

Transgressing Unstable Ground: Contradictions in Representations of Writing Program Administrative Work

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Despite our efforts in WPA scholarship, writing administration seems to still have a general reputation in academia as “institutional housework” (Adams, Hassel, Rucki, and Yoon 46). To investigate this perspective, this study undertakes a genre analysis of ten years of WPA job advertisements to trace discursive expectations of administrative work. Because advertisements do not necessarily demonstrate any sort of reality or “truth” about the work of WPAs, they are a useful genre to examine how perspectives of the work WPAs should do is constructed. Ultimately, this genre analysis demonstrates how WPAs are discursively constructed in regard to responsibility and temperament as team players: eager, non-threatening negotiators, liaisons, and otherwise passive caretakers of writing. Yet, they are simultaneously asked to do willful (Ahmed), boundary-breaking, progressive work in unstable environments: work that might—as some have argued—be more appropriately categorized as activism. This article concludes by describing the implications of such a disconnect and willful paths forward.

Perhaps this is what it means to transform willfulness into pedagogy: you have to work out how to travel on unstable grounds.

—Sara Ahmed (170)

In a “Key Concept Statement” on “Service” authored on behalf of the CCCC Committee on the Status of Women in the Profession (CSWP), Heather Brook Adams, Holly Hassel, Jessica Rucki, and K. Hyoejin Yoon argue that the many efforts to classify administrative work in Composition Studies as intellectual have been unsuccessful. Instead, such work “increasingly . . . falls to women and continues to be invisible or devalued” (45).

There is a great deal of evidence to support their claim. Two-thirds of the WPAs who responded to the National Census of Writing were women, and these women are frequently in untenured or contingent-status positions. Adams, Hassel, Rucki, and Yoon's finding is particularly disappointing given that the field of writing studies, and especially those who identify as WPAs, has made concerted scholarly and professional efforts to counter narratives that diminish and discount administrative work. Many of the NCTE position statements address issues of writing administration, and, perhaps most notably, the 1998 CWPA statement on *Evaluating the Intellectual Work of Writing Administration* offers a frame to quantify WPA work in order to demonstrate it "worthy of tenure and promotion when it advances and enacts disciplinary knowledge within the field of Rhetoric and Composition." Most recently, the CCCC's *Indianapolis Resolution* specifically articulates WPA work as dependent on scholarly expertise and focal to labor matters in the field (Cox et al.).

Despite these disciplinary statements, the rich scholarship of *WPA: Writing Program Administration* and its attendant community of active scholars, and the fact that most WPA readers will be at some point be asked to contribute administrative service to their program if not rotate into the WPA role itself (Pemberton; "Job Information List"), writing administration seems to still have a general reputation as "institutional housework" (Adams, Hassel, Rucki, and Yoon 46). Lynn Bloom offered a satirical vignette to this effect in 1992, noting that WPAs often function as the maligned, stereotyped housewife in English departments, organizing things and cleaning up the messes. She concluded her dark joke with the claim, "My God, who *wouldn't* want a Writing Director?" (178). But why is this joke still so relevant more than two decades later? Since administration and its associated theory and practice is central to the pedagogy and teaching of writing at the college level, how has this problem endured and grown? Why must WPAs tread on such unstable ground?

To answer these questions I examine ten years of WPA job advertisements, demonstrating how expectations of writing administrative work are constituted discursively and thus perpetuated. Using genre analysis inflected with feminist theoretical understandings of responsibility and temperament to examine constructions of WPAs, I listen and search—in the playful language of feminist rhetor Sara Ahmed—for ways to transform a will into a way for willful WPAs. Job advertisements are pedagogic in that they teach us expectations of who WPAs are supposed to be, and because there are no complimentary, equally clear, publicly available genres to counter the narratives they perpetuate, job advertisements assume an outsize role in their representation. Because advertisements do not necessarily demon-

strate any sort of reality or “truth” about the actual work of WPAs, they are useful in demonstrating how we learn perceptions of WPA work.

Ahmed’s figure of the willful subject is particularly useful to combat the beleaguered perception of the WPA’s institutional housework. Often leveled as a criticism, willfulness describes the determination of someone who does not conform to the desires of those around her. Willfulness is a generally gendered reproach, since those who identify as women should usually be willing. Ahmed notes, “When a structural problem becomes diagnosed in terms of the will, then individuals become the problem: individuals become the cause of problems deemed their own” (7). We might also explain this phenomenon of individual scholars and WPAs becoming the perceived root of their own problems as a result of neoliberalism. Yet this article examines the potential of willful WPAs and their colleagues “willing together” as a way to unlearn problematic framings of WPA work.

