CHAPTER 12.

# WAC VISIBILITY: RHETORICAL STRATEGIES FOR ESTABLISHING AND MAINTAINING PROGRAMMATIC AWARENESS AND ENGAGEMENT

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**Abstract**: *This chapter investigates the role of visibility in sustaining writing across the curriculum (WAC) programs, drawing on survey and interview data from WAC directors across diverse institutional contexts. Using Keith Grant-Davie's (1997) framework for defining rhetorical situations (exigence, rhetor, audience, and constraints), the chapter demonstrates how WAC directors employ a variety of visibility artifacts and rhetorical strategies to reach multiple audiences, including faculty, administrators, and donors. The chapter culminates in evidence-based recommendations for visibility that can foster programmatic resilience, enabling WAC programs to adapt to change and maintain their role as agents of institutional transformation.*

How do I get faculty to sign up for this workshop? Will the department chair want a consultation? Why is that dean recreating my program in their college? How can I get donor support? Such questions of visibility regularly preoccupy writing across the curriculum (WAC) directors (Condon, 2001; Condon & Rutz, 2012; Galin, 2021; Malenczyk, 2010; McLeod & Soven, 1992). As a WAC scholar, I have heard versions of them during workshops and breakout sessions at professional conferences, and as a WAC director, I have asked some of them myself. The stakes are high: visibility can affect faculty engagement, institutional partnerships, budgets, hiring, and, ultimately, opportunities for students to learn and practice meaningful disciplinary communication. As Brad Peters (2019) cautioned, "Institutional memory falls prey to amnesia if WAC leadership does not keep its projects in sight

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of faculty and administrators" (p. 22). To echo William Condon and Carol Rutz (2012), we must be just as vigilant about our visibility strategies as we are about our program structures, pedagogies, and assessment techniques if WAC as an agent of change—and not just an institutional office—is to continue.

For these reasons, Michelle Cox, Jeff Galin, and Dan Melzer (2018) included visibility as one of fifteen strategies for building and sustaining WAC programs. "The whole systems principle of *visibility*," they explained, "means that program development, assessment, and change are transparent, regular, and public." Visibility ought to be taken up by many stakeholders—not only the WAC director and enthusiastic collaborators, but also administrators, campus partners, and professional staff who run communications channels—so that awareness will "grow exponentially" (Cox et al., 2018, p. 177). Long-term, exponential growth in awareness can lead to sustainable engagement and resources that will allow the WAC program to thrive.

Despite these needs, WAC scholarship has rarely examined in detail the visibility strategies that WAC directors use. One notable exception comes from Peters (2019), who used Cox et al.'s (2018) whole systems theory as a lens for understanding programmatic history, including visibility. Over ten years, Peters utilized class visits, a self-study, newsletters, website updates, annual reports, research, quality enhancement proposals, general education reform advocacy, and assessment to maintain program visibility. From Peters, we get a clear picture of the ripple effects of these visibility strategies on his program's sustainability, as well as the larger institutional ecology. Less clear, however, is the specific rhetorical thinking that informed them.

Consultations with faculty (see, e.g., Flash, 2016; Mullin, 2008; Tarabochia, 2017) and campus partnerships (Bastian, 2020; Cox et al., 2018; Perryman-Clark, 2023) are the most valuable visibility strategies at our disposal. Visibility also requires WAC directors to leverage our rhetorical acumen. We need to gain the attention of our main constituents, faculty, who increasingly have their attention pulled in multiple directions at once. We need to bolster our oft-precarious positioning outside official departmental structures, in administrative offices that are subject to strategic change—or outright elimination—amidst larger shifts in institutional priorities and higher education (Basgier, 2023). Indeed, WAC directors need a deep knowledge of the available means of persuasion to sustain our programs.

However, scholarly conversations about campus communication techniques for WAC visibility are scant, limiting opportunities for knowledge-building in the field. This chapter seeks to provide that knowledge via quantitative and qualitative data on WAC directors' approaches to visibility, as

well as evidence-based recommendations for rhetorical awareness in support of programmatic promotion.

## METHODS

My central research question was: What kinds of documents, media, and rhetorical strategies do WAC professionals use to establish and maintain the visibility of their WAC programs in their local institutional contexts?

