Writing Program Administration

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Everything Is Praxis

Pedagogical Alliances among Writing Instructors and Teaching Librarians through a Writing Information Literacy Community of Practice

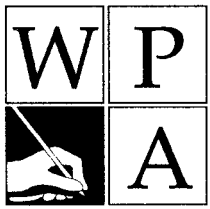
Recovering the Narrative of a Failed Media Studio

Essays

WPAing as a Postpedagogical Practice

The Adoption of Contract Grading in a University Writing Program: Navigating Disruptions to Assessment Ecologies

Journal of the Council of Writing Program Administrators



Writing Program Administration

Journal of the
Council of Writing Program Administrators

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Land Acknowledgment: We acknowledge that much of the work of *WPA: Writing Program Administration* is done on the traditional lands of the Tuscarora People, the Steh-Chass band of the Squaxin Island Tribe and Nisqually Indian Tribe, the Dakota Nation, the Cherokee People, and other Indigenous Peoples. While the work of a journal is multivocal, collaborative, and now often virtual, we believe it is important to recognize that each participant labors within space that was often unceded by its ancestral peoples. We do this to reaffirm our commitment and responsibility to mindful and equitable scholarship. We also invite you to review the list of resources used to craft this statement on the WPA website.

Council of Writing Program Administrators

Guide for Authors

WPA: Writing Program Administration publishes empirical and theoretical research on issues in writing program administration. We publish a wide range of research in various formats, research that not only helps both titled and untitled administrators of writing programs do their jobs, but also helps our discipline advance academically, institutionally, and nationally.
Possible topics of interest include:

- writing faculty professional development
- writing program creation and design
- uses for national learning outcomes and statements that impact writing programs
- classroom research studies
- labor conditions: material, practical, fiscal
- WAC/WID/WC/CAC (or other sites of communication/writing in academic settings)
- writing centers and writing center studies
- teaching writing with electronic texts (multimodality) and teaching in digital spaces
- theory, practice, and philosophy of writing program administration
- outreach and advocacy
- curriculum development
- writing program assessment
- WPA history and historical work
- national and regional trends in education and their impact on WPA work
- issues of professional advancement and writing program administration
- diversity and WPA work
- writing programs in a variety of educational locations (SLACs, HBCUs, two-year colleges, Hispanic schools, non-traditional schools, dual credit or concurrent enrollment programs, prison writing programs)
- interdisciplinary work that informs WPA practices

This list is meant to be suggestive, not exhaustive. Contributions must be appropriate to the interests and concerns of the journal and its readership. The editors welcome empirical research (quantitative as well as qualitative), historical research, and theoretical, essayistic, and practical pieces.

Submission Guidelines

Please check the *WPA* website for complete submissions guidelines and to download the required coversheet. In general, submissions should:

- article submissions should be a maximum of 7,500 words. Submissions for the "Everything Is Praxis" section should be a maximum of 5,000 words. Please see the WPA website for full details on submitting to the "Everything Is Praxis" section.

- be styled according to either the *MLA Handbook* (9th edition) or the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (7th edition), as appropriate to the nature of your research;
- include an abstract (maximum 200 words);
- contain no identifying information;
- be submitted as a .doc or .docx format file; and
- use tables, notes, figures, and appendices sparingly and judiciously.

Submissions that do not follow these guidelines or that are missing the cover page will be returned to authors before review.

Reviews

WPA:Writing Program Administration publishes both review essays of multiple books and reviews of individual books related to writing programs and their administration. If you are interested in reviewing texts or recommending books for possible review, please contact the book review editor at wpabookreviews@gmail.com.

Announcements and Calls

Relevant announcements and calls for papers may be published as space permits. Announcements should not exceed 500 words, and calls for proposals or participation should not exceed 1,000 words. Submission deadlines in calls should be no sooner than January 1 for the fall issue and June 1 for the spring issue. Please email your calls and announcements to wpaeditors@gmail.com and include the text in both the body of the message and as a .doc or .docx attachment.

Correspondence

Correspondence relating to the journal, submissions, or editorial issues should be sent to wpaeditors@gmail.com.

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Writing
Program
Administration

Journal of the
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From the Editors

Changes in Action

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

Welcome to *WPA: Writing Program Administration* 46.2! We are particularly pleased to share this issue because it includes manuscripts that were received after we assumed the editorship and thus reflects some of the changes we've made to the journal during our first year. It is also rewarding to see this issue published because it took quite a while to develop. Typically, a spring issue would appear several weeks before now, but, given the journal's 2021 pause in response to concerns about the CWPA's commitment to racial and linguistic justice, we have had to be patient for submissions to roll in again, and, when they did, it was clear to us that we needed to allow time and provide guidance for submitters and reviewers as we implemented new reviewer guidelines and a new submission category, "Everything is Praxis." We hope that the items included in this delayed issue reflect our efforts to promote anti-racist journal editorial practices and to expand the genres and voices of WPA scholarship.

In this Issue

Everything is Praxis

We created the "Everything Is Praxis" (EIP) submission category shortly after we assumed editorship of the journal in April 2022 because we wanted a place for shorter, practice-focused pieces that detail strategies WPAs and others have used to create and implement changes within their local contexts. We anticipate that EIP articles will identify, and briefly situate in the field, one or more challenges that are commonly encountered in writing program administration and then present case studies of up to five thousand words that emphasize the applicability of the ideas being discussed. Our intent is for the EIP section of the journal to enable sharing of professionally tested, theoretically sound strategies and tactics among a broad swath of WPAs across diverse institutional contexts, including institutions where teaching is valued as much as, if not more than, traditional research articles and monographs. At the same time, we fully recognize that no strategy or tactic can be copied wholesale from one context and implemented with equal effectiveness or identical results in different contexts, so we have

asked contributors to pay careful attention to describing the institutional climates and administrative structures of their schools; their positionality within their institutions; the characteristics of their student population; and anything else that a reader would need to know to evaluate the likelihood that the strategy or tactic would be productive for their local contexts and to envision how they might adjust that strategy or tactic to align it with the particulars of their institutional settings. We believe the first two EIP contributions in this issue accomplish these goals, and we hope they will inspire other readers to share their expertise and situated experiences through EIP submissions of their own.

In their contribution to "Everything is Praxis," Zoe McDonald and Deborah Minter advocate for a "radical alliance-seeking perspective" (12) on WPA work by describing a course-redesign and professional development collaboration between the writing program and the library at their university. The collaboration focused on preparing writing instructors to help students develop critical information literacy and more effectively "navigate the overwhelming volume of online information" (13). Navigation, in this case, means not only that students can identify credible sources but also, McDonald and Minter demonstrate through the "full class annotated bibliography" assignment that is included in the article, that students can engage each other in "conversations about the interconnections among power, social location, and knowledge, a central starting place for students to equitably assess the credibility of sources in traditional and online media environments" (19). The writing program-library partnership, thus, promoted students' abilities to recognize credible sources while also honing their abilities to situate sources within networks of power and to critically analyze inequities within those networks.

In "Recovering the Narrative of a Failed Media Studio," K. Shannon Howard and Clayton A. Sims remind readers to notice the stories that come from failed infrastructure. Howard and Sims relay details of teaching in "the remote and seemingly abandoned Room 307" while also recounting the room's legacy (30). The out-of-the-way room that seemed to have multiple purposes signifies what many writing instructors have experienced—that someone else designs the physical spaces we teach in, unknowingly dictating what choices we can make in our pedagogy. From the stained ceiling to the increasingly dirtier space, Room 307 is a reminder, Sims and Howard contend, that we, as WPAs, need to do a better job of observing and noticing our surroundings, allowing us to learn more about the histories of the spaces we teach in and helping us advocate for better spaces in the future.

Essays

Everything changes when the rubber hits the road. In "WPAing as a Postpedagogical Practice," Jeremy Cushman grapples with what writing program administration means within a theoretical landscape that is post-process and postpedagogy. (As playful—or not—as WPAs might be about our own importance, there's little likelihood that a post-administrative institution is on the horizon.) Cushman begins with the complexities of the classroom, the unpredictability of the day-to-day that demands improvisation with baked-in intentionality. Building from there, he suggests that WPAs adopt a similar (and similarly daunting) balancing act in our own work, thinking about it as "an intense practical involvement, or as a set of ongoing and relational practices" (46). To be or become a WPA, he posits, is not to take on a tactical role, but rather to abide in what is and what can be.

Sarah Faye, Erika I-Tremblay, Dan Melzer, DJ Quinn, and Lisa Sperber report on the adoption of grading contracts in the writing program at the University of California, Davis. As the writers explain, numerous factors contributed to the effective integration of contract grading, including the relative freedom that graduate teaching assistants—the primary instructors for composition at the university—have to experiment in their teaching; the availability of templates and other supporting materials to help GTAs implement contract grading; the visibility of the positive impact that contract grading had on different student populations (preprofessional students, academically struggling students, international students); and the freedom that instructors had to choose what type of contract—labor-based or hybrid—to implement based on their situations and preferences. In addition to benefits in terms of student success in contract-based composition courses, the authors discuss the increase in thoughtful attention to grading and assessment practices among both students and faculty and a concurrent increase in engagement with professional development activities around grading. They conclude with a heuristic for other programs to use in their efforts toward programmatic adoption of contract grading.

Reviews

In "What Do New Writing Teachers Need to Know?" Kathleen Lyons reviews Brian Jackson's *Teaching Mindful Writers* (2020), sharing her perspective on how WPAs might use Jackson's book for GTA education. Lyons highlights the various teaching methods for first-year writing that Jackson describes in the book, and she suggests specific uses for the text, including her recommendation to pair it with readings on antiracist pedagogies in the

GTA practicum to provide a more extensive and inclusive view of writing pedagogies for novice writing instructors.

Next, Michelle Tram Nguyen provides an overview of *Writing Across Difference* (2022) edited by James Rushing Daniel, Katie Malcolm, and Candice Rai. Nguyen's review introduces readers to the multiple ways the collection urges readers to account for difference in our teaching, research, and administration. Nguyen's review exemplifies the collection's argument that conversations across differences—including race, ethnicity, ability, gender, and more—belong in conversation together within the same text. Nguyen concludes her review by sharing how the book's various contributors provide recommendations WPAs might learn from and enact in writing programs.

Finally, Gabriella Wilson introduces *Standing at the Threshold* (2021), edited by William J. Macauley, Leslie R. Anglesey, Brady Edwards, Kathryn M. Lambrecht, and Phillip Lovas. Wilson's review highlights the collection's focus on graduate student positionalities as she relates to the text from her own experiences as a graduate student, GTA, and graduate WPA. Wilson concludes her review by calling on WPAs responsible for GTA education to listen and learn from the experiences described in *Standing at the Threshold* and, specifically, to make room for conversations about liminality in composition practica.

Conclusion

We conclude our introduction by pointing to some changes happening beyond this issue. First, we are excited to announce that our fall issue will be a special issue edited by Jacob Babb and Jessie Blackburn, "Writing Program Administration in the Time of COVID." Keep your eyes peeled for this important contribution in October!

Second, we hope *WPA* readers will explore another initiative that got underway just a couple months ago: an online video series entitled "*WPA: Writing Program Administration* Conversation Starters." In late April 2023, we posted to our social media accounts a brief video interview—developed, filmed, and edited by our Assistant Editor, Amanda "Anie" Patterson Partin—with Dr. Nikki Caswell, Director of the University Writing Center at East Carolina University. The interview features Dr. Caswell sharing details about the ECU writing center's "Linguistic Justice Statement," which was researched and composed by writing consultants, and the incidents that led to the statement being removed from the center's website. Over the next year, we intend to develop and share additional videos about pressing issues in WPA work, with the larger goal of cultivating discussion both on social

media and within the pages of the journal. Be one the lookout for our next "Conversation Starter" on Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter and consider adding your voice to the conversation! If you have a suggestion for a topic, or if you are interested in being featured in a future installment, please reach out to us at wpaeditors@gmail.com.

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. And, please follow us and interact with us on social media: @wpa_journal (Instagram), WPA: Writing Program Administration (Facebook), and @WPA_Journal (Twitter).

Pedagogical Alliances Among Writing Instructors and Teaching Librarians through a Writing Information Literacy Community of Practice

Zoe McDonald and Deborah Minter

Abstract

In this praxis piece, a WPA and a writing instructor describe a writing information literacy community of practice among writing instructors and teaching librarians. Through paying attention to one resulting assignment, a full class annotated bibliography, the co-authors argue this professional development program extended collaborations among the writing program and the library to center contextual notions of authority and metacognition that connect to composition's democratic political commitments.

In her 2017 CWPA keynote, Nancy Welch describes an environmental engineering faculty union member who supports the writing program's focus on promoting students' "critical inquiry and restless creativity" to suggest that alliances across academic departments may be one way to advocate among faculty members in influential departments for writing program resources ("Plan" 107). As Welch notes throughout her scholarship, such public displays often rely on a protest rhetorical tradition, which may be unfamiliar to many WPAs, as an avenue worthwhile to consider in response to our field's well known neoliberal labor conditions ("Living Room"; Welch and Scott). This radical alliance-seeking perspective departs from an assumed even playing field of public deliberation through centering contextual knowledge of local conditions in ways that foreground questions of shared resources, spaces for collaboration, and methods to share responsibility. Other WPAs and teacher-scholars propose that a similar alliance-seeking, or coalitional, perspective may be especially worthwhile to the development of in-depth writing program and library collaborations that counter politicized information networks and the twenty-first century student reading crisis (Sullivan, Tinberg, and Blau; Carillo and Horning). In this article, we suggest an alliance-oriented reading of our university's writing information literacy (WIL) community of practice. This reading enables us to recognize both the practical benefits of increased collaboration

between our writing instructors and the library, and theoretical connections to composition's democratic commitments.

Our WIL fellowship program used a grant opportunity for cross-disciplinary collaborations to increase student retention rates to meet the need to promote a ground-up redesign of our first-year writing courses with attention to the ways students write with print and digital sources. Nationally, multiple surveys have found it vital for college students to learn strategies to evaluate print and digital sources as they develop their critical thinking skills in more expansive ways than the CRAAP test or completing the occasional credibility worksheet (Breakstone et al.; Head, Fister, and MacMilan; National Endowment for the Arts, *Reading at Risk* and *To Read or Not to Read*). At the local level, our full-time writing faculty have recognized the need to redesign our program's three first-year writing courses to emphasize digital composing with responsible ways for students to navigate the overwhelming volume of online information. At the classroom level, a previous writing assessment identified the need for students to integrate external sources of information in their papers in ways that avoid new college students' tendencies to "patch write" rather than paraphrase or insert a quotation without context (Howard). With this range of holistic challenges, the WPA and a library faculty member recognized an opportunity to plan ways to equip first-year writing instructors with the resources to level up their research-based writing pedagogy. In what follows, we describe the origins and key activities of the resulting WIL community of practice. Both of us were participants, as the WPA and faculty co-leader, and as a graduate teaching assistant and writing instructor. After the overview, we turn to the writing instructor's assignments as an example of promoting CWPA and Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) frameworks in a way that parallels the beneficial social structures of the community of practice format for first-year writing students.

Teacher-scholars in composition and information literacy have much to say about the benefits library faculty bring to professional development programs and classroom collaborations. Among many shared findings, WPAs note the overlaps in both composition and information literacy professional student learning documents, often called "writing information literacy," with the key need for ongoing writing and library faculty communication "to abolish the formulaic writing of the research paper and the mechanical searching for and use of sources in favor of more generative, productive, and transferable practice" (Anderson, Blalock, Louis, and Wolff Murphy 4; see also Kazan, Behm, and Cook; Bowles-Terry, Davis, and Holliday; Norgaard). One recent study finds quantifiable benefits of digital and information literacy professional development programs for writing assessments

and instructors (Hardy, Kordonowy, and Liss). As Morgan Hanson notes in a review of this journal's professional development scholarship, often, professional development opportunities make labor conditions visible (82), which Elizabeth Wardle notes is a crucial step for professional advocacy for "a system in place for long-term faculty development and support." For librarians, such collaborations with writing instructors enable them to see the professional demands on part-time writing instructors who often teach multiple classes while working on scholarly projects and must navigate multiple student learning outcomes within their classes.

Our composition and library faculty have a history of collaborations that facilitated the WIL grant proposal. Each semester, library teaching and learning staff have consulted with writing instructors on co-taught class sessions centering research processes and assignments. The WPA, a co-author of this essay, participated in a library-sponsored course redesign community of practice that centered digital composing. At the same time, a library faculty member and an assistant WPA hosted a brown-bag discussion of the library's student learning goals for writing instructors. Through these collaborations, composition faculty learned of library faculty desires to share their knowledge in more in-depth ways than one-and-done research days focused on the features of a particular database or a tour of the library building. One library faculty member was especially interested in extending the reach of her staff through collaborations with the writing program to promote open access educational resources, develop digital library guides, introduce students to primary sources in the Archives and Special Collections, and disseminate the library's online tutorials. These prior collaborations solidified writing program and library faculty interest in creating a professional development opportunity to promote new college students' research skills beyond a generic research paper as librarians and writing instructors learn ways to share the responsibilities to educate students with the habits of mind to use sources that might not pop up on their social media feeds or page one of the database they used in high school.

At the same time, the past collaborations illustrated an interesting dichotomy: just as our writing instructors are quick to recognize students become overwhelmed with the quantity of available information—especially on social media, academic databases, public information, and digital and physical archives—so too can the instructors become overwhelmed by the prospect of teaching their students how to develop as writers in the midst of so much information. With professional responsibilities to teach different classes, complete graduate course work, and develop creative and scholarly work, the circumstances of our program's non-unionized contingently employed writing instructors do not enable an expansive redesign of their

courses without financial and professional support. During the first full group WIL meeting, all the instructors described this overwhelming feeling in response to a prompt that asks how they plan to include the CWPA, NCTE, and National Writing Project "Post-Secondary Success" and ACRL "Information Literacy" frameworks in their fall courses (see "First Meeting" tasks in the appendix). As one of the instructors and a writing center assistant director writes, "Holy cow! This is a TON to do in a single class. How is this even possible?!" The instructor continues, "Each of these things we are asking students to do in their writing and thinking is like the tentacle of an octopus—slippery, squirmy, and seems to have a mind of its own—and we're asking them to get all these tentacles swimming in the same direction at the same time!" As the instructor's statements indicate, due to the significant asks within our writing program redesign with student learning goals, a funded community of practice became essential.

In the spring of 2020, our campus's Center for Transformative Teaching funded cross-departmental pedagogical interventions to promote student success through improving student retention rates and time to degree. Scholars and researchers have found benefits for such retention efforts through the synergies of student knowledge of the resources available at their university libraries and the massive numbers of students in required college writing courses (Flierl, Bonem, Maybee, and Fundator; Soria, Fransen, and Nackerud; Kuh et al.). In the successful WIL fellowship grant proposal, the WPA and two library faculty members proposed a community of practice for writing instructors to work together over the summer in cohorts specific to the three different first- and second-year composition courses on our campus, which corresponded with the instructors' upcoming fall courses. These cohort groups were then responsible to develop a continuum of learning—a course design tool to emphasize information literacy knowledge throughout the fifteen-week semester—and activities that would allow students to demonstrate crucial writing and information literacy skills.

The three faculty organizers agreed to allocate most of the grant funds to compensate each instructor for their participation in the community of practice at the rate of teaching a summer class. On our campus, the part-time writing instructors are lecturers or graduate teaching assistants typically hired to teach exclusively during the fall and spring semesters. There are fewer summer courses, which requires the instructors compete to teach the summer courses or find employment outside the department. To keep the community of practice funding proposal competitive to the grant reviewers and attract writing instructors, the tenure-line faculty were intentional to allocate funding for the participants. These funding decisions

also signaled the faculty members' commitment to recognizing the labor of pedagogical work and the writing instructors' expertise of the contexts of their classes.

The faculty co-organizers chose a representative group of instructors based on those who applied. This group included both graduate teaching assistants and adjunct faculty lecturers, new and more experienced instructors, and those with scholarly backgrounds representative of the English department's specializations in creative writing, composition, literature, and digital humanities. Finally, the organizers were especially supportive of the instructors who described commitments to underrepresented students including multilingual students, students who transferred from community colleges, students with disabilities, first-generation college students, students of color, and students with diverse gender expressions.

The circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic complicated the proposal and required the WPA to carefully consider postponing the project, or how to coordinate it to enable slow changes to the composition program. The library faculty each had small children at home. Through conversations with leaders in the English department, the WPA also recognized that part-time writing instructors needed additional professional and financial support due to the pandemic. The WPA pondered these needs, and remembered her experiences as a young academic parent of a child with cancer, a time that required isolation, and fatigue associated with a health crisis that required navigating the safety of a little person ushered into the world while building a professional profile. The WPA and the library faculty agreed the WIL project could be energizing. While the shift to online work resulted in many academic conference cancelations, the WPA also recognized the opportunity to reallocate the grant's travel funding to support an additional writing instructor. To acknowledge the working conditions of the writing instructors, and the family responsibilities of the grant team, the faculty coordinators agreed to require four full group meetings, and to trust each writing instructor cohort group to decide how to work together outside of the full group meetings.

