

Cultivating a Sustainable TYC Writing Program: Collaboration, Disciplinarity, and Faculty Governance

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This article looks back to the 1998 special issue of WPA themed on collaborative administration and contrasts patterns in the articles in that issue—written almost entirely by four-year-college and university WPAs—with the particular conditions of one TYC writing program to argue that collaboration is equally valuable and vital in TYC programs but for different reasons than at other types of institutions. The specific material conditions of TYC writing programs—including diversity of disciplinary expertise among the faculty, and complex power dynamics—create a setting in which WPAs must build deep and wide collaborative structures that are both strong and radically inclusive. This article concludes with a list of design principles to guide the ongoing work of creating sustainable collaborative TYC writing programs.

I. COLLABORATION VIGNETTE #1 | INCREDIBLY NAIVE

In 2010, the elimination of a system-wide rising-junior reading and writing exam afforded our TYC writing program the opportunity to redesign the common final assessment for our FYC I course. Over the course of that year, faculty teaching Comp I experimented with a few different modes of final assessment that might work better for our students and faculty than the former timed exam. Based on the feedback we received from the faculty who'd been trying out various modes of final assessment, the directorial team of our writing program created a protocol for collaborative assessment at the end of all Comp I courses. The idea was to have faculty members work in small groups to cross-assess a single piece of student writing (not an entire portfolio) from each other's sections of the course. Our hope in designing this new practice was that it would help bring a needed level of harmony and consistency across sections of Comp I. We knew that some radically different versions of the course and assessment judgments were happening across the 85+ sections we run each semester, and we felt that it was ethically incumbent upon us to try to work towards greater consistency in a required core course. So, in 2011 when we devised this practice of cross-assessment of a single piece of student writing across all sections of Comp I, it felt like the right thing to do, and it felt as if there was an abundance of positive energy from the faculty to make this practice successful.

Well. While we weren't wrong that the majority of our colleagues were up for cross-assessment and thought it was a good idea, we had seriously underestimated the passion and resolve of the faculty members who were not on board with collaborative assessment. Long story short: a minority of faculty members began to openly challenge the new practice on various grounds: as a possible violation of academic freedom, as a possible contract violation, and as imposed via a specious authority (we WPAs). Although there were only a few faculty who voiced these sorts of sentiments, they were persistent, and, ultimately, we eliminated the compulsory cross-assessment practice.

In retrospect, this experience served us, all of us in the department, as a useful learning opportunity. Without this naive misstep on our parts as WPAs, we wouldn't have figured out why our process was faulty and how we could do better. This experience not only reinforced our knowledge that collaboration in decision-making and leadership within our writing program was essential, but it also surfaced some of the particular qualities of the professional ecosystem in our TYC English department that require a rather patient, ongoing collaboration among our WPA team and the rest of the faculty in the department. The combination of the diversity and ambiguity of disciplinary expertise plus a relatively flattened power hierarchy create an environment in which consensus is not easily reached and collaborative decision making is absolutely necessary to create what might be recognized as a writing program.

Recently, TYC-oriented scholarship in our field has helped to draw out several features of the professional location of TYC faculty members who teach composition courses. Adjunct, contingent faculty comprise a substantial portion of the composition "teaching majority" (Hassel and Giordano) and are frequently denied, along with reliable employment, a voice in decisions that control the courses they teach (Jensen). The fact that most TYC English departments effectively function as writing programs (Taylor), in that composition courses are the bulk of what they teach, creates a host of particular tensions connected to disciplinarity, autonomy, and academic freedom for faculty with backgrounds in various fields of English studies (Del Principe and Brady; Klausman, "Two-Year"; Larson). These tensions create situations in which faculty with a wealth of experience in TYC writing classrooms cannot confidently adopt clear professional "footing" (Toth, Griffiths, and Thirolf 100) and professional autonomy in their local writing programs and in national writing studies scholarship (Griffiths; Larson). How can WPAs work effectively in TYC settings, in which the boundaries and epistemology of the field of writing studies is ambiguous, disciplinary expertise and autonomy are in question, and faculty might rather

digress into their “underlives” (Zino) than come together to create common ground and learn from and with each other?

