CHAPTER 4.

HISTORICIZING WAC: CHANGE IN THE CONTEXT OF CONTINUITY

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Abstract. *This chapter follows a somewhat unconventional arrangement: I begin by describing the context for my talk at the Clemson-hosted IWAC conference in June 2023; then provide something of a summary of that talk; and conclude by anticipating WAC's future, especially in the larger, dynamic, and uncertain context of artificial intelligence (AI) and its multiple effects.*

SETTING THE CONTEXT

When I was asked to give one of the keynotes at the 2023 IWAC conference, the invitation was actually for *one half* of a keynote, the other half to be given by WAC founder and my colleague and friend Art Young. In talking about this invitation, Art explained that he wanted to take a personal approach to WAC, detailing his experiences with WAC at Michigan Tech and Clemson and commenting on the multiple, intertwined contributions WAC makes to student learning, faculty development, and institutional innovation. My plan for our paired talk, with Art's agreement, was to provide some thinking about the historical nature of WAC, thus providing a conceptual counterpoint to Art's personal historicizing of WAC.

My own sense, then and now, is that we typically understand WAC's development as a series of changes, or disruptions, marking its history. Such mapping, providing a point of reference for delineating larger patterns of change in different moments within a longer history, has helped us understand WAC well. My own sense, too, is that the early leaders of WAC quickly conceptualized the field this way, employing a lens that is still useful today. I'd argue, in fact, that this historicizing—both for understanding the past and for planning the future—is a defining feature of WAC. For instance, early on, Susan McLeod identified challenges she linked to WAC programs in what she identified as the "second stage," which had commenced only 20 years after its first implementation, among them maintaining relationships with the faculty pioneers of the

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first stage. This "stage lens" also offers an index for planning, as Robert Jones and Joseph Comprone (1993) illustrate, speaking in terms of WAC's likely "next stage," in their case invoking it as an exigence for reviewing WAC's progress to date, critiquing it, and proposing means of improvement. Likewise, three years later Donna LeCourt (1996) cited WAC's staging, in her case to argue for yet another stage, a third one, whose purpose, located in critical pedagogy and theory, would distinguish it from the earlier ones.

As McLeod notes in a 1989 Staffroom Interchange in *College Composition and Communication*, an important challenge for WAC programs in the "second stage" was to build on the institutionalization of "second-stage" WAC while resisting its potential negative effects. Such institutionalization, McLeod explains, "can imply a certain rigidity which comes with administrative lines of authority. In some cases it could result in a homogenization, a blandness—taking a vital new idea and making it into something more like familiar structures and programs, and therefore less free for experimentation, less interesting, perhaps less effective" (1989, p. 391). More comprehensively, in 2012, benefiting from another decade of WAC experience, Bill Condon and Carol Rutz offered a taxonomy of WAC programs keyed to four programmatic stages: foundational, established, integrative, and institutional change agent. And they too described the value of a particular program locating itself in such a broader context:

> if all we can see is WAC's location, then the program remains one of the first two types. It has not yet begun to have the kind of broader institutional impact that results in its being valued by those outside the WAC program and its immediate constituency—its converts. But if the wave motion is happening, then WAC has emerged from its own bailiwick. It has begun to have impact that WAC faculty and staff often have neither directly nor intentionally caused. It has achieved a quantum effect, moving in multiple places at once. It has become part of the fabric of the institution, contributing its energy to the whole, and receiving energy from the whole as well. (2012, p. 382)

As Condon and Rutz assert, such a taxonomy, keyed to different stages of a program, can help a program understand itself multiply: as a local, unique program; as one in the process of or with the potential to change; and as one participating in a larger WAC and/or institutional field.

As valuable as historical stages-as-lenses are, however, stages, whether of field or program, can occlude other equally important aspects of a program or field, or, to paraphrase Kenneth Burke, a way of seeing is also a way of *not* seeing. And again, my own sense, as I explained in my talk at Clemson, is that another

conceptualization of WAC enables us to see its development differently: instead of seeing WAC-as-disruption through the stage model, we might see WAC more coherently by focusing on the commonality and continuance defining it. Such an approach would require two moves: first, locating strands that contribute to and constitute WAC, and, second, ascertaining how they are braided or woven together into program or field, that is, how they are in relationship as they are *making* the program and field. Such an approach, I suggested, offered two benefits, the first that we would understand WAC differently, not as a series of disruptions but rather as a set of elements working together over time; the second, that within the context of this approach, we might think differently about the future of WAC, one informed by these strands, especially as new challenges occur, perhaps especially the challenge most current now, that presented by artificial intelligence (AI). As I observe below, the challenge AI presents to WAC differs in kind and degree from the kinds of challenges WAC has heretofore faced, for instance, to curriculum, faculty engagement, and funding. It is, rather, a challenge to *writing itself*. And writing itself, I argue, is at the heart of WAC. In what follows, then, I'll briefly historicize WAC as a braided activity before considering the current challenge posed to WAC by AI.