The resulting WIL fellowship program was an online, in-depth facilitated cohort-based community of practice. The organizers invited the participants to think early on about how they might share teaching materials with other writing instructors. Participants were required to attend four virtual whole group meetings throughout the summer months with additional smaller group meetings as needed (see the appendix for details about the work for the four full group meetings). In addition to a set of reflective writing assignments focused on the place of information literacy in their classrooms that instructors shared with the whole group for the first full group

meeting, for later meetings, participants produced an in-depth course overview, or "continuum of learning" (Wiggins and McTighe), specific to their small group's composition course. From there, instructors worked individually to apply the co-authored student learning documents to refine their course materials before a final meeting devoted to describing course redesigns and assignments. Finally, the organizers expected the participants to use those materials during the fall semester and, after they entered their students' final grades, provide written reflections, which may inform a future mixed methods library teaching and learning research article.

The WIL program resulted in classroom assignments that include a Google Maps–based writing assignment, refined selfie photo analysis, Instagram-inspired research starter pack, and a "who is at your table" reflection on representation activity. Several of these assignments have since become part the writing program's sourcebook for new graduate teaching assistants. The WIL program also created a new, ongoing, part-time-writing-instructor-led professional development series in our department; prompted two participants to share their work during a campus-wide teaching symposium; and motivated the University Libraries to establish a year-long graduate student information literacy teaching assistantship. In short, WIL sponsored an expanded network of instructor-driven change as the writing program adapts to composing in twenty-first century information landscapes. However, it is also important to recognize that the project wasn't conceptualized to have such wide impacts. The grant proposal described a community of practice for part-time writing instructors with expertise related to our university's students and first-year writing student learning goals. The results emphasize the better-than-anticipated benefits of providing time and space for instructors to collaborate with each other and library teaching faculty over several weeks during the isolation of the early COVID pandemic. Moreover, as we describe with the "full class annotated bibliography" activity below, we draw connections to the ways this activity facilitates similar collaborative opportunities for students in composition classrooms that the WIL program provided for writing instructors.

A Full Class Annotated Bibliography: In-Class Community Building and Applied Social Composing Practice

The full class annotated bibliography was one of the activities a writing instructor developed during the WIL fellowship program. We highlight this assignment for several reasons. First, the full class activity emphasizes the ACRL's "authority is constructed and contextual" information literacy framework and the CWPA, NCTE, and National Writing Project's

"metacognition" habit of mind (*Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing*), two shared student learning outcomes central to our first-year "writing as argument" class. Second, the activity relies on the familiar genre of an annotated bibliography through using the network capabilities of digital discussion boards to move a typically individual activity into one that promotes the whole class's participation in ways that reflect deliberative processes. Finally, this activity has circulated in our department through multiple class sessions and graduate teaching assistant orientations with modified prompts. The version of the assignment we describe is disseminated through the Open Access *Writing Spaces* Assignments and Activities Archive (McDonald). We hope this is one activity other WPAs may consider adding to their assignment banks with prompts that fit their students and classes. We also hope this activity showcases the radical potential of in-depth library and composition professional development programs to have an impact beyond an individual classroom. For ease of reading, the following two sections use the first person to allow the writing instructor to describe her assignment. We then return to a shared voice in the conclusion.

Activity Design and Process

Through my knowledge of women's studies and ethnic studies programs, I've recognized not all students have had the same opportunities to "study themselves . . . [and] 'give and get' something through writing . . . to write about something that matters to them" in their required first-year writing classes (Sommers and Saltz 141). I wanted to prioritize class conversations about different types of knowledge and authority rather than assume authority is something a source has or doesn't have without careful consideration of its context for a particular project, as the first ACRL information literacy "authority is constructed and contextual" and the CWPA, NCTE, and National Writing Project "metacognition" frames emphasize. I designed the full class annotated bibliography for students to have experience shaping the class's knowledge and experience the ways evaluating sources requires technical skills such as identifying an author's credibility markers and social skills such as deciding how a specific source may be worthwhile to share with readers in the class. I wanted to provide time for students to discuss their research processes, the context of their sources, and different types of authority. I also wanted to provide time for students to collectively reflect on the value of those whose knowledge is often glossed over in more general sources of knowledge in a similar purpose to feminist rhetorical recovery efforts (Ritchie and Ronald; Lunsford; Royster).

The activity prompt engages a central information need of the class, such as examining local resources and scholarship addressing health and mental health among college students. From there, students individually find one or two sources they recommend the class consider annotating and posting on a discussion board. During class time, students work together in small groups of three to four students to decide on a single source their group will spend time annotating and describing. This requirement facilitates student conversations centering a holistic evaluation of the credibility of different sources for in-class audiences, such as if information about a sober tailgate hosted by the campus counseling center may be more useful for the class to read about than a social work academic journal article summarizing key practices among campus health center staff. Once each group has decided on their source, each student has a role to play in the full class discussion board. One student reads the source to write an annotation. A second student justifies how the group's source is a valuable contribution to the class's knowledge. A different student posts a description of why their group chose their source. A final student reads a different group's annotation and makes a comparison between their group's source and that of a different group. The resulting discussion board can then inform class discussions as students engage their individual research-informed projects, or as a reference for students researching health and mental health.

My assignment emphasizes attention to dynamic social relationships and to making choices that, while they can be uncomfortable, are central for democratic pedagogies. While this deliberation-oriented movement has a deep history within democratic pedagogies and the National Writing Project, it is especially beneficial for writers from historically marginalized backgrounds to initially break into supportive groups as one way to participate in more general conversations, as seen in the recent work of the Black Digital Literacy and Composition Collective's NextGEN ListServ and the Anti-Ableist Composition Collective (Baniya et al.). However, as I noted above, this deliberative step on its own cannot be assumed to automatically center the needs of historically marginalized, and multiply marginalized, students or their knowledges (hooks; Ellsworth). Instead, in a similar way to how the WIL community of practice enabled part-time instructors, including myself, resources to redesign their syllabi, this class activity created time for student conversations about the interconnections among power, social location, and knowledge, a central starting place for students to equitably assess the credibility of sources in traditional and online media environments.

Activity Reflection

As I've worked on this essay with my WPA and co-author, what most stands out are the ways our many conversations illuminate national professional values within the context of our writing program. Our program has progressivist commitments, seen clearly through our department's sponsorship of one of the longest-running local sites of the National Writing Project, faculty joint appointments in women's and ethnic studies programs, and more recent public anti-racist statements. Following the WIL program, the writing program also adopted first-year writing learning outcomes for students to examine relationships between language and social change. I've learned these local values, and ways they have shaped the WIL program from the grant proposal to retrospective reflection, through multiple coffee-facilitated conversations. As my WPA has reminded me, neither the WIL community of practice structure, nor the directions in my full class annotated bibliography activity, require that students or instructors center historically marginalized knowledges, although the nuances of these positions should be carefully considered by WPAs interested in facilitating a similar WIL program on their campuses. The collaborative structures that provide contingent writing instructors with funded time and accountability structures can make explicit different legacies of power and sources of authority (Kleinfeld), which can then inform new opportunities for student agency as they make informed decisions about which information networks are worth their time and which ones give them an informed position to write from. Discussing these responsibilities with my WPA has allowed me to see who I would like to become if I'm the one seeking professional development funding, listening to the asks of writing instructors, and working to address a key finding from a writing assessment. I hope if I'm in such a position, I too will work to ensure as much money as possible goes to part-time instructors, and they have a structure that enables their collaborative work to influence other instructors in the department, and perhaps circulate through additional networks of influence. These are radical goals in a moment when many question the economic value of higher education, but goals that are not out of reach.

Conclusion

During her 2017 CWPA conference keynote, Welch connects such democratic commitments to class and race-based inclusion efforts through the pioneering work of Barbara Smith and the Combahee River Collective to suggest WPAs center the most marginalized "to take inspiration from the Combahee and Black Lives Matter slogans. . . . 'When adjunct faculty get

free, we all get free'" ("Plan" 110). Welch's call to draw upon the tradition of those who examine the intersections of class and race-based oppressions, among other forms of significant difference, forms a bridge to composition's key professional values to promote authentic collaborations and create equitable labor conditions especially for the many writing programs, such as ours, staffed primarily by part-time graduate teaching assistants and adjunct instructors. Welch suggests coalitional rhetoric and practices can enable generative creative opportunities to gather engaged collaborators to design opportunities for writing instructors and students to bring their full selves to classrooms in ways more expansive than financial-based customer and employee relationships.

While we do not want to suggest our WIL program was a coalition, or used the rhetoric of coalitions, we have found similar dynamics between our program and this avenue of inquiry. Those who study coalitions center questions of how to establish trust and accountability, and how to respond to differences among collaborators. The Civil Rights activist Bernice Johnson Reagon, especially, calls for women not to assume their groups are already fully inclusive of all possible points of view, a value our writing fellow selection process sought to model through selecting a representative group of instructors. Yet, perhaps most centrally, coalitions emphasize the necessity to share responsibility and have words and deeds reflect each other through providing time and space for collaborations. In our community of practice structure shaped by the NCTE's "network models" approach to teacher development (Arellano Cabusao, Fleischer, and Polson), we saw results that have been challenging to measure but may have circulated in ways unlikely in a more top-down mandated approach. The faculty WIL organizers modeled this practice through allocating funding primarily to part-time instructors and providing them with a structure of accountability. The faculty answered instructor questions during the international upheavals of the summer of 2020 at rates of compensation that recognized the disruptions to future conference travel, the financial needs of part-time instructors, and the responsibilities for faculty parents to keep their families safe during quarantine. The instructors had many of the same caregiving responsibilities and found ways to schedule meetings with their cohort groups, participate in the four required meetings, and complete in-depth course redesigns. The overwhelming task to redesign a class can be similarly mediated through ongoing conversations, readings, and course design templates. Likewise, introducing students to the "authority is constructed and contextual" and "metacognition" frameworks may be best taught when students have hands-on experiences like they do in the full class annotated bibliography activity, which required time, knowledge,

and multiple collaborators (Association of College and Research Libraries Board; CWPA, NCTE, and the National Writing Project). The benefits of prioritizing collaborations among many axes of difference in academic discipline, professional employment status, or social location are often difficult to quantify in the short-term. Collaborators may change jobs, need to step away from research projects, or require flexible deadlines. We recognize the level of funding our WIL program won is unusual, and yet it was essential to the program's success. We hope the readings, prompts, and annotated bibliography activity in the appendix inspire WPAs to draw upon existing collaborations with their campus's library faculty to advocate for funding to promote student retention through facilitating composition course redesigns. In circumstances that threaten to overwhelm, we see publicly ambitious working alliances that take full advantage of the knowledge of part-time writing instructors and teaching librarians as well worth further pursuing.

Appendix: Overview of Tasks Associated with the Writing Information Literacy Inquiry Program

First Meeting: Introduction to the Writing Information Fellowship and Learning Outcomes

Preparation Tasks:

- Complete a "pre-program" reflection on how information literacy currently figures in your teaching of your composition course, that is, English 150: Writing as Inquiry, English 151: Writing as Argument, or English 254: Writing and Communities.
    - What do you already know about information literacy?
    - In what contexts have you considered or learned about information literacy prior to this program?
    - How do you feel about your current approach to information literacy in your FYW course(s)?
    - What is one thing you absolutely hope to come away with after participation in this program?
- Complete and share a post for the group that introduces you to the group.
- Read ACRL's "Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education" and review our own campus's Libraries' Learning Outcomes.
- Additional material:

Bowen, Ryan S. "Understanding by Design." *Center for Teaching*, Vanderbilt University, 2017, https://cft.vanderbilt.edu/guides-sub-pages/understanding-by-design/. Accessed 5 June 2020.

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Meyer, Jan, and Ray Land. "Threshold Concepts and Troublesome Knowledge: Linkages to Ways of Thinking and Practising within the Disciplines." *Enhancing Teaching-Learning Environments in Undergraduate Courses*, Universities of Edinburgh, 4 May 2003, http://www.etl.tla.ed.ac.uk/docs/ETLreport4.pdf. Accessed 20 June 2023.

Nelson, Tamara Holmlund, Angie Deuel, David Slavit, and Anne Kennedy. "Leading Deep

Conversations in Collaborative Inquiry Groups." *Clearing House: A Journal of Educational Strategies, Issues and Ideas,* vol. 83, no. 5, 2010, pp. 175–179.

Second Meeting: Examine the Convergences among Information Literacy and Local Campus Composition Student Learning Outcomes

Preparation Tasks:

- Post a reflection on the intersections of composition and information literacy to the WIL discussion board.
- Read:

  Anderson, Jennifer, Glenn Blalock, Lisa Louis, and Susan Wolff Murphy. "Collaborations as Conversations: When Writing Studies and the Library Use the Same Conceptual Lens." *Teaching Information Literacy and Writing Studies*, edited by Grace Veach, vol. 1, Purdue University Press, 2018, pp. 3–18.

  Artman, Margaret, Erica Frisicaro-Pawlowski, and Robert Monge. "Not Just One Shot: Extending the Dialogue about Information Literacy in Composition Classes." *Composition Studies*, vol. 38, no. 2, 2010, pp. 93–110.
- Reflect:
  - How might the decoding-the-disciplines approach inform your approach to composition and information literacy?
- Additional material:

  Grim, Valerie, David Pace, and Leah Shopkow. "Learning to Use Evidence in the Study of History." *New Directions for Teaching and Learning*, vol. 2004, no. 98, 2004, pp. 57–65.

  Norgaard, Rolf. "Writing Information Literacy: Contributions to a Concept." *Reference & User Services Quarterly*, vol. 43, no. 2, 2003, pp. 124–30.

  —. "Writing Information Literacy in the Classroom: Pedagogical Enactments and Implications." *Reference & User Services Quarterly*, vol. 43, no. 3, 2004, pp. 220–26.

  Norgaard, Rolf, and Caroline Sinkinson. "Writing Information Literacy: A Retrospective and a Look Ahead." *Information Literacy: Research and Collaboration across Disciplines*, edited by Barbara J. D'Angelo, Sandra Jamieson, Barry Maid, and Janice R. Walker. The WAC Clearinghouse and University Press of Colorado, 2016, pp. 15–36.

  Sommers, Nancy, and Laura Saltz. "The Novice as Expert: Writing the Freshman Year." *College Composition and Communication*, vol. 56, no. 2, 2004, pp. 124–49.

Third Meeting: Marking a Transition from Conceptualizing Writing Information Literacy to Designing Your Instruction and Developing Assessment Plans

Preparation Tasks:

- With your course cohort, create and share a first draft continuum-of-learning document for that course.
- Read excerpt from Wiggins and McTighe's *Understanding by Design*.
- Post to group discussion your favorite resources or readings related to writing course development or assessing student learning.
- Additional material:

Brown, Sydney. "Designing Your Course: Part 1." *Teaching @ UNL: An Instructor Guide,* InnovativeInstructionalDesign,https://canvas.unl.edu/courses/51131/pages/designing-your-course-part-1?module_item_id=839945. Accessed 20 June 2023.

Head, Alison, Alaina Bull, Margy MacMillan. "Asking the Right Questions: Bridging Gaps Between Information Literacy Assessment Approaches." *Against the Grain*, vol. 31, no. 4, 2019, pp. 20–22.

Final Meeting: Share and Celebrate Our Work

Preparation Tasks:

- Post to discussion board a final iteration of the continuum of learning for your fall composition course.
- Post a second iteration of your plan for how writing information literacy will reside in your course.
- Review what others in your cohort group have shared and be prepared to discuss with the full group.

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Zoe McDonald is a PhD candidate in English and women's and gender studies at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln. She would like to thank Erica DeFrain, Catherine Fraser-Riehle, Janel Simons, the summer 2020 WIL fellows, and her students for their support of this article.

Deborah Minter is an associate professor of English at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln. Her research and teaching focus on the teaching of writing, composition studies and program administration. Her work has appeared in several edited collections and journals including *CCC*, *WPA: Writing Program Administration*, *Pedagogy*, and *College English*.

Recovering the Narrative of a Failed Media Studio

K. Shannon Howard and Clayton A. Sims

Abstract

A new lab at our university, designed to be the Composition New Media Studio, was seemingly abandoned rather than maintained after its design was complete. The authors share an account, or case study, of failed infrastructure, based in a series of campus "noticings" (Tsing) and interviews with composition teachers who taught in the space and were part of the design process. In examining this space more closely, we hope to encourage others to share stories of failure and take more notice of the objects, spaces, and local stories that lie in failure's wake.

Finding the ideal space and tools to write has become central to the study of meaning making. From locations that writers use to create and compose (Brodkey; Prior and Shipka; Reynolds; Rule) to the use of talismanic objects and tools like Moleskine notebooks, crafts, and geocaching materials (Alexis; Prins; Rivers), compositionists consider the nonhuman elements of our writing world to be just as agential as the human ones. Other scholarship has revealed more concrete challenges related primarily to acquisition of space (Camarillo; Davis; Walls, Schopieray, and DeVoss; Carpenter and Apostel). Yet, composition scholars typically place emphasis on the writing scene as it unfolds in situ, rather than digging into the past, which may lead to neglect of institutional artifacts that reveal hidden histories about spaces. More importantly, acknowledgment of failed writing spaces and studios from a physical or material perspective is almost nonexistent. Such omissions are problematic since Amanda Bemer, Ryan Moeller, and Cheryl Ball, like other scholars before them, have argued that "physical spaces . . . affect the relationships and work scenarios that take place within them" (140-41). Discussions of abandoned printers, water damage spots, and lost door entry codes may not be as seductive as accounts of favorite pens, touch screens, and ergonomic chairs. However, this article gives attention to the more damaged and forgotten spaces of our universities, the ones with hidden histories and unrealized goals. The narratives of unsuccessful studios or labs are just as important as a detailed account of those spaces that thrive under the right conditions.

During Shannon's first year in a tenure-track position, she stumbled upon such a space where she was assigned to teach composition: the remote and seemingly abandoned Room 307. After the first day of class, she emailed the department chair and the composition director because Room 307, with a sign that read "English Composition New Media Studio" above the door, was not fit for use. Although the room featured ergonomically designed chairs that rolled conveniently, new computers, and large widescreen televisions on opposite walls, debris littered the floor, and the walls revealed water stains from leaks.

> Hi, everyone,
>
> I am attaching photos from Room 307. From what we discussed today, it looks like it has not been cleaned for at least a year (as someone found it in this condition during her summer course in 2014).
>
> I have photographed a few things out of sheer curiosity—there is a dead clock stopped at 8:25am on a shelf. In that same area are two printers shoved in a closet and a very curious old binder of forms where you can hand in "complaints" to someone. The walls have expensive television screens with what looks like water damage just above them. I also snapped a few shots of overflowing trashcans down the hall.

As a new faculty member, Shannon did not speak her entire mind. This email masked several concerns: How was the program currently being perceived by those working in this part of campus? In what ways had the original designers of the studio lab conceived of this space, and why? Most importantly, how did the designers and staff not account for the room's maintenance and repair?

Shannon photographed the room that day from multiple angles to document the strange experience. After a bit of sleuthing, she began to have conversations with the people involved in the establishment of the studio. These discussions continued, off and on, during Shannon's early years as a professor. Her analysis did not result in a full institutional ethnography of Room 307 (see Miley). Instead, methodologically speaking, it became an informal series of "noticings" that built an incomplete but fascinating narrative of what happened in the past. Anthropologist Anna Tsing says that "[w]hat we're doing in fieldwork is noticing; we notice human relations with each other; we notice spirits; we notice all kinds of things." In this sense, noticing becomes a more informal and improvisational method for understanding how the university functions. Susan Leigh Star's call "to study boring things" also offers a guide to studying the indoor workings of our habitats on campus when reminding us that "it takes some digging to

unearth the drama inherent in system design creating, to restore narrative to what appears to be dead lists" (377). In this essay, we focus primarily on the physical objects and buildings surrounding computers rather than the computers themselves, which means attention goes toward the water stains and door codes rather than Windows operating systems and wireless networks. This focus is because forgotten objects and spaces surrounding computers reveal more concrete histories while machine hard drives are often wiped clean.[1] This essay follows the example of scholars like Charles Bergman, who reflects on the awe he experienced when visiting his University Center basement (65). The campus plumber had explained how the boilers worked to heat multiple structures at his college, and this information awakened Bergman to the "material reality" and "silent syllabus" at his institution (66). The act of walking across campus became, for Bergman, "a way of knowing the place in new ways" (68), which echoes Tsing's idea of engaging in specific "noticings."

As an outside observer to 307's story, Shannon had to recognize the limitations faculty and administrators face when confronted with directives to engage in so-called "innovating" and "cutting edge" projects. Labs and studios often serve, as Lori Emerson says, as "a response to pressures humanists are feeling to both legitimize and even 'pre-legitimize' what they do." Studio and lab spaces are, for better or worse, a "sea change in how the humanities are trying to move away from the 19th century model" of classrooms and the concept of the solitary scholar writing alone. Although the road to innovation is often paved with good intentions, the implementation of a plan can stall when material realities of a campus intervene. Andrea Davis, in her own account of proposing a new lab, brings infrastructural realities sharply into focus by stating that "the process of space requests in institutions is a slow process involving many layers and levels of stakeholders. . . . It can, and often does, take years to implement" (586).

