

Departmental Democracy and Invention in Two-Year College Writing Programs

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This article describes how a team of WPAs reinvented their decentered leadership structure to facilitate long-term, programmatic thinking and planning. Drawing on Louise Wetherbee Phelps' notion of institutional invention, we describe a range of conditions and activities that create and reinforce a "climate of invention" in two-year college writing programs.

The English Department at LaGuardia Community College—part of the City University of New York—consists of approximately 130 faculty members, who teach over 250 sections of our composition courses every semester. Prior to the fall 2019 academic year, faculty members were elected to three-year terms as directors for the following courses: Basic Writing, Accelerated Composition I, Composition I, and Composition II. This approach to administration led to coordinators investing most of their time and energy into managing a single course rather than looking at pedagogy, learning outcomes, and student performance across the sequence. Scholarship on writing program administration, including some of the articles in this issue, illustrates that such “decentering” of writing program work is common in two-year college English departments (Nist and Raines; Taylor; Calhoun-Dillahunt; and Klausman). In fact, Tim Taylor called for the field to recognize the “flexibility, stability, and respect for differences in pedagogy” that such a collaborative WPA structure invite (121). In this article, we describe how we looked more closely at our own leadership structure, to move away from less effective elements, and to make space for long-term, programmatic thinking, and planning.

Building a writing program at a two-year college is a challenge. It is not an impossible proposition, but to create and construct a program from the ground up within a large English department, requires “Considerable work, both conceptual and practical” (Phelps 68). Moreover, it requires a vision that facilitates faculty buy-in and creates space for reinvention. In this case, the idea of “reinvention” refers to programmatic and “cultural changes that demand constant innovation and adaptation to new challenges” (Phelps 66). Louise Wetherbee Phelps proposes that institutions can be inventive, “like organisms or academic disciplines” (88), but asks *how* this invention might take shape. One way to invent within an existing

departmental structure involves “expanding traditional roles and functions for leaders and, perhaps, radically rethinking the concept of leadership . . . power, authority, and their relationship to institutions” (Phelps 80). This article presents our effort to revisit our leadership structure in order to build a writing program within a two-year college context.

Our process of reinvention reflects Phelps’ central questions such as: “What conditions enable or define a ‘climate of invention for those’ in a program or unit?” and “How stable can such a state be?” (89). We detail the ways that local and institutional assessment cycles and the term-limits of elected WPA positions foster an environment that encourages and supports more thoughtful and intentional decision-making. We model a practice of “knowing-in-action” and “reflection-in-action” (Schön qtd. in Rose and Weiser 187) that eventually produced tangible results, though moments of invention were simultaneously generative and unstable. Our success is rooted in our commitment to work through the less dynamic periods of reflection and critique in order to define our goals and move toward revision. If we layer Phelps’ attention to environment with David Bartholomae’s attention to discourse, inventing our writing program involved speaking our program into existence, and testing out the language of the WPA community, departmentally and college-wide. That is, we began using this terminology while actively working to reinvent ourselves; we called ourselves the writing program on college-wide assessment reports, in departmental memos, and renamed professional titles from “directors” of a course to writing program administrators.

In essence, this article offers concrete and strategic advice for two-year colleges looking to create cohesive, visible, and democratic writing programs. While we cannot prescribe the best approach for all writing programs, based on our experiences, we believe other institutions might benefit from ensuring their own programmatic work includes the following components in ways appropriate to their context:

- Assess the curriculum you already have and pay attention to the sequencing of writing courses
- Coordinate departmental leaders and (re)define roles within the administrative structure
- Intentionally foster a writing program culture (one will exist whether or not you create it)
- Create faculty professional development opportunities that align with the goals for your curriculum sequence
- Make connections to other institutions

In our department, these activities both preceded and led to meaningful changes. In the discussion that follows, we describe the revision of the directors of composition into three writing program administrators, with decision-making power for all facets of the program. The WPAs work collaboratively on all major decisions and are elected to three-year terms. This structure provides opportunities for program leadership changes and sustains departmental democracy; we regularly vote on important programmatic choices and the faculty members who will serve as the WPAs, which simultaneously holds these leaders accountable. It also honors the independent minds and voices of faculty members who value classroom autonomy. We could not take it upon ourselves to wholly invent and implement a programmatic structure without consent from our colleagues. For faculty development to resonate and stick across our department, we had to consider the similarities between past and future pedagogical methods and materials. In this respect, when revisiting learning objectives, pedagogical materials, and approaches to faculty development, alignment became an essential component of invention.

