

## WPAs as University Learning Space Managers: Theorizing and Guiding the Creation of Effective Writing Classrooms

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*Despite the significant impact that the material conditions of classroom space exert on writing instruction, WPA scholarship has failed to attend to these learning spaces in a focused and systematic way. As a result, the classrooms where writing courses are taught lack a pedagogically motivated advocate, resulting in conditions that often obstruct innovative and even mainstream writing pedagogies. Positioning the infrastructural work of classroom management as critical to the effective and ethical delivery of writing courses and writing programs, this article (1) frames learning space management as part of WPAs' pedagogical and administrative mandate and (2) offers strategies for classroom management at the programmatic and institutional levels that allow WPAs to situate writing programs and administrators as leaders of learning space design on college campuses.*

One of the most ubiquitous elements of writing pedagogy has been the least visible in our scholarship: the physical classrooms in which our classes are taught. Although online writing instruction is thriving, the typical writing class still takes place in a brick-and-mortar classroom. As a result, classroom design and maintenance significantly impact the instruction writing programs provide. However, our literature overlooks these aspects of WPA work. This failure to consider classroom space is especially troubling given its significance at turning points in our field's history. Edwin M. Hopkins noted in the inaugural 1910 issue of *English Journal* that composition's use of a laboratory-style method of interactive, applied instruction without requiring a physical laboratory allowed administrators to increase class sizes and course loads to the inhumane levels still seen today. Donald Murray detailed the material requirements for the 1970s process classroom, which

emphasized students' textual production rather than reception of canonical texts. The increasing availability of microcomputers prompted a burst of scholarship in the 1990s on technology-rich writing environments that invited students to compose digitally. And in the decades since, changes in writing studies and higher education—emphasizing active learning, differentiating face-to-face and online instruction, diversifying the modes and genres in which students compose, and attending to the social, embodied nature of composing—have promoted the creation of specialized writing centers, writing studios, and technology-rich writing classrooms.

Unfortunately, attention to spaces for writing instruction has typically been restricted to these “special” spaces, of which most writing programs have few or none. Respondents to a recent nationwide survey of WPAs at two- and four-year institutions reported that sixty-five percent of the writing courses in their programs are taught in what Thomas T. Barker and Fred O. Kemp call proscenium classrooms, designed to focus attention on a single speaker (the teacher) addressing a silent audience (the students).<sup>1</sup> Of course, design isn't destiny: a classroom designed for banking-style education doesn't necessarily prevent liberatory pedagogy. The trouble, however, is that the design and maintenance of general-purpose proscenium classrooms—used by all departments, owned by none—tend to fall to facilities, IT, and other institutional stakeholders not typically invested in pedagogy, especially writing pedagogy. Reflecting their priorities, these stakeholders' designs often emphasize economy, uniformity, and durability rather than pedagogical research from writing studies or the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL).

In light of this vacuum around pedagogical leadership of learning space, WPAs should attend to classroom space as a matter of systematic pedagogical concern. This call echoes recommendations made by computers and composition specialists (see Knight; Walls, Schopieray, and DeVoss), but goes beyond their specific focus on technology-rich writing spaces to include all classrooms used for writing instruction, reflecting our field's laboratory instruction methods and infrastructural needs. Drawing on subfields of writing studies that have attended to “special” spaces—writing labs, centers, and studios—and on SoTL research on learning space design, I identify tools and approaches WPAs can use to manage classroom space, offering concrete, strategic steps WPAs can take to inscribe pedagogical best practices into the physical infrastructure of writing classrooms. This argument (1) extends Dana Gierdowski's case for attending to research in our own and adjacent higher education fields on space-conscious pedagogy (“Studying,” “Flexible”) and (2) addresses the aversion WPA scholarship has often shown to managerial work, a tendency which harms our peda-

gogical and intellectual mission. It positions WPAs to use the slow pace of infrastructural change to promote the accessible, active learning that writing studies advocates.

