Towards an Integrated Graduate Student (Training Program)[1]

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Abstract: This article argues that teaching writing can help graduate students become better writers. Each year, more than 100 graduate students from more than thirty departments participate in one of two training courses offered through Cornell's John S. Knight Institute for Writing in the Disciplines. This article describes some of how these courses engage with graduate student writing practices, and what Knight Institute faculty have learned from these students about graduate student writing. The article describes specific features of the training curricula that help graduate students learn to write as academic professionals. Primary source material is drawn from writing produced by graduate students in course evaluations, assignments, or in response to surveys sent to current and former graduate students. Graduate student observations that figure prominently in this article include a focus on writing process; the connection between teaching writing and learning to be a better writer; the value of reflection; and the efficacy of building communities where writers read each other's work.

Introduction: When Teaching "Teaching Writing" means Teaching Writing

Each year, more than 100 graduate students from more than thirty departments participate in one of two training courses offered through Cornell's John S. Knight Institute for Writing in the Disciplines. Writing 7100: Teaching Writing prepares PhD students to teach in the First Year Writing Seminar program (FWS). Writing 7101: Writing in the Majors Seminar prepares PhD students to work as teaching assistants in Writing in the Majors (WIM) classes. While these classes focus on particular teaching responsibilities, our not-so-hidden curriculum supports professional development for TAs and Graduate Instructors, most of whom will (we hope) follow short teaching careers here with long, productive careers elsewhere.

This article describes some of what we in the Knight Institute have learned from these students about graduate student writing, and some of the strategies we use (within institutional constraints) to address an often neglected aspect of graduate education: learning to write as an academic professional. Teaching people about *teaching writing* means teaching people about *writing*. In both 7100 and 7101 we try to demystify the practices and processes by which writing is produced, not just for undergraduates, but for apprentice professionals who are in the process of defining themselves relative to a discipline, an identity shaped above all else by how and what they write.

Teaching as Research

Tenure expectations at the research universities that train graduate students promote a narrow vision of what it means to be an academic professional. At research universities, professors are hired and promoted based on research: everything else is secondary. This incentive system pushes people to devote their limited energy and time to developing one aspect of a professional persona while neglecting others. Ironically, even though the primacy of research overshadows other aspects of academic work, the work of producing writing—the medium through which research is produced and presented—is often assumed to be something smart graduate students just learn. One current graduate student notes: "...graduate school does not necessarily encourage students to devote much time to thinking about how we write." A recent PhD writes, "I was one of those students in the sciences who must have been expected to learn to write by osmosis." [2]

A truly integrated graduate training program would prepare graduate students to become colleagues who could fully integrate into all aspects of academic life: writing, research, teaching, and service.[3] The department-centered character of graduate education at my university ensures that our stand-alone writing program cannot aspire to be part of a fully integrated program. However, as we help graduate students prepare for their immediate assignments as writing teachers and teaching assistants, we can also help them prepare for careers as professional academic writers.

This article takes as a central premise the idea that teaching can be research into how students learn—in this case, how graduate students learn.[4] Our training programs provide self-refreshing sources of information about how graduate students learn, think, and write. To call these sources of information repositories would be inaccurate because that suggests something static, an archive into which information is deposited. In fact, the process is dynamic: participating students learn from each other, even as we learn from them.[5] When graduate students teach us something, we don't have to wait until the next course or the next year to apply it: it can become part of the teaching and learning dialectic immediately.[6] The goal of this research into graduate student learning is not to pile up stuff in archives, or to pile up publications (although we do some of both), but to improve the support we provide to our students. This process may be local—certain challenges and opportunities are unique to Cornell—but much of the information this process yields may be relevant to graduate students and graduate programs across the country or across the world.

This article draws substantially on locally produced material on the teaching of writing, including work published by long-time teachers and administrators in our program, some of which has become part of the curriculum in our training courses. Primary source material is drawn from writing produced by graduate students: some in course evaluations; some in assignments; some in response to surveys sent to current and former graduate students.