ASSESSMENT AS A CATALYST FOR PROGRAMMATIC INVENTION

The story of assessment at LaGuardia is rooted in the interplay between the demands of accrediting agencies and the college's commitment to providing students with a well-rounded, liberal arts education. LaGuardia is accredited by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education, which requires general education and programmatic assessments. Nearly twenty years ago, the college defined its general education approach for all students, which at the time was considered by some to be "an unusual move for community colleges, where liberal arts may not integrate well into professional or vocational curricula" (Provezis 1–2). Yet as this approach took shape, the college was under pressure from Middle States to create a new plan that documented "how it used assessment evidence to improve student learning" (Provezis 2). At LaGuardia, general education courses are assessed based on how well students display proficiency in a series of core competencies and abilities: inquiry and problem solving, integrative learning, global learning, as well as written, oral, and digital communication. These college-wide priorities have shaped not only the way the college has conceptualized, communicated about, and implemented assessment practices, but also faculty members' attitudes towards assessment. Unfortunately, many faculty members have come to see assessment as disconnected from classroom practice and student outcomes.

In addition to general education assessments, the college has become increasingly focused on strengthening programmatic evaluations. Each academic program is charged with conducting a periodic program review (PPR) every five years. In a self-study report created by the program directors and faculty, PPRs assess achievement in the core and programmatic competences. The report responds to the following questions:

1. What competencies/knowledge do we want students in the program to graduate with? . . .
2. Are students in the program graduating with those competencies and knowledge sets? How do we know?
3. What changes do we need to make to improve student learning in these areas? What steps will we take to strengthen our curriculum and pedagogy to more effectively help students achieve these competencies? (Provezis 5)

As college administrators led faculty through assessment plans, faculty charged with this task were at a crossroads. The “writing program” at LaGuardia differs from other programs at the college in that it is accredited and does not grant formal degrees. Like many community colleges, we offer foundational composition courses (English 101: An Introduction to Composition and Research, English 102: Writing through Literature, and English 103: The Research Paper), which are general educational requirements for nearly all students enrolled in the college’s forty-four accredited programs. Even though this course sequence is more limited compared to other accredited programs, Middle States required that the writing program conduct its own PPR. Ironically, we were being asked to fill the official duties of a program, but did not yet self-identify as one. This placed us in a unique and challenging position: doing assessment was a way to be recognized by the college administration as a formal program and to start *talking about ourselves* as a formal program. However, it meant succumbing to a top-down process that increased our workload significantly; and the results of which might not find their way into the classroom. As other community college WPAs have described, an accreditation-focused push for assessment can become a “driving force” for localized, programmatic assessment (Chosed 131). If we did not take charge of assessment, these measures would be created for us.

The leaders of our program’s most recent PPR (2015–2016) queried the college’s Office of Institutional Research for data on grades, pass rates, and standardized remedial test scores, to analyze trends across English 101 and 102 (*Periodic Program Review*). A few faculty members conducted

interviews with students and faculty, and wrote writing case studies. Our analysis revealed that students were writing less successfully in English 102; that is, they were not meeting the rubric benchmarks the way they were in English 101. This, among other findings, led the PPR leaders to outline five clear programmatic goals. First, rather than focusing solely on individual courses, the composition directors and the faculty committees should communicate and share the concerns that had an impact on the program. This was connected to the second recommendation: to ensure a smoother transition for students moving through the composition courses, the program must identify common programmatic aims and determine the shared learning objectives across these courses. Third, the report highlighted the need “to develop a shared vision for the composition program, and to foster a departmental culture focused on student writing and composition pedagogy” (*Periodic Program Review* 88). Finally, creating a writing program culture required developing and maintaining lines of communication among full-time and part-time faculty (89). Given the emergent nature of our program, the PPR pushed us to take extensive action to align our curriculum. The significance of these broader actions to the development of the writing program is described in the “Culture Building and Professional Development” section of this article.

In short, our program’s most recent experience with programmatic assessment brought into sharper focus what we thought we knew, what we didn’t know, and what kinds of questions we could reasonably answer. Before we were in a position to do what Gregory Glau describes as the “hard work” of collecting “hard data,” this preliminary round of data collection (*Periodic Program Review*) forced us to circle back, revise course proposals, and align learning objectives across our writing sequence. Only after starting to present ourselves more consciously as a “program” did we begin to ask ourselves what statistical information would convince *us*—not just convince college administrators and Middle States—that we are running a successful program. Ultimately, the requirement to conduct programmatic assessments allowed us to ask and answer relevant questions and put us in control of the evaluative process. Multiple subsequent iterations of these local assessments have shown us that even basic attempts to collect data—specifically, figuring out what to collect, when, why, and from whom—provide meaningful opportunities to think and function as a program.