Ultimately, my findings highlight the contradictions expressed in job ads regarding the desired qualities of WPAs, including their temperament, responsibilities, and work environment. Problematic framing of WPA work is codified into some of the most widely available, public-facing articulations of WPA professional life, thus impacting institutional perceptions of such work. The implications of this conflict demonstrate how WPAs are discursively constructed in regard to responsibility and temperament as team players: eager, non-threatening negotiators, liaisons, and otherwise passive caretakers of writing. Yet, they are simultaneously asked to do willful, boundary-breaking, progressive work in unstable environments: work that might—as some have argued—be more appropriately categorized as activism.

JOB ADVERTISEMENTS AS GENRE

WPA job advertisements are institutional genres, disparately authored by colleagues from within and outside of writing studies, by administrators, and by human resources representatives. This Frankensteinian method of authorship, in which we draw from existing ads over here, and put a little of this handbook language and that website language in there, helps explain how job advertisements can become monsters that seemingly self-animate and take on a life of their own, perhaps divorced from the intentions of those involved in their development. The conventional nature of job advertisements is such that the headings “Minimum Qualifications” and “Preferred Qualifications” become almost invisible in plain sight for both the authors and audiences of the genre.

Yet job advertisements' authorship, conventional nature, and the fact that they probably do not accurately capture the actual work of WPAs, make this genre all the more important to examine when trying to understand why writing-related administration persists in its maligned role. It is also important to consider both what genre analysis cannot provide—unmediated insight into the minds of authors—and what it can provide—understanding of the work a particular genre does within a system or community of practice. Further, since one of the primary problems with administrative work is that it becomes invisible and taken for granted, it is necessary to examine how this is constructed. As a field, we have a strong collective understanding of demographics about writing programs, narrative evidence of WPA work, and innovative curricular developments taking place across our classrooms—all of which is important—but there is little empirical research on the day-to-day expectations or understandings of WPA work. Job ads are one of the few places where the work of WPAs is publicly articulated across institutions, and for those who do not do WPA work, participating on a search committee, constructing a WPA job advertisement, or reading such an advertisement, may be the only time they consider what WPA work entails.

GENDERED WORK IN COMPOSITION

The gendered nature of work in composition and its attendant systemic economic and labor consequences has been effectively documented in our scholarship (for example Schell, Miller). The two most recent book-length feminist treatments of WPA work, Donna Strickland and Jeanne Gunner's *The Writing Program Interrupted* and Krista Ratcliffe and Rebecca Rickly's *Performing Feminism and Administration*, respectively examine theoretical orientations towards administration that disrupt orthodoxy and address feminist methods for practically addressing administrative inequity. Both offer frameworks for problematizing gendered expectations of administrative work, but Debra Dew specifically describes reasons why WPA work in particular is frequently rendered invisible:

WPAs do not just enjoy a textual relationship with a subject matter; we employ our rhetorical training to establish a sound writing enterprise within the local context. Much of our rhetorical activity serves these ends, but we yet struggle to intelligibly represent the work for review. *We may exclude it from our professional records*, imagining advocacy as our peculiar burden given writing's history, or *tolerate the work in loyal service* to our programs. (W41, emphasis added)

Candace Spigelman has described this phenomenon, in which paid work and workers vanish, as the result of an exploitive “rhetoric of personal responsibility” (95). Michelle Massé and Katie Hogan echo Spigelman, calling the invisible service work of the university part of “schools’ silent economies” (1), explaining that such work “is often framed as a labor of love . . . akin to the caregiving tasks women perform for their mates, children, places of worship, or community groups rather than as work for which they should be paid and acknowledged” (2).

Examining the development of writing programs sheds useful light on how service work becomes invisible and taken for granted by historicizing the divide by which intellectual work and mechanical administrative work grew and crystallized. Such historical accounts add useful nuance to the well-articulated feminized view of composition studies. Donna Strickland, in particular, draws on an advertisement of the 1907 Edison dictation machine to situate the historical context in which writing programs gained footing. She describes how the image of a white man talking and a white woman writing down his words using a dictation machine provides a useful metaphor to understand the subsequent differentiation between conceptual/masculine and mechanical/feminine work at the university (simultaneously highlighting racialized expectations of this work). Strickland compares contemporary associations with the teaching of composition with that of the mid-twentieth century rise of the white woman secretary, who is attentive to mechanical correctness in letter-writing so that her boss need not be (465).

Kelly Ritter’s archival analysis of the lay reader program of the 1950s and 60s, in which college-educated “housewives” were hired to ease the grading load of lead teachers and thus make their work more efficient, similarly identifies the implications of the growing division between the heady work of theoretical instruction and labor-intensive theme grading. Ritter specifically connects the permissive attitude toward the adjunctification of composition courses with the reasoning for and the responses to the lay reader program. The problematic nature of unfair compensation and a strict hierarchy in which the lay readers were at the bottom is explained away by the comforting belief that teaching writing is appropriate to women given the related caregiving duties that come “naturally” to them (Ritter 401). Such foundational inequities invariably inform current practice. Thus, WPAs and writing instructors face the same struggle that the composition course itself has faced over its lifetime, insisting that the work is intellectually based as opposed to primarily mechanical in nature (468).

