

Minding the Gap

Tracy Ann Morse, Patti Poblete, Wendy Sharer, and
Kelly Moreland

In assuming the editorship of *WPA: Writing Program Administration*, we want to mark the gap of editorial leadership for the journal as a significant moment in the journal's and CWPA's history. Spring 2021 brought a pause to the organization to allow for work to be done to recognize, acknowledge, and begin to address its white supremacy culture. In his April 18, 2021, personal blog post titled, "Why I Left The CWPA (Council of Writing Program Administrators)," former CWPA Executive Board member and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Task Force co-chair, Asao Inoue, called for a "boycott [of] the CWPA until they address their Whiteness and White supremacy in their organization." Shortly thereafter, the previous editorial team decided to end their term early. They sent personal notifications to authors who had submitted manuscripts, posted to social media their resignations, and completed the summer issue as their last official work as editors. What many readers may not have realized is that the special summer issue, *Black Lives Matter and Anti-Racist Projects in Writing Program Administration*, was the last issue with the previous editorial teams' names on the masthead. The proceeding two issues, fall 2021 and spring 2022, were edited by different teams of volunteers organized by the CWPA leadership, with the fall 2021 issue including articles selected by the previous editorial team.

As we begin our editorship with this issue, we are grateful for the dedicated work of the talented previous editorial team, Lori Ostergaard, Jacob Babb, Jim Nugent, and book review editor Courtney Adams Wooten, who selected the articles for this issue (with the exception of the book review here included) and guided authors through the review and substantive revision processes. As we took up the task of copyediting the issue and composing this introduction, we saw clear and consistent evidence of their efforts to include a range of voices and research methods and to publish scholarship that values diversity, accessibility, and inclusivity. Lori, Jim, Jacob, and Courtney strove for openness and collaboration in as many ways as possible. Throughout the challenges of COVID and the turmoil of CWPA's much-needed self-examination, they were stalwart in providing supportive scaffolding for us, the next editorial team.

Our gratitude extends to numerous others as well. We want to acknowledge the significant work done on the three most recent issues. The summer 2021 issue, *Black Lives Matter and Anti-Racist Projects in Writing Program Administration*, was guest edited by Sheila Carter-Tod and Jennifer Sano-Franchini and included a striking cover by the artist Alvin Miller. The fall 2021 issue was editorially coordinated by Lisa Mastrangelo and Mark Blaauw-Hara. Most recently, Angela Clark-Oates, Aurora Matzke, and Sherry Rankins-Robertson edited the spring 2022 tribute issue, *Mike Rose: Teacher and Scholar, Writer and Friend*. Also, we'd like to recognize the dedication of the journal's editorial board and honor Peter Vandenberg (DePaul University) who has ended his term. As the incoming editorial team, we've benefitted tremendously from the shepherding done by these folks, without whose contributions we would not have been able to fully prepare for the work of the issue you now read.

WHO WE ARE

The four of us bring significant and varied WPA scholarship and experience to our new editorial roles. Tracy Ann Morse has directed the Writing Foundations Program at East Carolina University for the past 10 years. She has also been a member of the Executive Board of CWPA, has held the position of President of the Carolinas WPA affiliate, and has served as chair of the CWPA Disability Committee. With Wendy Sharer, Meg Morgan, and Marsha Lee Baker, Tracy has recently published "The Affiliate as Mentoring Network: The Lasting Work of the Carolinas WPA" in *WPA: Writing Program Administration* 44.1 (fall 2020). Additionally, the book she co-edited with William P. Banks, Wendy Sharer, and Michelle F. Eble, *Reclaiming Accountability: Using the Work of ReAccreditation to Improve Writing Programs* (Utah State UP, 2016), received the Outstanding Book Award from CWPA.