This essay should reflect the dynamic, collaborative culture of teaching and learning we try to foster in the Knight Institute. We strive to help graduate students teach each other. This goal is front and center in the course rationale for Writing 7100, which includes the following statement:

> Writing Seminars succeed when they help build communities of writers. We hope this course will help build communities of teachers. Sharing assignments with other teachers and, we hope, learning from the work colleagues produce will be among the central tasks of Writing 7100.

The importance of learning from one another is evident in the many comments graduate students make about the value of sharing their work. One current graduate student, who has taken Writing 7100 and worked as a graduate student co-facilitator for the class, writes:

> 7100 emphasizes collaboration and sharing of teaching materials, and at a certain point I began to wonder why the graduate community doesn't practice this more often and more broadly. I think it's incredibly logical and so clearly beneficial, it's almost comical how we (grad students) never share our writing with each other…. So, I've been actively encouraging my peers to share their work with me, and bugging them to read my work.[7]

Having benefitted deeply from these collaborations, I am committed to representing not only what my colleagues and I have taught to our graduate students, but what we have learned.

Following this introduction, the article is divided into two sections and a conclusion. "Writing and the Writing in the Disciplines Curriculum," describes foundational principles of the Knight program and features of the training programs that have had an impact on our graduate students' development as writers. "Voices from the Field," is built around the contributions of graduate student writers who have participated in one or more of the Knight Institute's training programs. While their voices are heard throughout the article, this section explores a few issues that emerge in these writers' reflections. The conclusion—"Learning Something Practical"—focuses on the critical importance of being a flexible and agile learner, one of the findings about graduate writing, and graduate education, this material repeatedly reinforces.

Writing and the Writing in the Disciplines Curriculum

The writing in the disciplines model enshrined in our program's full name is founded on one central premise: writing expertise cannot be fully separated from disciplinary knowledge. When one writes in the university one writes for an audience, on an occasion, within a context. Whether a piece of writing is produced for a class or for presentation or publication, context, occasion, and audience are determined by the practices and conventions of an academic field.

The small staff of the Knight Institute teaches only a handful of courses. The vast majority of the more than three hundred first year writing seminars offered at Cornell every year are taught by faculty and graduate students in approximately thirty departments. All of the forty WIM courses offered each year are taught by faculty in approximately twenty departments, with significant roles played by graduate TAs. The Institute funds TA packages for graduate instructors of first year writing and WIM TAs and provides training for graduate students.

The Institute's greatest impact on the teaching of writing is, therefore, indirect. While we teach a small percentage of Cornell's undergraduates, we train dozens of their teachers every year. Moreover, our training courses play significant roles in the careers of more than 100 graduate students each year, albeit a role that may not be widely acknowledged as a feature of graduate education at Cornell.

When these courses are recognized as a feature of graduate education, they are typically praised as teacher training. Two examples illustrate this. A music professor who has taught several Writing in the Majors course says the following about the training course for WIM TAs: "I consider this a key component of grad students' training as they prepare for their academic careers…. grad students also value this training, even when their research topics are distantly- or un-related to the…topic [of the course they TA]." A recent self-study conducted by the Department of Anthropology, which included surveys sent to the program's graduate alumni, included the following summary comments: "…recent alumni uniformly praised as necessary, important and excellent the training received through the Knight Program for Freshman Writing Seminars. Often it was the only intense and focused training in pedagogy they ever received at Cornell, and was seen as still valuable years after leaving Cornell" (Greenwood, Carrico & White, 2013, p. 32). The data generated by the anthropology study provides

evidence for two unsurprising findings: first, many graduate students receive little, if any, formal training as teachers. Second, good teacher training can play a pivotal role in their careers. As this article argues, good training can also help prepare graduate students not just to teach writing, but to write.

Who We Teach

To understand the Knight Institute's training mission, it helps to know how many people take our courses each year and how many disciplines they represent. The combined enrollment for all sections of 7100 and 7101 in 2013-14 amounted to 111 graduate students from thirty-four departments and programs. Tables 1 and 2 show the departments these graduate students represented during the 2013-14 academic year.

Table 1: Departments represented in Writing 7100: Teaching Writing
Summer 2013/Fall 2013. Twenty-seven total departments.