The college now requires more continuous programmatic assessment in between PPR cycles. Fortunately, they have given program directors local control to design and implement these small-scale assessment efforts. Thus, we have identified and developed programmatic learning objectives, which are annually assessed, and have facilitated our alignment with the val-

ues and objectives that emerged from the revised curriculum. During the 2019–20 academic year we chose to focus on a central learning objective in our Composition I course: “the evaluation and synthesis of sources using summary and/or paraphrase and/or quotation.” Eight faculty members read 60 artifacts in a double–blind assessment; we created our own rubric and normed against the rubric. This experience helped pinpoint our fundamental learning objectives and enabled us to have better conversations about how students use sources in their writing, as supported by these artifacts. Moreover, it allowed us to begin to evaluate whether our previous course revisions, which emphasized using low-stakes writing to give students more opportunities to practice the skills we wanted them to demonstrate in their essays, were producing the desired results.

REDEFINING LEADERSHIP ROLES

During the spring 2019 semester, department leaders began drafting a new leadership structure for the writing program. Our primary objective was to omit the structure of administrators who focused on a single course. To develop a new structure, the directors listed their job descriptions. We then determined which tasks and responsibilities were outdated, could be completed by support staff, or assigned to faculty in other roles in the department. We identified emerging duties and considered university and college-wide changes to developmental writing, standardized testing, and assessment. As a result, we created a revised job description, which was both retroactively descriptive and aspirational:

WPA 1

- Work with Department staff to review placement into ALP and developmental writing to ensure that students are appropriately placed.
- Engage in grant writing to support paid professional development.
- Collect assessment data about ENA 101, working with IR, at the end of each semester & collate it into annual reports.
- Work with the Assessment Leadership Team of the college in guiding faculty to deposit artifacts for the appropriate courses to support the assessment goals of the college, department, and program.
- Supervise composition committees in creating/updating grade descriptors.
- Organize and run norming sessions to ensure grading consistency within the writing courses.

WPA 2

- Attend periodic meetings with representatives from the Testing Office to schedule CUNY Assessment Test in Writing (CATW) testing dates and to discuss testing concerns.
- As needed, advise faculty outside the English department about English department practices and policies.
- Serve as a representative to the CUNY-wide Writing Discipline Council.
- Consult with library faculty related to guidance about and scheduling of library orientations in writing courses.
- Meet with textbook representatives to communicate course needs and to provide composition committees with updated information related to blanket-text orders
- Communicate regularly with Writing Center faculty liaison.

WPA 3

- Supervise creation/update of materials in new writing course handbooks and on ePortfolio. This work will be carried out by composition committees and supervised by WPAs.
- Provide New Faculty Orientation related to writing courses.
- Update faculty about writing program policies via email and hard copy.
- Establish one departmental digital calendar for all important writing program dates.
- Create and distribute the First Week Duties Memo containing information about English department policies and procedures and post the calendar on the English department bulletin boards and distribute the calendar electronically.
- Together with the relevant composition committee, review final exam directions and prompts throughout the semester
- Schedule professional development sessions for composition faculty, particularly focusing on those teaching a class for the first or second time.

The new WPAs had the opportunity to rethink and reorganize these responsibilities with programmatic cohesion as the central aim. In this three-person WPA model, administrators work collaboratively to create and implement a vision for the program. Further, they lead as a unified body to develop assessment goals for courses, to establish composition committee and subcommittee goals, and they contribute to the English Department Leadership Team. In our first year in these revised positions, we learned

that managing WPA responsibilities alongside the teaching and service demands required of LaGuardia faculty members necessitated that we “reflect in action” in order to further blend these roles. To communicate as a unit, we created a dedicated WPA email account rather than responding from our individual emails and regularly conversed about pressing issues in a text thread. This made responses to inquiries more transparent and allowed us to avoid duplicating our work. As a result, our leadership structure was stable yet flexible and fluid; it could bend with new challenges and demands, but did not break.