There are success stories despite this arduous process. Morgan Gresham and Kathleen Yancey write about creating a studio for the Clemson University Communication across the Curriculum program. With a three-million-dollar donation from an alumnus, the professors and architects worked together to design a space where different disciplines of writing, communication, and visual arts could converge in new ways. Another notable building is Eastern Kentucky's Noel Studio for Academic Creativity, where Russel G. Carpenter and Shawn Apostel describe the creation of "a space that facilitates play" (410). A video embedded in this Studio's website shows ample white board space and touch screens to enhance tutoring efforts. This space even includes objects like Silly Putty and Legos (Carpenter and Apostel 395). Conversely, our writing program director was working with

a found classroom inside a multi-purpose student center in an area where foot traffic was limited. Those who create new studios are often dependent on university size. In the case just mentioned, Eastern Kentucky's student population would more than double our own institution's numbers, and Clemson triples them.

The student center (or the Center), which housed 307, was and still is incredibly labyrinthine in part due to its Brutalist design. Architecture of buildings like ones on this campus, established in 1969, often make wayfinding difficult. Laurie Olin explains how many campuses at the time appeared "defensive and fortress-like" (8) due to Brutalism, a "stark, concrete-centric" form of architecture, characterized the arrangement of the interior and the exterior of many institutional structures across the country (Mindel).

Figure 1: *A photo of Room 307. The windows look out from the second level of the Center building. From this angle, the bottom (first) floor appears hidden underground.*

As seen in the image above, the Center reflects that design. It includes entrances and exits on the front and back of the building, both on the bottom and second floors. The first floor is even hidden completely from the angle featured above, which creates what some might observe to a bunker effect. Although the main floor, or second floor, includes the cafeteria and the offices of student services, people rarely venture upstairs. This location would be a particular challenge for students who were new to campus in first-year writing classes.

As Bemer, Moeller, and Ball remind us, English departments "do not have control over the ultimate design of most spaces" (142); instead, they often settle for what they are given. The key factor in choosing such locations is money, since available university spaces, particularly offices and classrooms, are hard to find. Consequently, spaces like writing centers or our media lab have been compared to "moveable feasts at transient tables" that are "spaces inside other spaces" (Sunstein 7–9). Such spaces may resemble a "proofreading-shop-in-the-basement" (North 444), or even a *small storage closet* (emphasis ours) in which students can only "stop and go" (Nordstrom). Contingent faculty also dwell in such spaces. Susan Miller speaks of the "sad women in the basement," where overworked women teach and tutor in hidden areas (121). Nate, a former graduate student who helped the director create the lab,[2] was aware that the studio was "removed away from the normal classroom sphere" or, rather, "kinda out of the way" on the third floor. Room 307 at our institution was the inverse, or attic, to Miller's basement, but the message is the same: spaces for teaching and tutoring writing, even when given new equipment and a new title, are essentially invisible if no one can find them.

Interior Design

At the time of this article's composition and interviews with him, Nate, the former graduate assistant who worked with the WPA, was a full-time lecturer. While the composition director and Nate were both involved in the execution of the room's design in 2013, Nate was responsible for placing the orders with vendors and emailing the facilities manager with any problems they had. When recollecting his time working on the lab, Nate comments that he felt more like a "task rabbit" than someone who had agency in the process. When asked what the original budget was, he did not know. Andrea Davis, who proposed a new lab for her campus of 1,500 students, states that the budget for her project was close to $75,000 (562). Our school of 5,000 students may have had a similar budget. Of equal importance was the fact that the director of the program had received funds from the dean of her college to hire someone like Nate. In most cases, such positions would be funneled through the department, and the chair would have to sign off on most stages of the process. The hiring process for Nate did not include the department and chair's sign off, which meant that Nate was less likely to receive guidance from a department chair and, therefore, less likely to feel included in usual departmental activities and goals. This part of the history, although not revealed immediately, was essential to consider, since the process of creation was fraught with challenges from different levels of

university infrastructure. In their article on "Hacking Spaces," Douglas M. Walls, Scott Schopieray, and Danielle Nicole DeVoss report that the creation of a new lab or studio at their institution took "five separate offices on campus and multiple campus personnel" (284). From Nate's interview, Shannon thought it sounded like this redirection of power was the director's attempt to "hack" or circumvent traditional hierarchies.

When the project began, Nate stressed that the goal was to move away from desks organized by rows; Walls, Schopieray, and DeVoss echo this concern in their work on "hacking" (269). Nate mentions that the need "to move and be organic" was imperative to his director's vision of a new space: "The idea of 307 was that it would be sort of modular, that you could have rows, but you could also change it around." This flexibility is hardly surprising given how Silicon Valley is known for promoting face to face "collisions" and "chance encounters" among its workers (Waber, Magnolfi, and Lindsay), and colleges often seek inspiration from such models, attempting to create what Natalie Loveless refers to as the "gadget-gear-cool-factor badge of maker-lab circulation" (33). Large flat screens hung on opposite walls so that the projector's images could be visible from multiple vantage points. However, Nate said that "unless you were moving around constantly, there was no central focal point." The idea was to have "power strips coming down from the ceiling" that would move as groups of students gathered throughout different areas. Nate mentioned that this set up would also allow desks to move and be arranged while students would still be plugged in. This plan was abandoned because, in the end, the power structure would simply resemble a series of cords descending from above; it was "too ambitious," Nate said. The word ambition suggests that the director was hoping, perhaps, for a Noel Studio rather than an attic classroom, something that could serve as a "show pony" (Nate's words) to administrators and visitors.

Nate stressed what Shannon already observed when she was assigned to teach in 307: the room possessed no central podium for the teacher. He said, "If you stood at the front, you had to sit down at the computer." The space, being primarily designed for group work, was not as flexible as Nate and his director had hoped. "You had to ambulate the entire time," he explained. It placed pressure on instructors to be constantly moving, and such situations are grounded in ableism. Sometimes this layout, based in part on corporate trends to maximize productivity (Waber, Magnolfi, and Lindsay), does not deliver the way it claims. Bemer, Moeller, and Ball note that "the pod layout is not a utopian ideal. The computers, unless they are mounted low enough, . . . can create line-of-sight problems" (144).

Rearranging chairs in a form of organizational theater is a superficial move at best. By putting such emphasis on pods and collaboration, the lab prohibited students from engaging in authentic writing situations with any degree of flexibility. "It was just people in pods, and they were blocked from each other," Nate says, echoing Bemer, Moeller, and Ball. Full-time lecturer Liz makes another point, one that echoes Jody Shipka's thesis in *Toward a Composition Made Whole*. She observes that the digital reigned supreme in 307: "I don't like the set up. Not everybody likes to work digitally all the time. There's not a lot of space for using pen and paper or other materials." She goes on, "I am constantly reminding people that multimodal doesn't mean digital because I don't like making digital projects all the time. I encourage my students to play with materials and create things." Nate agreed and informed Shannon that his own most recent teaching tools from the 2022-23 school year include markers and a white board. Although he feels "like a Luddite," he has noticed that he builds stronger bonds with students when he keeps things simple.

Physical Structure

Furniture and a lack of focal points were not the only concerns. Water leaks in the ceiling were a continual issue in the third-floor space (see Fig 2). When those leaks occurred, the ceiling tiles crumbled, and pieces, along with water, would land on the newly purchased computers. Nate said, "I had to cancel class a couple of times because there was a puddle of water underneath one of the computers, and I didn't want anyone to get electrocuted." [3] Problems with roof leaks had not been an obstacle anyone had anticipated.

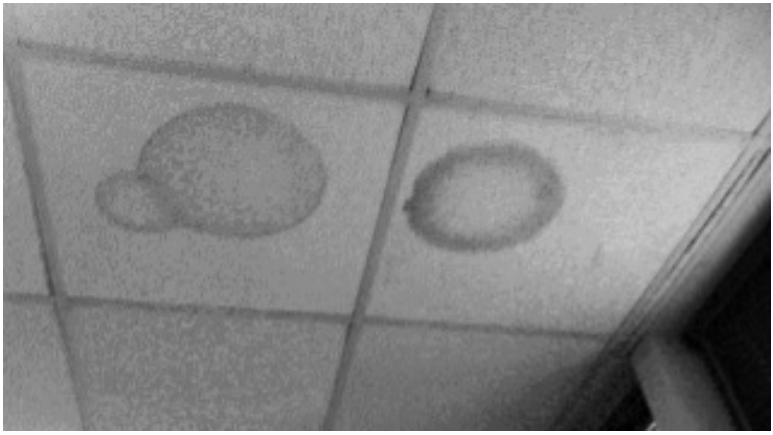

Figure 2: A photo of brown stains on ceiling tiles that reveal water damage that grew worse over time.

When the ceiling tiles fell, Nate mentioned that they were quickly replaced, but these replacements were a small band-aid on a much larger problem with the HVAC system. The facilities manager later explained that the key problem was always the roof. Regardless of cause, the costly new equipment was embedded in a space where walls and the ceiling carried older histories of flaws with them.

Likewise, Liz encountered a problem that Shannon, too, was confronting in her current teaching assignment in a neighboring building. "The first time I used the room I had to have campus police open the door," she explained, "because the code [to open the door] didn't work." Liz also explained that there was a door code and an alarm code for the room, and she had never been given the alarm code. Alarm codes are often given to very few individuals for obvious security reasons, but teachers find themselves confronting uniformed officers at their classroom door when such things go sideways. Gaining access to a location seems like something instructors take for granted, but Shannon learned quickly that this obstacle interferes with many who try to do their jobs.

Additionally, Liz found that this third-floor space was not maintained regularly, despite the presence of new technology and new furniture. In this sense, the space most resembled someone's attic, a place to accumulate dust and forgotten materials. "The first time I taught in that classroom it wasn't dirty," she said, but "it got progressively dirty" as the semester went on. "I started going to class early and hoping there either wasn't a class before me or that it would end early so that I could have more than ten minutes to clean up." Liz goes on,

> I remember talking to the director about it and she's like, "Well, ok, we'll put in a work order to make sure someone goes and cleans it," and then that never happened. And I didn't know until the end of the semester that there was some kind of ongoing discussion about who was responsible for cleaning and how they were gonna get into a locked room because apparently what I heard was facilities was saying they couldn't get into the room because they didn't have the code. . . .

When we asked if Liz used the printers in the nook, or closet space in 307, she mentioned that at first she did, but after time passed, she was uncertain who would restock the toner or paper. The machines then were ultimately left unused. This lack of maintenance is particularly disappointing given the artifact Shannon found upon visiting 307. She found a notebook in the 307 closet that day that was originally designed for teachers to make maintenance requests for the room.

The binder included official forms that teachers could fill out to file a maintenance request. The binder's cover mentions names of employees who no longer work at the university. This artifact, more than any other, suggests the importance of local history and how we may learn from it. Liz mentions that she does not remember a maintenance notebook, and neither does Nate. When Shannon opened the binder, no one had marked in it at all. Nate does remember constantly emailing facilities at the time and hypothesizes that the binder was a "band-aid" for the numerous problems that kept plaguing the room.

The Legacy of 307

The abandoned tools (the binder, the abandoned printer) in 307 may seem insignificant to a passerby. To Shannon they indicated the power of engaging in specific "noticings" and asking questions about local history. The need to create something eye-catching and innovative on college campuses is not new, but the pause necessary to contemplate the flawed processes by which these creations take place still warrants discussion. Unearthing local histories of infrastructure leads to more responsible planning and stewardship of space. Today Room 307, which, as Nate says, was intended "to be a sparkling example of how the university was being progressive with technology," hosts a student lounge for those in the University Honors Program. The signs associated with the English department were removed; even the number 307 has been taken down. Oddly enough, the Honors Program webpage suggests that 307 has been a lounge since 2010, so the history of the short-lived media lab has been erased, although the room is still labeled 307 on the Office of Public Safety's Emergency Plan. The third floor now hosts a variety of services, from counseling to the student food pantry. To the casual visitor, the third floor represents an amalgam of good intentions, all designed to improve the life of students, yet the arrangement of these services is a random one. This area of the Center then earns the reputation of housing the "leftover" needs of the campus.

Although we often cannot control the amount of space or money available, the conversations that arise as part of renovation require some updating, particularly after the Covid-19 pandemic that challenged infrastructure and university resource pools in ways that most could not anticipate. However, many faculty are doing more than their share to help students and their institutions. Looking ahead, we might offer three suggestions for improving the ways faculty and WPAs address matters of studio making and infrastructure.

First, organizational and innovation theater are often neoliberal mirages rather than sound critical paths. They become even more so when used amongst Brutalist structures that were not originally designed to feature such studios. Organizational and innovation theater are terms used in business to describe the performance of changing a company's infrastructure without engaging in deeper changes regarding the purpose and mission of the organization (Blank). The idea of setting up a new lab may seduce some academics charged with overseeing the marketability of a certain major or line of study because labs could act as centerpieces to tours on campus for prospective students. Even as those labs become highlights of a campus tour, the belief that all who enter such labs—students and instructors alike—are literate in the advanced technologies is a tenuous claim. Consequently, these same rooms may remain unused or underused for periods of time. Not only do some faculty avoid such settings due to various reasons, but staff hired to clean the rooms are wary of maintaining the new equipment, particularly when these workers are outside hires or contractors rather than full-time employees. Lilah Burke observes that the pandemic only exacerbated such conditions when these same workers were laid off. In some cases, the more expensive the equipment bought to display, the more unlikely any staff member, especially one in a precarious position, will feel comfortable cleaning the various surfaces and furniture due to a fear of being blamed for breaking or altering the new tools. Additional security codes on doors are often needed in such cases, and such systems run the risk of impeding rather than aiding instructors in doing their jobs.

Secondly, the local and more general histories of architectural planning, design, and maintenance are necessary in considering changes to classrooms and potential lab spaces. The brief comments on Brutalism in this piece barely scratch the surface of understanding the history of campuses over time. Becoming familiar with new technology and software on computers is just the beginning of preparing to teach writing. New teachers and their mentors might also spend time learning how maintenance takes place in classrooms and how proper upkeep determines quality of learning. Most importantly, our ability to understand the spaces in which we work will better prepare us for students with a wide range of abilities and ways to move within a given institutional context.

Finally, composition leaders and administrators might consider new sources of institutional memory. Van der Ryn and Cowan have explained that "memories of those who inhabit a place provide a powerful map of its constraints and possibilities" (65). Nate, to this day, possesses over sixteen years of experience teaching and studying at our institution. He earned undergraduate and graduate degrees as well as a certificate at our university

and served as an adjunct writing instructor in the years that followed. Now he teaches composition full time on a renewable contract. Nate's perspective on this failed project now can be best summarized as one in which he recognizes that both he and the lab were resources to be used rather than cared for. As an eager graduate student, he mentions that his enthusiasm for new ideas and projects "was hijacked for someone else's purpose" ten years ago, but he now speaks fondly of his new department chair and the increased agency that results from being "left alone to teach." Those designing spaces in the future might benefit from consulting people with Nate's longevity because they have witnessed different administrators shape the campus's spaces over time. Additionally, those who employ future Nates (graduate student assistants) might benefit from articulating goals and clarifying the purpose of errands and tasks associated with this design.

Lecturers enter and inhabit more spaces on campus than any tenure-track professor due to course load. They are more than temporary resources; they are experts in how to navigate different rooms and tools. Nate witnessed how different leadership styles changed his experiences as a facilitator of these spaces. It was Nate who alerted Shannon to our institution's role as a satellite campus, one that for years was trying to establish its identity apart from the main campus, whose reputation was more established. This positionality led to what he described as the "over-eager use of resources and a lack of transparency." These noticings from Nate escaped Shannon's attention even though she has been at her place of work for nine years. Metaphorically speaking, Shannon was able to point out the trees, but Nate could see the entire forest, which is instrumental in observing our surroundings. This project was granted exempt status by Shannon's university's Institutional Review Board and Research Council[4] since both Nate and Liz are being used as experts on 307 rather than as subjects of the study. However, Nate's key role in navigating the lab's creation did warrant the use of a pseudonym, even though these events transpired almost a decade ago. His position is still precarious since he is not protected by tenure.

Under today's administrative leaders, the facilities director asserts, such problems as those once found in 307 are no longer an issue, and this development makes it easier for us to recount the mistakes of the past without encountering institutional blowback. The current facilities director explains that a new emphasis on avoiding deferred maintenance, the kind of maintenance that saves money and postpones serious repair, has become part of facilities ethos since new leadership arrived on campus. Although circumstances have improved with time, more testaments of failed or unsustainable projects like 307 would help new leaders and instructors avoid such pitfalls. Those testaments might also help create the "deep wonder" that

Bergman experienced at his institution. All campuses reveal hidden histories. We just need to know who to ask.

Notes

1. For a robust explanation of infrastructure related to digital design and hardware, see DeVoss, Cushman, and Grabill.

2. Nate is a pseudonym. Likewise, all references to building and location have been anonymized.

3. Kaitlin Clinnin has stated that WPAs might do well to learn more about crisis management, which includes preparing for "hazardous material spills, medical emergencies, and even elevator malfunctions." Additionally, Genie N. Giaimo says that it is equally important that OSHA guidelines be followed and that employers "must take steps to mitigate or remove identified hazards" even during crises like the pandemic.

4. This project was granted "exempt" status: AUM IORG #: 0005227; AUM IRB #: IRB00006286; FWA#: 00012889

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K. Shannon Howard is associate professor of English at Auburn Montgomery, where she teaches both undergraduate and graduate courses in composition. Her research examines the spaces and tools writers use in college and how such spaces are depicted in popular culture.

Clayton Sims is from Montgomery, Alabama. He earned his BA in English with a minor in Music from Auburn University at Montgomery in 2008 and an MLA in 2017. He then went on to become a composition instructor, first as an adjunct and then a full-time lecturer, in the English and Philosophy department at AUM while also pursuing a Certificate of Teaching Writing. He has since presented at the 2019 CCCC on the work AUM's Composition Program has done in implementing a new Teaching for Transfer curriculum.

Essays

WPAing as a Postpedagogical Practice

Jeremy Cushman

Abstract

This essay addresses the constructive if seemingly incompatible relationship between WPA and postpedagogy. I demonstrate that while WPAs may not use the term, they grapple with the most overt postpedagogical position: namely, that whatever we might call a writing pedagogy is far too complex to be predicted or exploited (Lynch xix). Developing a relationship between the two reconfigures writing program administration as a set of ongoing and relational practices rather than a position from which to deploy strategies. What's at stake here is not what it means to be a WPA, but rather the important ways WPAing, as a set of ongoing and relational practices, becomes meaningful.

Admittedly, I've got trouble here at the start; my title is a stretch. It's not the "W" in WPA causing the trouble. Postpedagogy and WPA are both committed to writing. It's the P for Program and the A for Administration. Such words ring like devil terms for proponents of postpedagogy. For example, Victor Vitanza has long chanted, "*Programs lead to pogroms!* Therefore, Diaspora, Diaspora, Diaspora forever" (417). Vitanza casts writing as that which necessarily resists programs and, so, should never submit to administration. While attention-grabbing, "Diaspora Forever!" is an unhelpful tagline for our Council of Writing Program Administration. Postpedagogy and WPA seemingly name contradictory accounts of scholarly practice. For example, Marc Santos and Megan McIntyre write, "We hope it is apparent that postpedagogy isn't merely a discussion regarding teacher preparation, curricular development, or classroom management." They may as well write, "We hope it is apparent that postpedagogy isn't *merely* a discussion of Writing Program Administration." Or, as Sara Arroyo indicates, the acts of writing that emerge from postpedagogy cannot be planned for because it "lifts the notion of a finished curriculum from the pedagogical situation" (102). That would mean a WPA's basic concern for, say, assessment, which necessitates programmatic planning or a "finished curriculum" that could be assessed, doesn't have a meaningful place in conversations about postpedagogy. Not concretely anyway.

Still, I've laid awake for countless hours, trying to articulate for fictional colleagues the opportunities and even the useful strangeness attached to postpedagogy. To be sure, postpedagogy comes with its own set of problems, and I'll address a few of those as I go. But I'm convinced it remains deeply productive for writing teachers looking for practices that can adapt to the particularity of student writing. My quieter question—one that I lay awake trying to articulate for myself—is what postpedagogy might offer writing program administration if anything? Can approaching administration in terms of postpedagogy, including the managerial necessities the work entails (Strickland), allow for more responsive rather than calculated labor, more coordinated rather than administrative work?

Like so many writing teachers, I grapple with postpedagogy's most overt position: that whatever we might call a writing pedagogy is far too complex to be predicted or exploited (Lynch). Yes! I often feel compelled in the writing classroom to (somehow) plan for change. I try to follow bell hooks who insists that experience grounds pedagogy, which means "our strategies must constantly be changed, invented, reconceptualized" (10–11). hooks, anticipating postpedagogy, explains that an engaged pedagogy will follow from the experience or the performance of teaching. She's clear that teachers are not performers, in that our work is not spectacle. But teaching is still a performative act that "offers the space for change, invention, [and] spontaneous shifts . . . [that] consider issues of reciprocity" (11). Like hooks, advocates of postpedagogy promote the unpredictable writing acts that emerge from and with the practice of writing and teaching writing, not the other way around. Postpedagogy asks writing teachers to craft encounters for students rather than plan predictive rubrics and outcomes because writing situations are just too particular. The best writing teachers can do (should do?), Paul Lynch says, is "fashion a method of making ourselves susceptible to that particularity" (58).