#### THE NEED FOR WRITING CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT: WHY CLASSROOM DESIGN MATTERS FOR WRITING PROGRAMS

Physical writing classrooms have largely been ignored by WPAs, who have historically ceded the ground of learning space to Fordist models of design and management dictated by higher education's non-pedagogical stakeholders. Ruth Mirtz describes how the resulting proscenium classrooms encourage an authoritarian, one-to-many, passive form of learning that clashes both with best practices in writing pedagogy and with the information-saturated, multivocal communicative reality of the twenty-first century. Mirtz's critique reflects an individual approach to classroom management, the kind of "hacking" tactics described by Douglas M. Walls, Scott Schopieray, and Dànielle Nicole DeVoss, which focus on individual spaces and cultivate personal relationships to sidestep restrictive institutional procedures and infrastructures. Approaching an administrative issue like classroom management at the individual level, however, can't address the effects learning environments have on writing instruction at the programmatic level. As Tim Peebles warns, this type of tactical, lone-wolf administrative style relies heavily on personal initiative and connections, concentrating agency in a single individual without whose energy and network initiatives tend to collapse. This sustainability concern is especially serious given the slow pace of infrastructural change.

The systematic management of general-purpose classroom space offers an as yet unrealized opportunity for WPAs to shape the writing instruction students receive. When space and materiality have been discussed in WPA scholarship, the terms are often used metaphorically to describe abstract institutional structure (see Haviland and White) or funding (see Reiff et al.; Finer and White-Farnham). The WPA research that has addressed classroom space and infrastructure has typically done so in response to changes in instructional delivery imposed by external forces (see Bodmer, Rickly, and Neff). Classroom space comes up incidentally in this WPA research, which tends to focus on the development of curricular and administrative structures while ignoring the material learning spaces required to enact them. For example, after spending thirteen pages detailing the history of Purdue University's composition program and the process of developing its new curriculum, Irwin Weiser spends one paragraph describing how the computer labs and conferencing spaces that made this curriculum possible were procured,

designed, and built, despite the fact that without them—program directors and upper administrators agreed—the curriculum would fail. Positioning classroom infrastructure as peripheral to WPA work creates the erroneous impression that instructional delivery can be separated from classroom space.

WPA scholars tend to ignore classroom administration because of its managerial nature, which doesn't align with the ways WPA work has been theorized and accounted for in recent decades. Donna Strickland observes that although scholars publishing in the early issues of *WPA* asked managerial questions, since then, these questions have been strategically reconceptualized as teaching concerns to make the work more palatable and familiar to humanistically trained WPAs and the English departments that typically employ them. Against this tradition, Louise Wetherbee Phelps's theorizing of WPA work as a design art asserts the scope and intellectual significance of WPAs' managerial work, providing relevant frames for its application to the systematic management of classroom space (see figure 1).

Phelps argues that important system-wide levels of organization (services, skin, structure, and site) are often ignored by simplistic approaches to WPA work. I argue that classroom management pushes WPAs beyond the lower institutional levels to which they often restrict their work. This example of a “vertical,” institutionally involved approach to WPA work performs the intellectual work of management Strickland describes, offering a way to engage in the design art approach to WPA work that Phelps advocates. James E. Porter et al. further theorize this kind administrative work, arguing that careful empirical research allows WPAs to enact (not just articulate) institutional critique by creating policies that shape material and political conditions. One of the few examples of such scholarship is DeVoss, Ellen Cushman, and Jeffrey T. Grabill's research on the impact infrastructure has on writing instruction, which considers the policies and standards that regulate the use of learning spaces (such as budget, support, access permissions, and envisioned purpose) as well as their material features. This scholarship lays the theoretical groundwork for WPA management of classroom space, asserting its alignment with our disciplinary mission.

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Stuff</b></p> <p>Program details (e.g. individual course sections offered by program)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>WHERE WPAs TYPICALLY OPERATE</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">— <i>Phelps’ critique</i></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Space Plan</b></p> <p>Program’s activity seen from insider perspective (e.g. program curriculum)</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Services</b></p> <p>Labor that supports program’s work (e.g. teaching, research, outreach, et cetera)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">WHERE CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT OCCURS</p> <p style="text-align: center;">— <i>My assertion of classroom management as a component of WPA design art</i></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Skin</b></p> <p>Program seen from the outside (texts that make it visible from the outside, e.g. rules, general education requirements, vision statements, et cetera)</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Structure</b></p> <p>Wider institutional systems of time, space, relationship (e.g. credit/grades, tenure, shared governance systems, institutional budgeting systems)</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Site</b></p> <p>Entire institution itself, which is part of the larger system of higher education</p>	

Figure 1. Application of Phelps’s organizational diagram of higher education institutions through the lens of design thinking, illustrating (1) Phelps’ argument for how WPA work (should) extend throughout all levels of the (rows in left column), (2) her critique of the limited scope to which many WPAs restrict their action (black box) and (3) my argument for the comprehensive design work involved in classroom management (column on right).<sup>2</sup>