To answer this question, I sought participation from WAC directors via posts to the wpa-announcements and WAC-l listervs, as well as direct emails to several of my colleagues in the field. Data collection involved a survey and an interview. The survey first asked participants how long their program had existed. Then, participants could select and upload the artifacts they use for visibility, using a list of artifact types that I had pre-selected from Cox et al. (2018, pp. 178–84) and my own experience (see Table 12.4 later in this chapter). After selecting and uploading artifacts, participants were then asked to characterize the primary audience for the artifact in an open-ended text box. Finally, an additional set of open-ended questions invited participants to describe obstacles to visibility and to name the artifact type they found most valuable for maintaining it.

Second, I invited survey participants to a retrospective, semi-structured interview about the rhetorical decision-making that informed a specific artifact. I selected a different type of artifact for each interviewee (e.g., a website, an annual report, a newsletter), and I asked participants about the purpose, audience(s), representations of programmatic values, and ultimate utility of the artifact. I also asked them to discuss elements of the artifact, such as language or image, that exemplified their rhetorical choices. All interviews were conducted and recorded via Zoom; I used Zoom's auto-transcription feature to generate initial interview transcripts, after which I corrected them.

Because I was especially interested in WAC directors' rhetorical decision-making, I analyzed qualitative survey responses and interview transcripts using a list of codes that I developed based on Keith Grant-Davie's (1997) "Rhetorical Situations and their Constituents," in which he "defined a rhetorical situation as a set of related factors," including exigence, rhetor, audience, and constraints, "whose interaction creates and controls a discourse" (p. 265). I used each of those four factors, defined in Table 12.1 and elaborated in the discussion, as codes for analyzing qualitative data. I also added "visibility" to account for visibility strategies that were not specifically artifacts, such as attending campus events. I segmented all qualitative data as complete responses, rather than as individual sentences, to preserve the context of participants' ideas.

**Table 12.1. Definitions of Codes**

| Code | Definition: The participant describes … |
|---|---|
| Exigence | "The matter and motivation of the discourse" (Grant-Davie, 1997, p. 266), including what it is about, why it is needed, and what it is trying to accomplish |
| Rhetor(s) | "Those people, real or imagined, responsible for the discourse and its authorial voice" (Grant-Davie, 1997, p. 269) |
| Audience | "Those people, real or imagined, with whom rhetors negotiate through discourse to achieve the rhetorical objectives" (Grant-Davie, 1997, p. 270) |
| Constraints | "Factors in the situation's context that may affect the achievement of the rhetorical objectives" (Grant-Davie, 1997, p. 272) |
| Visibility | Other means of establishing and maintaining visibility besides artifacts |

## RESULTS

I received 26 responses to the survey. Table 12.2 represents the number of years each respondent's program had been in existence and the average number of artifact types each group selected.

**Table 12.2. Number and Percentage of Responses and Average Number of Artifact Types Selected by Self-reported Years of WAC Program Existence**

| Years in Existence | Number of Responses | Percentage of Responses | Average number of artifact types |
|---|---|---|---|
| 0–5 | 4 | 15.38 | 4.75 |
| 6–10 | 5 | 19.23 | 4.8 |
| 11–15 | 4 | 15.38 | 5 |
| More than 15 | 13 | 50 | 5.9 |
| **Total** | **26** | **100** | **5.4** |

As indicated in Table 12.3, nearly three-quarters of my participants worked at doctoral-granting universities. Throughout my discussion, I indicate participants' institution type and size and discuss its impact on their rhetorical decision-making when relevant. Here, I want to note that no patterns emerged based specifically on institution type or size. For example, I heard similar strategies for website maintenance from a WAC director at a small, private, doctoral/professional university as I did from one at a very large, very high research, public university; likewise, participants at the latter kind of institution sometimes used quite different strategies from one another.

Much like Peters (2019), participants reported using a range of artifacts to maintain WAC program visibility. As Table 12.4 indicates, internal institutional communication channels, annual reports, websites, event-specific posters or

flyers, and PowerPoint presentations were the most frequently selected artifact types. Participants also had the opportunity to upload sample artifacts, with totals represented in the right-hand column.