Fashioning a method for change, reciprocity, and particularity in the classroom is one thing; administering for it is quite another. But I am hardly alone in asking about postpedagogy and writing program administration. WPAs may never use the term, but they often reflect a kind of postpedagogical practice in their scholarship. And what I keep learning from these WPAs is that if we can approach our WPAing in more explicitly postpedagogical terms, then, to return to my quiet question, yes, we can, at least tentatively, articulate and grow a moving and morphing set of WPA practices that are responsive and accommodating rather than predictive and strategic, and that are necessarily sustained by change.

My answer remains only a tentative yes because postpedagogy cannot offer WPAs concrete ways for differently occupying our institutionally

given positions. We cannot be a postpedagogy WPA in the same way we can be, for example, a feminist WPA. To be reductive, being a feminist WPA means incorporating principles like collaboration, intersectionality, distributed leadership, and the affirmation of affect and emotion into our given positions. It means paying careful attention to what (and which!) feminist principles open our administrative positions up to something other than traditional leadership strategies (LaFrance and Wardle 19–21). Linda Adler-Kassner has long demonstrated that developing and incorporating principles into our WPA position is critical work, and I do my best to address such work below. But postpedagogy, at least for the WPA, cannot function as a set of principles that frame our position. Instead, postpedagogy reframes our principles again and again by continually opening us up to our own practices. In other words, principles sustain our position while postpedagogy helps WPAs make explicit those more tacit practices that disclose the very position of WPA in the first place. In that way, postpedagogy helps WPAs resist what Willie James Jennings calls the tacitly designed, masculine principle in higher ed of the "self-sufficient man—one who is self-directed . . . who recognizes his own power and uses it wisely, one bound in courage, moral vision . . . and not given to extremes of desire or anger" (31). The thing is, regardless of one's gender identification, this principle of the "self-sufficient man" remains a compelling framework for WPAs, even while our practices—our actual WPAing—continually and productively unravel such a WPA-centric approach. And postpedagogy helps us foreground those practices rather than our position.

Admittedly, approaching writing program administration as a postpedagogical practice rather than a position can seemingly leave us WPAs with exactly nothing to do. That's because, as Laura Micciche writes, "while the WPA whose actions have traceable effects back to her and her alone might be an anachronism in the context of current theories of agency . . . this possessive, linear model of agency is alive and well in the world of administration" ("For Slow" 74). This anachronistic WPA is alive and well because something like an administrative practice isn't as readily available as, for example, a medical practice or a yoga practice. At least I've never explained that I *have* an administrative practice when I can seem far less odd by simply saying that I *am* a WPA. That's one reason Diana George's famous metaphor of the sole WPA as a plate twirler remains terribly powerful. We are all always "trying to sustain the illusion of perpetual motion, worried over how to end the show without losing control" (xi). The metaphor centers what feminist scholars critique as the "WPA-centric model of work, which [like Jennings' self-sufficient man] envisions the ideal WPA as one who maintains centralized power over the writing program" (Micciche,

"More than a Feeling," 441). Even more to the point, Sherri Craig collects in one sentence nearly every metaphor from the predominantly white narratives that continue to characterize our position: "WPAs are resilient accidental basement dwelling boat rocking fathers in an army of one" (19). Again and again, we first articulate what the WPA is (role/position) before focusing attention on WPAing (practices/responses). So rarely do we articulate a more relational, accommodating, and, I would say, postpedagogical approach to what makes our WPA position meaningful.

To approach WPAing as a postpedagogical practice rather than an assigned institutional position from which to deploy strategies, I trace some of postpedagogy's longstanding arguments. I am by no means the first to do so, but rarely, if at all, have WPAs tracked down and then connected up a postpedagogical approach to the situational work in which we constantly engage. So, I try to do just that. I then explain how I approach the complex notion of practice as far more than an instrumental activity. Finally, I foreground and explore a few examples of the postpedagogical practices in which WPAs already engage. What's at stake here is not what it means to be a WPA, but rather the important ways WPAing, as an intense practical involvement, or as a set of ongoing and relational practices, becomes meaningful.

The Back-and-Forth of Postpedagogy

Marc C. Santos and Mark H. Leahy describe postpedagogy as "giving up (school's) control of writing" (86). Following Vitanza, they claim "an instructor cannot presume that there is one proper writing to teach but must acknowledge that writing gathers together a diversity of practices we must accommodate" (86). So, while they might want to lose control of writing, they still offer writing instructors and, I think, WPAs something to do. We accommodate whatever shows up in the writing act. Accommodating a writing act aligns with Thomas Rickert's account of postpedagogy as that which marks an engagement with those unique writing acts or surprises that indicate a failure of control (172). For Rickert there is no "glittering pedagogical prize achieved by means of good theories devoted to just ends" (173). Instead, a unique writing act cannot be orchestrated in advance, only recognized and accommodated. Planning for what we want to get out of student writing (e.g., our "glittering pedagogical prize") controls and, so, stifles the unplanned, even accidental possibilities of student writing. A postpedagogy, Rickert says, privileges the kind of student writing that "can erupt anywhere, out of any circumstance" (172).

As an example, Rickert (along with nearly everyone else engaged in postpedagogy) revisits Quentin Pierce's paper, a student paper David Bartholomae dwells on in "The Tidy House: Basic Writing in The American Curriculum." Quentin's paper is cynical, strange. It contains lines like, "The stories in the books are meanless [sic] stories and I will not elaborate on them. This paper is meanless [sic], just like the book, But, I know the paper will not make it. STOP" (qtd. in Bartholomae 6). And it ends with the rather hopeless, "I don't care. I don't care. about man and good and evil I don't care about this shit fuck this shit . . . . Thank you very much. I lose again" (6). Bartholomae admits he "knew enough to know the paper was, in a sense, a very skillful performance in words" (6). But he ignored it, choosing to file it away in a desk drawer for 18 years! Rickert argues that the paper haunts Bartholomae and, to some degree, composition pedagogy for multiple reasons. Chief among them is that it neither transgresses nor affirms Bartholomae's pedagogy. It's a unique, if troubling, writing act (Rickert 191–92). Rickert's point in revisiting Quentin's paper is to make obvious that predetermined writing pedagogy too often helps writing teachers maintain the fundamental fantasy that we control what students learn (180). Why troubling such an entrenched fantasy matters is that it shields writing teachers from recognizing and accommodating inventive, unpredictable writing acts. We just file these surprises into drawers, meet them with a failing grade, or (worst of all for Quentin) demand a revision.

So, the question seems always to come in response to postpedagogy, what's a writing teacher, let alone a WPA, to do? Paul Lynch says that for postpedagogy, disrupting systemic writing pedagogy may just be project enough (58). It's enough, that is, to challenge any pedagogical imperative, which certainly includes administration, "on the grounds that it is nearly impossible to speak about teaching without being tempted by the will-to-system" (Lynch, xiv). But Lynch also argues that postpedagogy still cannot respond to what it emphasizes: namely, disruptions, surprises, and inexplicable student work. He rightly says that it is just "insupportable that we would simply do whatever and wait to see what might happen" (50). Or, far more piercingly, Lynch asks, "How do we practice recognizing worth that we have never before seen?" (98). How do we accommodate what we cannot recognize? Indeed, Lynch admits, "It is easier to insist on the bureaucratization [the WPA-centric model, the will-to-system, the position of WPA] than it is to recall the imaginative possibility that occasioned it" (99). What's more difficult, and what postpedagogy's challenge allows for, is the recognition that bureaucratization or centralized positions are a stabilizing result of imaginative, disruptive, and surprising practices that preceded any formalized pedagogy or administration. In much the same way

hooks articulated an "engaged pedagogy" (11), Lynch uses postpedagogy to promote experiences and context-dependent tactics, which he argues opens pedagogy up to the imaginative practices that always and already underlie more systemic or formalized writing pedagogy.

All that said, as a recently tenured WPA, working with a non-tenure-track Assistant WPA, I feel more than obligated to promote formalized programming from predetermined principles and plans. Promoting such programming is all the more attractive to me given that MA/MFA students with little to no classroom experience teach all of our first-year writing classes. What's more, I am writing after a U.S. president was impeached (a second time!) for inciting violence in response to losing an election. And I'm writing while a novel coronavirus continues to devastate lives and compound economic insecurity, while police keep killing Black and Brown Americans despite massive protests, while white nationalism finds its way into mainstream discourse, while environmental degradation shows no signs of slowing. The local hardships and insecurities that fall out of this national context are difficult to hold. Such a consolidated bundle of angst can obviously overwhelm both new graduate instructors and their first-year writers. So, yes, promoting formalized, even stable, programming feels like the right, maybe the only, approach to my position as WPA.

The thing is, postpedagogy has already succeeded, even when it comes to writing program administration. Again, we WPAs may not use the word, but notions of postpedagogy already serve as the ground for the differing ways we figure the work of teaching and administering writing. For example, in the 2019 *College Composition and Communication* symposium, Chris W. Gallagher explains that WPAs want to provide each student in their program with the chance to encounter, perform, and learn a set of shared competencies or standards. This is why, Gallagher says, "Recent efforts such as the 'WPA Outcomes Statement for First-Year Writing' . . . attempt to stabilize and publicize the field's theory and practice" (477). But then he admits that we struggle to defend such standardized learning outcomes in our writing programs because "the idea of a generic 'academic discourse' that students could learn in first-year composition and then apply in all their courses across the disciplines is a fiction in the first place. From this perspective, writing, like teaching, is an *irreducibly complex, situated activity to which standardization is anathema*" (477; my emphasis). Gallagher sets up this symposium so that advocates for standardization, for formalized and stable programming, participate as outliers making an antiquated case. Postpedagogy, or at least the idea that teaching writing is an "irreducibly complex, situated activity to which standardization is anathema" (477) gets

framed in this symposium as a norm. What now needs defending, it seems, is standardization.

What I hope I'm demonstrating is that postpedagogy need not be either a celebration of student transgression or a committed resistance to standardization. For me, this either/or approach obscures the ways postpedagogy foregrounds writing program administration as a practice more than a position. In fact, Steph Ceraso, Matthew Pavesich, and Jeremy Boggs use complexity theory to argue that "the strongest version of postpedagogy forwards a complex account of learning rather than a disorderly one. Even if postpedagogical theorists sometimes use language that implies chaos ("accident," for example), postpedagogy relies upon a notion of learning as a form of coordination in a complex, but not chaotic, system" (Ceraso and Pavesich). At its best, then, postpedagogy can powerfully account for the surprising experiences so many first-year writers, teachers, and WPAs have with writing, even if those surprising experiences produce and are, in turn, produced by the bureaucratizing practices WPAing requires. Taking up postpedagogy, even taking it seriously, is unquestionably more difficult for a WPA than for a writing instructor; there's just too much for which we have to plan, assess, and account. But postpedagogy does help student writers, writing teachers, and WPAs privilege the impulse to accommodate emergent writing acts that lead (again and again) to transformative practices.

Practice Makes WPA

For Casey Boyle, practice names more than working on a skill required for improving one's ability in, say, a sport or with a musical instrument (5). Practice also names more than the opposite of theoretical speculation: "That's a fine theory, but will it work in practice?" (4). These traditional approaches to practice require a predetermined goal that the practitioner is consciously working toward, even working to control. Both approaches are instrumental understandings of practice. We get a practitioner who is using a practice to accomplish an already established goal. So, we get a practitioner on one side and a practice on the other. This instrumental approach to practice separates out, for example, a point guard from a basketball game, or a cellist from a concerto. The approach certainly separates out a WPA from their writing program.

Boyle writes that "it is not that we practice a tool/object/task but that an event of practice is occurring, exercising its tendencies within [an] assemblage and developing, over time, further capacities for that assemblage" (51). More succinctly, "*Practice is the exercise of tendencies to activate greater capacities*" (5). It's a difficult formulation, to be sure. Boyle is suggesting

that as practices are repeated and as they differently accumulate, a tendency to do one thing rather than another becomes available. He uses the tendencies of water to help him get at just what he means: Any body of water tends to take "the shape of its container and spreads across surfaces and into a surface's crevices" (5). Such is water's tendency. But exercising those tendencies with heat or freezing cold can "activate new capacities" (5). The capacity of water to function as steam or ice emerges in practice, in the exercising of tendencies. And this same exercising of tendencies, or, practice, constitutes any body, "from a microbe, a human, an institution, a rainforest," (5) and I would of course add, a WPA.

Any body, then, even a WPA, is not a stable thing but rather a set of tendencies that "emerges with and through practices" (5). One of Boyle's chief tenants is that any "individual (be it a human or nonhuman) or group of individual humans is not an essential subject or object compelled to adapt to external factors, [like the kind of centralized WPA that's 'alive and well' in Micciche's description], but that individuals emerge *from* and *with* practice" (45). Practices and, so, the perceptions of possible actions that become available to the WPA (i.e., capacities) are co-constitutive. Practice makes WPA. Put another way, WPAs do not *first* encounter TAs, curricula, university mandates, computer labs, budgets (if there are any), schedules, etc. as external factors to which we need to adapt and then assign meaning. WPAs are not at all separated from these elements that already constitute a writing program; our position emerges with these elements as the program is practiced into being one way rather than another. It's why moving from a WPA position in one program to another can feel like taking on an entirely different kind of job.

Spinosa, Flores, and Dreyfus say, people and things show up for us as meaningful because we already have "familiar practices for dealing with them" (18). Such practices are often so familiar that they remain invisible in their use. To name a simple example, if we did not already have a familiar practice (i.e., exercise of a tendency) for working with a schedule, we would not encounter a schedule but rather a strange artifact that would require analysis and explanation (which, frankly, is exactly how I initially encountered program assessment). Familiar practices give our lives and our work meaning and intelligibility. But, Spinosa, Flores, and Dreyfus also argue, "the commonsense practices that make our lives intelligible [like standardization or bureaucratization] cover up the fact that everyday common sense is neither fixed nor rationally justified" (29). That which our familiar or commonsense practices disclose could emerge differently were we to practice WPAing differently. Or, as Spinosa, Flores, and Dreyfus say so well, "Our practices are designed for dealing with things, not for dealing with

practices for dealing with things" (30). WPAs understandably can seem far more attentive to the people and things our practices already disclose, including our own position as a WPA, but we rarely, if at all, attend to those disclosing practices themselves. Again, as Lynch learns from postpedagogy, "it is easier to insist on the bureaucratization [or that which is disclosed] than it is to recall the imaginative possibility [or practices] that occasioned it" in the first place (99). Postpedagogy, because of its emphasis on accommodating the surprise and change that emerges from the practice of writing, helps us better foreground our own disclosive practices and not just the things those practices already disclose.

For example, Adler-Kassner ends up foregrounding a disclosive practice when she poses three questions designed to help new WPAs articulate the principles they are bringing to the position. She asks, (1) "What kind of WPA do you want to be?," (2) "What kind of alliances do you want to build?," and (3) "What kinds of compromises are you willing to make, if any?" (396). Her questions are not profound; they're not designed to be. But they matter. (I remember taping all three to my computer monitor as I nervously geared up for the WPA position.) What Adler-Kassner wants is for WPAs to value their own principles before making decisions about their programs. So, she walks newer WPAs, like I was, through her first question, "What kind of WPA do you want to be?," by also asking whether we want to collaborate across campus and in the community or work independently? What I eventually noticed is that her second and third question folded back onto this first one. That is, whether I wanted to be the kind of WPA that collaborates or works independently didn't really matter because, according to Adler-Kassner's line of questioning, I also needed to decide what kinds of alliances I wanted to build and what compromises I would make. That means regardless of my answer to the first question about whether I wanted to be the kind of WPA that collaborates, Adler-Kassner's questions already assume that WPAs are going to be collaborative, or at least collaborative enough to make some alliances and compromises. Collaboration here is already writing program administration's tendency; it's a disclosive practice.

Like the tendency of water to take a container's shape, collaboration appears here as already co-constitutive with what writing program administration means. It's not a principle that WPAs decide whether to take up. It's not a principle we can deploy or not from our position. There is neither choice nor control here; collaboration is one practice (among many) that makes the position of WPA meaningful in the first place. Put in terms of postpedagogy, writing program administration follows from the practice of collaboration, not, as Adler-Kassner would have it, the other way around.

Better foregrounding the tendency or practice, and not the principle, of the co-constitutive relationship between collaboration and writing program administration makes a difference because, as Jennings says, an educator who wants to serve in a western educational institution too easily grows into a "quiet tyrant" who, "enamored with his own abilities, imagines the good he can do in the world and then evaluates and organizes people according to their usefulness in fulfilling his dream" (75). A "quiet tyrant" is self-sufficient, convinced of the principles he will deploy in his WPAing before he deploys them. In that way, he sees himself as separate from his WPA practice. He is first a position.

I'm aware that naming the possibility that WPAs can work as quiet tyrants risks the same kind of drama as Vitanza's claim that "Programs lead to pogroms" (417). My point here is that WPAs are habituated or exercised into their administrative position through practices like collaboration, and, so, Adler-Kassner cannot help but foreground such a necessary practice even while she is asking would-be WPAs if they want to engage in collaboration or not. The practice of collaboration is interruptive and surprising. It requires constant accommodation, not decision or control. Writing program administration as a postpedagogical practice, then, highlights the fact that Adler-Kassner's scholarship, at least in this instance, is so remarkably attuned to WPAing that what she effectively offers the would-be WPA are not principles to choose from but an ongoing occasion of practice. (Perhaps that's why I left her questions unanswered but still taped to my computer monitor.) Her questions offer possible ways of constantly reflecting on and accommodating a practice like collaboration already implicit within writing program administration

As I said at the top, we cannot be a postpedagogy WPA because postpedagogy offers us no stable position from which to take up a set of principles. But postpedagogy does better to enable us to articulate and grow the kind of practices that disclose our specific WPA position one way rather than another. And, much like Adler-Kassner's line of questioning for new WPAs, such articulations of practice are often baked into WPA scholarship. But my point is that our practices remain far too implicit when we approach them as only strategic, or as a 'how-to' adapt to the things our WPA position already discloses. Instead, we might better approach the practices that make our position meaningful as constant articulations of responsiveness and accommodation—as postpedagogical practices.

Postpedagogical Practices for Writing, Programing, Administering

In the same collection where Adler-Kassner asks us to reflect on what kind of WPA we want to be, Rita Malenczyk explains, "Writing program administration . . . grounds itself, perhaps more than any other discipline, on the rhetoric and politics of departmental and university life and structure, as well as on the lived experiences of its practitioners" (3–4). Here, writing program administration is necessarily responsive to and accommodating of the environments and experiences that emerge from the life of a program and its practitioners. So, while WPA scholarship may rarely, if ever, take up the language of postpedagogy, there does exist at least a hesitant relationship between the two. By approaching WPAing as an often already postpedagogical practice, I now hope to rearticulate or make more explicit a few existing examples of these practices that center writing, programming, and administrating.

Writing

In an admittedly lofty, but useful engagement with Whitehead's process philosophy, Marilyn Cooper reminds us that writing is an "adventure of ideas, in which one does not feel oneself to be the master of what one writes, but where writing forces one to think, to feel, and to create" (159). Writing surprises. Indeed, I cannot count how many times I've built sturdy plans for a writing project only to be caught off guard and taken in new directions while I was writing. And I know I share this experience with every writer. Who knows how many more directions my writing has suggested that I just couldn't accommodate because those suggestions never quite surfaced above my initial plans. To get at the difficulty of accommodating surprise for WPAs, at least when it concerns the writing that goes on in our programs, Matthew Heard wants WPAs to develop a "sensibility." Heard's sensibility is a "posture" that "describes readiness and adjustment rather than knowledge and belief" (40). Readiness and adjustment, of course, reflect what I've been calling a postpedagogical practice. And for Heard, sensibility is the kind of posture WPAs need as we "*feel* through our embattled engagements with writing as it moves through us and into our programs" (39). Put another way, if our position is grounded, as Malenczyk's says, on the rhetoric and politics of writing instruction in a particular institution, then WPAs "have a unique window into the scenes of conflict and contingency where writing becomes a lived habit" (Heard 39). Like practice, lived habits tend to disappear in their use. For example, I remember a colleague whispering to me during a faculty meeting tangentially related to

writing instruction, "I don't see the problem; good writing is clear, concise, and specific." While my colleague was naming a lived habit, anyone with even the tiniest bit of interest in postpedagogy (or writing studies generally) may sense the conflict and contingency embedded in such a confident and "obvious" observation. Heard's point is that WPAs are positioned right at the scene of these kinds of conflicts and contingencies that concern writing. We should be sensible to them.

Such a sensibility, Heard admits, is a difficult posture. He explains, "One of the hard realities that faces me as I work to cultivate this sensibility I have described is how difficult it is to act in ways that change the *ethos* of writing that undergirds the needs and values for writing in my local setting" (45). For example, Heard explains that when he first took on writing program administration, he used the graduate pedagogy course to welcome TAs into conversations about what counts as writing and whether writing can be taught. The TAs immediately resisted. They wanted "direction and training" (44), not complex questions about writing pedagogy that might unravel their job before it started. Heard misunderstood their resistance because he "focused on [his] vision of TAs emerging, phoenix-like, from the ashes of their old habits of thinking" about writing (44). I'm tempted to say he was working here as a "quiet tyrant." He writes that he was sensitive enough to these TAs' concern, but, and this is the big point, he struggled to be "*sensible* to the feelings of disappointment and anxiety that pushed back against the vision of writing [he] had idealized" (45). What Heard was unable to sense was that this disappointment and anxiety were not simply signs of resistance to his vision, but rather these feelings were produced by the lived habits of his institution—the rhetoric and politics of writing instruction. The TAs' disappointment and anxiety emerged from and with the practice of teaching writing. Here, Heard's sensibility needs to function not only as a posture, but more importantly as a practice, or as a different way to exercise the tendencies underlying his institutional approach to TA education.