From the particular perspective of a WPA at a large urban TYC, I argue that collaborative structures are utterly necessary, not just desirable, and might work differently and for different reasons than they do in other higher education settings. The specific material conditions of TYC writing programs—including staffing issues, diversity of disciplinary expertise among the faculty, and ambiguous power dynamics—create a setting in which WPAs must build deep and wide collaborative structures that are both strong and radically inclusive. I frame a close analysis of the material conditions of one TYC writing program within previous scholarship on collaboration in writing program administration to draw out how collaboration functions in two-year settings, and I conclude with a concrete example of a TYC collaborative structure and a suggested list of design principles WPAs can use to create sustainable programs in their home institutions.

II. THE 1998 *WPA* ISSUE ON COLLABORATION

I begin by briefly revisiting a 1998 issue of *WPA* focused on collaboration in order to place my analysis of my TYC within the somewhat broader history of the discussion of collaboration within the pages of this journal. The articles in volume 21, numbers 1–2 of this journal, guest edited by Jeanne Gunner, frame collaborative administration as a highly desirable goal that, for the most part, enriches the experiences of the administrative team, who are most often tenure-track faculty members, but who might include grad students in writing studies, as well as the other members of the teaching staff in the writing program. In her opening letter to the special issue, Gunner reflects that “the concept of collaborative writing program administration has been in existence long enough for it to have been enacted, theorized, critiqued, and reconceived” (7), thus positioning collaborative administrative structures as commonplace in 1998.

Across the articles in the 1998 issue—only one of which was written from the perspective of a scholar at a TYC, who was serving as a dean—there are various justifications offered to readers for a collaborative approach. A couple of articles describe the advantages of collaboration stemming from its grounding in feminist and postmasculinist theories of power (Meeks and Hult; Smoke). Lynn Meeks and Christine Hult draw on a 1994 work by Hildy Miller and Jeanne Gunner and reframe Miller and Gunner’s overtly feminist stances into less-political language, labeling the collaborative structures as “co-mentoring” relationships in which “all parties contribute equally to the relationship” (Meeks and Hult 10). Less

optimistically, Trudy Smoke focuses on the fraught position of “powerless power” (93) that the WPA finds herself in, particularly in Smoke’s setting—a large, urban college in which the writing program is largely staffed by PT, non-TA, adjuncts. Many of the articles describe ways that collaborative WPA power structures benefit the graduate students who serve in them as the primary staff of the writing program (Anson and Rutz; Blakemore; Meeks and Hult; Recchio). Being included in various types of administrative roles both helps these up-and-coming teacher-scholars become familiar with the types of work involved in designing and running writing programs and with writing studies scholarship more generally—particularly if their doctoral study is not in a writing studies field. It’s clear that the primary goal of collaboration within these programs is the need for practical composition teaching and administrative experience in order to professionalize and prepare future PhDs (from various disciplinary backgrounds) for their future (possible) roles as teachers of composition.

*The Harmonizing Effect of Shared Knowledge
(or the Messy Question of Expertise)*

Many of the articles from the special issue focus on what might be described as the nitty-gritty surface of WPA work—running meetings and professional development, staffing and scheduling, managing student and instructor complaints, and textbook selection, to name a few—and very few bring up the more conceptual, intellectual aspects of the work. For instance, none of the articles describe situations like the one I describe in vignette #1, above, in which a portion of the teaching staff, or collaborative team, had a serious difference of opinion about what “writing” is and how it should be taught or assessed. Having experienced many of these types of disagreements in my own experience as a WPA in a TYC, this puzzled me. Then I realized that one reason for this seeming lack of deep disagreement might be the fact that, in nearly all of the writing programs described in this issue, the faculty and teaching staff share the same (or close to the same) knowledge base and disciplinary identity. For the most part, the writing programs reported on in this issue are directed by TT faculty with degrees and/or professional scholarly identities in writing studies and are staffed primarily by TAs who are graduate students in writing studies. These teachers study composition scholarship, history, and pedagogy, and that probably allows them to understand why the faculty who have designed the curricula or outcomes for the courses in the program might have made certain choices rather than others. Those TAs who are pursuing PhDs in subjects other than composition—I’m thinking of the students

described in Chris M. Anson and Carol Rutz’s article—are teaching in the writing programs as part of their graduate training and are there to learn the scholarship of the field. As part of their preparation to teach in the program, they take a pre-fall training session in which, I assume, they learn about the courses in the program and why they’ve been designed the way they have. Again, these teachers have acquired disciplinary knowledge, at least some of it, that would allow them to understand why the program is structured as it is. As they collaborate in the administration of their writing programs, they are not engaging in “a collaborative construction of knowledge; it is [instead] the cooperative application of pre-existing expertise” (Quiroz 83). Of course I do not assume that there are not, at times, significant disagreements between teachers in these programs, but I found it telling that none of the authors in this issue mentioned ameliorating or managing deep differences of opinion as part of the routine work involved in collaborative WPA.

