in Bulgaria	Suffolk University, Madrid
American University of Puerto Rico	Franklin College, Switzerland
American University of Central Asia (Bishkek)	International University in Geneva
American University of Armenia	Webster University in Geneva
American University in London	Webster University in Thailand
American University of Kyrgyzstan	British American College London
American University of Athens	Huron University USA in London
American University of Nigeria	American College in Greece
American University of Iraq	American College Dublin
American University of Abuja	American University in Kosovo
Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University, Oita (Japan)	Richmond, The American International University in London
Education City, Doha, Qatar (Carnegie Mellon, Georgetown, Texas A&M, Virginia Commonwealth, Cornell Medical Center)	CIS group of American Colleges Overseas (CIS/ACO) <a href="http://www.richmond.ac.uk/aco/index.htm">http://www.richmond.ac.uk/aco/index.htm</a>