Speaking directly in terms of postpedagogy, Ceraso and Pavesich ask writing teachers to "make sure that writing is not the only activity in a writing or rhetoric class; students should also be drawing, taking pictures, recording/editing audio and video, arranging and experimenting with materials, building, coding, and so on" (Ceraso and Pavesich). The important connection between postpedagogy and administration here is that if Heard's notion of sensibility helps us feel out different possibilities for practice (45), which I think it does, then just as Ceraso and Pavesich ask of writing teachers, WPAs too have to practice differently in order to recognize and accommodate surprise. No, we can't just "do whatever" and

see what happens. But we also can't simply introduce new content into the same practices and hope to recognize and accommodate difference. Heard wanted to change his TAs' understanding of how writing could function in his institution, but he didn't focus on his practices, his WPAing. He only introduced new conversations and questions into an already expected pedagogical practice, into a lived habit.

Perhaps instead Heard might have organized his approach to TA education around observations of design studios, chemistry experiments, or forestry research. Or, he might have asked his TAs to reverse engineer their notions of writing pedagogy by focusing exclusively on first-year writers' essays, asking how such texts might offer concrete pedagogical direction and training. One thing I've done is ask TAs to teach audio projects that emulate the kinds of writerly moves of journalistic, story-driven podcasts. Like Heard, I hoped the project would challenge our TAs to question what could count as writing in our program. Instead, I had to learn how to accommodate the surprising ways TAs began framing the work of assessing student writing around affect and issues related to the body. Their intense focus on assessment that emerged from this assignment was (by no means!) what I or my assistant WPA planned for. And it ended up suggesting a direction for our program that I found difficult to follow. Without having encountered Heard's (postpedagogical) notion of sensibility, I'm sure my initial intentions and plans would have kept me from recognizing and then accommodating such a powerful response from my TAs. As Cooper says, "In thinking about writing, the most important aspect of becoming is the way intentions, purposes, plans—and even writers themselves—do not exist prior to writing but rather emerge in the process of writing" (13). The same applies to administration: Our intentions, purposes, plans—and even our positions themselves—do not exist prior to WPAing but emerge in the process of our WPAing.

Programming

Approaching the 'P' in WPA as a postpedagogical practice might best reflect what Ceraso and Pavesich call "the assemblage of learning environments." They write that "postpedagogical thinkers understand teaching as the assemblage of learning environments rather than the linear transfer of knowledge from teacher to student. These learning environments are ecologies of spaces, bodies, objects, technologies, problems, and questions" (Ceraso and Pavesich). All our programing, be it TA education, placement, assessment, first-year writing curricula, and so on, already consist of "bodies, objects, technologies, problems, and questions" (Ceraso and Pavesich).

Writing program administration is a constant assemblage of learning environments.

For me, and I'd bet for most WPAs, assembling a learning environment entails the practical ways we try to account for how, say, the curriculum we write for the specific students in our college or university interacts with the classroom spaces assigned to us, the university writing requirements for which we are responsible, the level of experience our TAs bring to teaching, our understanding of how people learn, first-year writing scholarship, the specific history of the writing program we direct, and critically, all the labor, work, and action that emerges from our program. Assembling learning environments entails endless response and accommodation because the "bodies, objects, technologies, problems, and questions" from which our programs emerge are obviously everchanging (Ceraso and Pavesich). And what WPAs often bring to these programs is our own prior programming: That is, our own prior intentions, purposes, and plans (e.g., do we plan to collaborate or not?). Underlying a WPA's programming, then, exists our own relationships with writing scholarship, changing university initiatives, local institutions, first-year writers and their Tas, which is all to say our programs already show up as complex environments long before we get the chance to start programming, start assembling. Our job is to account for the ways we participate in and constantly assemble such environments. Rather than taking a supposed "step back" to test our program against an already established standard or goal, we can learn to recognize and accommodate what becomes available when we program otherwise, and what does that mean for how we program next year, next semester, next week, tomorrow? Such a recognition requires that we center our practices and what those practices disclose, while pushing to the margin the principles we already have for dealing with the things that have been disclosed.

A good example of the ways programming that centers principles rather than practices can cover over what becomes available is Cassie A. Wright's demonstration that, as a professional organization, CWPA overlooked, even ignored, *Students Rights to Their Own Language* (SRTOL). SRTOL is a progressive policy adopted by NCTE and CCCC in 1974. It answered the growing question "about the language habits of students who come from a wide variety of social, economic, and cultural backgrounds" by affirming "students' right to their own patterns and varieties of language" (Committee 1). While directly impacting writing programs, the policy remained absent from the pages of *WPA: Writing Program Administration* for 21 years (Wright 120). The reasons for that absence are no doubt a result of our organization's struggle to genuinely engage with race (Perryman-Clark and Craig). Wright also suggests the absence is a result of our field's early

focus on "professionalization and labor management" (121)—exactly what I've been calling our focus on the WPA *position*.

This programmatic focus on position made it awfully difficult to recognize and accommodate the possibilities of language use that emerged alongside our programming. In other words, like the emotional responses that Heard's TA education surfaced, I'm convinced SRTOL emerged with, not simply in resistance to, programming around what counts as writing. The powerful idea that students have a right to their own language within the university may indeed have been surprising, but there it was, already available to those working as WPAs. But CWPA, as an organization, struggled to accommodate it, maybe even recognize it as an available practice. That's why Wright says that, as an organization, "[C]WPA might more actively engage the implications of SRTOL with respect to program design and assessment, drawing especially on [Asao] Inoue's work as well as critical race theory, cultural rhetorics, and code switching/meshing theories, for example, to rethink communally responsible ways to affirm diverse language practices" (121). Wright is asking here for WPAs to engage in a postpedagogical practice. She's asking that we exercise our programming tendencies with differing "ecologies of spaces, bodies, objects, technologies, problems, and questions" (Ceraso and Pavesich) to better accommodate what might emerge. Wright's (postpedagogical) suggestion for CWPA not only affirms diverse language use, but it asks WPAs to work against relegating to the margins the surprises that emerge from our own programming.

It's worth recognizing that assembling learning environments rather than implementing systems from prior principles undercuts our (fantasy of) control of student writing and maybe even TAs' classroom teaching, allowing for the accommodation of writing acts, even an act as uncontrollable as SRTOL.

Administration

Micciche articulates a deceptively simple administrative practice for centering and accommodating surprise. She argues for a slow agency. Micciche argues that administration, or the design, implementation, and constant maintenance of a writing program, tends to require "big agency" ("For Slow" 76). Big agency names the position from which a sole WPA might "lead assessment initiatives, revise curriculum, hire, train, and oversee new teachers, advocate for the writing program at college and university levels, and coordinate writing initiatives across campus" (73–74). As WPAs well know, because these kinds of big administrative expectations are tethered to promotion and to how others learn to value WPA labor, there exists an

ever-pressing urgency to respond. Big agency privileges speed, it has to. WPAs hurry. That's our tendency.

Micciche's slow agency, then, is counter-intuitive, maybe aspirational (73). As I've experienced, moving slower, more deliberately can feel like it comes with too much professional cost. It also risks appearing like a kind of incrementalism that asks those seeking critical change to keep waiting. So Micciche makes a practical case for learning to document outcomes-in-progress as a strategy for meeting expectations and, critically, for welcoming as many others as possible into larger administrative initiatives (83–84). But her notion of slow agency names much more than a slower pace. It names the productive possibility of "agency as action deferred" (74), or even "suspended" (75). Deferred or suspended action, she writes, "is not necessarily a sign of powerlessness, inactivity, or dereliction of duty. On the contrary, it creates much-needed space for becoming still *and* getting places, allowing for regenerative returns" (74; my emphasis). Recognizing and then learning to accommodate regenerative returns means slowing down enough to occupy "spaces of deliberate uncertainty in hopes of achieving a renewed standpoint on a situation" (79). Purposefully occupying a space of uncertainty is just the kind of thing advocates of postpedagogy, even those as pushy as Vitanza, would welcome.

But, just like postpedagogy, slow agency is a big ask. WPAs just don't feel like we have time (or the institutional capital) to welcome uncertainty. That feeling of lack is Micciche's point. She argues that the speed at which we feel we need to operate from our big, consolidated agency too easily obscures the "conditions that make speediness necessary and normative in the first place" (79). In other words, acting from our WPA position with a sense of constant urgency is indeed a WPA's tendency—it's what our position has been practiced into.

Slow agency, on the other hand, can be a helpful practice in that it subverts what adrienne maree brown calls "masculine action culture" (61). brown says this pervasive culture is "penetrative" (61). Like Jennings' "self-sufficient male" (23) and like the big agency attributed to writing program administration, masculine action culture produces individuals whom others come to depend on to change a situation. The politics of a particular change that an administrator makes may be radical, leading to heroic and creative actions. But brown makes clear that what will be lacking is the work of "forming long-term partnerships with communities . . . [and] a sense of community ownership or engagement in the work" (61). So rather than rushing to administrate or implement (or penetrate) our programing, Micciche's slow agency asks WPAs to differently exercise this tendency toward speed by "residing longer than is comfortable in the complexity, stillness,

and fatigue of not knowing how to proceed" ("For Slow" 80). I can't write a sentence more reflective of a postpedagogical practice than that.

That said, I spent my first two years as WPA pretending I'd never read Micciche's sentence. Residing longer with the discomfort—and it is a discomfort—of not knowing how to proceed within the various assemblages that make up a writing program monkey-wrenches the illusion of a stable WPA position. It certainly has for me. But it gives WPAs the chance to slow down and accommodate not only what our (fast) practices already disclose as available and, so, go unquestioned within our programs (e.g., measurable learning outcomes, argumentative essay assignments, rubrics, etc.), but also those things that may emerge as available if our (fast) practices didn't cover them over (e.g., TA readiness, students' own language, a desperate need for a WAC initiative, etc.). Micciche admits, WPAs are not always in charge of pace, nor can they always practice something like deferred action. But, like in all these examples, what I find here is a practical attempt to recognize and accommodate what emerges from the act of our own WPAing. I find yet another example of writing program administration as a postpedagogical practice.

Conclusion

Andrea Riley-Mukavetz says, "It is easy to write joyfully about the practices that are easy and uncomplicated (are there practices that are easy and uncomplicated?), but what about the practices that scare us, challenge us, leave us with few answers or unarticulated meanings?" (546). It didn't take long after reading Riley-Mukavetz to understand, that with this essay, what I'd been doing was worrying about the complicated kinds of practices that the centralized, too often neoliberal WPA position allowed me to privilege, and how those practices stood in sharp contrasts to my attraction or even commitment to the relational power baked into writing pedagogy, and the practices that postpedagogy (sometimes inadvertently) celebrates. Orienting to writing program administration as a practice that emerges from a reciprocal and relational account of knowledge-making rather than focusing on a central WPA who works from an already established position is indeed a hard practice to write joyfully about. That is, developing a relationship between postpedagogy and administration opens our work up to something other than putting into practice theories developed elsewhere, apart from our own labor. Writing program administration might instead be the kind of ongoing and unfolding exercise that makes available new capacities for our classrooms—that opens conditions for possibility and occasions for practice that filter those possibilities into the probabilities we need to care for our programs.

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Jeremy Cushman is an associate professor and director of composition at Western Washington University. His research and teaching interests focus on the history and ongoing relationship between rhetoric and Judeo-Christian traditions, on podcasting and the persuasive qualities of sound, on putting student writers to work with local non-profits, and on the often-emotional work of teaching and learning. He has published and presented on invention and storytelling in technical service workplaces like automotive shops, digital/audio production in the classroom, and religious rhetorics.

Essays

The Adoption of Contract Grading in a University Writing Program: Navigating Disruptions to Assessment Ecologies

Sarah Faye, Erika I-Tremblay, Dan Melzer, DJ Quinn, and Lisa Sperber

Abstract

While there is growing interest among WPAs in adopting contract grading, the contract grading literature is primarily focused on individual classes and teachers and offers little guidance regarding programmatic adoption. In this article, we draw on an ecological framework to discuss disruptions caused by the spread of contract grading throughout the assessment ecology of the University of California, Davis University Writing Program. We report on the results of a case study of contract adoption from the perspectives of students, teachers, and administrators at multiple levels of our program. We draw on our experiences and research to provide a heuristic for adopting contract grading at the programmatic level.

While a growing number of teachers and writing programs have adopted contract grading, most studies on contract grading focus on individual classes and teachers (Blackstock & Exton, 2014; Danielewicz & Elbow, 2009; Inoue, 2019; Litterio, 2016; Medina & Walker, 2018; Potts, 2010; Reichert, 2003; Shor, 2009). This focus on individual classrooms is reflected in Cowan's (2020) review of the contract grading literature, which does not mention programmatic issues, although two articles in the special issues of *Journal of Writing Assessment* in which Cowan's article appears do touch on programmatic issues in adopting contract grading. Tinoco et al. (2020) consider the impact of grading contracts on the assessment ecology of a department, and Stuckey, Erdem, and Waggoner (2020) survey students and faculty regarding the switch to contract grading in an online first-year composition program. These articles begin to explore programmatic issues in contract grading adoption, but they do not offer systematic guidance for WPAs who are navigating the disruptions contract grading can bring to a department or program's assessment ecology. Most prior research on contract grading centers on the student experience, including a focus on writing processes and on issues of equity in grading (Danielewicz

& Elbow, 2009; Inoue, 2015; Litterio, 2016), often absent the experience of others in the ecology. While there has been some focus on increased transparency in grading with the adoption of contracts (Danielewicz & Elbow, 2009; Reichert, 2003) and the unexpected complications contracts can instigate (Carillo, 2021; Craig, 2021, Inman & Powell, 2018; Kryger & Zimmerman, 2020), the wider impact of contract grading on a writing program is less studied.

In this article, we apply an ecological perspective to respond to the call from Albracht et al. (2019) for "more robust inquiry around contract grading in department meetings, teaching, research, and writing more broadly" (p. 149). We—Dan, as the director of first-year composition; DJ, as a graduate student at the time of study and now a lecturer; and Lisa, Sarah, and Erika as lecturers in the program—present a case study of the University of California, Davis University Writing Program that includes interviews with teachers and administrators and student surveys as well as our own perspectives as faculty in the ecosystem. An ecological perspective helps us examine our complex writing program, which encompasses sheltered multilingual writing classes, entry-level writing, first-year composition, and upper division writing in the professions and disciplines. We focus on the ways contract grading spread, and the results of that spread in terms of attention to assessment, exposing assessment misalignments, and a resulting amplification of tensions surrounding assessment. We offer a heuristic for writing program administrators adopting contract grading in their programs to aid them in preparing for and navigating potential disruptions to the assessment ecology caused by the introduction of contract grading.

Theoretical Framework and Methodology

An ecological framework allows us to consider a network of connections that move beyond our individual courses and positions in the program to capture the complexity of how contract grading moved through and impacted our program. We build on Inoue's (2015) seven ecological elements: "power, parts, purposes, people, processes, products, and places" (p. 10–11). While he uses this framework to describe contract grading in the classroom, we adopt it to contextualize our research site. Specifically, we observe how the ecological people or the actors—students, faculty, and administrators—interact with one another within the ecological place of our program. The ecological framework makes visible the ecological process in which the ecological people as "organism[s]-in-[their]-environment" (Bateson, 1987, p. 457) interact with one another using different ecological products of assessment, including different outcomes and rubrics, to

eventually spread contract grading across our program. Those ecological processes are driven by different ecological purposes, which are largely influenced by our program's grading standards—the ecological parts, which are defined by Inoue (2015) as "artifacts, documents, and codes that regulate and embody writing" (p. 125). While the ecological parts may embody the beliefs of the program, the ecological products serve as instruments to practice those beliefs. Our study also displays how ecological power, which is "consciously constructed and manipulated" (p. 122) by the ecological people, manifests in misalignments and tensions regarding assessment within the program.

While Inoue's (2015) framework provides language to discuss our research site, we draw from a broader ecological perspective as a lens to discuss how contract grading spread within different areas of our program. Reiff, Bawarshi, Ballif, and Weisser (2015) state in their introduction to *Ecologies of Writing Programs*, "An ecological perspective shifts the emphasis away from the individual unit, node, or entity, focusing instead on the network itself as the locus of meaning" (p. 6). An individual actor, as an organism-in-its-environment, functions within "environmental structures that both powerfully constrain and also enable what [actors] are able to think, feel, and write [and do]" (Syverson, 1999, p. 9). In our contract grading adoption experience, feedback—the "flow of information between organisms and between organisms and their environment" (Fleckenstein, Spinuzzi, Rickly, & Papper, 2008, p. 396)—played a critical role.

Data collection took place in the spring and summer of 2019. We first received IRB exempt status from our institution and then administered a student survey via email (n=77).[1] The survey asked student participants to describe the type of grading contract they encountered and asked whether the contract affected their attitudes towards writing and their relationships with their instructor. In order to give voices to the actors in the ecology most directly impacted by the implementation of contract systems of grading and to triangulate the initial survey data, ten students chosen from a variety of courses in the program were selected from a pool of survey respondents who indicated they were willing to be interviewed. To reduce bias, we did not interview our own students. Because of the voluntary nature of our sampling and our limited sample size, our findings are not generalizable to the entire student population. Rather, our research is descriptive of our students' experiences, as well as the experiences of our program's teachers and administrators. An invitation to participate in the study was sent to faculty who used contract grading, and we interviewed six faculty who teach courses across our program. We also interviewed five

WPAs from different parts of the program, none of whom used contract grading themselves at the time of the study.

Table 1
Overview of the University Writing Program

	Staffing	Administration	Student Population	Assessment
English for Multilingual Students	Lecturers with TESOL training	Lecturer director, lecturer assistant director, and graduate student assistant to the director	-First year or graduate -Primarily international -Broad range of English fluency	-Shared learning outcomes -Shared curriculum -Shared portfolio assessment rubric
Entry-Level Writing Requirement	Lecturers and some graduate students	Tenure-line director, lecturer assistant director, and graduate student assistant to the director	-First year -Primarily international and first generation	-Shared learning outcomes -Shared curriculum -Mix of traditional and portfolio assessment
First-Year Composition	Primarily graduate students	Tenure-line director, lecturer assistant director, and graduate student assistant to the director	-Primarily first year and sophomore -Approximately 25% international	-Shared learning outcomes -Shared portfolio assessment rubric -Portfolio norming session each fall -Contract grading
Upper Division	Lecturers and some tenure-line faculty	Tenure-line director and lecturer assistant directors	Broad range of students: -transfer -international -first generation -underprepared -high achieving	-Separate learning objectives for each course type -Programmatic rubric of grading standards used by some teachers -Customized rubrics used by many teachers -Contract grading used by a growing number of teachers

The University Writing Program is an independent writing program at an R1 university with a STEM focus whose student population has become much more diverse in recent years. Currently 79% of our first-year students are students of color (University of California, Davis Information Center). The university also enrolls a high proportion of first-generation college students: 41% of first-year students are first-generation students as are 52% of transfer students (University of California *2018 Annual Accountability Report*). As a public university, University of California, Davis has a 2:1 ratio between students who enter as first-year students and students who transfer from community colleges.

The University Writing Program houses instruction of first-year composition and upper- division writing, as well as the entry-level writing requirement and the English for multilingual students programs. While there is overlap, the faculty, students, curriculum, and assessment in these four sites within the departmental ecology can differ considerably. Table 1 outlines the faculty staffing, administrative team composition, core student populations, and predominant modes of assessments in each of the four sites at the time we conducted our research.

As table 1 illustrates, each program housed in the University Writing Program is represented by a writing program administrator who oversees curricula and assessment practices. In the entry-level writing and first-year composition programs the assistant directors are tenure-line faculty who oversee shared curricula and assessment practice. The English for multilingual students program also has shared curricula and assessment practices, but it is typically overseen by lecturers. In the upper division, assistant directors have typically been lecturers, mentoring faculty but not overseeing curriculum and assessment, which are individual to instructors, rather than shared programmatically. Once introduced, contract grading rapidly spread throughout our assessment ecology. Figure 1 outlines a model of the impact contract grading may have on an assessment ecology. The processes are detailed in the following sections: The Spread of Contract Grading throughout an Assessment Ecology; Increased Attention to Assessment; and Exposing Misalignments and Amplifying Tensions.