TOOLS AND IDEAS FOR MANAGING WRITING CLASSROOMS FROM “SPECIAL” WRITING SPACES AND LEARNING SPACE DESIGNERS

Ignoring infrastructure limits the impact and longevity of the field-defining pedagogies that writing programs strive to implement. Subfields of writing studies and the higher education field of learning space design address this gap in WPA scholarship and can guide program directors in the intra-institutional work of managing classroom space. Taken together, these research traditions suggest interventions WPAs can make in classroom management at the programmatic and institutional levels. In the sections that follow, I

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draw on these research areas to develop recommendations for classroom management strategies WPAs can use to

- document conditions in writing classrooms and mobilize this information,
- develop proposals for external stakeholders to develop/improve writing classrooms, and
- leverage this knowledge and experience to place the WPA in a leadership role in decisions about campus learning space.

These recommendations (including “starter lists” of references to further research on learning space to facilitate programming and proposal writing) can be used either in part as individual initiatives or in full as phases of a long-term plan for comprehensive learning space management, allowing WPAs to adapt these strategies to their programs’ needs and institutional contexts.

#### PROGRAM-LEVEL INTERVENTIONS: USING DATA TO DOCUMENT AND MANAGE WRITING CLASSROOM SPACE

As a first step, with or without support from other stakeholders, WPAs can shape the delivery of writing instruction in their programs through active management of their program’s classrooms. This is especially important for the general-purpose classrooms writing programs typically rely on, which are spread across campus and vary considerably in design and condition. In order to assess the effects of classroom space and make cases not only for flashy new construction but also for essential, mundane administrative concerns affecting pedagogy (like equipment replacement, course caps, and room scheduling), WPAs need data on classrooms to understand the material conditions of writing instruction in their programs and work to improve them.

Turning to the history of writing labs, Cynthia L. Selfe, Benjamin Lauren, and Susan Miller-Cochran and Gierdowski draw on their experience managing technology-rich writing environments to demonstrate program directors’ need for data documenting how infrastructure relates to instructional efficiency, student learning, retention, and other concerns. One limitation of this writing studies scholarship, however, is its focus on case studies of individual learning spaces which are themselves atypical for their institutional contexts. However, learning space design builds on writing studies arguments for collecting data on learning spaces, offering tools specially tailored to documenting the conditions of learning spaces and their impact, designed for large scale use. Informed by SoTL research

on instructional effectiveness, Malcolm Brown et al. of the EDUCAUSE Learning Initiative offer the Learning Space Rating System (LSRS). The LSRS assesses individual learning spaces according to

- environmental quality (lighting, temperature, acoustics, accessibility);
- layout and furnishings (navigability of the space, seating density, furniture flexibility, writable surfaces); and
- technology and tools (networked connectivity, A/V interface and control, distributed interactivity).

These attributes are used to assign each space a score that quickly identifies rooms with the most severe issues and those that can serve as models.

Once problematic classrooms have been identified, additional research on technology-rich writing classrooms and higher education learning spaces can help address these challenging classrooms. Scholarship on technology-rich writing spaces from the 1990s through the 2010s (see Selfe; Handa; Myers; Bemer, Moeller, and Ball; Gierdowski, Carpenter et al., and Purdy and DeVoss) suggests a general consensus on desirable features for writing instruction:

- preference for “pod” seating that encourages interaction between students to highlight the social nature of rhetoric and composing;
- classroom layouts that support a variety of different solo, small group, and large group activities facilitated either by differently-designed areas of the classroom or by mobile furniture that allows for reconfiguration; and
- multiple display surfaces/technologies throughout the classroom that allow both students and instructors to publicly compose/share ideas, display and comment on texts, etc.

Given the lack of WPA managerial training Strickland describes and the literature’s minimal attention to classroom space, another learning space management tool also developed by the EDUCAUSE Learning Initiative can help WPAs advocate for the classroom features described above. The Flexible Learning Environments Exchange (FLEXspace)—a collaborative, searchable database indexing learning space design projects at universities around the world, including photos, floor plans, spec sheets, case studies, and other resources documenting existing spaces—can guide WPAs venturing into (re)designing writing classrooms. Informed by data on local learning spaces, WPAs can use FLEXspace to generate ideas for classroom renovation and building projects based on what they’ve learned about their program’s learning space needs.

*Recommendations*

Recommendations for program-level classroom management interventions fall into four areas: (1) making writing instruction environments a program priority, (2) gathering data on classroom conditions and their effects, (3) developing data-supported proposals for classroom (re)design, and (4) planning and assessing infrastructural change in stages.