American Indian Studies	Anthropology
Art History	Asian Studies
Astronomy	City and Regional Planning
Classics	Comparative Literature
Development Sociology	English
French (Romance Studies)	German Studies
Government	History
Horticulture	Italian (Romance Studies)
Linguistics	Medieval Studies
Music	Neurobiology and Behavior
Performing and Media Arts	Philosophy
Psychology	Science and Technology Studies
Spanish (Romance Studies)	

Table 2: Departments represented in Writing 7101: Writing in the Majors Seminar
Fall 2013/Spring 2014. Twenty-one total departments.

Anthropology	Applied Economics and Management
Asian Studies	Astronomy

Cognitive Studies	Communications
Development Sociology	Ecology and Evolutionary Biology
Entomology	Government
History	Human Development
Medieval Studies	Molecular Biology and Genetics
Music	Neurobiology and Behavior
Performing and Media Arts	Physics
Psychology	Science and Technology Studies
Sociology	

While these numbers vary from year to year, they are reasonable indicators of the number and range of departments whose graduate students participate in the FWS and WIM programs.

The Rhetoric of Teaching

During the time I've been in a position to shape the curricula of 7100 and 7101, I have learned to see these courses not just as modes of content delivery, and as laboratories for teachers, and as research in learning, but as arguments. Writing 7100 and Writing 7101 take rhetorical positions relative to the students who enroll in them. These courses argue for themselves as professional development. Explaining why we make this argument requires discussing some features of research institutions that will likely be news to no one reading this article. I frame my remarks primarily with a discussion about Writing 7100.[8]

To understand the curriculum of Writing 7100, it helps to understand how Cornell first year writing seminars differ from one another, and what they have in common. First year writing seminar instructors, whether graduate students or faculty, must follow certain guidelines.[9] Within these parameters, instructors have considerable freedom to design discipline based courses based on topics of their choice.

These parameters structure the Writing 7100 curriculum. The central task of 7100, and the task students typically find to be of most immediate value, is described in the course rationale: "...we want you to leave the course with an advanced draft of a syllabus and a selection of assignments you can use in your First-Year Writing Seminar." This task is one of three course goals laid out in the rationale incorporated into the syllabus when I began administering the course in 2003. The other two goals are as follows: "we want to introduce you to the challenges of teaching Writing Seminars with a disciplinary focus…. we hope this seminar will be a laboratory in learning and teaching…."

In addition to explaining why we ask students to do certain kinds of work, this rationale is intended to defuse resistance to the course. During the first years I taught Writing 7100 it was impossible to miss the resentful attitudes many students brought to the class. Many came to the course with an open mind. The course won over some skeptics. Nevertheless, graduate student discourse in general circulation sometimes disparaged Teaching Writing as a waste of time; this discourse shaped some students' perceptions of the course before they ever enrolled.

Some attitude is to be expected whenever you impose a requirement on anyone. Add to that an attitude towards teaching that can border on disdain. The position of many research faculty—learned and imitated by many graduate students—can be summarized as follows: teaching is a necessary and sometimes pleasurable part of our job, but it is a distraction from the real work of research. Time spent teaching is time taken away from higher priority activities. Teacher training is an even lower priority: first, because faculty and graduate students should be able to translate their own intelligence and experience into their teaching; second, because too much devotion to teaching can be seen as a lack of commitment to research. As one respondent to the anthropology study wrote, "Let's be honest, too much time spent developing one's teaching can be detrimental to one's career in academe." [10]

When I began directing Writing 7100 I initiated curricular changes intended, in part, to foreground the value of the course to the people who were required to take it. I hope this value is now apparent—not when the course ends, or years later, after they have enough teaching experience to value the experience—but before students walk into the first session on the first day. One of the most significant changes turned out to involve making graduate student writing an explicit element of the course, particularly through the first writing assignment (about which I say more below).[11] During the time I have taught 7100 and 7101, I have learned to see attention to graduate writing as a way to foreground the value of these courses. Since graduate students have to write their way *out* of graduate school, and (hopefully) into jobs, a course that helps them develop as writers, even if that is not its primary function, is of real and lasting value.