**Table 12.3. Count of Participants' Institutional Carnegie Classifications**

| Classification | Count |
|---|---|
| Associate's Colleges: High Transfer-Mixed Traditional/Nontraditional | 1 |
| Baccalaureate Colleges: Arts & Sciences Focus | 2 |
| Doctoral Universities: Doctoral/Professional Universities | 3 |
| Doctoral Universities: High Research Activity | 4 |
| Doctoral Universities: Very High Research Activity | 12 |
| Master's Colleges & Universities: Larger Programs | 3 |
| Master's Colleges & Universities: Small Programs | 1 |
| **Total** | **26** |

**Table 12.4. Number of Artifacts Selected and Uploaded by Type**

| Type of Artifact | Number Selected | Number Uploaded |
|---|---|---|
| Internal institutional communication channels (e.g., email blasts, listserv posts, or institutional newsletters or bulletins) | 25 | 6 |
| Annual reports and/or assessment reports | 24 | 6 |
| Website | 21 | 9 |
| Event-specific posters or flyers | 18 | 3 |
| PowerPoint presentations to campus stakeholders | 17 | 5 |
| Digital signage | 10 | 1 |
| Program newsletters | 10 | 2 |
| Social Media | 9 | 2 |
| Campus-wide publication(s) (e.g., an undergraduate research journal or a faculty development guide) | 7 | 1 |
| Other | 7 | 3 |
| General informational posters or flyers about the WAC program | 3 | 0 |

Of the 28 survey respondents, seven elected to participate in interviews. Table 12.5 represents the number of times I applied each code across qualitative survey responses and interview transcripts. In the following discussion, I examine examples of each of these codes to tease out the rhetorical decision-making underlying WAC directors' visibility strategies.

**Table 12.5. Count of Codes Applied**

| Code | Number of Times Applied |
|---|---|
| Exigence | 58 |
| Rhetor(s) | 21 |
| Audience | 29 |
| Constraints | 41 |
| Visibility | 22 |

### Visibility

I begin with the visibility code because I want to acknowledge that artifacts were just one way my participants sought to maintain awareness and engagement with their WAC programs. Indeed, my participants' main advice for WAC program visibility was consistent: beyond any programmatic structure or artifact type, they regularly emphasized the importance of what survey respondent Jacob, who worked at a large, very high research, public university, called "strategic networks of partnerships." The units I coded "visibility" named a range of strategic partners, many of whom were also recommended by Cox et al. (2018):

- WAC advisory boards
- Other writing program administrators
- Colleagues in teaching and learning centers
- Writing centers
- Undergraduate research initiatives
- Faculty at branch campuses and community colleges

My participants characterized these strategic partners as crucial for maintaining visibility and recruiting new faculty participants who might otherwise remain unaware of the WAC initiative.

Face-to-face interactions were also essential, whether participants were hosting events or "simply being at things," as Ashton wrote in the survey. These in-person meetings sometimes afforded unexpected opportunities for visibility. For example, Sheila, who worked at a small, private, doctoral/professional university, told me in an interview the following story about institutional strategic planning meetings:

> In these meetings … I found myself reporting some of our assessment findings that were really sustainability indicators (Cox et al., 2018). How are we doing? And just because it was a timely moment with a good audience of some key people

> there, I could just slip it in. It wasn't really on the agenda. So finding opportune moments when I happen to have the right people in front of me. I think that's really useful, too.

Of course, networking and strategic partnerships are not wholly separate from visibility artifacts. As Jacob explained in a survey response, "We need to harness all of the [types of documents] (all available means of persuasion) to connect our work to key partners and institutional initiatives," which "is a LOOOONG term process." Put differently, over time, visibility artifacts can lead to partnerships, and partnerships can inform the ways we create and circulate visibility artifacts.

## Exigence

Many exigencies motivated my participants' rhetorical decision-making as they crafted visibility artifacts. To elaborate on Lloyd Bitzer's basic definition of exigence as "a need or problem that can be addressed and solved through rhetorical discourse" (1968, as cited in Grant-Davie, 1997, p. 265), Grant-Davie (1997) used stasis theory—specifically "definition" (what the discourse is about), "cause and effect" (why it is needed), and "policy and procedure" (why it is needed) (p. 266). In this section, I will discuss each of these stases to illustrate how my participants articulated the complex purposes driving their visibility artifacts.