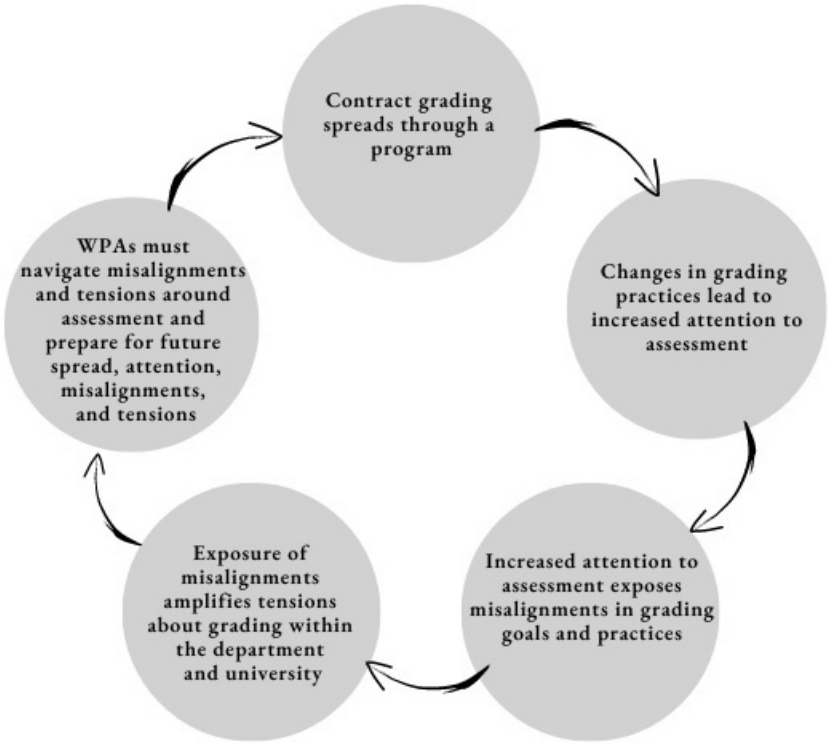

Figure 1: Model of the Impact of Contract Grading on an Assessment Ecology

The Spread of Contract Grading throughout an Assessment Ecology

Contract grading was introduced into the first-year composition assessment ecology through a pilot by DJ. Figure 2 outlines the spread of contract grading in the first-year composition program, using Inoue's (2015) assessment ecology to explain how those elements interacted with one another.

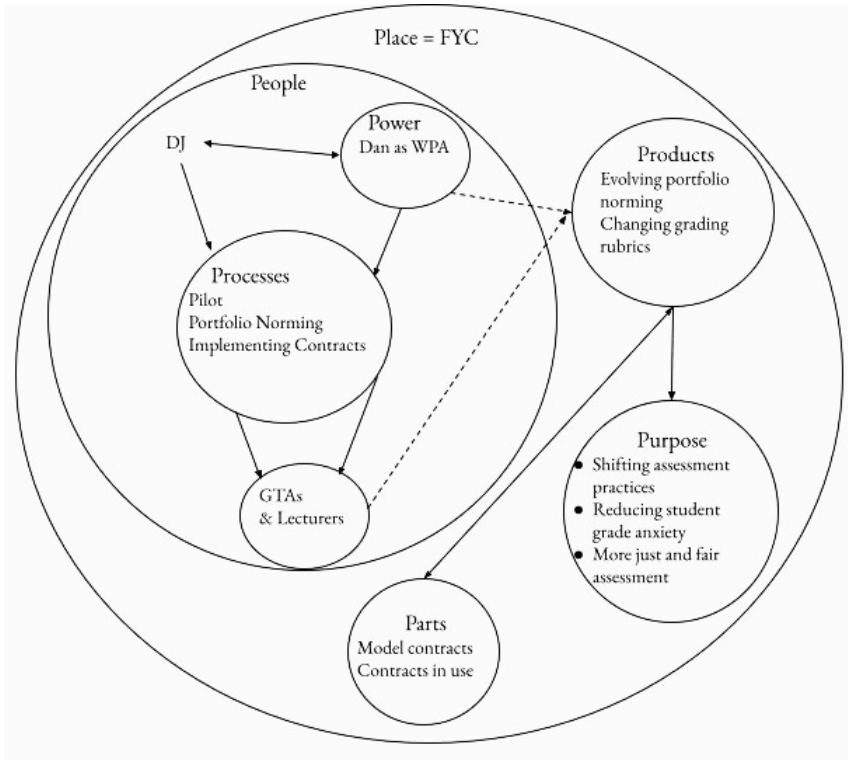

Figure 2: Map of the Initial Spread of Contract Grading in First-Year Composition

After DJ presented the results of his pilot to the other graduate teaching assistants (GTAs), Dan was surprised by how quickly the use of contract grading spread among first-year composition teachers. Most GTAs have little teaching experience, and their inexperience as teachers, together with their status as students, seemed to facilitate a spirit of experimentation. Lacking both the long-established assessment practices and high-stakes personnel evaluations of lecturers, the GTAs embraced contract grading as aligning with their developing pedagogical philosophies. One GTA we interviewed, David, told us that "the [first-year composition] program culture is generally supportive of contract grading, which makes it feel safer to choose that route—that is, safer than it would feel if one were *only* contending with the overall institutional culture." A feedback loop quickly amplified contract grading through the close-knit network of graduate students teaching first-year composition. Only a year after DJ's pilot, the majority of GTAs were using contract grading, and currently contracts are the default method of assessment in first-year composition.

David also mentioned that adopting contract grading "is made easier still by the fact that the [first-year composition] program shares templates and talks about contract grading in our pedagogy training—we don't need to invent a contract system from scratch." As contract grading spread, Dan developed support systems in the form of workshops, model contracts, readings about contract grading in the GTA preparation course, and integration of contract grading into regular portfolio norming sessions. Despite these faculty development efforts, the seemingly novel nature of contract grading demanded even more extensive support. As another GTA, Naiomi, told us:

> While the University Writing Program provided examples of grading contracts, I was really craving conversations with these people to understand how they were thinking through this version of assessment and how they approached it. I would have loved to sit down with 3–4 different people who used varying versions of contract grading and spend some time trying to understand how they saw their contract, how their contract evolved, and how they operationalized it.

Although first-year composition is primarily taught by GTAs, there are lecturers who traverse the first-year composition and upper-division microcontexts. Lisa and Sarah were teaching first-year composition as lecturers and helped spread contracts to the upper division. In actuality, contract grading had been used in upper division for years by a single teacher, but it did not spread until the department hosted a contract grading workshop led by this teacher and Dan, Lisa, and Sarah. This program-wide workshop on contract grading was organized by the director of the University Writing Program and this gave contracts the explicit, official support needed to inspire more upper-division teachers to adopt contract grading—especially those who had concerns that contract grading might not be supported in personnel reviews. The spread was then amplified by groups of teachers who adopted and adapted each other's materials.

The official support, however, did not translate into follow-up discussions about contract grading or programmatic discussion about assessment values and beliefs among University Writing Program faculty, as this spread caught WPAs off guard. An upper-division associate director (AD) reported in our interview that as contract grading began to spread in the upper division, at first, they felt unable to address concerns from some lecturers regarding disruptions to traditional grading practices. These traditional grading practices were based on an important ecological part—writing standards reflected in a shared grading rubric that more senior lecturers had been using. It felt to this upper-division AD that contract grading "has just sort of fallen from the sky." Another upper-division AD told us that they

had plans for future faculty development activities around assessment in order to create more programmatic coherence, but they were not sure how extensively contract grading was being used in the program, what types of contracts were being used, and exactly what impact contract grading was having on students and teachers.

Although contract grading spread rapidly from first-year composition to the upper division, it has been slower to spread to the English for multilingual students program, despite the program AD's openness to teachers experimenting with new pedagogies. However, contract grading *has* reached the English for multilingual students program, and its spread began when Erika—then assistant director of the program—learned about contract grading at the University Writing Program workshop. She understood this as an opportunity to implement contract grading in the English for multilingual students program, noting that contract grading emphasizes what the writer does, in terms of participation and effort, and she believed that the emphasis on the writer as opposed to the product would benefit her students. With the endorsement of the AD, Erika began using contract grading in the English for multilingual students program. A handful of teachers have now joined Erika in using contract grading in English for multilingual students classes, and this spread is likely to continue given the positive impacts of contract grading on international students that we discuss later in this section.

Because both hybrid and labor-based contracts were sanctioned by our program, instructors had the freedom to use the type of contract they were most comfortable with, which increased the spread of contract grading. While some faculty were interested in labor-based contracts, other faculty expressed more comfort using a Danielewicz and Elbow (2009)–style hybrid contract, which focuses on the quality of final products to determine course grades above a "B," and is therefore more similar to traditional grading. However, as the spread of contracts increased, many upper-division teachers using hybrid contracts switched to labor-based ones. We are not sure teachers would have been so invested in the process had a single contract template been thrust upon them as a new department policy.

Another factor in the spread of contract grading in the University Writing Program is the fact that both labor-based and hybrid contracts were effective in teaching different student populations. For our high-achieving, stressed out, pre-professional students, grades feel high-stakes. As a pre-med student, Jashvi is typical of this demographic. When she was introduced to contract grading, Jashvi's first thought was, "How can I get the best grade possible?" but she "really got into improving my writing rather than worrying what grade am I going to get. . . . I know it affected my process because

I was less stressed." Contracts supported students like Jashvi *and* our most vulnerable students. Guadalupe is a first-generation domestic student who was suspended from the university for low grades, damaging her self-confidence. When she returned, Guadelupe enrolled in an upper-division course using hybrid contracts and earned a "B," which "really boosted [her] perception of [her] intelligence."

For international students who must navigate the expectations of an unfamiliar academic context, contract grading may increase confidence and motivation. Tommy is an international student who described his previous writing experience as "strict," with grading based solely on the teacher's judgment. Tommy told us that he never felt confident as a writer, but "contract grading provided more motivation for [him]." For the first time in his academic career, Tommy began regularly attending office hours, and the six other international students in our survey all said that contract grading helped build a relationship with the teacher. Even though hybrid contracts have been critiqued for being aligned with traditional grading (Albracht et al., 2019), for students like Guadalupe and Tommy, any type of contract can provide essential support, helping them stay in college and stay on normative time while avoiding the damage to self-confidence that can result from academic failure.

It is important to note, however, that our students in our survey were self-selected, and that most of them had positive experiences with our contracts. Also, while we tried to hear from a variety of students in our survey and interviews, there are some voices that are missing, such as students with disabilities. Recent literature on contract grading highlights the problems that might be experienced by the less vocal and visible of our students. Carillo (2021) and Kryger and Zimmerman (2020) call attention to the inequities that can be created by labor-based contracts that put the neuronormative student at the center. As Craig (2021) points out, writing programs and instructors can easily fall into an unwarranted enthusiasm for contract grading, seeing it, incorrectly, as the answer to all of our social inequities. Additionally, Inman and Powell (2018) warn that grades have an important affective weight for students that might be disrupted by contracts. While the focus of our article is the spread of contracts in a writing program, we need to proceed with caution when claiming their benefits for all our students. As Carillo (2021) warns, the success of our contracts as creators of change ultimately comes from contracts that are designed with equity and engagement in mind.

Increased Attention to Assessment

As contract grading spread throughout the University Writing Program, two ecological processes, increased transparency and increased attention to assessment, had clear and unexpected impacts, including increased teacher reflection on the significance of grades and growing student attention to how their writing was assessed and for what purpose.

As a new form of assessment, contract grading disrupted GTAs' grading practices from their prior schooling and forced them to reconsider the nature of grades, traditional values about grading, and the role of labor in assessment. GTAs Naiomi and David both said that contract grading occasioned greater reflection on assessment practices. Naiomi said, "Contract grading has made me consider my beliefs about grading." David said contract grading has "made me think a lot about what I mean when I give a student a grade" and "challenged me to think more critically about my own practices, not only with assessment . . . but made me think about what my goals as an instructor are, what my goals for my students are, and how best to achieve those."

As first-year composition teachers moved towards assessing labor in lieu of departmental standards of language use, teachers like Naiomi struggled with how to assess that labor, becoming more reflective about grading in the process. As Naiomi said,

> I've had to really revise my own contract continually to think about—what does it actually mean? How many drafts are enough drafts or what does it even mean to have enough drafts? I'm still really working on that . . . no one seems to have the exact answer.

In first-year composition, the adoption of contract grading became a form of faculty development in and of itself as GTAs became more reflective about their assessment beliefs and values. GTAs felt that implementing contract grading forced them to reckon with received assessment practices, and to be more critical of how grades were and could be determined. Their increased attention to assessment encouraged Dan to focus more on assessment in the GTA preparation courses. In this way, contract grading caused Dan to implement more professional development while it also acted as a mechanism to reveal internal misalignments between individual teachers' grading practices and values. Even experienced teachers in upper division said that they found in implementing contracts an opportunity to better align their assessment practices with their values, continually refining their contracts to meet the needs of their students and better reflect their pedagogical goals.

Students, too, described a change in their attention to assessment after contract grading, but it might be more apt to describe the change in student attention to assessment as increasingly critical: the quantity of student attention to assessment may not be affected by contract grading, but the quality of that attention seems to be, as students who have experience in contract-graded classes are, as one student said, "thinking about grading in a conscious, deliberate way." According to student, teacher, and administrator conversations, student attention to assessment seems to shift from a focus on grades as an end in themselves to a focus on "fairness" and "improving my writing." Students noted that "contract grading opened [them] up to the prejudice behind" traditional grades, and they described contracts as "more fair." For example, Ana, a high-achieving student accustomed to earning A's in her writing classes, explicitly discussed the connection between linguistic privilege and grades. Ana described how her roommate took a traditionally-graded writing class and failed three times, despite working hard and improving each time. According to Ana, traditional grades in her classes privilege "English native speakers who went to a middle-class high school in the middle-class neighborhood," who "write an essay that is grammatically correct but what they write is bogus or they wrote in a week, but they still get a B or something," while students like her roommate, who lack that linguistic privilege, can work "five times as hard" and still not pass. Ana's experience illustrates students' increasing critical attention to systems of assessment.

On the administrative level, WPAs in the program noted that the spread of contract grading brought increased attention to assessment practices in a number of ways. An upper- division AD noted that the program lacked "a clear set of values," and this lack of shared values could potentially lead to "widely different experiences" across courses at the same level. The upper-division AD did not feel that contract grading "increased the problem" of inconsistent assessment, but rather "made the problem more visible" because of a "value-driven system," which has the potential to shift the focus of what we assess and how we assess it.

Administratively, then, the introduction of contract grading and the conversations that ensued revealed existing issues that had been less visible. "The problem," an upper-division AD said, "is a lack of a centrally articulated set of values . . . contract grading has made this very clear." Contract grading has caused conversations about assessment and values that had not been happening previously. While WPAs noted that, "we can't escape grades, especially in this system" (a sentiment echoed by students interviewed), they also noted that contracts of all types encourage "active discussion about grading and evaluation." Thus, the increased attention leads to students questioning

the kinds of assessment that best support their growth as writers and to teachers exploring assessment types that align with their values.

According to administrators in the program, most formal conversations about assessment and values in the University Writing Program happen in the context of the Personnel Committee, an important ecological place. The Personnel Committee is an infrastructure, thus the place that evaluates teacher performance and makes decisions about retention. In the past this committee focused heavily on whether or not "grades were too high," and while this focus changed well before contract grading was introduced, this focus seems to have left in place a cultural concern for rigor. Changes in the culture of the University Writing Program, which WPAs note had been happening slowly, have been further put into relief by the spread of contract grading, and have encouraged the Personnel Committee to attend differently to assessment, and to ask questions about grades, grading, and values that had previously been unspoken.

When contracts began to spread through our writing program ecology, they forced a conversation about assessment culture. What are the ecological purposes of our grading standards? Do we need to revisit the policies and products of teacher evaluations? Is it fair to students that some classes use traditional grading while others use contracts? These conversations forced University Writing Program WPAs to consider a variety of factors as contract grading spread, including teachers' philosophies and prior assessment beliefs, department assessment culture, level of consensus around assessment, professional development needed to prepare for contract grading, protection for teachers within review processes, and consistency across courses.

Exposing Misalignments and Amplifying Tensions

Our case study reveals the ways that the adoption of contract grading can expose and amplify tensions in an assessment ecology that is not prepared for contracts. However, even a deliberate and programmatic adoption of contract grading in an assessment ecology that does have shared values and regular faculty development for assessment was disruptive and exposed assessment misalignments, as our experiences in first-year composition illustrate.

Assessment misalignments in the first-year composition program were exposed during quarterly portfolio norming sessions. Most of the first-year composition teachers had adopted labor-based contracts, but the portfolio norming was focused on discussing students' final drafts and not their labor. The first-year composition portfolio rubric did emphasize process and

growth, and there was some evidence of labor in students' portfolio reflection essays; however, Dan found it difficult to facilitate a discussion of labor when so much of the assessment artifacts shared in the norming were final drafts. In addition, Dan struggled with the tensions between norming to a programmatic portfolio assessment rubric and his support of Inoue's (2019) community-based contract grading approach, in which course goals and assessment criteria are developed collaboratively with students. The programmatic adoption of contract grading caused Dan to confront a number of questions regarding ecological purposes that are relevant to WPAs in any type of program: What is the value of a shared grading rubric when all teachers are using contract grading? What is the point of a portfolio norming session when the focus of assessment has shifted from the products in the portfolio to student labor? And how will the program maintain shared faculty development around assessment when rubrics and norming sessions no longer seem relevant?

In the last decade, the University Writing Program has rapidly expanded, and with an influx of new faculty, both tenure-line and non-tenure-line, came new beliefs and practices, sometimes misaligning with established norms. Contract grading exposed those misalignments. An upper division AD voiced concerns about program cohesion, describing the program as having "ill-defined values when it comes to writing assessment and grading," for example, "some faculty very much value clear, correct writing . . . whereas others focus more on . . . global issues." Contract grading also amplified differences in our assessment beliefs. As another upper division AD put it, contract grading "really throws [our differences] into sharp relief" and has created tension: "I've been approached by people who are more skeptical of, or in some cases, hostile to contract grading."

Contract grading also exposed misalignments between teaching practices and personnel review procedures. For some teachers, adopting labor-based contracts feels like a risky choice because personnel review in the upper division is conducted by a committee that could include people aligned with more traditional grading standards or who lack experience with contract grading. Compared to hybrid contracts, labor-based contracts present a particular vulnerability, since final grades are not based on traditional grading standards. A newer non-tenure-line faculty member, Isabella, chose to adopt hybrid contracts "to teach with more of a civically engaged social justice-minded advocacy pedagogy." However, she realized that a hybrid contract is not "in line with my pedagogy." Isabella wanted to use a labor-based contract, but she felt concerned by how her materials might be evaluated: "I'm still in a vulnerable position because I don't have my continuing lecturer status yet. . . . I do think there's a division in our program

right now that we are not approaching a conversation about of what do we value in teaching." For teachers like Isabella, using labor-based contracts meant abandoning traditional grading standards and potentially moving in a different direction from the rest of the program. Assessment standards can be a hot button issue: a few of the faculty we interviewed asked us not to include in this article the discussions we had with them around issues of misalignment and tension.

From the Spread to Increased Attention to Amplifying Tensions: Where Do We Go from Here?

The previous sections outlined how contract grading was introduced to and impacted the assessment ecology of our program. We learned that even an intentional and carefully piloted implementation of contract grading may overwhelm a WPA with rapid spread. Even an assessment ecology such as first-year composition that offered extensive faculty development for grading prior to the introduction of contracts may not be fully prepared for the level of support teachers need as they shift their assessment paradigm and adopt an entirely new system of grading. As Reiff, Bawarshi, Ballif, and Weisser (2015) emphasize, writing program ecologies are "emergent" and create new structures and evolve as the actors in the ecology engage in new behaviors (p. 9)—and this includes new assessment approaches. Further, we learned that contract grading has the potential to spread even to areas of a program where the ties to teachers adopting contract grading are weak. In first-year composition, contract grading was implemented programmatically, but spread occurred in parts of an assessment ecology that were not intending to introduce contracts and may be less welcoming to the contract grading approach.

In this context, introducing both hybrid and labor-based contracts to faculty considering contract grading was key—many upper-division teachers who currently use contract grading found hybrid contracts to be a useful transitional tool. Although the freedom to use different types of contacts may have played a role in teachers' adoption of the grading system, interestingly, students responded very similarly to both hybrid and labor-based contracts, and this was true for both upper-division and first-year composition students. When asked to identify benefits of contract grading, students independently identified five major benefits previously reported in the published literature:

- 40% of our students described reduced stress and anxiety, a benefit discussed in Blackstock & Exton (2014)
- 18% indicated taking more risks, a benefit discussed in Inoue (2014)

- 15% reported an increased focus on process, a benefit discussed in Danielewicz & Elbow (2009) and Litterio (2016)
- 15% noted increased grade transparency, a benefit discussed in Reichert (2003)
- 9% felt that contracts improve student-teacher relationships, a benefit discussed in Moreno-Lopez (2005) and Reichert (2003).

However, our survey results differ from prior literature in that they include different types of contracts, demonstrating that these results were experienced by students regardless of contract type.

Preparing for and Navigating the Disruptions Brought by Contract Grading

Although we have described the spread of contract grading in one particular program, many of the issues we experienced regarding the spread of contracts will resonate with WPAs regardless of their program type: the value of piloting contract grading and building in structures that will help support faculty as contracts spread, the ways contract adoption multiplies rapidly in a tight-knit community of teachers, and the likelihood that contracts will eventually spread even to parts of a writing program that are siloed.

WPAs can expect that along with the potential for rapid spread, contract grading as a novel and potentially disruptive form of assessment is likely to bring increased attention to assessment for all of the actors in the ecology: students, teachers, and administrators. Whether that takes the form of teachers new to contract grading having to reflect on the role of grades, student conversations about how they are being evaluated and how they want to be evaluated, or WPA conversations about the nature and goals of assessment within a program, the more the actors in the ecology bring their attention to assessment, the more rapidly and intensely those conversations seem to take place. Spread leads to awareness, which amplifies the spread.