**Recommendation 1.** Adjust existing writing program practices to bring learning space into the purview of the WPA:

- Emphasize the importance of learning space in faculty development for writing instructors, informed by research on active, space-conscious writing instruction by Kim and Carpenter, Carpenter (“Flipping”), Charlton, Gierdowski (Geographies), and others.
- Provide instructors with accessible contact information to troubleshoot classroom infrastructure issues on the spot: IT help-desk for issues with projectors/wifi, facilities for broken/inaccessible desks, et cetera.
- Supported by the groundwork laid by the first two suggestions, designate the WPA as the point-person to whom instructors should report both immediate and long-term/cumulative classroom infrastructure issues to give the WPA a comprehensive sense of the state of writing classrooms, developing a more informed sense of the conditions of the classrooms where writing is taught and their impact on instruction.
- Take advantage of teaching observations to record details about classroom conditions, paying special attention to any infrastructure that inhibits or supports writing instruction. When debriefing with the instructor, ask about how the classroom challenges and/or facilitates their pedagogy.

These shifts in emphasis make the classroom more visible at the level of the individual course, (1) raising instructors’ awareness about classrooms’ affordances and constraints and (2) clearly stating that the program is interested in these issues. The information thus gathered about general-purpose writing classrooms can also be used immediately to generate lists of preferred/undesirable rooms for writing instruction, which the WPA can use when scheduling classes, either independently (if the program schedules its own classrooms) or in concert with a central scheduling office.

**Recommendation 2.** To more systematically document classroom conditions, use the LSRS (or a modification of it) to evaluate classrooms where writing is taught. One advantage of this tool is the formatted spreadsheet the LSRS provides (see Brandt et al.) which provides an automatically gen-

erated quantitative snapshot of conditions across classrooms that can help WPAs zero in quickly on the most problematic and most effective classrooms to prioritize redesign work and provide in-house models. Quantified measurements also provide data and visuals that can be rhetorically effective when persuading internal and external audiences of learning space (re) design proposals (see below).

**Recommendation 3.** Use FLEXspace (Flexible Learning Environments Exchange) to develop (re)designs for writing classrooms, tailored to the needs demonstrated by local data. Some of the classroom issues identified may involve maintenance, capacity, and accessibility: use these basic upgrade mandates as opportunities to deliberately shape learning spaces on campus by drawing on fleshed-out models that address basic functionality while advancing writing pedagogy.

**Recommendation 4.** Plan change in stages through pilot projects with the deliberate intention to iteratively shape classroom space to support writing instruction. The process of designing and overseeing classroom renovation and construction will provide ample opportunities to learn about university operations, vendors, quality of materials, receptivity of students and instructors to design changes, anticipated versus actual impact on writing instruction, etc. Innovate slowly, in increments of one or a few classrooms at a time, beginning with classrooms whose conditions most impede writing instruction, and monitor the impact of those changes using focus groups with instructors and students, assessment of student artifacts, targeted course evaluation questions, and other tools. Use the information collected to inform each successive renovation project to improve design ideas and methods over time and to demonstrate to stakeholders the value added by (re)design. This iterative, small project approach also has the benefits of (1) producing less expensive proposals, which can make funding easier, and (2) scaffolding WPAs' learning about classroom design as they add this responsibility to their already-burgeoning portfolio.

#### WORKING WITH INSTITUTIONAL MISSION TO (RE) DESIGN WRITING CLASSROOM SPACE

As Porter et al. note, prominent institutional texts like mission statements, strategic plans, and other institution-level rhetoric outline institutions' distinctive traditions, ambitions, and characteristics, articulating their identity and guiding their actions. Working with these institutional texts can allow WPAs to advocate for infrastructural change based on the teaching and learning experiences the institution commits to providing and what scholars of (writing) pedagogy know about how to facilitate them, pro-

viding powerful warrants for arguments about classroom space ranging from basics like maintenance to infrastructural improvements like upgrading built-in technology to spatially inflected pedagogical issues like room scheduling and class size. To ensure that writing instruction aligns with institutional mission, Elizabeth Vander Lei and Melody Pugh recommend that WPAs both link writing program goals to institutional mission and work to shape institutional mission. However, they don't detail how to do this, especially in the unfamiliar and slow-moving domain of institutional infrastructure.

Research on writing/multiliteracy centers addresses this challenge, illustrated when mission documents from the Noel Studio for Academic Creativity at Eastern Kentucky University are compared with institutional mission documents (see table 1).