CULTURE BUILDING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Considering that faculty who teach writing courses at two-year colleges frequently are not specialists in composition and rhetoric, establishing a program culture should accompany curricular and structural changes. Program culture is developed by making space to conceptualize what a writing program looks like at your particular institution; brainstorming and formalizing collective values; researching, piloting, and implementing pedagogical methods and approaches; and creating opportunities for professional development. In many ways, culture building is a form of what Mark Blaauw-Hara and Cheri Lemieux Spiegel, and Judy Nagy and Tony Burch, describe as a community of practice (CoP), in which faculty are “bound together by shared practices and understandings” (Blaauw-Hara and Spiegel 245) to “negotiate identity, learning, and purpose in collaboration” (Nagy and Burch 227). Furthermore, building program culture accomplishes what Phelps describes as the two essential components for institutional invention: first, all members jointly working to “change or reinvent . . . its purposes and structures” (82); and second, the collective creativity of members “serve not only their personal intellectual goals but also its common purposes as an organization” (82).

In our department, culture building focused on establishing a set of shared values and practices as part of our local control (i.e., sharing of assignments and approaches to texts). As a large department with multiple voices, engaging in community practice can be messy and chaotic. However, inviting widespread faculty involvement fosters greater faculty buy-in (and commitment) when new program or course policies and practices are adopted. Two examples of collaborative culture building initiatives that occurred in our department were the creation of a writing program vision statement and our introductory course guides (which we refer to as “Intro to” sheets). The development of our vision statement and “Intro to” guides

are examples of faculty negotiating the identity of our program and developing and clarifying its collaborative goals and purposes.

The genesis of our shift from a department with faculty who teach composition to a department with a writing program is reflected in our vision statement. This statement was developed by the Composition Task Force, a two-year internal faculty committee formed to follow up on assessment recommendations. Our vision statement expresses the overall trajectory of the writing program and general student learning outcomes:

The Writing Program fosters a journey of transformation for students at all levels, aiming to support the college's mission to educate and graduate one of the most diverse student populations in the country to become critical thinkers and socially responsible citizens. Writing is a foundation for students' intellectual engagement in the humanities and their participation in a rapidly evolving democratic society. To strengthen this foundation, faculty employ inclusive pedagogies that address the diversity of our student population. Our writing courses aim to integrate reading and writing; by modeling how to read culturally diverse texts closely, we seek to help students identify and create interpretive, evidence-based claims. Students also gain a deeper understanding of the writing process by exploring the relationship between rhetoric and genre, and engaging with digital/multimodal writing practices and contexts. Courses emphasize revision and collaborative student learning. ("English Department Vision Statement")

Our vision statement integrates department values with aspects of our college's mission statement and core values. It articulates how we recognize and aim to balance the needs of our student population with disciplinary knowledge and the larger needs of society.

Constructing the vision statement was vital to the development of our program culture in that it provided opportunities for faculty to discuss, negotiate, and agree on a shared purpose for the writing program. While the initial drafting process involved a handful of faculty members, the draft was shared with the department and faculty were given an opportunity to offer feedback, which contributed to shaping the identity of our program. Our departmental vote on the vision statement prior to its adoption is an important example of building a collaborative and democratic culture. We continue to vote on all major program and curricula initiatives before they are adopted.

Similar to our vision statement, our "Intro to" sheets were a collaborative initiative that established our program culture and defined the identity, goals, and objectives of our writing program. Developed by our WPAs and

faculty members on our composition committees, the “Intro to” sheets provide clear information about course objectives and policies. We developed student and faculty sheets for each of our writing courses. With headings such as “What Will You Write?” and “How Will You Be Successful?” student “Intro to” sheets use accessible language that centers their likely experience in the course rather than listing course policies. The faculty “Intro to” sheets provide essential information including the catalog description, learning objectives, and grading standards; further, they serve to highlight course values and provide concrete pedagogical guidance. For example, the course rationale section of our faculty “Introduction to English 102” sheet addresses the following:

The main goals of the course are to improve students’ writing, help students evaluate and synthesize sources, and to avoid plagiarism through the appropriate use of MLA conventions and documentation. Pedagogy practices include coaching students through close readings of texts, and allowing students opportunities for editing and revising in order to understand writing as a process. Faculty are encouraged to learn about the linguistic diversity of the students in their classrooms and incorporate students’ language abilities into their classroom practices or activities. (“English 102 Faculty Information Sheet”)

Overall, our “Intro to” sheets are a key communication tool between the *department and students*, and the *department and faculty*. They set the tone for each of our writing courses. Similar to our vision statement, drafting the “Intro to” sheets provided an opportunity to create new identities for each of our courses.