For better or for worse (likely, for both), the harmonizing factor of a shared disciplinary knowledge base is not present in my experience in the TYC writing program in which I have worked since 2004. Kingsborough Community College (CUNY), my home institution, is an urban, highly diverse TYC that enrolls 15,000 students, and our composition program is housed within the English department. Our department teaches literature, journalism, ESL, and creative writing courses, but fully 68% of the courses the department teaches are the two core, required transfer-level composition courses. On average, we offer approximately 140 sections each term of our Composition I and Composition II courses combined; 40% of those courses are taught by FT faculty, and 60% are taught by PT faculty members. Our department has 104 faculty members: 40.4% (42) are tenure track (of those, 37 are tenured); 12.5% (13) are lecturers who will be eligible for a tenure equivalent; and 47.1% (49) are adjunct faculty. Upon review of our current list of faculty members, I am one of a total of six FT TT faculty members (two of the six are untenured) who have PhDs in a writing studies field (composition, English education, urban education, etc.) and whose scholarly identity is in writing studies. This places those of us with formal composition credentials as 14% of the FT members of the department. Unlike departments described by other TYC scholars (Andelora “Teacher/Scholar/Activist”; Klausman, “Toward”), my department hasn’t fully pivoted to prioritizing hiring new TT faculty with degrees and disciplinary expertise in a writing studies field. Because those of us in writing studies are a small minority within the overall faculty, there is absolutely not a shared familiarity of writing studies scholarship among the faculty teaching our composition courses. As described by Tim Taylor, we are an English

department that is essentially a writing program, in which “mostly literature-trained faculty teach mostly composition” (Janangelo and Klausman 140). At the same time, these non-writing-studies FT TT faculty members have all taught composition courses during their years as graduate students and have spent most of their classroom time in our TYC teaching composition courses. Thus, they have extensive experience teaching writing while also not personally identifying as composition people. While I realize that TYCs are diverse in their contemporary hiring practices, I truly doubt that my institution is anomalous in that the majority of faculty teaching writing courses do not have a scholarly background in writing studies (Andelora, “Response”; Calhoon-Dillahunt).

Many of our PT adjunct faculty members come from backgrounds teaching English in secondary schools, or they are creative writers with MFAs who are looking for college teaching work to round out their income and to provide them with steady, good benefits. These teachers typically bring many years of classroom teaching experience to their work in the program, and, while most of our adjuncts did not begin their teaching careers in our school, most of them remain with us for many years, thus building local expertise and valuable institutional memory. The former, and sometimes current, high school teachers bring their expertise, gained through years of intensive teaching in the NYC public schools, of managing classroom dynamics, motivating students, and handling heavy workloads. Our teachers who are creative writers bring their expertise in creating voice, experimenting with structure, and writing autobiographically, among other things, to their teaching and to our community’s discussions of the writing habits that might benefit our students most. Of these 49 PT adjunct teachers, only two have direct graduate-level training and scholarly identities in composition and rhetoric despite the fact that all of them teach numerous composition courses each semester. So, while these teachers have a wealth of classroom experience teaching composition, they, like most of our FT TT faculty, do not share the national, scholarly knowledge base of the field of writing studies. Rather than enhancing our ability to collaborate effectively, this lack of shared disciplinary knowledge creates situations in which teachers talk past each other (Del Principe), act as “independent contractors” (Griffiths) quietly doing their own thing in their own classrooms, and seek out other faculty who share their teaching philosophies, thus creating factions within the department that undermine true collaboration (Griffiths and Jensen).

Our non-composition FT TT faculty generally lack familiarity with the field—if, by “the field,” one means scholarship—of writing studies, but they also have a somewhat different perspective on their expertise as