With increased attention to assessment comes the potential for misalignments within the assessment ecology to be exposed and tensions to be amplified. As Syverson (1999) notes, complex ecologies need to be adaptive in order to respond to conflicts and misalignments and avoid stagnation (p. 4). Part of this adaptivity for WPAs is anticipating the likely impacts of contract grading and preparing for its spread. We present our heuristic for implementing contract grading as a tool for WPAs planning to adopt contracts in their program to help them prepare for and navigate the inevitable disruptions caused by the introduction of contracts. Our heuristic incorporates the interdependent factors that affect contract adoption in a writing program assessment ecology, from individual teachers' assessment beliefs,

to institutional context and values, to students' needs. Our heuristic maps onto Inoue's (2015) elements of assessment ecologies, with connections between purposes and program beliefs, parts and contract variations, processes and professional development, places and courses, people and student population, and products and ongoing assessment. Inoue's most critical element, "power," is present throughout the heuristic, with important issues for WPAs to consider regarding potential conflicts surrounding assessment beliefs, the extent to which contracts are negotiated with students, who gets to decide what types of contracts are sanctioned, and how teachers are evaluated in personnel processes when the assessment ecology is disrupted.

Heuristic for Adopting Contract Grading

Assessment Beliefs of Students, Faculty, and Administrators

- What beliefs about assessment and grading do students, faculty, and administrators currently hold? How might they be shifting?
- How do long-held beliefs and emerging beliefs shape the assessment ecology of the course/program/department?
- How do those beliefs connect to or conflict with the assumptions that underlie contract grading?
- What are the risks of using contract grading for faculty in more vulnerable positions?
- What is the mainstream assessment culture of the institution? Are there unacknowledged assessment cultures within the institution?

Contract Variations

- To what extent should the contract/s being adopted focus on processes and labor or products and quality of writing?
- To what extent should the contract/s be negotiated with students?
- To what extent should the contract/s be individualized for each student or standardized for a course/program/department?
- How does the type of contract/s being considered connect to or conflict with teachers' teaching philosophies?
- To what extent are the types of contract/s adopted by the program addressing the needs of non-traditional students, underrepresented students, and students with disabilities?
- To what extent might contracts challenge institutional exclusion or simply replicate it?

Professional Development for Faculty and Administrators

- What challenges will teachers face if contract grading is adopted? How will they adapt their teaching and help their students navigate contract grading?
- What professional development activities and resources for teachers will be needed in order to successfully adopt contract grading?
- How will teachers be protected if the assessment system is misaligned?
- Which instructors are being tasked with making the case for contract grading to students and faculty who may be resistant?

Course

- Do the course learning outcomes or grading standards conflict with the assumptions that underlie contract grading?
- How is the course positioned within the ecology of the program/department?
- How will consistency in assessment be maintained across course sections as contracts spread?

Student Population

- What are the attitudes and experiences of the student populations in regards to assessment and grading?
- How might contract grading shift student attitudes about learning and perceived roles in the classroom? How will these shifts in attitude empower or disempower students?
- How can contract grading support the specific student populations of the course/program/department?
- What challenges will the different student populations face if contract grading is adopted?
- How are the needs of neurodivergent and other marginalized students being considered in the application of the grading contracts?

Ongoing Assessment of Adoption

- What are the current ongoing assessment practices of the course/program/department?
- How might contract grading disrupt these practices?
- What are the best methods for assessing the impact of contract grading?
- What are the best methods for assessing the unintended impact grading might have on non-traditional students, underrepresented students, and students with disabilities?

- Who are the audiences for reporting the results of this assessment, and what types of data and arguments will be most persuasive to those audiences?

This heuristic is available as a figure at bit.ly/contract_grading_heuristic.

Programs that are adopting contract grading will benefit from considering the factors in the heuristic and being aware of the ways these factors are interdependent. WPAs adopting contract grading should first make sure they understand the beliefs that inform the current assessment ecology and be prepared for disruptions for students, faculty, and administrators that are likely to arise from the introduction of contract grading. When there is a lack of shared assessment beliefs, instructors who use contracts may be professionally vulnerable, putting pressure on WPAs to be aware of the assessment ecology. Negative disruptions can be mitigated by scaffolding for students and planning for faculty development and ongoing assessment. Contextual factors such as the individual course, student population, and department and institutional assessment beliefs will shape the way that contract grading is received and adopted. Programs adopting contract grading can also benefit from thinking in nuanced ways about contract types and the unintended harm contracts can create even with the best intentions.

Our research indicates that students respond positively to both labor-based and hybrid contracts and that both vulnerable and high-achieving students benefit from contracts. Contracts also support multilingual students by guiding their learning behaviors and thus increasing their self-regulation. While some student and instructor voices may not be well-represented in the current study, particularly students with disabilities, our heuristic provides a method for WPAs to consider those voices in contract-grading discussions and for future researchers to explore. Allowing teachers flexibility in contract design encourages individual instructors to be more receptive to the change, and among teachers whose philosophies aligned with contract grading, hybrid contracts were often a stepping stone to labor-based contracts. An ecological framework moves the discussions surrounding contract grading away from a focus on the individual teacher and course, shifting awareness to the broader ecology. As our study illustrates, to fully understand and manage the adoption of contract grading, the entire assessment ecology must be understood and considered. We hope our research will help broaden the focus of contract grading discussions from individual students or teachers to the departmental ecology in which students, instructors, and administrators operate.

Note

1. IRB protocol number 1401239-2

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Sarah Faye is a lecturer in the University of California, Davis University Writing Program. She is a PhD student in rhetoric and technical communication at Texas Tech University. Her research interests include contract grading and assessment, disability studies, and the history of technical communication.

Erika I-Tremblay is a first-gen, multilingual writing teacher and researcher with a background in TESOL and writing studies. Her research interests include antiracist pedagogy, assessment, and student well-being. She is a

lecturer in the University of California, Davis University Writing Program, where she teaches entry-level writing, first-year writing, and advanced composition courses.

Dan Melzer is a professor and director of first-year composition in the University of California, Davis University Writing Program. He is the author of the books *Reconstructing Response to Student Writing* (Utah State University Press, 2023) and *Assignments across the Curriculum* (Utah State University Press, 2014) and coauthor with John Bean of the book *Engaging Ideas* (Jossey-Bass, 2021) and with Michelle Cox and Jeffrey Galin of the book *Sustainable WAC* (National Council of Teachers of English, 2018).

DJ Quinn is a lecturer in the University of California, Davis University Writing Program, where he was previously a graduate student, and teaches whatever courses need coverage. His teaching and scholarly interests include contract grading, trauma-informed pedagogy, and disability and writing pedagogy.

Lisa Sperber is a lecturer in the University of California, Davis University Writing Program where she teaches professional writing. Her teaching and scholarly interests include contract grading, transfer, and WAC. She is the co-editor of *Teachers on the Edge: The WOE Interviews: 1989-2017* (Routledge, 2017). Her co-authored work on graduate writing consultations recently appeared in *Praxis*.

Review of *Standing at the Threshold: Working Through Liminality in the Composition and Rhetoric TAship*

Gabriella Wilson

Macauley, William J., Leslie R. Anglesey, Brady Edwards, Kathryn M. Lambrecht, and Phillip Lovas, editors. *Standing at the Threshold: Working Through Liminality in the Composition and Rhetoric TAship*. Utah State UP, 2021. 206 pages.

Interest in the education of graduate students in rhetoric and composition has resulted in increased scholarship, study, and publications on how the field teaches graduate students to write and teach. With publications such as Claire Lutkewitte, Juliette C. Kitchens, and Molly J. Scanlon's edited collection, *Stories of Becoming* and Cecile Badenhorst, Brittany Amell, and James Burford's edited collection, *Re-Imagining Doctoral Writing*, there's growing concern over how the field educates graduate students to prepare them to enter the field and a resurgence of interest in discussions around the education of graduate TAs and the ways graduate students embody the various roles they are expected to perform. Edited by William J. Macaulay, Leslie Anglesey, Brady Edwards, Kathryn M. Lambrecht, and Phillip Lovas, *Standing at the Threshold: Working through Liminality in the Composition and Rhetoric TAship* entered the field in 2021, raising questions about the liminal position born out of TAs' institutional role. This collection offers recommendations articulated by former and current TAs for how to approach the TA practicum in ways that are attentive to the needs of TAs. The book is important for WPAs to consider as they construct TA practica because it speaks directly to the roles and duties of those most impacted by TA practica. In turn, the collection offers ways for WPAs to approach the TA practicum and create effective and generative spaces for TAs to grapple with and negotiate liminality and the various positions they are expected to hold.

Written by (former) TAs for current TAs, this collection hopes to do two things: (1) it hopes to engage in productive questioning about the roles TAs are expected to hold and how they embody those roles and (2) it looks to create space for dialogue around how the field trains TAs in ways that address TA concerns, anxieties, and questions. Stressing the importance of TA-driven practica, the authors offer various ways of exploring the idea of

teacher communities to negotiate with the dissonances caused by the liminal position TAs occupy. Within these communities, TAs can discuss how the liminal position they occupy can be used as a tool that allows them to reframe their successes and failures in generative and productive ways. Arguing that liminality "refers to TAs working between roles and responsibilities rather than the process of crossing a threshold or accessing what is on the other side of a threshold," the collection explores how TAs negotiate their roles as teachers and graduate students primarily but also other roles that TAs take on like tutor and mentor to other TAs (4). The collection argues for sustained attention to the experience of embodying a liminal position because it allows for a focus on how TAs navigate the experience of jumping between roles, which enables TAs to reflect on the learning and development process as they encounter new knowledge about pedagogical and composition theory.

The collection focuses on four concepts defined by Macauley in the introduction. The authors hope to expand on how the field views the TA practicum by exploring who speaks, liminality, thresholds, and misinformation. Keeping in mind other scholarship on TA practica, the authors posit that the field has not included the voice of TAs enough when thinking through the rhetoric and composition TAship. To counter this deficit, the collection takes up the concept of "who speaks," arguing that the field needs to include TAs in discussions around the construction of practica. Given the collection's focused attention on how TAs occupy liminal positions and consistently jump back and forth among different roles, the collection explores threshold concepts "as repeated experiences rather than singular locations, as ongoing transformations rather than distinct exigencies" (5). The authors in the collection view liminality as a threshold concept, articulating the importance of highlighting how TAs experience liminality when considering the ways TAs construct their teaching identities. Finally, Macaulay writes that the collection will counter popular myths about TA practica and the information conveyed during the TA practica, highlighting misinformation to consider the field's misconceptions and misunderstandings regarding TA practica. The remainder of the review will turn to look at how individual chapters in the collection provide insight into various ways WPAs can approach the practica to develop TA self-efficacy and navigate liminality.

Looking to Cicero and Quintilian to define imitation and consider how mimesis informs pedagogical choices, the first chapter in the collection, written by Lew Caccia, examines what TAs transfer from previous experiences and contexts to how they approach the first-year writing classroom. Arguing for a view of imitation that functions as a generative, emulative

practice, Caccia differentiates between binary assumptions about imitation that view it as antithetical to creativity and agency, instead positing that calling attention to imitation allows TAs to negotiate how they hope to identify and locate themselves as an instructor in the classroom. Caccia contends that TA practica should view imitation on a continuum that moves between imitation and innovation through critical reflective practice that asks TAs to consider the practices they do and do no t want to emulate alongside considerations of how they reproduce ideological perspectives in the classroom. For Caccia, calling attention to what TAs emulate and why allows for a reflective consideration of how TAs wish to locate themselves in the classroom and what theories they wish to position themselves alongside. Caccia's chapter is rightfully positioned as the first chapter in the collection as it opens up space for considering where TAs draw knowledge from as they craft and construct their identities in the classroom. Using this chapter as a frame for the collection asks WPAs to consider how imitation and improvisation can be used as assets in the TA practicum to help TAs craft their teaching identity.

In the second chapter, "Multimodal Analysis and the Composition TAship," Lillian Campbell and Jaclyn Fiscus-Cannaday argue for increased attention to embodiment and performance when analyzing processes of identity negotiation in TAs. Specifically, the pair argue for different ways of using information gleaned from recorded videos of TAs while teaching to evaluate the ways they negotiate their liminal positions. This chapter provides ways to engage TAs in multimodal work that can illuminate different perspectives about how TAs construct their identity in the classroom and negotiate liminality. Campbell and Fiscus-Cannaday argue that recorded videos provide information on how TAs' embodied performances enact certain kinds of disciplinary values that demonstrate the liminality TAs negotiate. Reflecting on their study, they provide various insights into how recorded videos can be used to help TAs reflect on how they negotiate their liminal positions. The pair argue that this chapter can also help to provide ways for TAs to reflect on their self-efficacy and imitation by using the teaching videos as an analytical tool for helping TAs to reflect on their performances in the classroom.

The third chapter, "Disciplinarity, Enculturation, and Teaching Identities: How Composition and Literature TAs Respond to TA Training"' by Jennifer K. Johnson, provides WPAs with an instructive view on how literature students negotiate the liminal spaces they embody as not only TAs moving between teacher and student roles but also as literature students enculturated to different disciplinary values from those they learn through the writing TA practicum. Johnson argues that literature students,

especially given the differences between how literature and composition each approach teaching, can find it difficult and challenging to negotiate and navigate between the different disciplinary and institutional roles they are expected to fulfill. Contrasting the teacher-as-scholar model, where teachers are expected to be naturally good at teaching because of their scholarship and composition's focused attention on pedagogy, Johnson traces the tension between these different ideologies around teaching to posit that literature students may feel a stronger sense of liminality in the TA practicum because they are also negotiating between disciplinary ideologies. Given the insight Johnson gleaned from their study, they conclude their chapter by asserting the importance of drawing attention to disciplinary paradigms and how those paradigms influence the ways that instructors approach the first-year writing classroom.

With a view towards liminality as a generative and productive space for TAs to learn how to engage in critical thinking, develop an open-minded perspective, and refine creative approaches to navigating problematic situations, the authors of "The Graduate Teaching Assistant as Assistant WPA," Kylee Thacker Mauerer and Faith Matzker with Ronda Leathers Dively, explore their navigation of the liminal space between being an assistant director to the WPA, TA, and graduate student. Mauerer and Matzker argue for approaching liminality as a threshold concept, stating that they could not have progressed in their roles as assistant WPAs without navigating and negotiating between the liminal positions they held. The chapter offers advice for assistant-director (AD) WPAs and WPAs reflecting on the creation of mentee roles in TA practica. Concerned with navigating and negotiating with the power they hold, Mauerer and Matzker posit that viewing liminality as a threshold allows for consideration of the advantages and disadvantages of embodying liminal positions. Mauerer and Matzker argue that AD WPAs and those in service roles within TA practica should engage in pre-reflection before interacting with other faculty and mentees to consider what roles they should embody in a given context.

In "The Invisible TA," Rachel Donegan considers the lack of scholarship about graduate TAs' experiences with disability and accessibility to argue for a repositioning of disability. Focusing on how disabled graduate TAs navigate and negotiate with disclosure within a liminal role, Donegan considers how disclosure functions as a communicative act for graduate TAs that causes anxiety because of ableist assumptions about disabled graduate students and accommodations. While on the one hand, Donegan articulates the institutional ableism and uneven power dynamics that can occur when graduate students choose to disclose or request accommodations, Donegan also makes space to consider how graduate TAs use disclosure to

build community with their own students. Donegan ends the chapter by arguing that rhetoric and composition TA practica need to consider and engage with disability studies to enable the field and graduate TAs to better grapple with disability and access in the classroom. Donegan's chapter is especially important for WPAs because of the necessity of creating TA practica that are attentive to the needs of disabled graduate students. Additionally, given increasing mental health concerns about undergraduate students, WPAs must consider how their TA practica prepare TAs to approach disability in the first-year writing classroom.

Calling attention to feelings of imposter syndrome, especially during graduate school, Kathyrn M. Lambrecht, author of "From Imposter to 'Double Agent,'" argues that liminality and the feelings that emerge from liminal positions should be viewed as an asset. Positing that the process of learning expertise can be a "potential source of agency," Lambrecht argues that liminality and the experience of embodying a liminal position develops its own kind of expertise, efficacy, and agentive possibility (135). Lambrecht posits that instructors must pay attention to and embrace the liminal process of learning expertise because it can function as a way to better engage students as they undergo the process of learning information. In other words, graduate TAs especially should use the knowledge they glean as students to relate to their students as they also engage in the learning process and development of new knowledge. Lambrecht makes clear that we must reimagine how we approach agency in the classroom, creating more space to consider how to develop efficacy both in the TA practicum and first-year writing classroom, especially as a means of negotiating with imposter syndrome in the academy. To build this sense of efficacy, Lambrecht argues that graduate TAs must feel mastery over the content. To accomplish this, Lambrecht stipulates that the TA practicum and first-year writing classroom should consider language norms in specific discourse communities, share experiences about writing, and build community.

Like Lambrecht, in "Beyond 'Good Teacher' / 'Bad Teacher,'" Megan Schoettler and Elizabeth Saur argue that attention to building self-efficacy can be generative for aiding TAs' understanding of themselves and their role in the classroom. Paying particular attention to how graduate TAs produce either generative or disruptive framings around their teaching ability contributes to how graduate students develop a sense of self-efficacy in the classroom that demonstrably eases their comfort in the classroom. Moving beyond a binary frame that situates teachers as good or bad, Schoettler and Saur push for an affective rendering of self-efficacy in the classroom to consider how instructors approach confidence and a belief in their abilities as an instructor. Arguing that TA practica must reframe how they approach

shame, failure, and community, the authors posit the importance of building affective TA communities where TAs feel comfortable sharing both successes and failures in their classes. Like other authors in the collection, Schoettler and Sauer also emphasize the importance of self-reflection in the form of teaching journals as another way of creating space for generative framings of teacher ability, especially if these journals are read by secondary audiences who can mentor graduate TAs and attest to their efficacy. Specifically, the authors argue that WPAs who lead TA practica should also read and provide affirming and generative feedback to TAs as they navigate their first semesters of teaching to develop their self-efficacy and confidence.

In the collection's afterword, Jessica Restaino reflects on the first book she published, *First Semester: Graduate Students, Teaching Writing, and the Challenge of Middle Ground*. Crafted from her dissertation, Restaino's book explores graduate TAs and the first-year writing classroom. Restaino, like others in the collection, argues for the importance of not forgetting graduate experiences as students who embody and occupy liminal spaces, positions, and roles in the academy. Arguing for a view of this liminality as a threshold concept that graduate TAs consistently navigate and negotiate, Restaino promotes a productive and generative conception of how liminality can help graduate TAs as they move forward in their teaching and academic careers. All of the authors in the collection look to liminality as an asset and tool that graduate TAs can use to foster their development as writing instructors. The collection's focus on liminality is helpful for TAs experiencing anxiety as they navigate a liminal position, as well as for WPAs hoping to develop TA self-efficacy and agency.

Overall, readers of *WPA: Writing Program Administration* will find the collection to be helpful for its overall message around constructions of teacher identity and approaching graduate student TAs. As a former assistant director of a teaching assistant education program, the collection highlights, for me, the importance of working alongside TAs to construct effective and generative practica. Addressing concerns around engaging with the differences between TAs entering the practica from literature programs and those entering from rhetoric and composition, as well as engaging alongside debates around theory and pedagogical practice, the collection offers both TAs and WPAs insight into how liminality can be used as an asset when crafting teaching identities as a TA. WPAs should use the collection to better understand the necessity of creating spaces where TAs feel comfortable discussing feelings of shame, failure, and inadequacy. Viewing liminality as a productive space to engage TAs can help address TAs' feelings of inadequacy or a lack of confidence.

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Gabriella Wilson is a PhD student in the Composition and Cultural Rhetoric program at Syracuse University. Her writing has appeared in *Peitho*, *The Journal of Rhetoric, Professional Communication, and Globalization*; *The Journal of Multimodal Rhetorics*, and *Writers: Craft and Context*.

Review of *Writing Across Difference: Theory and Intervention*

Michelle Tram Nguyen

Daniel, James Rushing, Katie Malcolm, and Candice Rai, editors. *Writing Across Difference: Theory and Intervention*. UP of Colorado, 2022. 256 pages.

This book is the first text in composition that brings together multiple areas of studies, positionalities, and perspectives into a deeper and more comprehensive conversation on difference—a construct and modality that divides, excludes, and perpetuates inequalities yet, at the same time, opens possibilities for forging alliances and connections. At its core, the contributing authors attempt to address two main questions: How does difference—existing across social, political, institutional, and linguistic forces—function, presented, and mispresented in language, writing, pedagogy, and administrative policies? In what ways can writing and instruction help negotiate such difference and create more equitable, inclusive, and diverse classrooms? Readers of this book could walk away with not only a better understanding of how to teach writing more equitably and ethically across difference but also practical ideas and strategies for advancing the work of racial and social justice in composition studies, both in the classroom and at the programmatic level.

In my own reading, I identified three primary themes of the book: (1) the translingual strategies that can enhance the practice of writing across difference; (2) the narrative-based interventions, the invitational rhetoric and whole-self rhetoric that can promote inclusivity, accessibility, and equity; and (3) the approaches and practices that challenge many of the current orthodoxy of race, gender, class, ability, and disability.