This tension is particularly pronounced in the contemporary university where, as some *WPA* readers may be familiar, a prevalent view of the pur-

pose of first-year composition is as a site to clean up students' grammar and syntax before allowing them to progress to advanced work in upper-division courses. The majority of instructors tasked with this impossible project of language sanitation are women of contingent status (Cox et al.). WPAs are complicit in the unethical hiring practices of this labor force, but they too are frequently faculty members who do not have institutional support to advocate for visibility. This especially includes graduate students (Edgington and Taylor), non-tenure-track faculty (Gappa and Leslie; New Faculty Majority), and junior tenure-track faculty (Elder, Schoen, and Skinnell; Charlton et al.). The field is familiar with the implications of invisibility, perhaps most notably in the many accounts of WPAs in tenure-track positions not getting tenure (Leverenz). This study interrogates WPA job advertisements to understand how invisibility is discursively constructed from the outset.

THE STUDY: CONTRADICTIONS IN RESPONSIBILITIES,
TEMPERAMENT, AND WORK ENVIRONMENT

Like syllabi in our classrooms, job advertisements serve as a rich introductory genre, replete with information we are eager to share with students and candidates, and plenty of information we communicate unintentionally. My dataset for this study includes ten years of job advertisements, from September 21, 2005 through August 24, 2015 posted on the Council of Writing Program Administrators (CWPA) job board.¹ This includes 268 positions: 78 are writing center-related, 109 are composition program related, and 23 are WAC related. I used NVivo, a qualitative data analysis program, to assist with my coding and quantitative data queries, including word frequency and collocation analysis. I initially coded the data according to conventional markers, noting the year of the advertisement, responsibilities, teaching load, qualifications (those preferred and those required), and position title (including rank, and program descriptors).² The advertisements in the dataset varied significantly in regard to length, level of detail, kinds of institutions, and specific types of positions.³ I tried to develop a broad dataset of advertisements whose candidates drew from those trained in rhetoric and composition and who would work primarily in writing programs, writing centers, and writing across the curriculum initiatives.⁴

In the specific discussion of results that follow, I provide examples from the corpus that illustrate the trends I found in my inductive coding. As I describe, the most notable results pertain to three dimensions of WPA work: temperament, responsibilities, and work environment. The job ads often stipulate that they want a team player, yet the responsibilities, institu-

tional hierarchies, and environment for the positions are generally in conflict with this request. The contradictions among these three expectations of the work are problematic and ultimately provide inroads to understanding why WPA work is frequently rendered invisible.

Temperament: So Much Depends on a Team Player

In examining the dataset, the temperament with which this work must be carried out—the “how” of WPA work—was especially marked. In fact, although AAUP recommends against collegiality as a consideration in tenure and promotion (Schiell), I found that appropriate temperament is noted throughout the corpus. According to these ads, WPAs should be collaborative, creative, team-oriented, collegial, and enthusiastic (see table 1). As one advertisement described, the ideal candidate should be “a team player, collegial and with a professional demeanor.” This chain of identifiers seems redundant at first, but the nuances among them are worth considering: a team player is someone who works well with others; a collegial person is likeable; and someone possessing a professional demeanor is willing to do whatever the work entails. In contrast, there were a few notable exceptions to requests for WPAs to possess the temperament of a team player: one advertisement requested “demonstrated imagination and skill,” while another sought “A strategic mindset and exceptional spokesperson for articulating strategic priorities.” Such invocations of strength and strategizing are essential to WPA function in practice, and discussions of these traits as necessary to successful work in administration are rife throughout our scholarship (and feminist scholarship in particular), but their use is infrequent across the dataset. Further, balancing strength with being a collegial, professional team player is tenuous, since, as Ahmed notes, willfulness is often read as unwilling to play nicely. She writes, “a good will is in agreement with other wills. Willfulness as ill will is often understood as a will that is in agreement only with itself” (95).

Table 1
Temperament-Related Terms Appearing in WPA Job Advertisements.