BRAIDING STRANDS

The idea of elements collectively constituting WAC was initially suggested by Charles Bazerman (1991) in his review of four books addressing the nature of WAC. He contextualized his review by pointing to the shift underway from WAC in its first stage to the second.

> The four books under review here mark the end of the first stage of WAC, driven by the missionary zeal of composition and the institutional designs of administrators looking for broad structural fixes, and the beginning of the next stage, based on a realistic assessment of the roles written language actually takes in disciplines and disciplinary classrooms. (1991, p. 210)

In his review, Bazerman highlights Chris Anson's (1988) chapter in *Advances in Writing Research: Writing in Academic Disciplines, Vol. 2*, a volume he praises for "step[ping] more boldly into the classrooms and the disciplines behind them." He praises Anson's contribution for "examining the relationships of three domains of WAC research: the actual writing of the disciplines, the writing pedagogy in disciplinary classrooms, and the role of writing in the development of individual students" (1991, p. 210).

These domains are what I am calling elements or strands that, woven together, constitute WAC. What brings them together is a commitment to two fundamental questions that have animated, currently animate, and will in the future animate WAC.

1. What is writing?
2. What does it mean to write?

Underlying these questions are others. For instance, when we use the word writing, do we mean words only, or mostly words, or words plus, i.e., words and visuals and document design and sound and movement? How do we use writing to make meaning? What motivates writing? What does it mean to write beyond the academy, in the world? At the end of the day, what difference will writing make, whether a given text, writing more generally, or writing efforts?

Early on in WAC, the central questions "What does it mean to write?" and "What is writing?" situated writing largely as a tool for learning, thus emphasizing two of Anson's (1988) three focal strands: a focus on pedagogy and the growth of the individual student. Teresa Redd (2004), who co-founded the Howard University program, invoked this language, for instance, in describing her program and its foundation: "The WAC Program at Howard University was built on the primary tenets of the WAC movement, 'writing to learn' (WTL) and 'learning to write' (LTW)." This early focus on writing to learn and learning to write, however, didn't necessarily preclude or exclude a third strand, attention to writing in the disciplines, as McLeod (2000) explains:

> Writing across the curriculum may be defined, then, as a comprehensive program that transforms the curriculum, encouraging writing to learn and learning to write in all disciplines. Before discussing the possible components of such programs, it is worth reemphasizing the basic assumptions of WAC: that writing and thinking are closely allied, that learning to write well involves learning particular discourse conventions, and that, therefore, writing belongs in the entire curriculum, not just in a course offered by the English department. (pp. 5–6)

The "particular discourse conventions" cited by McLeod offer a specific response to the question "What is writing," that is, not a generalized writing practice so much as discipline-based discourse community interactions; such a definition of writing has over time played a larger role in WAC programs, testifying to WAC program plasticity. Interestingly, however, whereas the stage models of WAC tended to see this discipline-oriented purpose somewhat in competition with writing to learn, as well as a key motivator for Bazerman's (1991) and Jones'

and Comprone's (1993) call for a second stage, the more integrated, braided approach to WAC I am describing understands these strands, or themes, working together, with emphases shifting, some having more emphasis at one moment, then less at another. Early on in WAC, for example, the pedagogy of writing to learn, especially located in student journals, received a majority of attention, but even then, as McLeod (2000) explains, WAC included writing in the disciplines as part of its agenda and activity. Likewise, as writing in the disciplines began to define WAC programs more fully, writing to learn has nonetheless been understood as an important component of them, at least in part precisely because of WAC's continuing commitment to student learning and student writing.