Executive Director Russell Carpenter (Review of *Peripheral Visions*) describes the benefits of such alignment, which have made the Noel Studio a showpiece used by administrators to demonstrate ECU's commitment to revitalizing the campus. Its vanguard status has placed the staff at the center of this major university initiative, such that the Noel Studio became part of the Quality Enhancement Plan submitted to ECU's regional accreditor (Carpenter and Apostel). Carpenter ("Shaping") also theorizes the Noel Studio's physical design in terms of its support for rhetorical composing across modes, citing the professional standards of the Council of Writing Program Administrators and the International Writing Centers Association (Noel Studio, "About") to add the imprimatur of disciplinary expertise to the Noel Studio's implementation of ECU's institutional mission. In this way, the leadership role Carpenter and the Noel Studio assert in ECU's campus revitalization has integrated writing studies expertise and traditions into the design of technology-rich creative learning spaces at the institutional level.

EDUCAUSE's LSRS can also help link classroom space and institutional mission as Carpenter and the Noel Studio have done. While part B of the LSRS (described above) assesses individual classrooms, part A focuses on classrooms' alignment with institutional mission, policies, and initiatives relating to teaching and learning.<sup>3</sup> LSRS part A interrogates how closely each space corresponds to the campus's overall academic goals, learning space master plan (if such a plan exists), and campus-wide technology infrastructure plan. Reaching outside the institution into the scholarship of teaching and learning, LSRS part A also considers how well the space facilitates best practices in pedagogy (as defined by SoTL research). This research-based framework provides another warrant for expending resources on classroom (re)design.

Table 1

Illustration of parallels between EKU strategic plan and Noel Studio mission

<b>Noel Studio “Vision and Mission” statement</b>	<b>EKU 2020 strategic plan</b>
Name identifies the center with “academic creativity” and shifts disciplinary “multiliteracy center” terminology to “studio” to align with EKU’s institutional values	Values “intellectual vitality, which is characterized which is characterized by knowledge, scholarly inquiry, creativity, critical thinking, and curiosity” (EKU 1)
Goal is to “create innovative support for communication, research, and teaching and learning initiatives that enhance deep learning at EKU”	Ongoing commitment to “critical/creative thinking and communication skills” (EKU 3) and new initiatives to invest in students’ success, especially through “collaborative and innovative student engagement in and out of the classroom” (EKU 7)
Envisions itself as a “transformational physical and virtual hub for innovation in pedagogy, critical and creative thinking, research, and communication”	‘Invest in the physical infrastructure of our campus, improving technology [and] creating creative spaces’ (EKU 11)
Commitment to serving the EKU community, the region, and the nation	“[B]ecome the 1st choice partner in regional educational, economic, cultural, and social development” and “Become nationally prominent in fields with regional relevance’ (EKU 12)

*Recommendations*

Use the models and tools described above to frame data supported proposals for classroom (re)design in terms of institutional mission in order to leverage institutional values, initiatives, and goals as warrants for requests.

- With data-identified classroom issues in mind, review the institution’s mission statement, vision and values statements, strategic plans, and learning outcomes, using part A of the LSRS as a lens to identify values and initiatives that speak to teaching and learning.

- Consider where these commitments align with best practices in writing instruction and the program’s infrastructural needs, such as updated technology, furniture supporting collaboration and active learning, reduced class sizes, etc., supported by the writing studies expertise captured in documents like CWPA resolutions, CCCC position statements, and Linda Adler-Kassner and Elizabeth Wardle’s *Naming What We Know*.
- Incorporate SoTL research on active, emplaced learning (such as Carpenter, *Cases*; Chism and Bickford; Oblinger; and the *Journal of Learning Spaces*) to add multidisciplinary research support for learning space proposals.

Use concerns shared by the institution and pedagogical research—supported by data gathered within the writing program—to frame proposals for improvements to writing classrooms.

#### SHAPING WRITING CLASSROOM SPACE AT THE INSTITUTIONAL LEVEL

Managing classroom space (especially general-purpose classroom space) involves dealing with the multiple layers of institutional structure Phelps outlines. Due to their experience with “special” learning spaces that operate outside of the general classroom inventory, researchers designing and studying writing centers, labs, and studios provide valuable guidance on such cross-institutional collaboration. However, these are typically individual spaces, usually managed by a single department or program. To scale up such collaborations—integrating them into institutional systems of classroom management to encompass the large number of general-purpose classrooms used by an entire writing program—scholarship on learning space design at the institutional level is instructive.