After six weeks, students should leave either course with a toolkit they can use in their own classes. Students should also leave with a clearer sense of themselves as writers, and a clearer sense of where they stand relative to the undergraduates they teach (who they once were) and the faculty who teach them (who they hope to become). By focusing attention on both the immediate value of these required courses (the toolkit) and the long term value (professional development as teachers and writers) I hope we are able to build a more receptive audience for these courses, which, in turn, improves the learning environment for everyone involved.

Anatomy of the Writing Process

One of the first Writing 7100 assignments (due before the first class meeting) asks students to reflect on themselves as writers. To a significant degree, I can trace my interest in the subject matter of this article to the fascinating responses to this assignment I have read in both Writing 7100 and in Writing 7101 (where I also use a version of this assignment). Called "Anatomy of the Writing Process," a recent version of the assignment includes the following guidelines:

> Choose a specific piece of academic writing you've produced during your time at Cornell…. Write a short essay in which you narrate *the process of writing it*…
>
> You may want to address some of the following questions: what sequence of steps did you follow as you produced this piece? Was this sequence typical for you? How many distinct drafts did you write? What made them different? What texts or data did you engage with as you wrote? How does this piece participate in the discourse of your discipline? What observations can you make about language and style in your writing? What did you learn in the course of writing this piece? As noted in the learning outcome above, writing about your own work should advance your capacity to participate in reflective discussions on theories and practices of teaching and writing.

Completing this assignment, reading the submissions of their classmates, and discussing them in class should make clear to our graduate students how important we think it is that *they* help *their* students become more aware and self-reflective as writers. When it works, the impact is substantial, as is clear from the comments made by a current graduate student who has taken both Writing 7101 and Writing 7100, and has worked as a co-facilitator for Writing 7100:

> Preparing for Knight Center courses, working with students as a co-facilitator, and preparing my own first year writing seminars have all made me much more cognizant of my own writing process…. Having to articulate the anatomy of my own writing method helped to formalize, in my mind, the steps I need to take with each piece of writing I commence…. In many ways, the classes I have taken with the Knight Center have offered the first serious critique of my *writing* technique, rather than the sole merits of my argument, since high school.

Both 7100 and 7101 offer participants focused discussions on teaching and writing among people working in a broad range of fields. For many graduate students, this cross disciplinary conversation represents a significant learning opportunity. Engagement with field-specific writing practices is of evident interest to those graduate students who take advantage of professional development opportunities beyond the required training courses. The observations below were written a graduate student who has taken 7101 and 7100, worked as a co-facilitator in 7100, and currently works as a writing tutor, both for undergraduates and for graduate students.

> Working with other graduate students as a writing consultant has been, I believe, even more valuable to me as a writer because it let me see what graduate writing looks like across the disciplines and at different stages of the PhD. Looking at writing in unfamiliar subjects made it easier for me to see the rhetorical moves that writers — and writing — at different stages of development looks like. As I learned to see the ways in which other writers introduced an argument, contextualized a citation, or summed up a point, I became more sensitive to when and how I did these things in my own writing.

For this student, engaging with the writing of others teaches her about her own writing practices; greater understanding of unfamiliar disciplinary practices helps her locate herself within her own discipline. In a different context, a current graduate student succinctly describes the impact of teaching writing on the teacher as a writer:

> I have become almost hyperaware of the skills I teach my students when editing my own writing. As my students learn about constructing arguments, my own arguments become more cohesive. When I teach my students the merits of concise writing, my own sentences become clearer.

Voices from the Field

The Backbone

Describing the process through which he produces writing, a graduate student in the sciences describes a crucial phase of his writing process as follows:

> Before I even start writing the outline or even thinking about the paper, I just spend a few days going through my sources and notebooks and I write down anything that I feel

> should be a part of the paper, from numbers, to references, words, sentences, or just ideas…. When sorting my words and ideas into categories…I start recognizing the few that will eventually become the backbone of the paper…. Then, within each paragraph I condense every idea or group of ideas into one sentence….

For this student, a significant portion of the work of writing a scientific paper involves turning groups of ideas into ten or twelve tightly packed sentences which contain "all the relevant information."