In the midst of developing a program culture, two-year colleges simultaneously consider ways to maintain and eventually evolve as needed. At LaGuardia, the significance of what we learned about the effectiveness of our writing courses required that we rethink professional development. How would faculty development resonate and stick across such a large department? How would the WPAs successfully adapt to working as a solid unit and implement faculty review and development initiatives? What could we do to foster greater consistency across courses and engage a broad swath of our faculty? The short answer would be to align curricula and faculty development to produce consistency across all of the sections of our major writing courses. The desire for lasting change necessitated that the WPAs re-envision the ways in which we produced faculty development opportunities that supported our culture-building efforts.

Our professional development activities represented reflection-in-action. Opportunities to engage faculty more deeply in the scholarship of writing studies were provided, including research and data collection. These activities provided venues for faculty to develop learning objectives as well as a common language to describe the work of our courses. This is the kind of work a traditional WPA does; in our context, having voluntary and remunerated professional development sessions helped to diminish faculty resistance, and create classroom transparency (see Del Principe in this issue). Our WPAs were not imposing mandates on the courses (the kind of “impositions” that some faculty feel intrude on academic freedom); rather, they functioned as guides in a collaborative department-wide process.

In practice, our working groups are an example of the interplay between collaborative culture building and professional development. Revisions to our developmental writing courses, which were the central focus of the working groups, provided opportunities for faculty to improve their classroom practices, while collaboratively revising the course learning objectives and other curricular elements. Working groups researched best practices in accelerated learning and developmental pedagogy, reviewed other course models, and created materials to share with faculty. Ultimately, the working groups recommended curriculum changes and rewrote the course with new objectives. Next they collectively revised the learning objectives for the courses, which were voted on and approved by the department. Extending the collaborative nature of our culture building initiatives, our working groups are an example of collaborative writing program administration that helped increase faculty buy-in to pedagogical changes.

The WPAs still utilize aspects of traditional program oversight. For example, during the first academic year of our revised writing courses, the WPAs collected syllabi from all faculty members. The purpose was to document whether syllabi were in sync with the new requirements, and to ensure students were receiving the same course description, learning objectives, and number of assignments. It is important to note this review was not intended to function as an enforcement method; however, it allowed the WPAs to ascertain whether faculty were in compliance with the shifts in course requirements. The syllabi review revealed that reinforcement of the changes to course policies and pedagogies was necessary. The WPAs designed a professional development workshop to address some of the concerns of the syllabi review, and incorporated a session on low-high stakes assignment prompts and scaffolding practices. In the subsequent semester, the English department faculty guidelines were revised to remind faculty about course policies and to incorporate information from the “Intro to” sheet on their syllabi. Faculty were still free to exercise autonomy with

respect to text selection, course themes, and other teaching and pedagogical practices.

These examples of professional development illustrate the relationship between traditional program oversight and collaborative attempts at WPA work among faculty. This dance between the WPAs and our department colleagues' respects faculty autonomy, and reflects our commitment to democratic decision making within our writing program. Culture building and professional development are shaped by internal efforts as well as outside influences; thus, the next section discusses maintaining relationships with other programs and WPAs, to facilitate continued reflection, growth, and program reinvention.

MAKING INSTITUTIONAL CONNECTIONS

As LaGuardia's English department sought to rethink and reshape its writing program, departments across CUNY were also seeking ways to better communicate and organize as a body of writing program scholars and educators. The significant changes to our stand-alone developmental course (English 099) were the result of university-wide policy changes, spearheaded by a coalition of writing program administrators. This university-wide concern required a collective response, and there were few venues available for composition faculty to discuss and organize. Faculty from LaGuardia and other campuses came together to re-form the Writing Discipline Council. This body was essential to changing CUNY policy and creating lines of communication across campuses. The council gatherings revealed information about other CUNY writing programs, reinforced and strengthened our disciplinary and institutional knowledge, and provided opportunities for informal WPA job training. Further, this work granted us disciplinary legitimacy in the eyes of our faculty and administration. Additionally, cross-campus collaboration provided us with the ability to address policy (in-process) at the university level.