Rebecca Burnett et al.’s description of the overhaul of the writing and communication program at Georgia Tech illustrates the possibilities of considering pedagogy and infrastructure in tandem, treating learning space as a programmatic pedagogical issue. When the program revamped its learning outcomes to emphasize studio-style digital composing, it was able to capitalize on concurrent building projects at Georgia Tech to construct new classrooms specifically designed to support the new curriculum’s learning outcomes by including features like mobile furniture and multiple whiteboards, digital projectors, and digital screens allowing students to access, produce, share, and critique multimodal digital texts. Significantly, this faculty-led building project included the program’s “regular” classrooms, rather than only a handful of demonstration classrooms used for specialized elective courses.<sup>4</sup> However, while the process Burnett et al. describe of

working with multiple external stakeholders from Georgia Tech's Office of Capital Planning and Facilities, architects, building designers, and IT professionals to design classrooms specifically for writing instruction shows what's possible when writing programs design their own classrooms, this situation is atypical.

Aimée Knight's account of the often opaque year-long negotiation between the communication department at St. Joseph's University, the college's associate dean, the associate vice president of information technology, and engineers from campus media services over the design of a new multimodal composition classroom shows describes the more common case, where administrators and non-academic units like facilities and IT play leading roles in learning space design. While Knight's department was able to work through the process's long silences and delayed/missing information to create a space that met their needs, the black box nature of the typical learning space design process can have serious consequences for writing instruction. Sara Littlejohn and Kimberly M. Cuny's account of the creation of the Digital Literacy Center at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro highlights the costs of limiting program directors' access to the design process. Although the directors wanted a light-filled, open space reflecting the social process of multimodal composing advocated by the center's pedagogy, they were allocated a windowless, low-ceilinged basement space, broken up by many load-bearing pillars. Decisions about funding and where to locate the center were made before the directors became involved and limited the scope of the center's design to modifications of the allotted space. The levels of institutional bureaucracy involved in learning space management that Knight and Littlejohn and Cuny describe constitute another challenge for WPAs seeking to attend to classroom space as a component of writing instruction. As Walls, Schopieray, and DeVoss note in their MSU-based recommendations for hacking individual classrooms, responsibility for infrastructure tends to be highly diffused, which complicates the management of classroom space considerably by requiring substantial knowledge of the institution and political capital to negotiate with numerous stakeholders.<sup>5</sup>

Learning space researcher Deborah J. Bickford sums up these problems in terms of where leadership in learning space design is located: faculty (primary users concerned with classrooms' support for learning) often play a limited role, while facilities managers (who don't use the spaces regularly and tend to prioritize economy and durability) typically lead the process. To reverse this tendency and promote the kind of pedagogically driven design experience Burnett et al. experienced, Bickford recommends restructuring the process of learning space design: faculty should be centrally involved

from the outset as “project shepherds” (49) to ensure that learning remains a primary focus, and facilities managers should be held accountable for how well new spaces support learning (rather than evaluated primarily on the building project’s efficiency and economy). However, Bickford fails to address two critical issues: (1) tasking faculty project shepherds with leading the occasional classroom building project entails considerable work, which is likely to fall into the minimally rewarded “service” category (when not connected to a research agenda) and (2) the implication that input from pedagogically focused stakeholders is needed when classrooms are built, but not throughout their long lives—as physical infrastructure deteriorates, curriculum and pedagogy evolve, instructional technology changes, and student population shifts—overlooks the need to attend to classroom space as an ongoing pedagogical responsibility.

Rather than attending to classroom space using a one-and-done approach concerned only with design, Beth Ingram et al. describe the benefits of systematic learning space management by standing committee at the University of Iowa. Acknowledging the need for widespread input and ongoing management of learning space, Iowa’s Learning Spaces Advisory Committee (LSAC) includes faculty, administrative, and staff members and addresses the pedagogical, financial, and logistical issues involved in learning space management, guiding new building projects and renovations of existing facilities. Increasing numbers of universities are forming learning space committees like the LSAC, tasked with:<sup>6</sup>

- Drafting/advising the institution’s strategic plan for learning space
- Creating long-range campus building/renovation plans, informed by systematic evaluation of learning spaces
- Approving and/or guiding proposals for new/renovated learning spaces
- Developing campus-wide standards for different classroom types
- Recommending classroom type ratios and optimizing classroom use

Notably, WPAs aren’t included as standing members of the LSAC or similar committees at other institutions. I argue that because of the relative size of writing programs and their commitment to pedagogy, WPAs should participate *ex officio* in this kind of institution-level learning space management work, shaping infrastructural policy through the attention to pedagogy, research, and administration that defines our field.