Word	<i>n</i>	Sample usage
<i>collaborative</i>	133	collaborative style, who will manage multiple complex relationships, A collaborative, consensus-building and flexible leadership style
<i>creative</i>	45	recruiting an energetic, creative, and experienced founding Director
<i>team</i>	33	a team player, collegial and with a professional demeanor
<i>collegial</i>	15	collegial, team-oriented scholar
<i>enthusiastic</i>	5	A high degree of enthusiasm, energy, and creativity

The word tree in figure 1 demonstrates how the term *team* is utilized to describe the necessary work of WPAs. I use the word tree because it allows us to see, in a way that a table alone cannot, the myriad and frequently contradictory ways WPAs are asked to perform their roles. I am also influenced here by Tarez Samra Graban's metadata mapping project, which she uses to "suture" archival information of feminist rhetors whose contributions may be "rendered invisible because it doesn't appear in easily recoverable forms or forums" (173). Thus she turns to geospatial mapping to trace the locatability of various "networks of activity"; she posits, "In lieu of fixed nodes or points, locatability identifies the fluid relations or pathways of texts" (174). The work of WPAs, and the many folks in and around writing programs who do related service and administration, is similarly networked and prone to erasure because it does not always follow the academic path for which our annual reports are designed. The word tree is generated by aggregating all of the uses of *team* in the dataset and clustering collocated words. Larger, bolder words are used more frequently. Figure 1 includes different ways that WPAs may be included in a team: they might "manage" the team, "organize" the team, "join" the team, or simply "create" the team and watch what happens. In most cases the WPA is in charge of the team, though sometimes asked to be a "part of" it. In other cases the WPA is a "team-player," is "team-oriented," or thrives in a "team environment."

The advertisements, when operationalized, constitute a rather problematic notion of team, however, one in which the WPA is not the coach, the quarterback, or even the quintessential cheerleader, but the obsessive fan who watches the players' every move. A team is not a very honest metaphor for a writing program, given that other members, particularly students and contingent faculty, may not consider themselves a part of the team, since

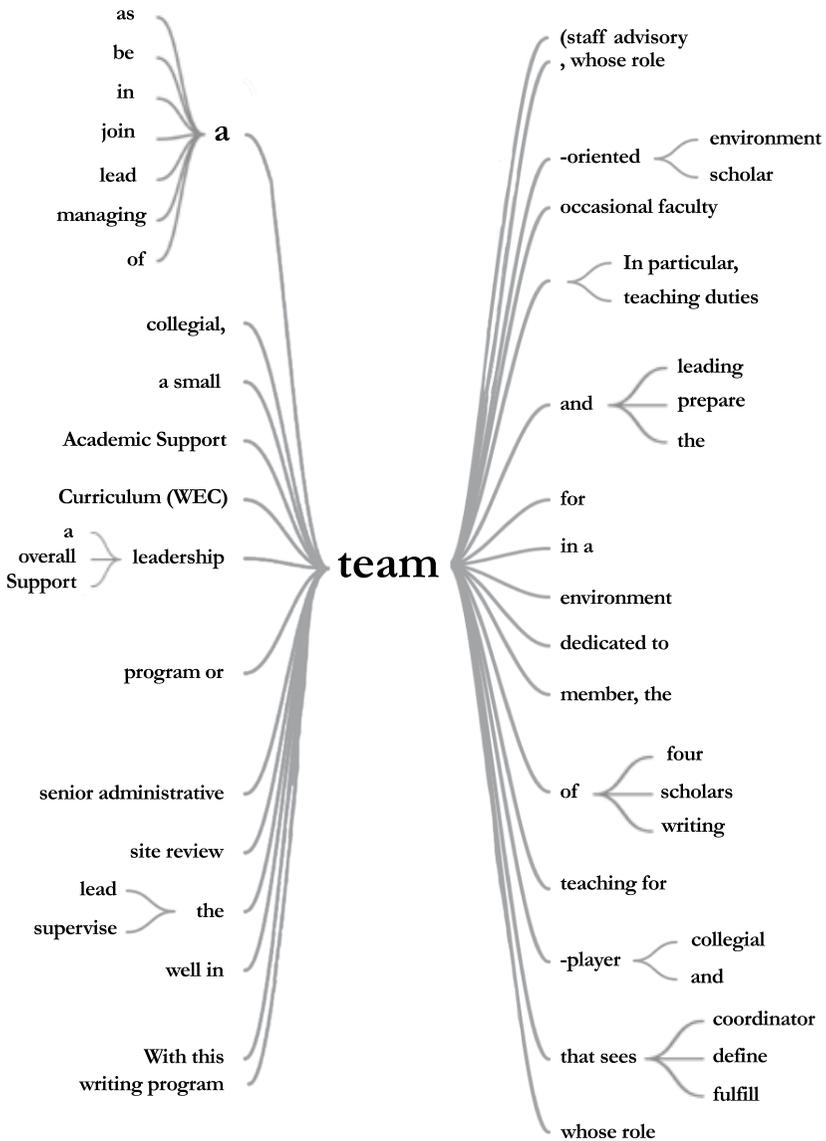


Figure 1. A word tree of terms collocated with *team* in WPA job advertisements. (Created in NVivo)

they are frequently asked to collaborate and be overseen simultaneously. In practice, this construction of WPA temperament is misleading and misrep-

representative, making invisible not just the potential work for the program, but the people within the program itself. Perhaps it is necessary to interrupt this metaphor so that WPAs are constructed as less willing (Ahmed) members, or leaders, of this unstable team.