composition teachers as compared with the PT faculty members. For the most part, these 55 full-time career academics have taught composition since they were grad students pursuing their PhDs in a literature-related field. Many of them had some level of training—perhaps a semester-long course, or an on-the-job practicum—in teaching composition as new grad students, and ever since then they’ve taught primarily composition courses while teaching the occasional literature course in their area of scholarly expertise. While most of the PT instructors identify as teachers, the FT instructors identify as teachers and professional scholars, and, as a whole, they are well-published in their literature-oriented fields as our guidelines for tenure require publication. Perhaps their preparation for teaching composition courses in a TYC would have been improved if the most recent *TYCA Guidelines for Preparing Teachers of English in the Two-Year College* (Calhoun-Dillahunt, Jensen, Johnson, Tinberg, and Toth) had been in place when they were in graduate school, but their preparation isn’t the primary source of struggle; rather it is the ambiguity regarding disciplinary expertise that exists in writing studies and manifests in a range of behaviors and positions that bubble up from the “underlives” of these faculty members (Zino). For example, one receives a palpable sense of resentment from many of these full-timers in response to any attempt to get them to work together to create shared curricular guidelines or even student learning outcomes. Many label this work as a violation of their academic freedom—their right as professionals to determine what to teach and how to teach it in their own classes. Faculty who take this stance would prefer a “house in disarray” (Andelora, “Teacher/Scholar/Activist” 304), as it were, to a “writing program” with more consistency across sections. A healthy percentage of these full-timers quietly question or outright reject the idea that there might be a difference in expertise between them and those of us who have degrees and scholarly identities in writing studies because they perceive the teaching of writing as part of their professional expertise, given that they’ve been doing it for so many years. They have a good point.

The issue of (the lack of) shared disciplinary knowledge and different forms of expertise begs a central question for those of us working as WPAs in TYCs: what does/might it mean to be in the field of composition or writing studies? The situation of diverse expertise I’ve described in my writing program has become a relatively common topic of reflection and scholarship by TYC authors in the last decade or so and has inspired discussions regarding the nature and origin of expertise in writing studies. Because we work every day in writing programs in which the majority of the teachers, FT and PT, do not hold “the academic credentials typically required of faculty members in other fields,” we find ourselves trying to square this circle

by thinking quite hard and creatively about knowledge and professionalism in our field (Wardle and Blake 90). In many ways building off Stephen North's 1987 concept of instructor "lore" in composition, Holly Larson questions whether it is fair, equitable, or valid for writing studies to produce knowledge via scholarship that is largely produced and sanctioned by scholars from four-year colleges and universities. Implementing standpoint theory, Larson examines how the standpoint of the field of writing studies preserves the field's participation in traditional modes of knowledge-making, i.e., the traditional scholarly article that is embedded in and responding to previous scholarship in the field. She argues that this stands at odds with the fact that a huge proportion, certainly more than half, of composition courses in the country are taught by faculty who, like herself, do not hold degrees in composition and rhetoric; and, further, this standpoint excludes the knowledge of those non-composition-credentialed teachers by considering it non-scholarly or anecdotal. Larson advocates the redefinition of "scholarly work" to include the lore, or "folk knowledge" (Larson 129) generated by composition teachers who do not participate in or are shut out of the traditional forms of composition scholarship. Thus, her argument seeks to elevate practitioner knowledge to scholarly, professional knowledge. This perspective would define being in the field of composition as teaching composition classes, reflecting on one's experiences teaching those classes, and processing those reflections and experiences reciprocally with other composition teachers (Larson 130). Larson's reframing of expertise is a radically democratic, non-hierarchical vision in that it positions the act of teaching composition courses as the origin of scholarly knowledge that heeds Holly Hassel and Joanne Baird Giordano's call for the field of composition to reflect the reality of the "teaching majority" (117).

As appealing as it is, on the basis of validity and fairness, to accept Larson's redefinition of the origin of professional knowledge, it is troublesome to do so because it questions the very nature of scholarly knowledge more broadly and questions whether writing studies has a status equal to other academic disciplines. In describing their work in their own writing program—albeit in a university setting, but in a program not staffed by composition-credentialed faculty or graduate students—Elizabeth Wardle and J. Blake Scott admit that "Rhetoric and Composition is unlike most other fields" because it doesn't "see graduate training in the field as a necessary qualification for teaching the field's scholarship" (73). From this perspective, composition could appear to be a field that routinely hires non-professionals to teach its courses. How odd. By Jeff Klausman's definition of the term *professional*, the majority of faculty, FT and PT, who teach

composition courses in my writing program would have to be categorized as non-professionals:

the status of professional must be determined by the community of professionals, as the AAUP states, which in our case are the scholars and practitioners who work within, at, or near the disciplinary boundaries of composition-rhetoric as expressed in the journals, presses, and conferences that disseminate the field's research. ("Two-Year" 390)

Given that writing studies does appear to operate as a field—complete with journals, presses, conferences, graduate programs, etc.—it must be that in order to have expertise and professional status in writing studies one must participate in the communal, scholarly interactions of the field—right? So simply teaching composition courses, however long one has done that, would not qualify one as a “professional” in the discipline and would imply that one doesn't have the same rights to academic freedom as do those teacher-scholars with degrees and scholarly identities in the community of writing studies because “one has the right to autonomy only when one is teaching one's subject” (Boland 44).