These strands, in other words, are flexible and resilient, able to accommodate and incorporate the new, with the role of writing in the development of students providing a good example, as, for instance, writing development as function of classroom activity is put into dialogue with writing development occurring in other, non-classroom sites. Early on in WAC, student writing development was conceptualized as almost exclusively classroom based; over time, however, the classroom has been defined as an important site, but not the only one. In other words, WAC has shifted from a primarily classroom-based emphasis to an enlarged multiple-site program; its answer to the question "What is writing?" widens the field of engagement. In "Studying and Supporting Writing in Student Organizations as a High-Impact Practice," for instance, Brian Hendrickson (2016) argues that students writing in co-curriculars, and for purposes of their own, make up an important form of WAC. Similarly, in "Lifewide Writing across the Curriculum: Valuing Students' Multiple Writing Lives Beyond the University," my colleagues Ashley Holmes, D. Alexis Hart, Ide O'Sullivan, Yogesh Sinha, and I (2022) documented students' accounts of composing, on three continents, in six "spheres of writing," including workplace, co-curriculars, internships, public contexts, and private contexts. In surveys and document-based interviews, students articulate well the lessons learned in one sphere, including the classroom, that have relevance for writing purposes and audiences in other spheres. From this perspective, the classroom doesn't contain student writing, nor does student writing development necessarily (or only) occur vertically as students advance academically; instead, WAC supports a set of reciprocal practices that students engage in across multiple contexts. Moreover, understood this way, WAC provides opportunities to learn—about writing and to write—to all its participants: faculty, staff, internship preceptors, and so on, in addition to students. And such learning: it too is at the heart of WAC.

Moreover, such learning, especially as seen through disciplinary attention to writing encouraged by WAC, has contributed to a newly theorized understanding of the nature of writing: writing as a defining theme of WAC continues even

as writing itself, especially its multimodal character, is newly understood. Early on, writing in WAC was conceptualized as words only; it was a word-centric activity, in large part at least, because of the influence of WAC leaders who tended to have backgrounds in the humanities and thus conceptualized writing as verbal practice. But faculty in all the disciplines, even if they were participating in a WAC program oriented to a verbal-writing to learn, brought their own writing definitions and practices to their WAC programs, which of course is the value of an inclusive braided approach. In "Iconology: An Alternate Form of Writing," for instance, Dennise Bartelo and Robert Morton (1989) assert that what counts for writing in their field isn't language so much as visual expression, especially as it takes place in a discipline-specific sketchbook oriented to meaningful writing:

> In discovering that the sketchbook is a sensitive visual language that can be read by the artist as well as others, it seems appropriate that this concept of visual literacy be recognized in Writing Across the Curriculum programs. The way language processes—in this case drawing and writing—are used to reflect thinking and meaning should be the primary concern. The sketchbook captures the internal monologue of the artist. It is the "never seen" foundation for those formal public works. (p. 32)

Here, then, the definition of writing is widened, and a new site of writing practice, the sketchbook, is identified and theorized.

Such an approach, with faculty defining writing in their fields and identifying the genres and media of such writing, now characterizes several WAC programs. The WAC program at Appalachian State University, for instance, has worked with faculty across disciplines to create resources for students, including a glossary of terms common in writing and an accompanying website for students, "WAC Glossary of Terms," which lists and defines genres, rhetorical strategies, and media used in different fields as identified by disciplinary faculty. Likewise, the WAC program hosted at the Miami University of Ohio Howe Center for Writing Excellence has sponsored the development of disciplinary guides to "help students learn about the writing characteristics valued in various disciplines." Similarly, the Campus Writing and Speaking Program (also known as Communication across the Curriculum/CAC program) at North Carolina State University and the WAC program at the University of Minnesota have supported the development of disciplinary- and departmental-based writing curricula incorporating writing to learn and supporting students through graduation. In these programs, which collectively have been titled Writing Enriched

Curriculum, or WEC, answers to the questions "What is writing?" and "What does it mean to write?" have been notably enlarged even as they vary dramatically, with different disciplinary definitions of writing; different disciplinary sites of writing, both textual and architectural; and different disciplinary learnings about writing and the many ways writing constitutes a field of inquiry in a very distributed programmatic model of writing. At the same time, these programs include writing of all kinds.