Responsibilities: Collaboration as Catchall

Responsibilities for WPAs listed in the dataset demonstrate the vague ways job advertisements attempt to account for the myriad duties of a WPA, alternating, frequently in the same sentence, between specific duties and amorphous generalities. Further, the responsibilities listed are often primarily managerial, “not serious, rigorous, or intellectual, but rather, consistent with the dominant views of composition studies, service-oriented and largely practical” (Micciche 441). Table 2, below, accounts for these responsibilities, listing the most frequently used verbs in the corpus alongside sample usage. For instance, one notable example from the corpus posits that successful candidates will “provide leadership and support to *various initiatives* as needed,” or they will “teach one writing seminar each term and *manage other projects*” (emphasis added). Such broad descriptions signal the expectations of WPA work: at any moment, WPAs may be called upon for a wide range of (sometimes competing) responsibilities. Further, the “various initiatives” and “other projects” may become invisible, assumed parts of the job without any official accounting other than in the WPA’s own reporting. These responsibilities also include the conventional prefacing and threshold construction found generally in job advertisements: “the director will teach *at least* one course per year,” “Duties include, *but are not limited to,*” and “*We anticipate* that the director will . . .” However, given that there are few genres that allow WPAs, or those who review them, to provide further detail to these duties—and there is such diversity in release time and compensation across WPA positions—such glosses, the fictions constituted by the job advertisement, can become a WPA’s reality.

The duties listed in table 2 represent fairly expected, commonsense ideas of WPA work. However, close analysis demonstrates the gendered nature of these tasks, in particular, the expectation of working for the needs of others without developing visible work products. Of this list of verbs representing job responsibilities (table 2), only *develop* and *implement* suggest active creation, work that fits into clearly delineated notions of intellectual or scholarly work that might be recognized by the university in the form of a reduced workload, promotion, compensation, or formal accolades. As early reviewers of this work noted, many administrative job advertisements have similar threshold language. The difference between purely administrative

Table 2
Verb Frequency in the “Responsibilities” and “Descriptors” Sections of WPA
Job Advertisements

Word	<i>n</i>	Sample usage
<i>develop</i>	321	The Associate Director supports students in helping them to develop their writing skills
<i>teach</i>	258	We anticipate that the director will teach at least one course per year
<i>support</i>	176	Initiate, coordinate, and support the collaboration of existing offices and services in support of teaching and learning
<i>work</i>	165	Demonstrated ability in facilitating the work of different offices for mutual benefit
<i>assess</i>	151	Liaisons with campus communities to assess and meet writing/language needs and to form partnerships
<i>train</i>	116	Duties include, but are not limited to, the following: interview, hire, train, and supervise undergraduate tutors
<i>provide</i>	109	provide leadership and support to various initiatives as needed.
<i>oversee</i>	101	Oversee all aspects of the daily operations of the WRC in collaboration with Assistant Director of Writing
<i>implement</i>	90	Will work closely with the Writing Center Director to develop and implement a newly- instituted campus-wide WAC program.
<i>collaborate</i>	91	Collaborate with faculty in providing academic support through: Leading pedagogical workshops, Developing the appropriate instruments for first-year writing placement exams, giving these exams, and placing students into the correct first writing course, Developing a system for timely references to OAS for students struggling academically, Working with the faculty as needed on policies and procedures for OAS
<i>manage</i>	81	The Associate Director will also teach one writing seminar each term and manage other projects.
<i>serve</i>	73	Serves as an advocate for writing in the university community.

positions and the majority of positions addressed in this study is in the fact that most of these advertisements are for faculty positions assessed by the traditional triad of teaching, research, and service, and these duties are not easily or obviously aligned to such evaluations. Further, the valuing of a team-player temperament are in conflict with these duties, and it is the relationship of these duties to expectations of temperament and institutional

positioning (addressed in the next section) that suggest a potential answer for why such work has historically been discounted.

Perhaps one of the least surprising terms listed in table 2 is *collaborate*, given that collaboration has long been a fashionable keyword for writing programs (Strickland and Gunner). The word tree in figure 2 demonstrates how *collaborate*, used across the dataset, reveals the complexity of WPA responsibilities constituted in a simple verb. The brackets before and after *collaborate* include the words that are adjacent in the advertisements. The word tree demonstrates that most uses within the text suggest that the candidate must collaborate “with” some entity. Phrases that precede *collaborate* identify specific tasks for which the WPA is responsible, and the phrases after the verb generally list the disparate partners “with” whom the WPA must work. Frequently these groups are vague, as suggested by the terms *counterparts*, *faculty*, and *partners*, though the work must be “innovative” and “successful.” Thus, *collaborate* is meant to account for working with numerous, frequently unnamed stakeholders, bringing together multiple voices who may have very different goals for the work than the WPA but for whom the “collaborative work” is the WPA’s sole responsibility to accomplish.