To return to my own colleagues, the conundrum regarding the expertise of the FT faculty members, in particular, creates an identity crisis of sorts for them and creates challenges for those of us working as WPAs and trying to foster collaboration. While a small minority of these faculty members have embraced identities as “transdisciplinary cosmopolitans” (Toth, Griffiths, and Thirolf 94), the majority don't identify as members of a writing studies field. For the most part, these faculty members want to continue to define themselves primarily as professionals in literary studies who publish in literary journals, attend and present at the MLA and other literary conferences, and who generally engage in the scholarly communities of their field. They got into English studies because they wanted to study and write about literature or a related field, and that is what they enjoy doing the most. At the same time, as TYC faculty, they spend nearly all of their time teaching and talking about their composition courses, of which they teach 3–5 per year, on average (in addition to a couple of literature courses). Whether they perceive their composition courses as a rewarding part of their job or as an unfortunate neoliberal reality that must be tolerated, it is my impression after working with many of these colleagues for 18+ years that all of them feel they have the right to determine how to teach and what to teach in their composition courses and that they have the right to academic freedom in making these choices. If asked whether composition and rhetoric is a scholarly field, I'm sure the majority—but perhaps not all—of

these faculty members would say yes; if asked whether they are members of that field, I think the responses would be mixed, but I'm sure that quite a few would respond in the affirmative, even though they do not participate in the field of composition in any other way than teaching composition courses. To act as a WPA in this context requires one to woo these colleagues into collaborating with each other, and with PT faculty, to create consistency and coherence across a writing program. It requires walking a tightrope between acknowledging faculty expertise in classroom teaching while simultaneously gently, but consistently, suggesting that greater familiarity with writing studies scholarship and the practices of other teachers in our program might actually strengthen their teaching and their students' learning.

Power Differentials

In addition to the lack of what I've called the "harmonizing effect" of a shared disciplinary knowledge base among teachers in TYC writing programs, the power dynamics at play between WPAs and other teachers differs in the TYC and four-year/university settings. Regardless of the collaborative structures, creative, democratically minded WPAs in programs staffed by TAs construct, the fact is that the TAs are junior in every way to the TT faculty collaboratively directing the program. Regardless of the collaborative structures that might exist in a program, there really is no getting around the fact that the hierarchical, apprenticeship structure of academia is one in which there is a substantial power differential between grad students and tenured faculty. This power differential very likely has a number of effects on the ways in which collaboration functions in these settings. For example, I'd imagine that grad students might sometimes not truly feel that they are able to voice dissenting points. Further, the TT faculty serving as the WPA, or WPA collective group, very likely are, or have been, the actual instructors of the grad students teaching in the program, thus TT faculty's perspectives have quite literally shaped those students' teaching philosophies and knowledge of what a composition course might actually look like. This goes back, in another way, to my earlier point about the harmonizing effect of a shared knowledge base, but this time with a power dynamic. Overall, my guess is that this power differential serves to both motivate the grad students to collaborate, and be seen as collaborating, with the TT WPAs and to make this collaboration as functional and as smooth as possible.

In my TYC setting, the power and status differentials between program leadership and the rest of the teaching staff of the program are significantly

different than the situations described in these articles and influence the ways we're able to collaborate. It's not that there are no power differentials, but the nature and direction of the power is more diverse and complex than programs with the TT prof WPA and grad student/TA set up. I'd like to briefly describe the power relationships in my program by looking at three settings: among program leaders, between program leaders and PT teachers, and between program leaders and FT teachers. In our program, the inner leadership team is comprised of four FT tenured (at this point) faculty members: myself (a PhD in English education, who has always identified as a teacher-scholar-researcher in writing studies), and three other English department faculty members (one has a PhD in cultural studies, two have PhDs in literature—one of those has adopted writing studies as her scholarly identity and the other continues to publish scholarship on literature). While I currently carry the title of director of the composition program and they serve as associate directors, all four of us share the responsibilities of administering and making decisions about all the various branches of the writing program. That said, the fact that I am the only one of us who holds a degree in a writing studies field and who has always had a scholarly identity in writing studies creates a power differential between me and the other three members of the leadership team. Despite my ongoing attempts to balance our power and voices in the dynamic among the four of us, I find that my colleagues continually defer to me in making the final decisions about actions the program should take or in providing disciplinary leadership and vision for the program. While I would still say that the four of us collaborate quite functionally, it would be inaccurate for me to pretend that there aren't power differences within that four-way collaboration.