But of course, writing itself changes over time. How so is demonstrated in the many disciplinary Writing Plans hosted on the University of Minnesota WEC program website (University of Minnesota, 2025). These disciplinary accounts of writing provide documentary evidence of how faculty, in answering the question What is writing?, then plan for the curriculum and pedagogy that will socialize students into their specific contexts, a process Pamela Flash (2016) has outlined well. Considering one such plan, even if briefly, allows us to see how writing can be defined, with shared writing characteristics, such as attention to audience, overlapping and in dialogue with disciplinary-specific practices and genres. Mechanical engineering was one of the first departments to create such a writing plan (University of Minnesota, 2020). As explained in the document, the department has revised it three times, with the latest version including a comment about each of the definition's features and its meaning for the discipline as well as a link to the prior plan with annotations explaining changes from the penultimate plan to the current one (University of Minnesota, 2020). The first feature, with a brief explanatory comment, for example, is that

At graduation, undergraduates in mechanical engineering should be able to:

1. Use mathematics to describe an engineering principle or to solve an engineering problem.
2. Comment: The ability to write with mathematics is fundamental to engineering writing.
3. The other eleven writing features, without further comment, include
    a. Use physics and engineering science to describe an engineering principle or to solve an engineering problem.
    b. Explain and discuss a physical apparatus or a design concept.
    c. Use visual representations to describe a physical apparatus or an engineering concept.
    d. Communicate information that integrates visual, textual, and oral explanations.
    e. Represent and interpret data clearly and concisely.
    f. Describe the purpose, context and objectives of an actual or proposed engineering activity.

g. Synthesize and summarize key points.
h. Record and analyze activities related to a laboratory study or a design project.
i. Write collaboratively to produce a group-authored document that describes the output of a team-based project.
j. Analyze an intended audience and create a document that meets their needs.
k. Represent themselves professionally through their writing.

Some of these features, like "Analyze an intended audience and create a document that meets their needs," seem sufficiently important and rhetorical that they would be recognized by all disciplines, while others, like "Represent themselves professionally through their writing," seem more relevant to pre-professional disciplines like engineering, nursing, and architecture. Still others, like "Explain and discuss a physical apparatus or a design concept," seem directly relevant to the specific kind of writing mechanical engineering students compose.

As I indicated previously, writing changes as does our understanding of it, and we see such revised understandings in both the second version and third version of the writing plans for mechanical engineering in the numbered document Mechanical Engineering Writing Plan Fourth (Legacy) Edition. Cumulative in nature, each draws on the earlier versions with the changes to the current plan "designed to more closely align with the expectations for mechanical engineering student writers and to be more specific in the actual writing skills that every student should have, as well as to align with the faculty review of writing abilities" (University of Minnesota, 2020, p. 7). Some changes in the current plan are organizational, as in "The order was arranged to follow rough groupings," but several are rhetorically oriented to the writing in mechanical engineering, as in "A new ability (#7 in the new list) was added related to describing the background to an experiment and the objective and context of a project" (University of Minnesota, 2020, p. 7). Perhaps the most important change, especially given that the writing features are disciplinarily specific, is the inclusion of context for each feature so that the logic explaining it is included as well. Put more generally, then, the reiterative process of creating such writing plans supports the learning about writing that faculty and students engage in, a kind of practice-based research into writing that is motivated by curricular interest in how to represent disciplinary writing as well as how to support students' writerly development. Moreover, such plans demonstrate how this WAC curricular development brings together and continues to emphasize the three WAC strands of individual student writing development, writing pedagogy, and disciplinary writing.

WHAT DOES THIS BRAIDED, EVOLVING UNDERSTANDING OF WRITING MEAN FOR THE *FUTURE*?

With questions about the nature of writing and about what writing means at its heart, WAC in the United States—and it would be good to know if this is also the case for WAC-like initiatives elsewhere—has been consistent in its focus and values while it also evolves, especially in response to new understandings and participant needs. Sometimes, those responses seem generated from within WAC, as when disciplinary-based writing definitions and practices like those at North Carolina State University and the University of Minnesota generate new programmatic emphases. Other times, writing to learn and other pedagogical approaches loom large in WAC, as was the case in the early days of WAC. And in still other times, WAC research takes center stage, as with Dan Melzer's (2014) study of WAC assignments, demonstrating that despite attention to WAC's discipline-based writing, many if not most WAC-based writing assignments are not discipline-based, but rather are oriented to supporting students writing to learn. Put simply, change in the context of continuity continues to characterize WAC. The question now: Will this pattern continue in the future, especially given what many perceive as the external, potentially disruptive threat of AI—which some, at least, see as undermining the very idea of a human writing at the heart of WAC? In taking up such questions about the future of WAC, both in my 2023 IWAC conference talk and in this chapter, I intend/ed to signal the uncertainty of the current moment relative to AI. As I suggest below, because WAC scholars have been engaging with AI and its implications in helpful ways, we didn't—and don't—need to start from scratch in thinking about what appropriate role AI might play in WAC's continued braided focus on writing, student development, and writing research. Toward this end and as a heuristic toward thinking about this future, I briefly review AWAC's AI position statements before outlining one practice-based research exercise I engaged in as one mechanism for thinking about AI's appropriate role in writing.