> …once this is achieved it really feels like the paper is written. After days of sorting and condensing and struggling to strip every sentence of all non necessary words, the reverse process is easy enough! Turning sentences into paragraphs is much easier than turning paragraphs into sentences.

This student's sequence of writing activities—sort, compress, expand—closely resembles the approach recommended by George Whitesides, an extraordinarily prolific chemist whose essay on "Writing a Paper" lays out guidelines for the collaborative production of scientific articles. Writing to graduate students and post-docs in his lab, Whitesides emphasizes the production of an outline, as a way to organize a paper and as a way to organize the *production* of a paper. He writes:

> An outline is a written plan of the organization of a paper, *including* the data on which it rests…. think of an outline as a carefully organized and presented set of data, with attendant objectives, hypotheses, and conclusions, rather than an outline of text. (1375) [italics in original]

According to Whitesides, successful researchers write and revise as they experiment, to understand the data they are collecting and why it matters. His definition of a paper makes it clear that writing is an integral element of planning and executing research: "A paper is not just an archival device for storing a completed research program; it is also a structure for *planning* your research in progress" (1375). [italics in original]

As a humanities trained writing teacher I have long been comfortable with the idea that the writing process is part of the thinking process. My own ideas come into focus as I write and change as I revise. Years of working closely as a teacher and tutor with individual writers have confirmed and reinforced this lesson many times. When I work with writers at any level I feel comfortable telling them that writing is not about putting fully formed ideas on paper. Learning happens through writing. Among other things, this should be a recipe for helping writers relax.

As my work has increasingly brought me into contact with graduate students and faculty in the social, natural, and physical sciences, I have tried to learn more about writing practices characteristic of academic fields rhetorically and methodologically distant from my own. I first read the Whitesides article, which I have since incorporated into the Writing 7101 curriculum, because a graduate student in the class gave me a copy. In this instance, as in many others, the teaching flows both ways. When I meet a graduate student, like the one quoted above, who has already figured out that his job includes building a highly compressed outline of each paper, I feel confident that this student is establishing writing habits and practices that will serve him well.

Unnecessarily Raising the Stakes

> …As a graduate student I have learned to write in a way that assumes that someone is going to argue every point that I make -- I am intentional in every word choice I make,

> anticipating potential areas where people will take issue.
> [written by a current PhD student before a class on writing]
>
> This was one of the most useful classes I've taken since starting graduate school because we talked about issues I am currently facing in my own writing.... Because I write defensively, I often feel that I often have too many subsections, breaking down my rationale for using my particular analytical frameworks and in doing so, show my hand -- aka my lack of confidence about the subject I'm trying to engage.
> [written by the same student after class]

Writing to new undergraduates about the writing they should be doing as college students, Hjortshoj states: "Although there are many variations of form and style in academic writing, almost all of these variations occur within a consistent range of style and tone of voice: a tone of rational *explanation and discussion*" (Hjortshoj, 2001, p. 82). Directed at undergraduate writers, this advice is far from irrelevant to graduate students. There may be many reasons why a piece of writing produced by a savvy, motivated graduate student may fail to exhibit a calm tone of rational explanation. As the comments quoted above suggest, confidence can play a significant factor. When I picture a writer who believes every sentence will be challenged, I picture someone in a defensive crouch. Defensive writing is likely to be what Hjortshoj calls "gripped."

This graduate student's defensiveness may be well-founded. Perhaps graduate classes have been contentious. Perhaps she has received negative feedback from professors. Perhaps this is just part of being a graduate student. Even if the students' advisors and colleagues have been supportive and the feedback has been helpful and encouraging, the graduate student is right to recognize the limits of what she can express in her own work. She writes elsewhere, "My writing is supposed to push on the boundaries of knowledge..." This is a tall order for someone who is still learning where the boundaries are.