### *Recommendations*

Recommendations from previous sections focus on crafting proposals at the program level, focused on individual projects, which will necessarily appeal to other campus units and funding sources. The recommendations in this section suggest actions WPAs can take to get involved in managing classroom space at the institutional level, advocating especially for the general-purpose classrooms used for writing instruction and ensuring that writing studies pedagogical expertise shapes campus infrastructure.

**Recommendation 1.** If a campus learning space committee exists, request that the WPA become an *ex officio* standing member. This may take some detective work, as the committee name (such as the Instructional Spaces Advisory Committee, Campus Space Planning Committee, Innovative Learning Building Committee, etc.) and its organizational location/reporting line (faculty senate, provost's office, center for teaching, etc.) can vary. Taking on this work may also require the additional approval of department chairs, deans, and other administrators to whom the WPA reports. Support the request by highlighting the writing program's reach across campus learning spaces and the valuable data on classroom conditions this generates, the tools and systems the program has implemented to manage classroom space, and any successful classroom (re)design projects the program has completed (described above).

As an institutional citizen rooted firmly in teaching, scholarship, and administration, the WPA is an ideal learning space committee advocate for the pedagogical elements of institutional mission, an important counterweight to the tendency of other stakeholders (such as facilities, IT, and upper administration) to focus on cost, efficiency, and untested flashy technology rather than the spaces' contributions to learning. The writing program's extensive use of general-purpose classrooms and program-level design projects also helps the WPA to (1) draw the committee's attention to maintaining/upgrading existing classrooms and (2) work through small, targeted interventions (as well as big, high-profile projects).

**Recommendation 2.** If the campus has no learning space committee, propose that one be formed, with the WPA as an *ex officio* member. Some strategies to consider when making this proposal:

- Draw on higher education research (such as Temple and Barnett; Haggans; Milliron, Plinske, and Noonan-Terry) demonstrating the integral role learning space plays in delivering on commitments to learning-focused aspects of institutional mission (like learning outcomes, instructional quality/innovation, providing access to higher

education, et cetera to learning space) to assert the need for a learning space committee.

- Position the WPA as a natural fit for and leader of this committee based on program-level writing classroom assessment and (re)design work, capitalizing on the organic learning space design leadership Knight and Carpenter (Review of *Peripheral Visions*) describe growing out of their programmatic learning space (re)design and assessment.
- Draw on knowledge of institutional policies and politics to identify other learning infrastructure stakeholders to include on the learning space committee, such as facilities, IT, the registrar, librarians, the teaching center, faculty representatives, etc.
- Negotiate compensation for the WPAs' leadership role on the learning space committee in the form of program resources, course releases, administrative support, stipends, etc. to reflect the magnitude of the task, its addition to the WPAs' traditional responsibilities, and its significant contribution to the institution's teaching mission.

Joining or forming a learning space committee is an institution-level move that formalizes the infrastructural leadership WPAs engage in when they assess and (re)design classrooms at the programmatic level, giving WPAs a voice at the table where decisions about classroom management are made.

#### SUPPORTING WRITING AND RAISING ITS PROFILE THROUGH WPA CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

Managing writing classroom space is significant work, in the sense that it (1) deeply affects writing instruction and (2) demands considerable work beyond the “low” institutional levels to which WPAs often restrict their work. Reflecting DeVoss, Cushman, and Grabill's capacious understanding of infrastructure as both polices and material features that structure activity, managing writing classrooms entails not only changing the spaces in which writing is taught, but also changing writing programs' practices of assessment and professional development and their involvement with university administration. This work extends from writing programs' pedagogical mandate, but hasn't yet been systematically recognized as a WPA managerial responsibility with significant implications for teaching, research, and institutional status. The latest version of the CWPA's guidelines for self-study for writing programs preparing for visits by the CWPA Consultant-Evaluator Service begins to move in this direction with questions about the offices and labs the writing program occupies and the accessibility of classrooms for faculty and students with disabilities, which is an important step. However, adding questions that ask programs to document

their classrooms (as described above) would provide consultant-evaluators with more of the information needed to address classroom space in their recommendations as a vital part of instructional delivery.