Patti Poblete, who recently joined the faculty at South Puget Sound Community College, has served on the CWPA Executive Board and has held positions as a WPA at Henderson State University and as assistant director of the Writing and Media Center at Iowa State. She has authored or co-authored two recent articles in *WPA: Writing Program Administration*: "How to Respond When You're BIPOC and Your Organization is Called out for Racism" (44.3, summer 2021) and "Sustainable Becomings: Women's Career Trajectories in Writing Program Administration" (with Louise Wetherbee Phelps, Sheila Carter-Tod, Jessie L. Moore, Casey Reid, and Sarah Elizabeth Snyder, 43.1, fall 2019). The collection *Toward More Sustainable Metaphors of Writing Program Administration*, which she

co-edited with Lilian Mina and Lydia Wilkes, is forthcoming from Utah State University Press.

Wendy Sharer held the post of associate director of composition from 2001 through 2006 and then director of composition from 2006 through 2012 at East Carolina University. From 2011 until 2018, she directed ECU's "Quality Enhancement Plan," a university-wide initiative to bolster support for student writers and for writing instructors as part of the university's re-accreditation process with the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. The experience of directing the QEP inspired her participation in co-editing the award-winning collection, *Reclaiming Accountability: Using the Work of Re/Accreditation to Improve Writing Programs* (Utah State UP, 2016). Similar to Tracy, Wendy has held the position of president of the Carolinas WPA affiliate and, as noted earlier, co-authored the recent *WPA: Writing Program Administration* article, "The Affiliate as Mentoring Network: The Lasting Work of the Carolinas WPA," about the impact and ongoing challenges of that group.

Kelly Moreland, book review editor, is assistant professor of English at Minnesota State University, Mankato, where she currently holds the post of director of first-year writing. From 2017–2019, she served as assistant editor for *WPA: Writing Program Administration*. In this role, she helped maintain a social media presence for the journal, assisted with copy editing and formatting articles, and co-authored an interview with Christine Hult for the summer 2019 special issue, *WPA at Forty*. As explained further below, Kelly brings a valuable perspective on how to involve graduate students more fully in the processes and scholarship of the journal.

Our many and different experiences with WPA scholarship and practice have influenced, and no doubt limited, our perspectives as journal editors. For this reason, we rely on many wonderful colleagues who serve as manuscript reviewers and members of the editorial board. We thank those of you who have already helped us by agreeing to review new submissions to the journal, and we invite anyone interested in serving as a reviewer to contact us at wpaeditors@gmail.com.

CHANGES TO EXPAND ACCESS AND DIVERSIFY CONTRIBUTIONS TO OUR CONVERSATIONS

As we assumed the responsibilities of editing the journal, we knew we wanted—indeed, we needed—to make some substantial changes to “business as usual.” Considering the pointed and substantive critiques expressed about the CWPA’s complicity with practices that bolster systemic racism, we knew that the journal’s editorial practices, particularly the ways in

which submissions to the journal are evaluated and valued, had to change. Thus, one of the first things we did was revise the journal's guidelines for manuscript reviewers. Fortunately for us, a sizable group of smart, dedicated colleagues¹ had already taken up Angela Haas's "Call to Action to Redress Anti-Blackness and White Supremacy" and Miriam Williams and Natasha Jones's challenge to the field to engage the "Just Use of Imagination," resulting in the incredibly useful and influential *Anti-Racist Scholarly Reviewing Practices: A Heuristic for Editors, Reviewers, and Authors*.

We drew on this most valuable document as we incorporated new questions for reviewers to consider, questions that specifically address the white frameworks and traditions within which much scholarship has been judged and circulated. We now ask reviewers, for example, to comment on how a submission "contributes in socially just ways to knowledge in the field and/or to practice in research, teaching, or administration." It's also a reviewer's responsibility, under these revised guidelines, to consider if the piece "meaningfully engage[s] relevant perspectives and scholarship from diverse authors, including BIPOC, multiply marginalized (gender, race, ethnicity, disability, sexual identity, etc.), and underrepresented scholars." Further, we ask reviewers to provide suggestions to strengthen submissions in this area and direct them to the resources Dr. Cana Uluak Itchuaqiyag has curated in the "Multiply Marginalized and Underrepresented (MMU) Scholar List" and the "MMU Scholar Bibliography." We request that reviewers pay close attention for potentially harmful or trauma-inducing materials in manuscripts, and we invite specific suggestions for how the submission "might be revised to better achieve the goals of the author(s) and promote anti-racist, inclusive, accessible conversations and practices in the field." We also want to be transparent with our reviewing practices and have thus made these guidelines accessible on the journal's "Information for Authors" webpage so that potential contributors know to consider them in their contributions.