Here I'd like to draw out the power dynamics I see between our program leadership and the other faculty members, our colleagues, who teach, along with us, the writing courses that comprise the composition program. Our program illustrates well what Joseph Janangelo and Jeffrey Klausman have identified as the defining feature of TYC writing programs in general: "the notion of autonomy—strong respect for and insistence upon the individual faculty member's independence in course design, textbook selection, assessment, and so on—is what marks the two-year collect writing program as different" (140). While our numerous adjunct PT teachers certainly hold a status that has less power than do our tenured FT faculty, they have a different power profile than do TA grad students. First of all, as mentioned earlier these PT instructors have nearly all been teaching writing at the college level for over a decade. While they generally do not participate in the field of composition and rhetoric, as described earlier, they have earned a level of authority—in their own and others' eyes—through

their years of teaching. In addition, while I would never deny that those of us on the leadership team hold certain types of power in the program, we do not determine the schedules of PT teachers (including the number of courses assigned to different teachers), we do not arrange for the observation of their teaching, and we are not positioned as their teachers. Given the relatively good job security and benefits that come with a long-term PT position teaching in our unionized system, our adjunct teachers truly are our colleagues. As we collaborate with them, there is no way in which their eagerness or agreeability earns them greater rights, more stable employment, or better written recommendations than other PT colleagues receive. Of course, the same thing is true of our FT colleagues. Given the fact that we are literally employed at the same status, and given their previously discussed sense that they are equally in the field of composition, having taught it for so many years, I have never sensed a hesitation on the part of these colleagues to openly express their opinions and judgements about what they like or don't like about the work we're doing on our program.

It is this sense of professional autonomy and confidence that we see in (naive) vignette #1, when faculty members felt able to express their own sense that cross-assessing student writing was a violation of their rights as faculty members. Most of the time, faculty in my department operate as independent contractors, the term Griffiths uses to describe TYC faculty who want and take independence in their classroom practice, but they really do not engage in the wider profession in a way that affords them full autonomy. However, our request that they collaborate on student assessment pushed a few of them to demand professional autonomy and speak from their footing (Toth, Griffiths, and Thirolf) as writing teacher/experts. Both Griffiths and Toth, Griffiths, and Thirolf attempt to parse the same issue—the ambiguity of the professional identity and authority of TYC faculty—using frameworks that help clarify the quite particular positioning of these faculty. As my associate directors and I came to better understand the power dynamics at work within our program, we became better able to design collaborative structures that take advantage of what might appear to be irreconcilable differences.

III. COLLABORATION VIGNETTE #2 | SOMEWHAT WISER

Based on what we learned via the experience of trying, and failing, to introduce the practice of cross-assessing student papers at the end of our Comp I course, we retooled and tried another, very different, approach to building deep, meaningful collaboration into our writing program. I offer this second, more successful, story to readers as just one example of the kind

of collaborative structure that is working pretty well, albeit with regular adjustments and tune-ups, in a TYC writing program. I do not offer it as a blueprint for a structure other TYCs should necessarily attempt to replicate because it was borne from the very particular material conditions of my setting, and that is very much part of the point.

After our attempt to initiate cross-assessment of student writing at the end of Comp I crashed and burned (perhaps a bit hyperbolic, but this is what it felt like), my associate directors and I reflected on what that experience had taught us, and in 2013 we initiated a new structure within the composition program and in the English department—the Course Review Committee (CRC). We named it the course review committee because we were thinking that the CRC would function as a way of having faculty collaboratively review and share thoughts and judgments about the writing students submit at the end of our Comp I course; thus, it would be a different way of accomplishing a function similar to that intended for the cross-assessment groups. Over the years as the CRC has continued, we've realized the myriad functions and potentials for the group, and it has truly blossomed.