As has been the case with other new technologies animating education contexts, from handheld computers to word processing, early reactions to AI ranged from acceptance to confusion to resistance. These early responses to AI were amplified by two factors, social media and its easy availability, as explained in *Forbes* (Marr, 2023).

> OpenAI released an early demo of ChatGPT on November 30, 2022, and the chatbot quickly went viral on social media as users shared examples of what it could do. Stories and samples included everything from travel planning to writing

> fables to coding computer programs. Within five days, the chatbot had attracted over one million users. (para. 6)

Many of those users were students, according to Rhea Kelly of *Campus Technology*. As her headline proclaimed, "More than Half of Students Will Use AI Writing Tools Even if Prohibited by Their Institution" (2023). While a greater percentage of students today is currently using AI, the research Kelly (2023) outlined paints a portrait of stark differences and usage between faculty and students that persists. Kelly's report pointed to variations in the student and faculty use of AI rather than student adherence to university policy. She observed that the large survey of "2,000 instructors and administrators as well as 2,000 two-and four-year college students" that was intended to ascertain "use of and feelings toward generative AI" demonstrated two important findings. First, faculty and staff were "well behind students on the generative AI adoption curve." Nearly ¾ of faculty had not used any form of AI, and nearly a third were unfamiliar with it. Second, students were already using AI: nearly half of the students in 2022 reported using "generative AI writing tools at least once; 14% considered themselves occasional users (i.e., monthly); and 13% were frequent users (i.e., weekly)" (2023).

The act of writing, so central to the continuity of WAC, is also and already changing in response to AI for another academic population, graduate postdocs, as reported in in *Inside Higher Ed* (Hosseini & Holmes, 2024). A survey of 3,800 postdocs conducted by the journal *Nature* (2023) showed their use of AI for specific writing tasks, including for '"refining text" (63 %), "code generation/editing/troubleshooting" (56 %), and "finding/summarizing the literature" (29 %). Commenting on such use, researchers Mohammad Hosseini and Kristi Holmes (2024) identify four areas of particular concern regarding the use of GPT for scholarship and research, among them "unreliable and nonreplicable searches" and "enabling shoddy research." Moreover, they conclude:

> To appropriately address these gaps, we need further assessment of these tools' veracity, the development of guidelines and best practices for their ethical use, and meaningful training for researchers. Ultimately, a range of interventions are required to prevent GPTs from spreading misinformation, pseudoscience and biased views that will undermine norms of research and ultimately erode trust in science.

Others, however, have quickly and adroitly developed policies. The Association for Writing across the Curriculum (AWAC), for instance, has issued two position statements. Published in 2023, the first, consistent with WAC's continuity, focuses squarely on writing in the context of student learning and WAC research:

> Current AI discussions remind us, yet again, of long-established best practices in Writing Across the Curriculum, grounded in research and extant for decades: designing meaningful and specific assignments that foster learning and develop skills; focusing on processes and practices such as peer-response and revision; encouraging writing in multiple genres, including ones connected to specific disciplinary practices.
>
> We recommend fostering the kind of deep learning and cognitive development that students gain through writing to learn and through learning to write in specific situations.

In this position statement on the role of AI in WAC, the AWAC Executive Board highlights continuity, particularly in terms of WAC's continued commitment to student development, to the pedagogy that supports it, and to the disciplinary practices it studies, fosters, and enacts.

The second position statement, published in 2025, takes a more nuanced approach. Defined by six principles, it describes writing as a human activity while also endorsing the inclusion of AI in WAC:

- Champion writing as a human-centered activity grounded in rhetorical judgment and critical thinking.
- Recognize AI tools as sites of struggle.
- Ensure inclusive, equitable writing instruction.
- Address academic integrity through critical engagement. Honor faculty agency and disciplinary context.
- Develop transparent, flexible institutional policy informed by educators.
- Empower writing across the curriculum programs and WAC professionals to lead.