Grant-Davie (1997) explains that the definitional stasis can include either "the most apparent topic" or "a more abstract" attention to "larger issues, values, or principles [that] motivate people and can be invoked to lead audiences in certain directions on more specific topics" (p. 267). The "most apparent" programmatic exigencies named by my participants addressed different constituencies, including faculty, administrators, and donors:

- Housing and sharing information and history
- Sharing status or assessment updates
- Celebrating accomplishments
- Recruiting faculty participants

Participants defined several "more abstract" exigencies undergirding their rhetorical decision-making. For example, Amber, who worked at a large two-year college, explained that, to recruit faculty participants into programs, she needed "to prioritize faculty needs first," rather than any structural element of her WAC program. In our interview, she told me that this rhetorical technique stemmed from her programmatic focus on compassion: she adjusted her messages to help faculty feel seen, in hopes that (to echo Grant-Davie) doing so would motivate them to respond to her workshop invitations.

In this way, programmatic values sometimes became exigencies that intersected with programmatic identities. Sheila, for example, changed her WAC program website to communicate a compelling programmatic identity. Before our interview, she had given a presentation to upper administration about their progress "with implementing the vertical [writing] program," so on the website, she "was thinking of what I would want them to see to say, 'Here's what the writing program is.'" To communicate that identity, she included information about programmatic structures and program history, which, crucially, included donor support.

Sheila's desire to represent program identity brings us to the cause-effect stasis, which can include Kairos, "why the issues are important and why the questions it raises really need to be resolved," or "the situation's implications" (Grant-Davie, 1997, p. 268). Like several of my participants, Sheila was aware of the potential that administrators might take programmatic resources to balance budgets or bolster other programs. Therefore, she told me, "I want to remind everyone else who looks at this that we have [donor] backing because … when they decide what to prioritize and what to cut and where to shift resources, it reminds the administrators that these are endowed programs." On a persistent artifact like a website, such reminders would be available for kairotic moments like annual budget planning meetings.

Budgetary concerns weren't the only political matters that functioned as causal exigencies. In a survey, Maria, who worked at a large, very high research, public institution in the Northwestern United States, explained, "Others on campus who have higher visibility … speak about writing matters as if they are authorities, setting a narrative that I then am in a difficult position to correct." One way she attempted to counteract this problematic narrative about writing was to host events with noted scholars in writing studies and advertise them widely through listservs and fliers.

Others had to respond to official institutional mandates that served as causal exigencies. For example, Murray, who ran the WAC program at a large, very high research, public university, had recently revised writing intensive course outcomes. In our interview, he reflected, "Okay, we have some new outcomes. How do we actually get faculty to do them?" This question served as an exigence, not only for in-person interactions "with faculty and unit leaders," but also a dedicated section in his newsletter and online resources.

Murray's comments also point to the policy and procedure stasis, which Grant-Davie (1997) says entails attention to "the goals of the discourse," including "primary and secondary objectives" (p. 268–269)—basically, what the discourse is attempting to accomplish. For Murray, the exigence was to increase faculty use of the new outcomes (primarily) and to utilize effective

WAC pedagogies, even when they weren't teaching writing intensive courses (secondarily).

This secondary pedagogical effect was a common policy stasis named by participants in the survey and interviews. Cher, who worked at a very large, very high research, public university, wanted faculty who looked at student samples on her website "to see what their students have to deal with when they go to an English class versus a science class" and encounter different disciplinary expectations for writing. For her, this could be a means of amplifying effective, rhetorically rich pedagogy. Meanwhile, Andrea, who ran a well-established WAC program at a large, very high research, public university, told me in an interview that, if she could "get new faculty to our events … they're more likely to reach out" later for additional support, meaning ongoing relationships served as a secondary outcome for her newsletter items. This pattern of attention to pedagogy as exigence comes as no surprise, given most WAC programs' mission of pedagogical support and curricular reform.