The official curriculum (should) help graduate students map the field and then help them identify questions which will "push the boundaries." The unofficial writing curriculum for WIM TAs and FWS instructors can help students build confidence, partly by stimulating greater awareness about what it takes to produce writing in a field. Our defensive writer has the following to say about the unofficial curriculum:

> ...graduate school does not necessarily encourage students to devote much time to thinking about how we write.... In 7101 we broke down the different stages of writing, the things that make us comfortable when we write, and the things we want to change...
>
> One of the most meaningful experiences that impacted my development as a writer surrounded our discussion regarding the importance of having a separate set of eyes read over my writing. I have always worked very privately but I realized that for the past year and a half I had been unnecessarily raising the stakes on each paper by having the first pair of eyes besides mine to look at the paper be those of my evaluator. It sounds like a simple enough idea, but as a graduate student I had become used to operating solo and my sense is that this is the case for many of my peers.

I suggested above that this graduate student's defensiveness might have something to do the challenges inherent in building what Lovitts calls a "cognitive map" of her program. (120-124). Her own follow-up comments suggest that the official curriculum may play a role, although not necessarily because her department has failed her in some way. Her comments suggest, instead, that

graduate students thrive when they develop writing practices that include drafting, revising, and informal peer review. Graduate students who write in public tend to complete their programs more quickly than do students who are isolated when they write, particularly during the long haul of dissertation writing.[12] Graduate students can, and do, build writing communities on their own. But graduate programs could do more to foster these communities, and to make them part of the curriculum, rather than an informal feature of graduate life.[13]

The graduate student quoted above wrote about how valuable it has been to share her work with peers. One striking fact about this observation—echoed in many other comments—is the path the realization travels. In 7100 and 7101 we discuss modes of informal peer review and their value in undergraduate writing classes. But the writing graduate students actually share with each other in 7100 and 7101 would not typically "count" as academic writing. Asked to name genres of academic writing, most people would probably include the following: articles, conference papers and posters, dissertations, books. But few current or aspiring scholars would classify course materials—or a reflective essay about writing—as examples of academic writing. Reading graduate students' comments on Writing 7100 and 7101, I realized that graduate students discovered the value of sharing their work with others because of an essential feature of both courses: people read each other's work every week. However, the work typically consists of things like assignment sequences and in-class writing exercises. In the introduction I quoted one student on this topic: "7100 emphasizes collaboration and sharing of teaching materials, and at a certain point I began to wonder why the graduate community doesn't practice this more often and more broadly. I think it's incredibly logical and so clearly beneficial...." What is significant, for this student and others, is that she made the connection between the value of sharing teaching materials—which figures prominently in our training courses—and the value of sharing her scholarly work.

Practicing peer review means practicing for the profession. While collaborative authorship of scholarly material is routine in some fields (such as biology) and relatively rare in others (such as English) academic life is built on other forms of collaboration, including the structured systems of peer review that govern academic publication. Even in fields where scholarship is typically produced by individual authors, other kinds of professional writing are produced collaboratively: job descriptions, committee reports, departmental review documents. Gateway decisions such as hiring and promotion include review of candidates by peers, often working in teams. Informal peer review is routine for most scholars: few would send an article to a journal that has not been read by at least one colleague. While the sharing of work is deeply embedded in academic culture, even the savviest graduate students will not necessarily learn this from coursework or department colloquia. Some learn it in a seminar ostensibly devoted to something else.

Writing is a Process which at Times will be Messy

This section quotes Lindsay Cummings and Sarah Senk, two tenure track professors who recently earned Cornell PhDs. They describe the lessons they learned about writing as process through their multiple modes of participation with Knight Institute programs. Both took Writing 7100 early in their graduate careers and taught several first year writing seminars. Both participated in the peer collaboration program; both won teaching prizes. Senk worked as a writing tutor and served several times as a graduate co-facilitator in Writing 7100. Cummings received a one-year teaching post-doc in the Writing Workshop where she taught small, tutorial oriented writing seminars and co-facilitated Writing 7101.

Writing about the significance of writing as process, Senk and Cummings describe issues ranging from the utilitarian (time management) to the epistemological. Their discussions of process move

beyond the fact that writing proceeds through steps and stages, especially when the product under construction is a long-term project like a dissertation. Both attribute what they learned about writing process largely to their work with the Knight Institute. I quote each at some length.