As these principles suggest, writing and student development provide the focus of interest in AI, but research is included as well, if less explicitly. In the final principle, "empowering" includes an assumption "that WAC scholar-practitioners continually develop their knowledge in these areas and contribute—as time and context allow—to the sustained efforts required to realize these principles in practice" (Association for Writing Across the Curriculum, 2025, p. 5).

AND NOW?

Given this dynamic moment in WAC history, it seems impossible—not to say foolhardy—to commit to a permanent policy or position regarding AI other than to suggest inquiry, which is the approach taken in the 2025 AWAC

statement. In its principles, the statement encourages continuation of the kinds of practice-based approaches characterizing WAC throughout its history, that is to continue to learn *about* writing in the context of AI, about its role in student development, about the pedagogy supporting that development, and about disciplinary versions of writing, especially as our inquiry is keyed to the WAC-central questions "What is writing?" and "What does it mean to write?" that have defined WAC from the beginning. Those two fundamental questions, especially in referring to learning can function something like a north star as we collectively navigate the challenges posed by AI to writing as a human activity and thus to WAC.

As an example of what such a practice-based exploration might look like, one brief exercise is instructive. In 2023, when I gave the IWAC talk, I said that I had hoped that reflective writing might provide one kind of writing immune from the influence of AI. After all, reflective writing by definition is unique to the writer and, I thought, by its very definition, human, and it is frequently employed in multiple WAC contexts. I continue to understand such writing as unique and human, but I have learned since then about tools employing AI to help students reflect. Interested to see how such a tool might foster reflection, I tried it out myself. The tool I chose, designed at Stanford, is called Riff (https://riffbot.ai/). Its purpose, according to its developers, is at odds with those of generative AI: "While chatbots powered by generative AI are typically designed to answer questions and perform tasks, Riff focuses on asking learners thought-provoking questions to deepen their reflection process."

Riff began directing my reflection by asking me to identify a "peak experience" from the term, which referred to a writing task or text. Then, based on my answer—that is, on the text I identified—it asked me a new question, thus initiating a set of successive questions about that text and my writing of it, all working together to help me think (1) about the revision of that text and (2) about revision more generally. What I experienced as I engaged with the tool and answered its questions, however, was *how* it wanted me to think and *what* it wanted me to think about: not in terms of my perceptions or the questions I wanted to pursue, but rather in terms of its script. Put differently, regardless of my responses, the questions focused exclusively on revision, assuming that what I needed or wanted to reflect on was how to revise more effectively. In this reflective task, then, Riff asked me: (1) how I had revised a given text, and (2) what lessons about revision I had learned in the process of revising my text, with the script assuming that I needed to reflect on the revision process I employed in the text in question in order to improve my revising process(es) more generally.

I was disappointed in this reflective experience, and for several reasons. For one thing, the idea that learning how we revise one text will necessarily help us revise

another is flawed, given that revision often varies according to contextual factors like rhetorical situation, audience, and genre. As important, improvement in revision was not *my* goal for this reflection; that is, I did want to reflect on the making of the text I had chosen to reflect on, but not in order to revise "better" the next time around. In my reply to the prompt, I said that, if in this situation again, I'd not revise but would opt instead to publish the text in a journal allowing the full text. Given my experiences as an academic writer, this seems a reasonable response, if at variance with what Riff wanted me to do: in composing over 100 articles and book chapters, I've been asked only once to cut so dramatically (i.e., 3,000 words), so the likelihood of such a revision task occurring again is low. As noted above, it wasn't that I didn't want to think about revision or the project itself; I wanted to think about other issues important to me—about the shape of the project; about how we employ research, especially student interviews; about the impact of the deletions I did make. More generally, my sense was that the Riff questions were overdetermined—too focused on improvement—as well as too acontextual, general, and formulistic to be helpful to me as a writer.

On the basis of what is, admittedly, a simple if interesting trial, I make two observations. First, in this reflection on Riff, I have learned that, as one of this volume's editors observed in a comment on an earlier draft, "the act of engaging with [this AI tool] has given you the opportunity to reflect here, now, on what you value and need as a reflective practitioner." Fair point: in reflecting on this experience, I am learning about whether this reflective prompt is useful (no), about why and how (not), and about how I understand reflection itself.