Still, it is worth lingering for a moment on the complicated rhetorical maneuvers that the definitional, causal, and policy exigencies can require. My interview with Francine, who worked at a mid-sized, high research activity, public university, about her assessment report illustrated these complications well. Ostensibly, her assessment report responded to an "official obligation" expected of "every program" in general education. But she also defined her exigence in terms of two deeper values. The first was transparency. Before she wrote this report, "there wasn't complete clarity and transparency with [the writing intensive course] outcomes," so she aimed to assess the outcomes and "mak[e] sure people understood the process we carried out." The second was accountability. She wanted to use the assessment report to acknowledge accountability to the administration: "You've stood behind this program … We want to show you that we care about the quality of what's being done here, and … We're engaging our faculty and meaningful assessment practices." This accountability to administration had a deeper cause—like Sheila, Francine knew that resources could always be taken away—and, thus, a policy outcome focused on sustainability: "There's no need to cut us because we're showing up and we're getting the work done." But even more than administration, Francine felt accountable to "the faculty involved in the program" and "ultimately the students who are taking these classes," another constituency for whom she wanted to ensure a meaningful educational experience with writing. Thus, Francine made clear that WAC visibility artifacts can respond to multiple overlapping exigencies, and WAC directors must work to balance those exigencies or decide how to prioritize one over the others.

## Audience

Grant-Davie (1997) defines audience broadly, arguing that it may include:

> (1) any people who happen to hear or read a discourse, (2) a set of readers or listeners who form part of an external rhetorical situation (equivalent to Bitzer's interpretation of audience), (3) the audience that the writer seems to have in mind, and (4) the audience roles suggested by the discourse itself. (p. 270)

In this section, I focus mainly on faculty, who were the most typical audience named by my participants. However, administrators, donors, and students were additional constituents, and many of them become downstream audiences as WAC messaging circulated.

Awareness of audience, especially the first and second kinds above, was essential for overcoming obstacles like faculty labor and perceptions of relevance. Ashton, who worked in WAC at a large, very high research, public university explained on the survey, "Instructors … are busy. After the pandemic, I noticed a lot more people putting their heads down and just trying to work, and I think that has affected a lot in terms of getting information out there or recruiting new instructors" to teach writing-intensive courses. Other faculty might not think WAC programs are relevant to their needs. As Fischer, who ran WAC at a large, very high research, private university, remarked in the survey, "Although we have a strong STEM writing cohort of WID faculty, we find it very hard to reach STEM faculty more broadly, even when we design workshops for them and promote them through all our email lists." Underlying both comments is the challenge of helping faculty understand why they should engage in WAC programming.

These faculty often constituted the third type of audience, the ones my participants had in mind. Unsurprisingly, they were savvy about differentiating their messaging for multiple audiences who often had different needs. For example, Sheila knew that many were experiencing information overload and overwork. Therefore, she advocated being "selective" about the number and kinds of links and information on her website. She prioritized information with a potentially high impact on writing pedagogy, such as student writing examples, which faculty could access "to share models or samples of student writing with their students."

In some cases, participants had to balance multiple audiences within a single artifact. For example, Murray's newsletter was meant for all faculty at his institution, but he also suspected it would catch administrators' eyes. He had heard "through the grapevine" that an administrator was curious about the status of revised written communication outcomes, so he "very specifically put that

heading in there just to be like, 'Here's what's happening with those outcomes.'" He characterized this as "a very narrow audience, but in a lot of ways a very important one because that person can then advocate funding … or reinforce the advocacy that my more direct reporting line does." In other words, Murray anticipated that he could reach this specific, high-priority audience with access to resources simultaneously with the more general audience of faculty who might also be interested in knowing about the outcomes.

While Murray balanced multiple audiences within a single artifact, others selected different genres or media to reach new or different audiences. Based on an internal study, Amber found that "email is, by far, the preferred method of notification of WAC programming for faculty and staff," whereas "for administration, the presentations and reports are most useful." In the survey, Andrea also reported using email as the most commonplace form of communication, but she added, "Interestingly, we've found that being included in the provost's newsletter does bring us new faculty who haven't taught WI to our trainings and events." She elaborated on this sentiment in an interview: "We hope that by using the provost's newsletter, we're going to bring in those people who don't know us yet," such as "faculty outside of English and education, where we draw a lot of faculty because they share our values." Andrea and her colleagues in the WAC program had spent several years cultivating a relationship with the provost, who she characterized as "actively involved" in the program "and a huge proponent of it." Given Andrea's long-running WAC program is in a large research institution, the provost's newsletter was invaluable for expanding her visibility and reaching more of her audience.

As WAC leaders became aware of different audiences' needs, they were more apt to try new communication channels to get others' attention. They were also likely to try new rhetorical techniques. For example, adjunct faculty at Amber's two-year college were hard to reach because of their busy schedules. Therefore, in an email blast about self-paced faculty development courses, she specifically addressed their needs using rhetorical questions: "Want to improve your teaching, but can't fit a course into your busy schedule? Have free time during winter break? Or when the new semester starts?" These questions, along with the promise of additional pay, were designed to catch adjunct faculty's attention and encourage them to register.