One particularly telling example of this effective cross-campus collaboration was the council's response to the university-wide remediation policy. The council wrote a letter to the CUNY administration to address its dissatisfaction with remediation practices. At that time, the policy was in opposition to developmental learning best practices; students were assessed based on the same "do-or-die" exam, to determine their placement in and exit from developmental writing courses. Placement exams were not always administered or proctored on campus. The exams were graded at central locations by a hired staff that did not necessarily include local English department faculty. In addition, the on-campus exit exams were the single measure for successful course completion. The council was aware

of using multiple-measures rather than one exam, and the significance of local assessment (TYCA Research Committee 2015) to determine successful developmental course completion. The letter proposed a model of multiple-measures to assess writing that would accurately reflect the work of the student, minimize the punitive nature of timed-writing, and return faculty expertise to the assessment of student work. Initial responses to the letter and the council's continued advocacy were chilly. However, as the central administration acknowledged national remediation trends, specifically California (Hern, Hern and Snell), as well as non-profit organization influences (like Strong Start to Finish), the university adopted the council's remediation reform model. For two-year college writing programs that exist within larger systems, understanding the inner workings of your particular system, and fostering connections with possible allies, provide opportunities for WPAs to engage with and make university-wide policy changes, rather than merely responding to policy directives.

Campuses with less formal writing program administrative structures can benefit from inter-organizational knowledge sharing and support, to create a cohesive writing program. One less systematic collaborative effort was the CUNY-wide Composition Conference (May 2018) — “Critical Pedagogies at CUNY: Learning through Writing” — convened by LaGuardia's English department composition committee. The conference germinated based on the recommendation (*Periodic Program Review*) to facilitate workshops for English faculty that encouraged the exchange and development of multiple approaches to writing pedagogy. We created a forum to explore critical frameworks around teaching composition and writing studies, addressed national trends in writing pedagogy, modeled effective practices, and included adjunct, writing center tutor, and graduate student voices in this university-wide conversation. A year later, the conference “Restructuring First-Year Writing at CUNY: Access and Equity in the 21st Century” assembled faculty from multiple campuses to discuss how to reimagine first-year writing. We invited outside scholars to offer a disciplinary picture of national developmental education reform. This discussion went beyond pass rates and placement and focused instead on student “access and equity.” In short, these conferences enhanced cross institutional relationships, helped to provide cohesion in LaGuardia's writing program, and produced a feedback loop between our department and the CUNY system.

These examples highlight how cross-institutional professional networks were central to our department's ongoing reinvention as a writing program. Both conferences enabled the department to situate itself within scholarly conversations about two-year college writing programs. Our work with the Writing Discipline Council offered the chance to make university-wide

curricular changes that adequately reflect our department's developmental writing values. Perhaps most importantly, sharing spaces with other program directors provided effective and usable leadership models that partially shaped the construction of our writing program.

CONCLUSION

Returning to Phelps' central questions, we have pinpointed the circumstances that have both enabled and defined a "climate of invention" within our program. As a result of our process, we discovered a series of activities around assessment, restructuring, and reinvention that could be adapted by two-year colleges interested in developing a writing program. Our program assessment began with a commitment to "knowing-in-action" and provided on-the-job training in assessment practices. Taking ownership of assessment as a catalyst for programmatic invention helped us to address the local needs of the program rather than simply comply with top-down directives. A close review of the curriculum revealed what we needed to change in our writing course sequence. These discoveries then produced conversations that led to rethinking and reinventing our administrative structure. Meanwhile, culture building helped to shape the construction of an intentional writing program as ongoing professional development reinforced and maintained the work of curriculum alignment. If possible, we recommend other emergent programs make institutional connections that allow faculty to share and discuss scholarly work, placement policies, pedagogical strategies, and other concerns. These connections reminded us that invention does not happen in a vacuum; in our case, we were able to compare and contrast our choices with peer institutions. Through these connections, WPAs can reimagine the relationship between their local work and program development within the larger field of writing studies.

Our intention was to share our process in building a writing program from the ground up and to suggest concrete, strategic advice for two-year programs. The commitment to make smaller yet meaningful changes and initiatives led to a cohesive, visible, and democratic writing program. In moments of drastic change, what stabilized our collective work was imagining the student experience. We considered what it was like for students to move through our writing program courses and beyond. This concern was the centerpiece of the conversation and helped us to maintain focus during periods of change. When we began this process in 2015, we did not imagine our current WPA leadership structure. Moreover, a top-down administrative approach could not have achieved these results. Our reinvention evolved organically based on the issues raised and addressed by the faculty, and its democratic process. While we were not the first people in

the department to embark on this journey, our ability to successfully build a program was facilitated by a climate ripe for change. No one can be sure whether these changes will endure after our tenure as administrators; yet, we remain hopeful.

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