Advocating for the spatial needs of writing instruction has important programmatic implications. Echoing the relationship between composition's spatial demands and the exploitative delivery systems Hopkins described a century ago, Christopher Scott Wyatt notes that in the twenty-first century, writing's presumed immateriality has made writing courses a target for movement online for fiscal—rather than pedagogical—reasons.<sup>7</sup> Material classroom conditions continue to be a fundamental part of both how writing instruction is delivered and how writing programs are positioned physically and politically. The recommendations offered here for documenting writing programs' spatial needs and intervening to advocate for them position WPAs to become learning space experts on their campuses. Their expertise sets WPAs up not only to advocate for occupying and/or creating classrooms that facilitate twenty-first century writing pedagogies, but also situates them up to assume a leadership role in the institution's planning for and management of learning spaces across campus. This reflects the design art approach to WPA work Phelps advocates, an additional form of administrative power and labor with strong pedagogical and research underpinnings, embodying the kind of applied expertise of WPA work that is coming to define the discipline in the twenty-first century (see Serviss and Voss). The emphasis the recommendations offered here place on documenting classroom conditions and their impact in the form of assessments and proposals underscores the empirical, data-driven approach to WPA work that Chris M. Anson argues for, providing concrete levels of intervention at the programmatic and institutional levels that individual WPAs can adapt to their institutional contexts and apply at varying institutional scales.

Where Strickland outlines how managerial labor has been excluded from the disciplinary and intellectual identity of the WPA and Porter et al. theorize the connections between the managerial and the intellectual, attending to the spatial needs of writing instruction offers a path for WPAs to engage in this work in ways that will benefit writing instruction while raising the program's institutional profile by positioning it as a campus leader in spatial design and assessment. Performing this leadership role will involve WPAs in conversations where the kinds of decisions that Hopkins and Wyatt decry are made, giving WPAs a voice in institution-level, infrastructure-focused discussions that deeply shape writing instruction but which—as Knight and Cuny and Littlejohn warn—often exclude those who direct and teach in writing programs. The approach to WPA work

advocated here resonates with the applied, expertise-driven, locally responsive Doug Hesse offers as a 21st century disciplinary paradigm for writing studies and offers our field a way to engage with other institutional stakeholders on stronger footing than was possible in previous eras of the field's history. Both the benefits to writing instruction and the new opportunities for influence and collaboration offered by managing writing classrooms make this work valuable to WPAs as program directors, institutional citizens, and disciplinary members.

## NOTES

1. This survey was conducted by the author 2017–18 under IRB Protocol #17-09-1006 at Santa Clara University.

2. Figure 1 remediates a figure Phelps borrows from architect Stewart Brand to illustrate the layers of structure that comprise built environments by adding Phelps' description of how these layers map onto WPA work to the concepts depicted in her original visual (represented by the white column on the left side of figure 3). My addition is the gray column on the right, arguing that the administrative work of classroom management extends throughout all these layers of institutional structure.

3. Beyond what's described here, LSRS part A also examines learning space planning processes (stakeholder involvement, evidence-based design, assessment) and support and operations (faculty development, financial sustainability, scheduling systems), which may be useful for diagnosing the causes of problematic classroom conditions and developing institution-specific proposals to address them.

4. The opportunity the Georgia Tech Writing and Communication Program had to design new classrooms was made possible by the planned remodeling of the Skiles Classroom Building housing the program's laptop classroom, the planned construction of the new Clough Undergraduate Learning Commons housing the program's new multiliteracy communication center and postdoctoral fellows, and the donor-funded complete rebuilding of the Stephen C. Hall Building housing the program's "home" classrooms, studios, and offices.

5. For example, Walls, Shopieray, and DeVoss report that MSU has ten different university-level committees working on space planning and facilities maintenance (275). As a result, infrastructural issues like maintenance of furniture, digital projectors, computers, and ethernet/electrical systems are handled by four different MSU units with different physical locations, personnel, and reporting procedures (279–81), creating considerable logistical difficulties for an administrator trying to manage classroom infrastructure at the program level.

6. This summary of the typical responsibilities of learning space committees draws on the charges of a sampling of committees at US colleges and universities,

including University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, Loyola Marymount University, Washington and Lee University, University of California, Los Angeles, Pace University, University of Illinois, University of San Diego, University of Iowa, Trinity College, and Pacific Lutheran University.

7. Wyatt describes how, to satisfy a Minnesota state government cost-cutting mandate that 25% of all undergraduate credits earned at public colleges be completed online by 2009, university administrators identified writing courses as ideal for fulfilling this requirement, because they “do not require laboratories, studios, or other physical spaces.”

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