> …the Knight Institute really reinforces the idea that writing is a process which at times will be messy. This keeps you writing…. When you keep the overall writing and thinking process in mind, there is less stress placed on a single day's output…it also keeps you from worrying too much about a single sentence. It's hard to be too much in love with your own language after you spend a half an hour in a conference with a student convincing them to cut through the meaningless rhetorical flourishes…. Teaching that lesson reinforces it for the teacher. (Cummings)

While Cummings describes the ways teaching writing reinforces good writing practices, Senk writes about how thinking and writing are intertwined.

> I think that I never really internalized the idea that writing was an epistemic process. In college I always thought that one should formulate an idea and then transparently translate it into an essay; in grad school I learned (partly through course work but mostly through teaching and training) to think of thought as something that came into being through writing, and to think of thought itself as something mutable. (Senk)

As contributions to the academic study of writing, Cummings's and Senk's insights into writing as process are not earth-shaking. Indeed, much of what they say follows from some of the texts we read in Writing 7100 and 7101. What is potentially earth-shaking *for these two writers*, is that—largely through their work as writing teachers—they were able to transition from successful careers as undergraduate writers to successful careers as graduate writers who produced dissertations and got tenure track jobs. Both describe the training they received and their experience as writing teachers as crucial to their ability to make these transitions.

In describing the survival skills mastered by these two talented and accomplished scholars, I make no attempt to control for other features of training or temperament that made their interests compatible with the Knight Institute's philosophy. Their talents were evident before they were admitted to small, highly selective graduate programs (Comparative Literature for Senk; Performing and Media Arts for Cummings), before their first contact with the writing program. They came to us as highly capable graduate students who would probably have been successful with or without the training and support they received from the Knight Institute and the community of teachers they chose to join. I would argue, however, that their success can traced, in part, to their willingness to take advantage of the opportunities presented to them, and their ability to adapt to the new circumstances they have faced as students, instructors, and, now, professors. The goal of the project called graduate education should not be to admit students and see how much they can accomplish on their own; the goal should be to admit students and provide them with the tools they need to succeed.

Conclusion: Learning Something Practical

My conclusion begins with quotations from four Anthropology PhDs who responded to their department's recent survey of alumni. The survey included questions about training they received as teachers and TAs while in graduate school. The quotations below are responses to questions about Writing 7100 and Writing 7101:

> Amazing! I cannot say enough about this course…. It made me prepared, and more confident, to teach on my own. Teaching a Writing Seminar meant that I had a course ready to go when I got a teaching postdoc and later an assistant professor position.
>
> Very important to me. Improved my teaching, and changed my scholarly orientation. Became more interested in helping others articulate their ideas.
>
> A wonderful class that I got a lot out of and still use in terms of how I teach composition courses in the my current job. This was a fabulous class which I still draw on for inspiration in my teaching.
>
> I though [sic] this class was very good, because it was the first time I really felt I was learning something PRACTICAL…. To this day, I still feel that, although I do not teach, the clear steps and structure associated with what I learned in that class continue to influence how I approach the actual work that I do...

I have written elsewhere about survival and adaptation in the academic world.[14] In these comments I am reminded of the range of cognitive transitions graduate students must confront, the number of times they must adapt to new circumstances if they are to survive in their chosen fields. For the first student, teacher training prepared her for a teaching post-doc, then for a job. The training course shifted the scholarly interests of the second respondent. The third is apparently teaching composition. The fourth is not in a teaching position but has found that the course shapes his approach to subsequent professional experiences.

While the comments above focus primarily on teaching, rather than writing, they reflect the interconnected nature of academic practices. Although they are frequently taught separately (if at all), and valued along different matrices, teaching, writing, research, and service can be mutually reinforcing. Graduate education at my institution is like to continue to be fragmentary: students who succeed will continue to make use of the tools they can find, sometimes in unexpected places. Until such time as truly integrated graduate programs take root, programs like ours are likely to continue providing graduate students with access to tools they may not find anywhere else.