With regard to the first theme, translingualism and translanguaging, Juan C. Guerra begins the conversation by offering an incredibly vivid narration of his own engagement with languages and issues of language identities. After nearly five decades of teaching, the author affirmed that there is no such thing as a "silver bullet" that would once and for all address the myriad challenges faced by multilingual writers and that the teaching of writing needs to build on students' "learning incomes"—the repertoire of rhetorical and literacy skills that students bring to the classroom (p. 29). Guerra then discusses a variety of approaches to writing across language

differences, including code meshing (Young, 2009), shuttling (Canagarajah, 2006), and his own transcultural repositioning (Guerra, 2004), concluding that the goal should be to find ways to help students develop "intercultural literacy," which is the ability to consciously and effectively move back and forth, among, and in and out of various discourse communities so that they can become more effective writers and communicators (p. 35).

From another angle, Iris D. Ruiz joins the conversation by sharing her literacy and academic experiences as a Chicana. She brings in the concept of *nepantla*—which, in her words, is the idea of a comfort zone in-the-between and an act of crossing the borders of languages, discourses, rules, conventions, limitations, identities, experiences, and traumas. Ruiz argues that *nepantla* is her way to resist the erasure of difference, to navigate the territories of mainstream, to practice decoloniality, and to be able to "breathe in the crossroads of contradictions" (p. 56). She further suggests employing the rhetoric of *nepantlerx* as a conceptual framework for re-knowing and de-linking from colonial teaching practices that privilege the dominant language and discourse, and by default, marginalize others and incite divisiveness.

On the second theme, how to develop and practice narrative-based interventions, invitational rhetoric, and whole-self rhetoric in ways that better promote inclusivity, accessibility and equity, Writing Across Difference provides readers with a wide variety of approaches and strategies that can be applied immediately into the practices of teaching writing across contexts and areas of study. Stephanie L. Kerschbaum, in "Exploring Discomfort Using Markers of Difference: Constructing Antiracist and Antiableist Teaching Practices," discusses the intersection and interconnection between disability studies and teachers' professional development practices. Kerschbaum shares a narrative of her own experience as a graduate teaching assistant who had a very different way of conducting class discussion compared to her colleagues. As Kerschbaum grappled with such a "marker of difference" a concept she developed referring to the rhetorical cues that signal the presence of difference between two or more interlocutors in communication—the author came to conclude that by recording, listening to, and reflecting on our own pedagogical stories, teachers of writing could further consider how these narratives present themselves, the teacher's beliefs, positions, and underlying assumptions that shape many of their teaching practices. Kerschbaum, in addition, shared a series of guiding questions encouraging practicing teachers to deeply and critically reflect on moments of discomfort and vulnerabilities in teaching. This reflective practice, according to the author, is to help teachers begin to tell their most

authentic and meaningful pedagogical stories, and furthermore, use these stories to challenge racism and ableism in their classrooms.

As related to writing instruction, James Rushing Daniel introduces a pedagogical practice rooted in the work of public writing, advocacy, and service learning. In a writing course designed for undergraduate students, he developed a service-learning component that helps connect students with local community partners. Throughout the course, his students were engaged in tutoring practice and community literacy work. They were also invited to do research and write about the history, goals and purposes, and day-to-day operation of the communities they served, using the lenses of critical theory, intersectionality, and the framework of resistance. Daniel argues that, through such ways of working with community partners and conducting in-depth analysis of inequalities, his students can grow as more effective writers, be better positioned for academic and professional work, and can contribute to long-term and more sustainable social change.

Approaching writing instruction from the perspective of restorative rhetoric, Nadya Pittendrigh asserts that restorative justice, as opposed to the conventional forensic practice, could provide a more fruitful avenue of inquiry for interrogating structural inequality. Restorative practice, as Pittendrigh believes, is also a more ethical and equitable approach to communication across difference. The author further proposes the conceptual framework of whole-self rhetoric and advocates for implementing it in the writing classroom, clarifying that this framework with its particular emphasis on "dialogue, not persuasion" and "openness to being changed" (p. 107– 108) can offer something to writing pedagogy that neither rhetorical listening nor invitational rhetoric does.

Sharing a similar approach, Shui-yin Sharon Yam offers a rich account describing how she employs invitational rhetoric (Foss & Griffin, 1995) and deep-story practice (Hochschild, 2016) to help her students, especially those from marginalized groups, write their counter-stories and engage with various social and political issues, more openly and critically. From the science writing classroom, Megan Callow and Katherine Xue introduce pedagogical practices that help writers challenge the conventional notion that the basis for difference among human groups (i.e., the constructs of race and sex) in science studies is purely biological. The authors suggest "a flipped teaching model" in which foundational scientific knowledge is presented to students via "case-based pedagogy" as an alternative to the abstract presentation with occasional, limited examples (p. 127), could provide a meaningful way for writers to engage with the broader sociopolitical and moral dimensions that have not been adequately considered in both science studies and science writing.

Expanding the conversation from classroom practices to "Institutional, Community, and Public Transformation," the rest of the book discusses theoretical and methodological frameworks for creating changes at the programmatic and institutional levels. Neil F. Simpkins, drawing on results of his research studies, asserts that disability identities are "culturally and historically contextual" (p. 142) and that many diagnostic theoretical frameworks currently used in institutions, writing programs, and writing classrooms provide "unreliable and inaccurate vocabularies" (p. 146) for describing the complexity and difference in disability studies. Simpkins calls for writing teachers and WPAs to re-examine their policies and pedagogical practices. For instance, would their course and program policies approach disability as merely a deficit? Would the program adequately consider various markers of difference concerning disability and disability identities? Would the classroom and program policies flexibly and effectively address the singularities of disability across individual students?

From another teaching context, Laura Gonzalez and Ann Shivers-McNair propose a multiperspectival approach—rather than a single theoretical framework—to redesigning teaching practices that position difference "not as a problem to solve" but "as an opportunity to seek new collaborations, understandings, and innovations" (p. 175). The scholars share their experiences developing a culturally sustaining writing program at their Hispanic-serving institution. They explain that, with three conceptual topoi (intersectionality, interdependency, and community sustainment) and the multilingual user experience (UX) initiatives, their instructional designs have worked to move away from the deficit-based model of teaching writing that treated multilinguals as in need of remediation and enculturation to the dominant discourses. Instead, their writing program has strived to (re)include, celebrate, and centralize Latinx students' histories, perspectives, and their rhetorical traditions and skills.

Building their work upon the antiracist translingual praxis, Sumyat Thu, Katie Malcolm, Candice Rai, and Anis Bawarshi posit that "translingualism conceptualizes language use an active process of *languaging* in which language by its very nature is always performative, dynamic, emergent, and relational," rather than "a monolithic, transparent, standardized tool that writers use more or less effectively depending on the assessment of readers in dominant positions of power" (p. 196). The scholars further describe the ways they translated such praxis into teaching and administrative policy. Specifically, they developed an antiracist policy that upholds the principles of antiracist pedagogy, for example, building on writing assessment practices that emphasize the writer's development process, language choices, and rhetorical effectiveness. Writing instructors in their program

actively participated in various professional development activities, such as naming and mapping instructors' teaching identities, collaboratively developing antiracist assessment and response praxis, and attending portfolio-assessment sessions. Thus, Malcolm, Rai, and Bawarshi argue that these activities could help teachers explore and reflect on their holistic and intersectional identities. The activities also provide the space and opportunities for teachers to examine various ideas and develop their own antiracist teaching practices.

Lastly, Johnathan Benda, Cherice Escobar Jones, Mya Poe, and Alison Y. L. Stephens contribute the conceptual framework of superdiversity. According to the authors, this framework helps them better describe the ever-changing and more complex characteristics of the student populations they serve. Superdiversity as a conceptual framework, furthermore, provides a lens for observing the teaching and writing at their institution, Northeastern University, and the "mobility, complexity, and unpredictability" associated with how they teach, how they research, and how they think about the landscape of their institutional context (p. 233). The scholars also share their experiences putting this framework into practice of measurement or placement of multilingual students into categories or classes. Their students in first-year composition classes, for example, were invited to consider and respond to how they are represented and "placed" in the university. In terms of coursework, their "Writing in Global Context" class uses the concept of superdiversity as a through line to help writers explore their linguistic heritage and identity, not only as an individual experience but also in connection with the linguistic landscape of their community. In essence, superdiversity could be a powerful conceptual framework for recognizing and responding to the constantly-in-flux, dynamic, and complex needs of student writers.

Reading this book from the perspective and experience of an emerging scholar in the field of rhetoric and writing studies who is also particularly interested in the work of building a more accessible, equitable, inclusive, and antiracist teaching practice, I was a bit overwhelmed yet, at the same time, appreciated the broad and diverse scope of discussion of this book. I would assume that readers with a similar background and interest could, in the same way, gain a more comprehensive understanding of what it means by "writing across difference," as the book is concerned with an array of positionalities and orientations. The broader audience, who are writing teachers, scholars, and administrators across contexts and teaching focuses, could in many ways benefit from the approaches, methods, and practical strategies the contributing authors offer for developing course design and pedagogy. Practicing teachers, for instance, could approach writing across

difference from a translingual perspective, and as Guerra suggests , find ways to help students develop their "intercultural literacy" competence. Writing scholars could also employ Ruiz's concept of *nepantla* and the rhetoric of *nepantlerx* to continue advancing the work of anticolonialism in writing studies. The conceptual frameworks of invitational rhetoric, deep-story telling, and whole-self rhetoric, could be introduced in writing classes across levels to help students engage with various social, political issues in a more open and critical manner. The practice of incorporating service-learning into a writing course, suggested by Daniel, could spark insights for many writing teachers who are seeking ideas for how to contribute to the long-term and more sustainable social change and help students better prepare for their academic and professional work. Similarly, the "intensive case-based pedagogical model" introduced by Callow and Xue could be a great reference example for writing teachers who want to help students explore the social, political, and moral dimensions of various scientific and technical constructs in science studies. The methods and strategies for telling a meaningful pedagogical story, as Kerschbaum introduces, could be adopted to help writing teachers constantly reflect on and enhance their teaching practice.

For WPAs in particular, this book offers abundant resources for innovating programmatic and institutional policies and administration. The multiperspectival approach to redesigning teaching and sustaining community, which Gonzalez and Shivers-McNair developed from the conceptual frameworks of intersectionality, interdependency, community sustainment and multilingual UX initiatives could be successfully adapted to either similar teaching contexts or beyond a Hispanic-serving institution. Many professional development activities suggested by Thu, Malcolm, Rai, and Bawarshi could be multiplied broadly to help teachers continue mapping their identities and building their own antiracist teaching praxes. WPAs should also pay attention to the complexity and singularities associated with individual disability identity, because, as Simpkins suggests, defining and categorizing disability without adequately considering the difference would greatly affect access and accessibility for student learning. The concept of superdiversity could be incredibly beneficial for WPAs to reconsider the ways international students, multilingual writers, and other student populations are described and placed in writing programs, and how it would shape placement, tutoring, and teaching practices.

From my reading experience, I have learned that working with difference is the first and foundational step to advancing the work of equity and social justice in composition studies. To this end, *Writing Across Difference* does a great job providing most necessary theories and interventions to help

writing teachers, scholars, and administrators engage more deeply in the conversation, and furthermore, begin to take actions and foster changes for their classrooms.

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Michelle Tram Nguyen is a PhD candidate in rhetoric and writing studies at Bowling Green State University in Ohio. As an international student, a multilingual writer, and a language teacher who has been working with diverse student populations, Michelle is genuinely passionate about developing classroom practices and programmatic actions that contribute to advancing equitable, accessible, and inclusive teaching of writing.

What Do New Writing Teachers Need to Know? A Review of *Teaching Mindful Writers*

Kathleen Lyons

Jackson, Brian. *Teaching Mindful Writers*. Utah State UP, 2020. 281 pages.

In *Teaching Mindful Writers*, Brian Jackson argues that effective writers are mindful writers. As a central focus of the book, Jackson models how to design learning experiences that integrate metacognition and mindfulness into first-year writing instruction. He defines mindfulness as "a purposeful, deliberate awareness of what we are doing and how we could do it better—right now, and in the future" (35). To build purposeful and deliberate awareness, Jackson proposes a four-part learning cycle to teach mindful writing: planning, practicing, revising, and reflecting. The book provides strategies and practices for new teachers to design assignments for mindfulness using the learning cycle. For WPAs, *Teaching Mindful Writers* is a helpful resource to support new writing teachers and strengthen metacognitive writing instruction more generally. Jackson's book is a suitable answer to what new writing teachers need to know. He concisely outlines complex theories and histories of writing studies while giving concrete examples for how to cultivate mindful writing and teaching habits. Jackson's book is a beneficial addition to mindful teacher development.

With a focus on mindfulness as a form of metacognition, Jackson scaffolds how to teach metacognition into six segments. In the book's opening and closing segments, "Designing Tasks for Mindful Writers" and "The Mindful Teacher," Jackson delivers important theoretical, historical, and contemporary context for readers to consider what it means to teach writing and be a writing teacher. The middle four sections of the book move through each part of Jackson's proposed mindful learning cycle. As a result, the book is organized for teachers and program administrators to engage the book repeatedly as students plan, practice, revise, and reflect. Each section and chapter offers quick entry points to find ideas, activities, and theories. This makes the book helpful for individual instructor needs, lesson planning, and larger pedagogy groups or workshops. At the beginning and end of each chapter, Jackson recaps key points and reminds readers of important takeaways. The teaching advice and templates are clear, flexible, and designed to give multiple options and opportunities for use. Teachers

can return to the text at any point to consult on strategies for a range of daily teaching tasks, such as setting goals, teaching reading, facilitating peer feedback, grading, discussing style, integrating reflection, and more.

The teacher development angle of the book offers an introduction and overview of writing theory. The beginning of the book positions rhetoric and writing as key metatheories for teaching first-year writing. Jackson argues that the content of first-year writing is writing, which is based in teaching-for-transfer (Yancey, Robertson, and Taczak) and writing-about-writing (Wardle & Downs) pedagogical approaches. This is complicated terrain and Jackson offers a way in for those just starting out in the field. Because his audience is new instructors, his synthesis of a broad field is necessarily brief and compelling. He points to other representative composition textbooks for readers to engage for supplementary support, such as Glenn and Goldthwaite's *The St. Martin's Guide to Teaching Writing.* Jackson's focus is teaching mindful writing, and he turns to heavy hitters of the handbook tradition in writing studies to support his goals. Jackson does not cite more recent developments in antiracist pedagogy, accessible writing pedagogy, and decolonial pedagogy. As readers engage with *Teaching Mindful Writers*, there is an opportunity to pair the book with texts outside the traditional canon and critically address the (un)commonplaces of teaching writing.

At the core of *Teaching Mindful Writers* Jackson delivers a self-directed learning cycle with four phases: plan, practice, revise, and reflect. These phases are discussed across the book as Jackson articulates why mindful writing is so important. For "the rookie first-year writing teacher" who Jackson is writing for, the sequence is easy to follow and even easier to put into action (4). In part two, he positions "planning" as an essential part of any learning sequence, where students assess the writing task by analyzing genre, questioning the rhetorical situation, reviewing their prior experience, acknowledging their ability to perform the task, and anticipating the value of the task. After this assessment, he encourages students to set goals. The section is filled with templates and sample activities readers can easily pick up and use quickly in their next class or unit. In part three, readers are again prompted to take action as part of the second phase of the learning cycle, "practicing." Jackson describes practice as the rhetorical action teachers and students take to learn to write. The practice section provides advice for lesson planning, daily writing activities, teaching with models, class discussion, facilitating collaborative learning, and strategies for teaching reading. Readers can look forward to concrete examples with a range of options. The practical advice in this section makes it one that WPAs and

new teachers will continue to return to as they consider learning outcomes and how to meet them.

In the final two phases of the learning cycle, Jackson pushes and pulls against two classic arguments related to style and process. For rookie instructors, who come with their own assumptions about writing, Jackson outlines the pros and cons of language-based instruction during the "revision" phase. He covers the basics on how to read and respond to student writing, as well as how to facilitate peer review. Ultimately, Jackson argues for a return to language instruction by sequencing style into the writing process. He suggests orienting students to style by developing a shared language about language. Specifically, he turns to play, revision, and reflection as ways to scaffold style into their writing process and "habituate students to style and encourage mindfulness" (218). Just as Jackson rehashes the argument to teach style, he also views his book as a response to the process pedagogy tradition. In the "reflection" phase of the book, he argues that *Teaching Mindful Writers* intervenes in process pedagogy by focusing on metacognition at various stages throughout the writing process, instead of just the drafting and revision stages. The design of the book supports this argument, as he includes reflection in every phase of the learning cycle. Ironically, part five, which is dedicated to reflection, is the shortest in the book. It is also the section readers will most frequently return to, as Jackson provides "a semester's worth of prompts for mindful writing" (231).

In the final moves of the book, Jackson turns his attention to mindful teaching. In true meta form, the conclusion highlights how to incorporate the habits and strategies from the book into a mindful teaching practice. He outlines five domains of good teaching for mindful teachers to engage. These include: (1) Taking on a learner's mindset to engage culturally responsive pedagogy, (2) Staying up to date with teaching strategies and approaches, (3) Knowing the subject matter, or understanding theories of communication, language, learning, and writing, (4) Mastering the teacher's role as a communicator, and (5) Engaging in reflection and collaboration. He spends the majority of this section on domain number one. Specifically, he advocates for a learning practice where teachers continuously attune to the cultural values reflected in writing curricula. While culturally responsive pedagogy is not a framework defined at the beginning of the book, Jackson offers a few rhetorically flexible options for readers to consider in their future work as mindful teachers. Once again Jackson suggests concrete practices, such as keeping a reflective teaching journal, writing a teaching philosophy, routinely returning to questions about what it means to be a mindful teacher, and participating in teaching communities.

For the new writing teachers reading Jackson's book, he shows readers how to be mindful academics. This is valuable for graduate students who are new to teaching and to scholarly writing. As a graduate student, I often try on different voices, styles, and approaches to writing. While reading, I learned the power of synthesis as Jackson brings together histories, theories, and critical concepts in writing studies with finesse and clarity. Additionally, graduate students often have a heavy reading load and will appreciate the way Jackson "nutshell[s] what is most important" (25). He breaks down difficult, nuanced, and oftentimes intangible topics like rhetoric, transfer, metacognition, and mindfulness into something approachable. He covers a wide range of important pedagogical information to fill in new writing teachers' knowledge about research on reading, transfer, peer review, assessment, and style. At every turn, he describes what he is doing, where the information is coming from, the relevant arguments, and why he forwards certain pedagogies, ideologies, and strategies for first-year writing. He is not hiding, but transparent about where he is coming from and where he wants to go.

Jackson's clarity and transparency is especially prominent in the boundaries he places around the book. He persuasively articulates the stakes of mindfulness in first-year writing: Writing is a social act, an iterative activity, and a task best performed mindfully. He is forceful about writing as a learning activity. The book is everything I love about writing studies. As someone in the middle of dissertation writing, I live by the mantra, "I am writing to learn." It is a mantra that keeps me writing. At the same time, the scope of *Teaching Mindful Writers* is everything I struggle with about our field. The book contributes to a canon of writing studies enmeshed in white, Western traditions. Jackson addresses his position within this tradition, but he does not necessarily push against it—this is outside his scope. He emphasizes that metacognition and writing are culturally situated and value-oriented, but the book also relies on discourses that perpetuate normative standards for "effective" or "good" writing and teaching. When we consider what new writing teachers need to know, we also have a responsibility to push outside of the Western canon. For instance, habits and the "habits of mind" construct norms for how thinking and writing happen, as well as standards that define writing and what methods are deemed effective (see Yergeau, *Authoring Autism*; Hitt, *Rhetorics of Overcoming*; Martinez, *Counterstory*; Inoue, *Antiracist Writing Assessment Ecologies*). In placing boundaries around the book, the citational practices miss recent research related to the cultural and value-laden intersections of writing and race, disability, gender, class, sexuality, and citizenship. For WPAs who assign or suggest this book to new teachers, the recommendation should be paired

with texts that disrupt norms and habits. As mentioned earlier, one pathway for this work would be exploring the trend of (un)commonplaces in writing studies.

With the book's scope in mind, Jackson puts forth a useful framework for mindfulness that readers can adapt to their own practice. This is possible because Jackson recognizes metacognition as "a universal practice with culturally specific operations and values" (39). He urges readers to make the book work for us. The practice of teaching mindful writers utilizes rhetorical flexibility, which helps us question how people learn to write and how we as teachers of writing can support that learning. As Jackson prompts me toward mindfulness, he returns me to what I love about writing as an iterative, social, and cultural activity. *Teaching Mindful Writers* encourages teachers to mold mindful writing into their teaching process through reflection and intention. The book is especially helpful for WPAs looking to give clay to teachers of first-year writing, especially those just starting out.

Throughout this review, I keep returning to the question, what do new writing teachers need to know? Jackson gives us a key ingredient: mindfulness. *Teaching Mindful Writers* is a text that is easy to follow and easy to return to for quick reference. The result is a useful pedagogical resource for writing teachers who are juggling many new ideas and practices. It is a book all WPAs should pass out to graduate students and new writing teachers. It is a book for new writing teachers to keep close by and at the top of their book stack.

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Kathleen Lyons received her PhD from the University of Delaware in May 2023. Currently, she is the chair of the Writing Program Administrators

–Graduate Organization (WPA–GO). She is also the incoming assistant director of the College Writing Program at Fairleigh Dickinson University–Florham Park.

Council of Writing Program Administrators
c/o Parlor Press
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