At present, here is how the CRC works. Mid-summer, I put out a call to all faculty in our department inviting them to volunteer for service on the CRC during the coming academic year. I stress that the CRC is a year-long commitment and that faculty earn payment—in time or in money—for their participation. Each year, I secure funding, through internal system-wide funds for the improvement of undergraduate education, to pay up to 25 teachers, FT or PT, for the CRC, so I keep the group to 25 or fewer. From the pool of faculty who have volunteered, I select CRC participants based on whether they have served on the committee before (new participants are prioritized), and I try to match the ratio of FT to PT participants on the CRC to the ratio of teachers who actually teach our Comp I course (approximately 60% PT to 40% FT). Maintaining this ratio is important to our work because we are dedicated to ensuring a voice for PT teachers (who are not paid to attend department meetings and cannot vote in those meetings) and because we want the powerful professional development features of the CRC to reach the teachers who are actually in the classroom teaching our composition courses.

While the big picture goal of the CRC changes each year, there is a predictable rhythm to the type of work the committee does. During the fall, we read and discuss composition scholarship on a particular issue we're working on; currently, we've been learning about ways to move toward greater equity in our composition sequence. In addition, faculty participate in their choice of "collaboration groups" with other CRC members. This

past fall, there were three choices of collaboration: classroom intervisitation, co-teaching, or cross-marking. These forms of what I would call deep collaboration—collaboration that goes beyond discussion and crosses the threshold into the sanctum of a teacher’s classroom—have helped us build “psychosocial resilience” among a large portion of the faculty teaching composition in our program (Griffiths and Jensen 303). My observation is that they help build this level of resilience and community among members of our program because, in all versions of fall collaborations, faculty are put in the (possibly stressful) situation of having some aspect of their individual private teaching practice exposed to one or more of their peers. Because these collaborations are done peer-to-peer and because there are no written documents or evaluations that are produced and filed as a result of these collaborations, they become deep moments of sharing and bonding between and among faculty members.

During spring semesters, faculty design and carry out small-scale classroom-based empirical research projects in their own classrooms based in some way on the overarching focus of the CRC that academic year. The purposes of these “spring research projects,” as we call them, are multiple:

- they provide an opportunity for faculty to experiment with researcher/scholar mode and imagine how one might empirically study student experience and/or learning; as mentioned earlier, very few of our FT or PT faculty have backgrounds in composition or in fields that involve empirical research;
- they are the way we do program-level assessment;
- they require each faculty member to find and use at least one piece of composition scholarship in framing their project, which pushes them into the field’s scholarly literature as researchers rather than as students of that literature;
- they result in faculty making concrete changes to their own teaching practices based on what they themselves found out via a study that they designed and carried out.

While there are even more advantages of these spring research projects, these are the most salient for the current discussion. Our CRC meetings during spring semesters are designed to help support faculty as they design and carry out these studies, and faculty share and discuss their findings and conclusions at our last meeting of the spring term. At that last meeting, we also did some deep collaborative reflection and work to set goals for the next year’s CRC.

Periodically, suggested changes to the curricula or assessment practices of our composition courses grow out of the CRC's work. In 2015, we were faced with such a situation when the CRC produced mission statements and revised the student learning outcomes for both of our composition courses. At the end of that year, we wondered together how that work would and should be brought to the larger English department (remember, we are only 25 out of 104 faculty in the department) and what status these collective decisions should have within the larger program. What we were realizing was that the program, and the department as a whole, did not have a clear faculty-led governance structure. This realization inspired the CRC to design what it felt was a fair process of faculty governance for changes to the composition courses. We created operating procedures for the CRC whereby any proposed changes to curricula, assessment practices, or required elements of syllabi would be voted on within the CRC and would only be approved if they received 65% or higher of the vote within that body. Once a proposal has been approved via this process, I request of the English department chair that we have time during a department meeting to bring the proposal forward for the vote of the entire department. Once this vote has been taken, the proposed changes are in force across all sections of the course(s).

Overall, the CRC has been a successful and popular addition to our writing program. Each semester, we get a healthy list of volunteers, and faculty frequently ask to join mid-year and often make suggestions about issues that they'd like to see the CRC focus on in the future. The CRC collaborative structure works for us because it meets the particular needs of our faculty and the scale of our program. Given that there is not a shared disciplinary knowledge base among our faculty, the CRC provides enough ongoing contact with and discussion of composition scholarship to help some faculty become at least somewhat familiar with trends in the field and/or the history of the field. The CRC works within the (lack of) power differentials that exist by patiently working through issues together and by voting on any proposed changes to the courses. The fact that PT instructors have a vote equal to FT instructors within the CRC helps ameliorate, to some degree, the fact that PT instructors are "citizens [who] do not have the right to vote" within our college bylaws, cannot serve on other levels of departmental or college governance, and are generally excluded from positions of power within the institution (Calhoon-Dillahunt 124). The clear governance structure we've created in the CRC has created greater transparency and shared authority that has helped us increase consistency and reduce the level of "disarray" across sections of our courses (Andelora, "Teacher/Scholar/Activist" 304). Further, by engaging deeply, patiently,