Collaborate is used in two very different ways in these ads. On one hand, *collaborate* is frequently used as qualitative, and the word is closely followed by an adverb that specifies how the collaboration should go: *successfully*, *innovatively*, *productive[ly]*. Other ads list the constituents with whom the WPA should collaborate: “related student success programs,” “various stakeholders,” “partners,” “Directors,” “faculty,” and “relevant personnel in the composition” program. Figure 2 further highlights the gray area of collaboration, where “to collaborate” includes “leading,” “developing” instruments and systems, and “working with faculty.”

Given this data, and especially the long list of potential collaborators, collaboration as a responsibility of WPA work seems to be an attempt to signal the need to work with others, but as William Duffy notes in his proposed revision of the term, collaboration has “assumed a catchall status that allows theorists and practitioners to deploy it in decidedly uncritical ways,” noting that “To call something ‘collaborative’ is tantamount to saying nothing” (Duffy 417). Further, it can be especially difficult to collaborate given “the status differentials inherent in writing program administration” (Crawford and Strickland 77). In fact, in their critique of collaboration, Ilene Crawford and Donna Strickland warn how the “erasure of material differences between members of collaborative administrative teams” can maintain unequal staffing situations and prevent unfairly compensated instructors from confronting inequity (79). The idealism Kenneth Bruffee

brought to the term “collaboration,” by demonstrating the use in writing with others and talking about the process of writing in writing centers, has been picked apart as necessarily asymmetrical (Duffy; Ede and Lunford; Thompson; Pantelides and Bartesaghi), and its use is thus marked in these advertisements.

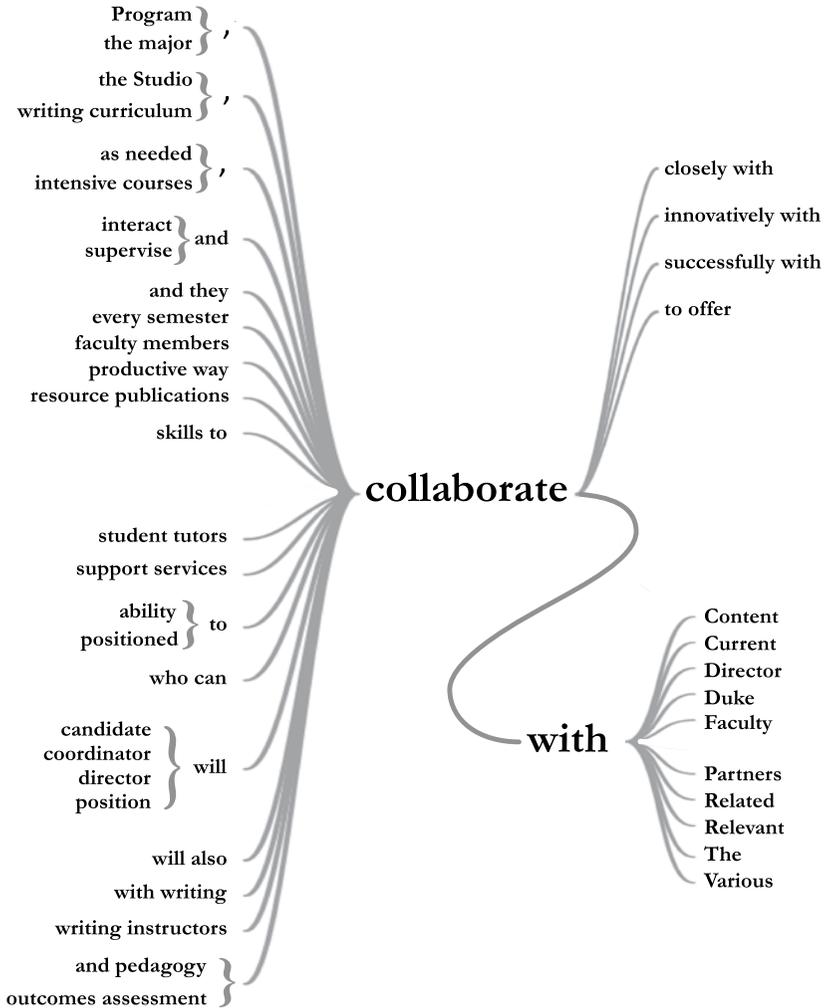


Figure 2. A word tree of terms collocated with collaborate in WPA job advertisements. (Created in NVivo)