We know that there is much more we can do to invite and amplify BIPOC and multiply marginalized voices in the field, and we will continue to interrogate and change these guidelines as we gain more experience through our use of them. We welcome any feedback as we continue to examine and challenge exclusionary practices in WPA scholarship.

In a spirit of invitation, we've made some other changes that we hope will expand access to the "scholarly conversation" in which the journal participates. First, we are now accepting submissions year-round, including over the summer. We recognize that, from an editorial perspective, it might be harder to find people who are available and willing to review submissions over the summer, but, at the same time, the summer is also a time when some people actually have time to work on items and submit

them for consideration. Thus, with the caveat that reviews may take a bit more time over the summer, we are happy to provide a more widely open window for contributions.

Another way we hope to expand the number of voices and perspectives in the journal is through a new submission type, “Everything is Praxis.” While the scholarship of WPA has remarkable breadth, many WPAs will tell you the best way of learning is by doing. However, taking the leap can often be daunting. In those cases, we find it beneficial to rely upon the wisdom and experience of others within the WPA community. In the vein of the “And Gladly Teach” section of *College English* and the “Praxis Wiki” of *Kairos*, we hope to offer our community articles of applied wisdom. By allowing folks to zoom in on the specifics of their own circumstances, we hope to spotlight the variety of contexts in which WPA work is done, as well as the amount we can learn through the experiences of others facing challenges parallel to ours, but in different—perhaps vastly different—circumstances.

We are also committed to including more graduate student, non-tenure track, and contingent faculty voices in the journal’s book review section, where we will mentor new authors through the process of writing the review. We understand book reviews as a space to celebrate diverse approaches to theorizing, studying, and doing the work of WPA. We encourage prospective reviewers to query the journal before submitting a review, and to focus the work on how the text could be applied in WPA contexts. Please send book review queries to wpabookreviews@gmail.com.

Moving forward, we are committed to continuing the work of directing much needed attention to the scholarship of those who have been, for far too long, on the periphery of published WPA scholarship. Given the important role of the journal in writing studies, we want to find ways to include even more authentic and emerging voices and perspectives. To that end, we are in the planning stages of an additional type of contribution: shorter, more narrative pieces to be featured on the online platform for the journal that raise important questions about topics such as pedagogy, working conditions, and administrative philosophies and strategies. Such vignettes won’t rely on extensive research but will instead focus on self-standing experiences or examples. We intend such vignettes to encourage broader representation of perspectives and voices, such as graduate students and those from two-year colleges or institutions with heavier teaching loads.

IN THIS ISSUE

We are excited to share the articles in this issue with you. The first two pieces examine student enrollment and persistence relative to writing

program administration. In “Assembling Multi-Institutional Writing Programs: Reimagining the English Major While Expanding Writing Studies,” Steven Accardi, Nicholas Behm, and Peter Vandenberg share a process they used to establish partnerships between multiple institutions in response to decreasing enrollments in the English major. The authors argue that the partnerships between their two-year and four-year institutions have reciprocating benefits. With clearly articulated agreements between the institutions, students benefit from incentives to transfer, enrollments at the institutions improve, and connections between the writing program personnel at the institutions expand our field. Accardi, Behm, and Vandenberg encourage their readers to replicate their process of building multi-institutional partnerships.

In “Examining Retention at the SLAC: The Impact of Race, Class, and Resource Use on First Year Writing,” Erin M. Andersen and Lisa S. Mas-trangelo explore reasons students weren’t succeeding in the writing classroom at their institution, a predominantly white institution (PWI) and small liberal arts college (SLAC). Their exploration includes a discussion of how students use (or do not use) resources at their institution, as well as their findings regarding students’ race and first-generation status correlating, if at all, with students’ struggles in composition courses. They include an overview of current scholarship on persistence and specifically consider research on race and class to understand how they may best support their students.