and iteratively with faculty member's suggestions for the program, this collaborative program structure flips typical WPA authority structures. Rather than trying to impart program consistency through various top-down "boss" techniques such as syllabus reviews and restrictive curricula, the CRC heeds Dominique Zino's call for writing programs to harness faculty's often tacit resistant ideas and behaviors and to create "spaces where people have to think for themselves, lay out arguments, and keep conversations going" (258–59).

Since we've had the CRC in place, it has also shown to have imparted "design resilience" to our program and has served to protect us from sudden and random incursions into our program from higher administrative leadership (Griffiths and Jensen 304). For example, a couple of years ago I was asked by a dean at our college to approve the move toward offering more sections of our composition courses online; this was, of course, before spring 2020 when we were all unceremoniously forced fully online. While I was and am very much open to the idea of expanding our online offerings, I was able to respond by suggesting that, rather than answer that question myself in some sort of authoritarian way, the CRC could work on this idea of how to ensure quality and equity, for students and faculty, across online sections of composition. This allowed me to respond to the dean's request in a positive way and simultaneously slow down the process to ensure that faculty voice and governance would make decisions regarding changes to our composition offerings.

What follows is a list of design principles for creating sustainable collaboration within TYC writing programs, but, first, a caveat. Perhaps this goes without saying, but there is no one generic TYC writing program type or model. While I think that the writing program that I've been describing in my own home TYC is probably similar in some important ways to other TYC programs, I also know that TYC writing programs can vary from each other in ways that are quite significant and would demand very different approaches to collaboration. The scale of the institution/program, the scholarly identities and expertise of the faculty, the labor rights afforded to PT and FT faculty, the location of the program within the college, municipal and state laws, and the unique local history all strongly influence what sorts of collaboration will work best in each setting. That said, I suggest that TYC WPAs consider the following list of design principles when creating collaborative structures within their programs. While I list these individually, they are quite deeply connected:

- **Patience.** Perhaps this goes without saying, but, if done well and inclusively, collaboration takes time, more time than making decisions

on one's own or with a small group of peers. I've learned that this is time well spent because it allows for layered, iterative processes that includes as many voices and perspectives as possible.

- **Enact a local field.** As discussed earlier, the operational boundaries of the field of composition and rhetoric are fraught and are in flux. There isn't enough space in this bullet point and article to fully articulate this idea, but I call for TYC writing programs to enact local fields of composition, in line with Christie Toth and Patrick Sullivan's (2016) call for the cultivation of "local teacher-scholar communities of practice," complete with the discussion and production of scholarship (248).
- **Transparent governance structure.** Simply discussing things doesn't mean you're collaborating on decisions. Collaborative WPA structures should have a clear, documented protocol for faculty governance of the writing program and should employ iterative, consensus-building processes in preparation for voting.
- **Include/represent faculty who actually teach the courses.** To the degree that it is locally possible to do so, work toward a structure that represents the faculty who really teach the courses in the program.
- **Get funding.** Building and sustaining a collaborative structure within a TYC writing program, part of creating "resilient praxis" (Griffiths and Jensen 314), is labor and must be recognized as such by the TYCs in which we teach and learn. Faculty must be paid, in time or in money, for this ongoing labor.

These principles are not a to-do list, on which one can cross off items once they've been accomplished. Instead, they are ongoing, dynamic goals that must be renewed regularly to respond to changes in the field in micro (hyper-local) and macro (national) scales. These principles have helped us build and sustain a writing program that promotes "both programmatic unity while inspiring greater collegiality and autonomy" (Janangelo and Klausman 141), a delicate balance anywhere, and a particular balance within a TYC setting. Just as the multiple diversities of our students demand creativity from us as teachers, the diversity of faculty who teach composition in the TYC requires that WPAs build deep and wide collaborative structures that are both strong and radically inclusive. Given the palpable shift in the field of writing studies toward seeking out more scholarship from and about TYCs, I'm hopeful that, 22 years from now, the scholarship on collaborative WPA will reflect the diversity of these TYC structures.

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