My participants also attempted to appeal to their audiences' values. Maria told me, "What I found is the faculty I work with are very strongly committed to inclusive classrooms … They want inclusive classrooms from a standpoint of disability. They want inclusive classrooms from a standpoint of linguistic inclusiveness. They want to create antiracist classrooms." The event flyer we discussed in our interview specifically addressed their desire in its content, which not only advertised a notable disability studies scholar, but also invited accessibility accommodations.

A final audience-focused strategy involved adding a personal touch to visibility artifacts. While most of my participants used institutional email channels to publicize the program, Francine reported going a step further by "individualiz[ing]" her emails because "it's important for building/cultivating respect and loyalty" to the program—a strategy that was possible because of her long tenure and deep relationships at her institution. As a newer WAC director, Murray took a different approach to personalization by including a faculty spotlight in the newsletter focused on "the ways in which they have benefitted from our programs" to "tell a more personal side of the story." These techniques can help audiences see themselves reflected in and valued by WAC programs' various activities and commitments, thus contributing to the building and maintaining of campus relationships.

## Rhetor

Rhetors are individuals or "rhetorical team[s]" (Grant-Davie, 1997, p. 269) who both produce discourse and must represent something about themselves in discourse—an ethos. As "rhetorical teams," or collective rhetors, WAC programs occasionally contend with brand confusion, or the tendency to mix up different kinds of writing programs. Sheila told me, "People sometimes do get the writing center and [University] Writing Program mixed up … But I think when people think they're going to the University Writing Program website, they're often at the writing center website. Maybe it happens the other way around, too, because on occasion I'll get questions that seem like they're directed to the writing center." Such brand confusion may lead audiences to believe that a writing program is only for student support, rather than professional development, thus preventing participation in faculty-focused initiatives. One method of clarifying the mission and purpose of the WAC program was by cultivating a consistent and flexible ethos. As Grant-Davie (1997) put it, rhetors must communicate integrity— "a measure of consistency they take from situation to situation"—and receptivity—"the ability to adapt to new situations and not rigidly play the same role in every one" (p. 270).

Indeed, for most of my interviewees, successful visibility required consistent attention to the WAC program's reputation and values. Amber had cultivated an effective program identity: "The work, progress, mission, and values are to provide compassionate support for all writers." She demonstrated this ethos in an email about WAC faculty support. Faculty at her college were completing their annual portfolios for performance reviews, so she put a portfolio workshop first. To her, this arrangement "shows that faculty writing is as important as student writing … and that faculty are equally vulnerable to the outcomes that are inflicted upon their writing, particularly in their evaluation." She arranged relevant information

in order of her audience's likely priorities: professional portfolios first and self-paced learning second, thus exhibiting implicit compassion for their needs. She reserved discussion of writing intensive courses for last because it was a controversial topic at her two-year college, where it was perceived as "extra work," due to the "5-5 load." By placing that information in the last position, she put her audience's immediate priorities above her more politically sensitive one.

Other participants practiced receptivity by aligning their ethos with the larger institution's. For example, Shiela integrated the terms *leading* and *serving* from her university's mission statement into her WAC program's mission statement on its website. Her strategy suggests that an effective WAC program can represent its ethos in artifacts that connect the program to institutional priorities via kindred terminology.

Meanwhile, Francine's assessment report allowed her to demonstrate both integrity and receptivity. She demonstrated what Grant-Davie (1997) calls integrity through the consistent quality of the report, which she told me was often cited as a model because "I carried out something pretty systematic … and followed up and got everything in a form and revised the [writing] outcomes, and then implemented all that. It was a nice, tidy, closed loop kind of process." At the same time, she demonstrated receptivity by making ample use of the voices of faculty partners who had invested in the WAC program. She explained, "Those quotes and testimonials and feedback that I received from faculty … [were] a really good way to connect with our faculty, and it … honored their voices and perspectives." No doubt, this inclusive, relationship-oriented approach to visibility contributed to what she called an "aura" around WAC on her campus, one that continued to bring people into the fold. The assessment report did not create that aura alone, but it did manifest and maintain the ethos.