Many of the job ad responsibilities include additional terms for accounting for the invisible work of writing program administration, including

overseeing, as in the director will “Oversee all aspects of the daily operations of the WRC in collaboration with Assistant Director of Writing.” This work of overseeing complicates the directive to collaborate with various stakeholders. *Oversee* suggests a hierarchy of which the director may be at the top, but the work goes largely unaccounted for, rendered invisible because of this passive construction of work as watching. If WPAs are merely overseeing, why must they be in a tenure-track positions? What experience must the WPA truly have to just watch what happens? How might this hierarchy damage a WPA’s efforts to build community and engender open conversations about teaching? Further, how might this passive seeing contribute to a kind of agentive-bureaucratic void that filters known problems and keeps them from reaching upper administrators? Might it also contribute to a WPA’s sense of powerlessness on issues of importance, like unethical staffing practices? This imprecise description of WPA work may fan the sometimes tense flames between colleagues in various subfields of English studies in this season of humanities famine, ultimately compromising the WPA’s position and ethos.

Work Environment: WPAs as Willful Subjects

Although many of the responsibilities detailed in these job advertisements suggest passivity, and the invocation of temperament asks candidates to perform gendered leadership in which being a positive team player is primary, the described “unstable ground” of the work environment in which candidates must perform their roles implies that WPAs must be willful subjects (Ahmed): those who transgress borders and political territory, who may have to go against the will of those with whom they are collaborating or against the will of other members of the team. Like other rhetors who have been tasked with maintaining face in politically tenuous territory, constructions of WPA responsibilities as collaborative, team endeavors “thinly veil” the challenging terrain and active role they must embrace to be successful (Mattingly 15–16), if success means delivering effective instruction for students and ethical staffing and support for instructors. This tension is encapsulated by the third most frequently used word in the dataset, *across* (*across* trails only *work* and *support* in its frequency in the corpus).

These advertisements constitute WPA work as something that stretches across boundaries, and in some cases, WPAs are charged to cross these boundaries for the first time. For example, of the 268 positions, 15 explicitly noted a search for a founding director of a program or initiative, and there are more than 200 mentions of *new* and *initiative* throughout the corpus. Seventy-three positions in my study, nearly a third, were seeking new

faculty members—they either explicitly sought an assistant professor or assistant professors were invited to apply. Thus, WPA work, as constructed in these advertisements, often involves new faculty members working in new programs, on new work—and working across boundaries other faculty have not tread across. What if the expectations for this new work articulated the willfulness required of WPA work, making plain the interruptive requirements of the job?

Breaking with convention, one ad explicitly notes that the successful candidate will be willful and will be an activist, standing in stark contrast to the other 267 positions. It is worth noting that this advertisement is for a position outside of the US. Here is an excerpt that describes the position (emphasis added):

[Seeking] a Director to oversee the *development of a strong, fully articulated writing center* and a newly-instituted campus-wide WAC program. The Director will be *positioned as a leader and an activist*, working with university administrators to develop and support policy; *s/he will have authority* to chair and serve on committees, providing a liaison among academic, administrative, and supporting units on campus. . . . The Director will be working in *the interest of all departments on campus*. . . .

The proposed responsibilities of the Writing Center Director include, but are not limited to: Managing an administrative staff, including an Associate Director for Writing Across the Curriculum; *Developing, implementing, and revising the strategic plan* of the WAC Program in consultation with various campus stakeholders; *Developing, implementing, and revising the strategic plan* of the Writing Center; *preparing the Writing Center's annual budget; documenting the practices and activities* of the Writing Center; *preparing annual and progress reports; developing and overseeing periodic assessment* of the Writing Center. The Director will teach two courses per semester, which can include a tutor training course. . . .

Candidates at Associate or Full Professor rank are preferred.

Although this seems like far too many responsibilities for a director with a 2/2 teaching load (and how can a WPA work in the “interest of all departments?”), this deviation is refreshing and potentially worth modeling. The candidate’s progressive work across boundaries is championed in the positioning of the director as an activist. Further, the responsibilities are active, rather than passive, and generally product oriented. Even if only on paper, the director is granted “authority.” Thus, the “story” (Adler-Kassner) that

the university tells about this WPA via the job advertisement is that he or she will be generative, scholarly, and worthy of respect.

CONCLUSION: INVISIBILITY IS ENCODED IN THE JOB ADVERTISEMENT GENRE

The conflicting constructions of temperament, responsibility, and work environment in the decade of WPA job advertisements examined here constitute an impossible role for WPAs. They must be pleasant team players while simultaneously overseeing and collaborating across institutional boundaries. Much of this work is “face work” (Goffman), or relationship building—work that is not easily accounted for in teaching, research, and service and may thus go under the radar. And this is just how the work is constituted in advertisements; there is no similar document to account for the actual work of WPAs. In comparison to faculty, chairs, and deans, WPAs are especially idiosyncratic in their localized work and reporting structures.