In an effort to promote persistence and greater success among those taking on positions as WPAs, Justin H. Cook and Jackie Hoermann-Elliott share narratives about things that went awry in their WPA work during the COVID-19 pandemic. Their goal in sharing these vignettes of failure, however, is to move the field toward an understanding of failure that considers imperfections, mistakes, and misjudgments as common situations that WPAs should openly share rather than trying to minimize or hide. Sharing moments of failure in this way, the authors demonstrate, can create a more welcoming environment for all WPAs, but the acknowledgement and acceptance of failure is particularly important for new and future WPAs. Normalizing failure counterbalances what Cook and Hoermann-Elliott call the “success-oriented preparatory steps” that currently inform most graduate training in WPA and can thus also reduce emotional labor and feelings of shame among beginning WPAs.

Brian Fitzpatrick, Lourdes Fernandez, Ariel M. Goldenthal, Jessica Matthews, Brandon Biller, and Courtney Adams Wooten also direct readers’ attention to insights gained during the pandemic. When the authors set out to study how instructors adapted to unfamiliar, hybrid modes of

instruction, they discovered that most instructors did not have an informal support network in place and were thus not able to draw and build on the experiences and resources of other instructors. Instead, the majority of instructors sought assistance from a few program administrators or figured out what to do based on their own past experiences, ultimately relying on trial and error to determine what effective hybrid writing pedagogy entails. The authors apply Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger's theory of communities of practice to highlight the importance of informal networks for inexperienced practitioners and conclude with suggestions for how WPAs might more effectively foster these kinds of informal networks within professional communities of writing instructors.

In "Directed Self-Placement and the Figured World of College Writing," Kristine Johnson delves into what it means when students are given the opportunity for directed self-placement—not just in terms of their self-perceived abilities, but in terms of what they think "college writing" actually means. These perceptions, however, are formed according to the roles students think will be recognizable by the institution. In order to create equitable writing programs, then, it falls upon programs to consider what norms are being constructed not only from within their courses, but according to what's portrayed to those outside of them.

Assumptions about writing and learning also play a major role in Dorothy Worden-Chambers and Ashley S. Montgomery's "How Writing Teachers' Beliefs about Learning Transfer Impact Their Teaching Practices: A Case from L2 Academic Writing." The authors consider how writing teachers' understandings of transfer can change learning experiences for L2 (and beyond) students as they continue in their scholarly growth. Curricula, particularly when following institutional mandate and disciplinary guidance, is often formed without on-the-ground implementation taken into account. In order for pedagogy to be fully effective, it's key for WPAs to consider the beliefs about transfer held by individual instructors within the program. Working on only the assumption of buy-in means that instructors might not always be all-in.

Finally, in "Everything is Connected: A Review of Institutional Ethnography," AJ Odasso shares a graduate student perspective on Michelle LaFrance's *Institutional Ethnography: A Theory of Practice for Writing Studies* (2019). Odasso encourages WPAs, instructors, and students to consider how institutional ethnography as method imbues our everyday academic practices and how all involved in the work of a writing program might employ institutional ethnography to better understand the networks that inform that work.

CLOSING INVITATION

We hope that the pieces in this issue encourage and challenge you as they did us, and we invite you to share your insights, your expertise, and your submissions with us at wpaeditors@gmail.com.

NOTE

1. Contributors include Lauren E. Cagle, Michelle F. Eble, Laura Gonzales, Meredith A. Johnson, Nathan R. Johnson, Natasha N. Jones, Liz Lane, Temp-tuous Mckoy, Kristen R. Moore, Ricky Reynoso, Emma J. Rose, GPat Patterson, Fernando Sánchez, Ann Shivers-McNair, Michele Simmons, Erica M. Stone, Jason Tham, Rebecca Walton, Miriam F. Williams.

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