To augment that ethos, she connected her institution's local needs with the "larger movement" of WAC. Her assessment report began with this disciplinary context:

> Assessment of writing initiatives is considered essential in refining learning outcomes and optimizing the experiences for students (Haswell, 2000; NCTE, 2014; Rhodes, 2010; Sparks et al., 2014; Wardle & Roozen, 2012). However, comprehensive assessment of these initiatives across time—and disciplines—has proven challenging, labor intensive, and sometimes even contentious. (Camp, 2012; Shaw, 2017; Slomp, 2012)

Her report then connected this disciplinary context to the first-year writing, WAC, writing center, and general education programs at her institution, all

of which are "nodes" (Cox et al., 2018) for writing instruction. She said this connection between the discipline and the local institution encouraged her colleagues to see "what's going on in the field … and, you know, that there is credibility here." Her assessment report was successful in part because it leveraged this credibility with integrity, even as it adapted to her institution's local needs and circumstances.

## Constraints

Discourse is always necessarily constrained by contextual factors and the (un)availability of discursive resources. According to Grant-Davie (1997), constraints are "all factors in the situation, aside from the rhetor and the audience, that may lead the audience to be either more or less sympathetic to the discourse, and that may therefore influence the rhetor's response to the situation" (p. 273). I have hinted at some such constraints above, such as the COVID-19 pandemic or austerity budgets. These factors led to a culture of burnout at some institutions, and my participants limited their communication in response. As Francine wrote in the survey, "There's always a fine line between enough and too much—and getting the attention of faculty and lecturers—and even administrators—when there's so much vying for everyone's attention." This self-imposed limitation on the frequency of contact thus represents what Grant-Davie (1997) called a constraint on the "emerging text" that influences how it will look and circulate (p. 274).

Intersecting with wider problems with information overload, as well as budgetary constraints, was the labor of establishing and maintaining visibility. Cher's program "used to produce a faculty newsletter, but it got to be too difficult to keep up." This difficulty can also arise when programs are "undersized" with a "lack of resources, such as staff, funding, and time to plan out and implement a public-facing identity," as Brenda, who taught at a very large, very high research, public university put it in the survey. Without additional resources, WAC directors might be left doing the bulk of visibility labor themselves—if they have time. As one survey respondent noted, they had to "prioritize regular workshops and the process of helping faculty propose and develop required WAC courses and take [a] required faculty development workshop"; visibility labor was less important than these other priorities, alongside teaching and research responsibilities.

A few of my research participants used the circulation of visibility artifacts to alleviate workload and reach audiences—a "positive constraint" (Grant-Davie 1997, p. 272) that could support their larger rhetorical goals. Some circulated material to reach as many readers as possible, such as a survey respondent who noted, "The listserv and bulk mail reach more people." Others asked campus partners to get the word out, including institutional communications and

marketing offices, teaching and learning centers, and especially provosts, who "can reach all of the faculty at the university," one participant said, thus amplifying the WAC program's message. That said, several participants also noted that they did not always have the necessary working relationships with these potential partners, meaning they were constrained in yet another way.

When WAC directors were left doing visibility work themselves, data served as a contextualizing tool that helped some of them decide on the efficacy of their efforts at campus-wide communication. Murray, for example, had access to the marketing platform Constant Contact, which he used to maintain a list of about 500 recipients; with an open rate for newsletters "above 50" percent, he could assume that the newsletter was a valuable use of time and "effort for a resource-stressed program."

Francine also commented on data and efficient use of resources, albeit in a different way. She told me in an interview that some of her content, such as data in the assessment report we discussed, had a life beyond the original document itself. "We extracted this a lot," she explained. "Some of this ended up on the website. A lot of it ended up in communications that I send … to people teaching these classes again." This tactic, which utilizes prior discourse as a positive constraint on new discourse (Grant-Davie, 1997), is especially savvy because she also characterized her WAC program as "under-resourced"; by utilizing content across media, she saved on labor and circulated key information across channels.

Indeed, my participants understood that one visibility strategy might lead audiences to another, a way of circulating messaging across artifacts to continue stakeholders' engagement and awareness. Cher showed me a slide deck used during a faculty development workshop that specifically referenced student-facing online resources so "you don't have to teach them about [topics like] relative pronouns" because they have "a handout for that." All these resources, she elaborated, also have "keywords" and "tags," so the relevant materials would be more likely to come up in searches. These interrelated documents thus made it easier for faculty to find teaching support for a subject which, she said, they were not trained to teach.