Notes

[1] My first thanks go to the many current and former graduate students with whom I have had the pleasure of working during my time at Cornell. Special thanks to those who contributed to the ongoing study of graduate student writing and teaching which provided the material at the heart of this article. Thanks to Davydd Greenwood and Nerissa Russell for sharing results —both the summary report and some of the survey data—from the self-study conducted by Cornell's Department of Anthropology. Thanks to my colleagues at the Knight Institute for providing a supportive and engaging place to work, teach, and write. It's been a particular honor to collaborate with colleagues in our graduate training programs: this work has provided some of my greatest learning and teaching opportunities. Thanks to David Faulkner and Paul Sawyer who read portions of this essay in progress. Thanks, as always, to Deborah Starr, who is my closest colleague and friend, in addition to being my wife.

[2] With two exceptions, all quotations from current or former graduate students are anonymous.

[3] I make this argument at greater length in "Survival and Failure, Adaptation and Acceptance" (2004, p. 24-25). I use integration in two ways here: to describe a program's relationship with other institutions that shape graduate education; and to describe the different aspects of professional life that graduate students aspire to learn. I do not explicitly refer to a third relevant meaning of the term. In her work on graduate student attrition, Barbara Lovitts writes about the importance of *social integration* for graduate students.

She writes, "…the better integrated students are into their programs, the better their cognitive maps will be because they are in closer and more frequent contact with people who can help them develop the understanding necessary for degree completion." "Research on the Structure and Process of Graduate Education: Retaining Students" (2004, p. 117-8).

[4] I owe this insight to Katherine Gottschalk and Keith Hjortshoj's invaluable book, *The Elements of Teaching Writing*. They write, "You can think of teaching as research into the ways in which students actually learn the material. You can think of your course, therefore, as an ongoing experiment" (2004, p. 24).

[5] For evidence of the ways that local knowledge travels from students to instructors and back one need look no further than some of the publications that have emerged from these collaborations. Notable examples cited in this article include *The Elements of Teaching Writing*, *The Transition to College Writing*, and *Writing from A to B.*

[6] After reading a draft of this article, my colleague, David Faulkner, said he would discuss some of the issues discussed here in the section of Writing 7100 he was teaching at the time.

[7] Each section of Writing 7100 is led by a member of the Knight Institute faculty and assisted by a graduate student who has taken 7100 and taught one or more First Year Writing Seminars. Graduate students apply for these co-facilitator and receive a stipend for their six weeks of work.

[8] I focus on 7100 for four reasons. First, I began teaching 7100 in 1998, long before I started teaching 7101 (which I first taught in 2007). Second, I assumed administrative and curricular responsibilities for 7100 in 2003, long before I assumed similar responsibilities for 7101. Third, my work with 7100, starting my first year at Cornell, has shaped everything I have done since. Finally, the FWS program, and the training program that supports it, is both larger and more visible than is Writing in the Majors.

[9] The basic parameters of all Cornell first year writing seminars are posted on the program's web site and described in the "Indispensible Reference for Teachers of First-Year Writing Seminars," a pamphlet updated annually and distributed each year to all new FWS instructors.

[10] Citation information for the complete report is included in the works cited page and cited within the text as necessary. Some quotations are taken from the raw data, which the department shared in a form that protected respondents' anonymity.

[11] While this was not an explicit focus of Writing 7100 before I began directing the course it has long been a significant element of Writing 7101, as I learned in 2007 when I began teaching *that* course.

[12] Hjortshoj notes that, "Research on doctoral programs indicates…that isolation is a fundamental cause of difficulty and delay in the completion of PhDs" (2010, p. 34). Lovitts has explored the issues of social integration that have an impact on degree completion. One striking finding from her research into graduate student attrition is the fact that, "completers were almost twice as likely as non-completers to have shared an office" with another graduate student (2004, p. 125).

[13] In "Demystifying the Dissertation" Karen Cardozo outlines some strategies for building this kind of work into graduate programs (2006, p. 146-148).

[14] See "Survival and Failure, Adaptation and Acceptance," referenced above.

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Complete APA Citation

Shapiro, Elliot. (2015, August 25). Towards an integrated graduate student (training program) [Special issue on graduate writing across the disciplines]. *Across the Disciplines, 12*(3). Retrieved from https://wac.colostate.edu/docs/atd/graduate/shapiro2015.pdf