Second, I understand anew the role of context in reflection, an issue in reflective writing that I have addressed elsewhere (Yancey, 2016, 2023). In the Riff trial, the lack of context seemed a defining problem for me; most reflection activities include a fair amount of context while the tool neither asked for nor allowed it. And upon reflection, I see other issues. The absence of audience is one: for whom was I writing? For whom was I reflecting? For whom was I learning? Was it my learning that Riff was interested in, or the script's conception of what I was *supposed* to learn?

I'll also note that there is difference in kind between the approach used in this reflective prompt tool and the kind of prompt research suggests is both more satisfying for the writer and more efficacious, as suggested in a recent article on reflection in internship ePortfolios (Yancey, 2023). Perhaps not surprisingly, that approach varies considerably from the Riff approach. As indicated, Riff is very just-in-time, incremental, and instrumental; echoing students' replies, picking up on an aspect of one reply, asking about it, and moving progressively, Riff intends to evoke insight in the respondent about improvement. In that sense, it is about a certain kind of reflective instrumentalism—and one many faculty

value. In contrast, a reflective frame, which is what I have called the ePortfolio internship prompt, is a highly contextual, capacious, and personalized heuristic set of progressive questions oriented to *many* kinds of learning, about *multiple* definitions of writing and editing, about writing and editing practices, about new understandings, and about future directions.

In the case study on ePortfolio reflections I presented in the internship article, the reflective prompt begins with student observations about writing and editing practices in two contexts, classroom and internship; then shifts to more general observations about the nature of these practices; then to the relationships of those practices to other areas of the student's life, including non-writing issues like time management and personal relationships as well as other writing contexts like civic writing and personal writing; and finally to what students make of the experiences and observations for their future, which again, may or may not be writing-related. While designed for an internship ePortfolio for majors in writing, editing, and media, the reflective frame, applicable to many kinds of learning situations, is characterized by a set of six factors:

- Authentic questions,
- A progressive design from specific to general,
- Inclusion of prior knowledge and experience,
- A comparison of prior knowledge and experience not in terms of value (i.e., good or bad) but rather to pose questions about similarity and difference as a practice of invention,
- Inclusion of outside contexts, and
- A consideration of the future

Unlike in the Riff prompt, which rolls the questions out one-by-one, students see all the questions in the reflective frame in advance, so they can work through them reiteratively, making and revising meaning as they do. In the reflective frame, revision can be the *object* of reflection, as in Riff, but it is also part of the *process* of reflection. More generally, in terms of this WAC discussion, with its attention to the question "What is writing?" I'd suggest that the reflective frame keeps the WAC continuing values of writing, students, and learning at its center precisely because of the ways it centers student questions.

Still, my trial and assessment of Riff as only a single AI tool is a *very* limited trial; although I was dissatisfied with it, others may not be. Students may find the Riff reflective prompt helpful, especially if their focus is on thinking about revision, and/or if the Riff questions are those faculty want answered. New trials with Riff, given that my single trial is hardly definitive, can be used to pursue other questions—and perhaps, even as I write, they are. Nonetheless, the trial shared here and my analysis of it constitute, I think, a useful beginning

exploration of the value of a single AI tool. In this case, of course, the trial focused on reflection as a familiar kind of writing in WAC contexts. Within the larger context of WAC and writing, however, my hope is that this kind of practice-based research on all kinds of writing, including that augmented by AI, will continue to characterize WAC, especially relative to student development and disciplinary writing, as it has throughout its history.

AND NOW (REDUX)?

From its earliest days, WAC understood itself—as it was developing, in its planning, and in its historical accounting—in stages keyed to disruptions: this well-known and well-regarded history is a master narrative of the field. But other narratives help us see the field in new and equally insightful ways. Here, I've outlined another narrative, one keyed to continuity and change and centering related features: writing as a human activity, student development, and disciplinary writing. In this narrative, WAC is defined by a set of common interests maintained across time even as one or two of them may assume greater influence at any given moment, writing to learn early on, for instance, and disciplinary emphases somewhat later, with student development present throughout. Moreover, these elements have continued to function collectively as a north star to WAC as it has evolved, reminding us of where we have been and where we are going. Continuing to think collectively about the central braided questions defining WAC—about what writing is and about what it means to write—takes us back to the central questions defining WAC, as we've seen, as well as forward to the responses that will shape its future. In taking up these questions anew, we can ensure that WAC continues to support all of us: students, faculty and higher education. And not least, as we move forward in this endeavor, we may discover that the current challenge AI seems to pose is not, after all, the disruption some currently fear it to be, but rather merely another iteration in the vital story of WAC continuity and change.

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