## CONCLUSION: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR WAC DIRECTORS

Based on these findings, I want to end with recommendations for WAC directors looking to establish and maintain programmatic visibility.

1. **Remain mindful of multiple exigencies**. The stases of definition, cause and effect, and policy can be a useful heuristic when deciding how to craft messages. Some audiences may define issues and needs

very differently from the WAC program, and the WAC director's most pressing needs may not be those of faculty members. By reflecting on exigencies and discussing them with sympathetic colleagues like a WAC advisory board, WAC directors can define needs, identify causes, and name outcomes in ways that are recognizable across constituencies.

2. **Nurture networks**. Prior research and my own participants emphasized the crucial role of networks of strategic partnerships in maintaining program visibility. Since a full-time, in-house communications and marketing professional is atypical in most WAC programs, the director should attempt to have a concerted, strategic conversation about visibility with institution-wide or unit-specific communication and marketing offices or professionals that can help publicize the program. If relations with such units are not conducive to partnerships, WAC directors might consider partnering with marketing or public relations courses or hiring an intern or graduate assistant if funding is available. Visibility artifacts can be important for nurturing networks. They can speak to and validate the expectations of key partners, thus cultivating a receptive programmatic ethos. A personal touch also helps. The more personal our visibility strategies, the more likely we are to reach our audiences and nurture relationships with them. In addition to individualized messages or faculty testimonials, tailored messages can help our colleagues identify with an offering for, say, part-time instructors, engineers, or faculty of color.
3. **Link programmatic and institutional values**. All WAC directors and program stakeholders bring values to our work—another matter of ethos than we can represent in our roles as rhetors. Many of my research participants were transparent about their personal and programmatic values, and they used those values to frame their communication with others across campus. A few also used institutional mission statements to craft their own programmatic mission and ethos, a savvy move that can be difficult to refute when programmatic cuts are on the line.
4. **Seek and speak to many audiences**. My research participants were attuned to the needs of many different audiences at their institutions. Even when faculty were their main focus, they recognized that audience's needs beyond the classroom (especially related to research, tenure, and promotion) and tailored communication accordingly. Other audiences, such as administrators and campus partners, were often allies in amplifying programmatic missions, especially when they understood how the WAC program's mission and ongoing activities might intersect with other campus priorities like student success.

5. **(Re)use material across multiple communication channels**. Most WAC directors utilized more types of visibility artifacts than others because they understood how different channels might reach different audiences. These different channels also have a distinct kairotic benefit: some, such as websites and asynchronous training modules, were "always on" so faculty could access them when needed; others were used at opportune times to speak to emerging campus initiatives or high-priority institutional deadlines. To save on some of the labor involved, WAC directors can also create reusable materials. For example, newsletter and social media templates can contribute to a consistent brand identity and save time on creating media.
6. **Connect visibility strategies**. To avoid overloading busy faculty audiences with too much information, some WAC directors connected visibility artifacts to one another to help faculty find relevant information and stay in touch. For example, an email or newsletter might link to a registration form, a slide deck might point to further resources on a website, and a website can invite face-to-face teaching consultations, which could lead to a department-wide consultation.

Of course, none of these recommendations constitutes a magic fix for some of the most entrenched obstacles facing WAC directors, especially when those obstacles are contentious political ones. Still, used regularly and with attention to values and relationships, these strategies can contribute to programmatic resilience. Cox et al. (2018) argue that resilient programs—ones that can "anticipate and typically accommodate … changes" do so in part via "'deliberate transformational change' orchestrated through social action" (Folke et al., 2010, para. 17, qtd. in Cox et al., 2018, p. 39). While their examples involve adjustments to structural components of WAC programs, visibility artifacts are also important rhetorical tools for orchestrating social action. Artifacts can remind stakeholders of the program's existence, speak to their needs, and communicate changes regularly and transparently so no one is caught unaware when the program shifts. They can also help stakeholders understand how the program operates and uses resources before it gets caught up in any political crossfire. Finally, they can leverage rhetorical strategies to build new relationships and nurture longstanding ones. Visibility work and relationship-building are inseparable activities that are essential for long-term WAC program sustainability.

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