As is the case for all academic “truths,” much of the reality of WPA work depends on local context. Yet this disconnect marks the roots of invisibility, and it foregrounds the tension that WPAs must face as they are asked to collaborate and be a team player in a space that requires willful ways and strategies to accomplish the work with which they have been tasked. It explains how the rupture between discursive constructions of who WPAs are, what they do, how they act, and where they work may be ignored because of the cloak of feminized invisibility, or perhaps “the labor of love” narrative (Massé and Hogan). It makes sense that WPAs are often tasked with arguing for something unpopular or unseemly (to colleagues or administrators) in as nonthreatening and persuasive a manner as possible, but this tension seems to be encoded within WPA job advertisements without a recognition of the complexity and contradiction inherent in the work. It is not that WPAs shouldn’t be agreeable—I generally try to be and appreciate the same from others—but when their primary job description is to get along while being asked to tread in unfriendly waters, WPAs are placed in a difficult position. Thus, it is necessary to recognize the rhetorical constraints placed on WPAs as a matter of their discursive constructions and workplace realities.

If we are to effectively claim WPA work as intellectual and worthy of tenure, a project that, despite our best efforts, has not gained traction outside of (or perhaps even entirely within) English studies (Adams, Hassel, Rucki, and Yoon), we will need to acknowledge the material circumstances and, certainly, the contradictions in constructions of responsibility, tem-

perament, and work environment. We will need to take this on within the larger field and not relegate conversations about WPA work to the margins or the subfield alone. And we will need to acknowledge that writing administration has largely been deemed “women’s work,” or as Adams, Hassel, Rucki, and Yoon note, “institutional housework” (46). We will have to continue picking apart what it means to “oversee” daily operations, making more explicit, public, and recognizable the actual work of writing program administration. We cannot just insist that writing program administration is intellectual, we have to construct it as such. Granted, the CWPA statement on *Evaluating the Intellectual Work of Writing Administration* does ask us to be explicit, as do countless thoughtful articles in our disciplinary literature; however, we must extend this practice across our discursive footprint—certainly to our job advertisements—the place where we tell universities and candidates what WPA work entails. As it stands, WPA work is coded as invisible in advertisements, and the problematic contradiction between the gendered work and the gendered workplace is written into the role. Granted, we only have so much control over advertisement authorship, but my study suggests that being mired in job advertisement convention has not helped WPAs’ cause. It is worth being willful in the writing of a job ad, or, if not there, we need to expand the practice of writing up work responsibilities for WPAs and sharing them widely among colleagues.

My study demonstrates that we must consider how WPA work is framed from the outset (to invoke Adler-Kassner’s notion of framing activism in WPA work), far before annual reviews or tenure and promotion decisions. My recommendation is not that we should construct WPA work as traditionally masculine, but that we should resist dichotomies that code feminized work as passive, “natural, invisible, or inconsequential” (Hallenbeck and Smith 201). We should discursively equip WPAs with the willfulness they will need to walk the “unstable ground” between the work expected of them, how it should be performed, and under what circumstances. Though many might characterize WPA work as a labor of love, it is labor (Ianetta), and it must be strategically constructed as such. This is what genre analysis pushes us towards: explicit accounting and negotiation between representation and reality. WPAs should be even more public in our work, telling others what we do, laying out our methodology as carefully and studiously as we did in our dissertations, remembering that we are both showing our audience and ourselves that we know what we are doing—and that what we are doing matters.

NOTES

1. This historic period includes quite a bit of tumult, perhaps most notably the Great Recession. Economic factors certainly impacted the job market during this time, but my focus here is on how WPAs are described rather than on how many and what kinds of jobs are available. Excellent scholarship by Caroline Dadas; Gail Stygall; and Nancy Welch, Catherine Laterell, Cindy Moore, and Sheila Carter-Tod, for instance, specifically examines connections between available jobs and the relative health of the field. My own job search in 2013 led me to this research, ultimately influencing my selection of the WPA job board as the dataset and the decade from 2005–15 as the time period under study.

2. This initial coding scheme also mimics job advertisement content analyses across the disciplines, such as Robert K. Reeves and Trudi Bellardo Hahn's 2010 study of library and information science positions (108).

3. The dataset demonstrates fascinating changes that I was not able to address here; for instance, there were numerous positions that specified that the candidate should be prepared to rotate into administrative positions upon achieving tenure and numerous positions were run in consecutive years (sometimes changing and sometimes remaining the same).

4. I only included advertisements that specifically listed writing program administration as a primary and immediate focus of the position. For instance, I excluded department chair postings and positions that listed future rotation into WPA work. I did not include directors of digital humanities, research centers, or English language institutes, although many of the positions I included overlapped with the responsibilities in these positions. In short, categorizing some positions as WPA and others as not demonstrates the fluidity of such positions and the changing, expanding role of administrative work in rhetoric and composition.

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